

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

29 June 2023

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, 5 July 2023 at 7.00pm.**

Yours faithfully

Stephen Reid
Chief Executive
Ards and North Down Borough Council

A G E N D A

1. Prayer
2. Apologies
3. Declarations of Interest
4. Mayor's Business
5. Mayor and Deputy Mayor Engagements for the month of June (Copy attached)
6. Presentation of Past Mayor and Deputy Mayor Certificates
7. Minutes of Council Annual Meeting dated 7 June 2023 (Copy attached)
8. Minutes of Council meeting dated 12 June 2023 (Copy attached)
9. Minutes of Committees
 - 9.1. Minutes of Meeting of Environment Committee dated 14 June 2023 (Copy attached)
 - 9.2. Minutes of Meeting of Place and Prosperity Committee dated 15 June 2023 (Copy attached)
 - 9.3. Minutes of Meeting of Corporate Services Committee dated 20 June 2023 (Copy attached)
 - 9.4. Minutes of Meeting of Community and Wellbeing Committee dated 21 June 2023 (Copy attached)

- 9.5. Minutes of Meeting of Planning Committee dated 22 June 2023 (Copy attached)
- 9.6. Minutes of Meeting of Audit Committee dated 26 June 2023 (Copy attached)
10. Charging and Income Policy (Report attached)
11. Budgetary Control Report (Report attached)
12. Ards and North Down Sports Forum Grants (Report attached)
13. Council Members Representation to the Reserve Forces and Cadet Association (Report attached)
14. Appointment of Diversity Ambassadors (Report attached)
15. Urban Regeneration Projects (Report attached)
16. Grant of Entertainment Licence (Report attached)
17. National Association of Councillors – Draft Constitution, response to ANDBC feedback (Report attached)
18. Sealing Documents
19. Transfer of Rights of Burial
20. Notice of Motion Status Report (Report attached)
21. Notices of Motion

21.1 Notice of Motion submitted by Alderman Douglas and Councillors Cathcart, W Irvine, Blaney, McKimm and McCracken

That this council requests officers to bring back a report with full costings and budgetary options outlining pragmatic solutions to tackling anti-social behaviour in the Bank's Lane car park, Ballyholme including the restricting of access to the car park at night. In addition, officers should clarify ownership of the Bank's Lane as part of the solution.

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

22. Annual Councillors' Return to DfC 2022-23 (Report attached)
23. Queen's Parade Update Report (Report attached)

24. Rectification of Title - land to the rear of 132 Church Road, Holywood (Report attached)
25. Belfast Region City Deal Annual Report 2023 (Report attached)
26. Faster Project Collaboration Agreement (Report attached)

MEMBERSHIP OF ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

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

LIST OF MAYOR'S/DEPUTY MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS FOR JUNE 2023

Thursday 1st June 2023

- 09:00 Somme Exhibition with Schools to France, TBC
- 12:30 Portaferry Gala Launch Reception, Mayor's Parlour
- 14:30 Final Meeting with Charity Committee
- 17:00 Launch of ForM Sculpture Exhibition 2023, Bangor Castle
Walled Garden

Friday 2nd June 2023

- 12:30 PSNI Reception, Mayor's Parlour
- 14:30 HMS Raider and HMS Penzance CO Visit
- 19:30 Primary School Musician of the Year Competition 2023,
Towerview Primary School

Saturday 3rd June 2023

- 12:00 Sea Bangor Festival, Bangor City Centre

Sunday 4th June 2023

- 10:30 Fun Run Bangor, Ward Park, Bangor

Monday 5th June 2023

- 10:30 Killard School Visit

Tuesday 6th June 2023

- 10:20 Record of Achievement Presentation P7, Clifton School, Bangor
- 14:00 Photo Opportunity: Translink Active Travel, Bangor Train Station

*****End of Alderman Douglas' term as Mayor and Councillor Blaney's term as Deputy Mayor*****

ITEM 5

Start of Councillor Gilmour's term as Mayor and Councillor Hannah Irwin's term as Deputy Mayor

Thursday 8th June 2023

- 10:20 Record of Achievement Presentation, Clifton School, Bangor
- 13:30 Photo Opportunity: Comber Earlies Festival PR, Comber Leisure Centre
- 19:00 Clandeboye School Performance, Upper Sixth, Bangor

Friday 9th June 2023

- 10:15 Launch of Ella, Pink's Green, Donaghadee
- 10:45 Comber Regen Community Festival Partnership Fringe Festival, Comber
- 13:00 Intergenerational Project, Movilla Nursing Home and Movilla High School, Newtownards
- 14:00 Photo Opportunity: Translink 175 years, Holywood

Saturday 10th June 2023

- 10:30 Friends of Columbanus Visit by Italian Mayor, Bangor Museum/Coffee Cure
- 11:30 Codo Art Mural Rejuvenation, Ravara Training & Resource Centre, Bangor

Wednesday 14th June 2023

- 11:00 Official Opening of Comber Refurbished PlayPark

Thursday 15th June 2023

- 14:15 Launch of the Translink Ulster In Bloom, Newtownabbey

Friday 16th June 2023

- 11:30 Promoting Event Recycling Stations, Bangor Castle
- 13:00 Photo Opportunity Proparamedics Event, Conway Square, Newtownards
- 14:00 Comber Primary School Allotment Opening
- 15:00 Clandeboye Golf Club – NI Master's Golf Tournament

Saturday 17th June 2023

- 10:00 Small Worlds Workshop, Ards Arts Centre
- 13:00 Portaferry Sailing Club RUFFIAN 23 – 50th Anniversary

Wednesday 21st June 2023

ITEM 5

10:00 Boom Studios Social Enterprise Launch

Sunday 18th June 2023

12:30 NIFRS Fire Cadets Display and Graduation Ceremony

Tuesday 20th June 2023

10:30 Ballymagee Nursery School Presentation of Certificates

12:00 Launch of Creative Peninsula Photo Op, Ards Arts Centre

14:00 Ronnie Patterson Birthday, Stricklands Bay

Wednesday 21st June 2023

18:15 Ards Cycling Club Race, Newtownards

19:00 Glenlola Collegiate 125 Anniversary Celebration

Thursday 22nd June 2023

08:00 Bangor Chamber of Commerce Business Breakfast

13:00 Official Opening of Pollinator Garden, St Marys Primary School, Kircubbin

15:00 Visit by Percy French Society, Bangor City Hall

Friday 23rd June 2023

12:00 Bangor Golf Club Buffet Lunch

20:30 ABBA in the Park, Comber

Saturday 24th June 2023

11:00 Donaghadee Lifeboat Festival

12:00 Comber Earlies Festival

14:00 Donaghadee Sailing Club Annual Regatta

Tuesday 27th June 2023

10:30 Bangor 10k Photo opportunity, Main St, Bangor

12:00 Recruitment Open Day, Old Market House, Bangor

19:00 Official Opening of New St John's Ambulance Hub, Balloo, Bangor

Wednesday 28th June 2023

10:30 Brunch with Crochet Group, Ards Sailing Club

14:00 Meeting with Mr Hamilton, Colostomy UK

ITEM 5

Thursday 29th June 2023

10:30 Parklets at Comber Town Square Photo opportunity

11:00 Press Launch – Photo for In-Bloom

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

A hybrid Annual Meeting of the Ards and North Down Borough Council was held in the City Hall, The Castle, Bangor and via Zoom on Wednesday, 7 June 2023 commencing at 11.00 am.

PRESENT:

In the Chair: The Mayor (Councillor Douglas)

Councillors:	Armstrong-Cotter	Kennedy
	Adair	Kerr
	Ashe	Martin
	Blaney	McAlpine
	Boyle	McCollum
	Brooks	McCracken
	Cathcart	McDowell
	Chambers	McIlveen
	Creighton	McKimm
	Cochrane	McLaren
	Cummings	McRandal
	K Douglas	Moore (Zoom)
	L Douglas	Morgan
	Edmund	Rossiter
	Gilmour	Smart
	Graham	Smith
	Hollywood	Woods
	S Irvine	Wray
	W Irvine (11.40am)	
	Irwin	

Officers: Chief Executive (S Reid), Director of Corporate Services (M Steele), Director of Community and Wellbeing (G Bannister), Director of Environment (D Lindsay), Director of Place (S McCullough), Director of Prosperity (A McCullough), Executive Officer (F Thompson), Head of Administration (A Curtis), Corporate Communications Manager (C Jackson), Democratic Services Manager (J Wilson) and Democratic Services Officers (P Foster, H Loebnau and S McCrea)

1. PRAYER

The Chief Executive commenced the meeting by reading a prayer.

NOTED.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors MacArthur and McKee.

An apology for lateness had been received from Councillor W Irvine.

NOTED.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Mayor (Councillor Douglas) asked for any declarations of interest and none were advised.

NOTED.

4. MAYOR'S REVIEW

The Mayor stated that as outgoing Mayor, she wished to make some remarks.

Councillor Douglas stated that she would like to place on record her thanks to the Chief Executive, the Corporate Leadership Team and all the officers who had supported her in her role as Mayor over the past 12 months, in particular, Richard, Steven and Michelle from the Mayor's Office and Jeanette from Democratic Services.

As Mayor, she had had the opportunity to host many groups and individuals at the City Hall, and as such she also took the opportunity to thank Gary, the City Hall Superintendent and his team who had ensured everyone's comfort and warm welcome. She added that Gary was a great source of local history, providing scores of people with a history of Bangor Castle which was always well received.

Having had hundreds of engagements throughout the year, she expressed her thanks to Colin, Steven and William, the Mayor's drivers who had escorted her to and from the events safely and on time.

Continuing she also thanked the Corporate Communications Team: Jonathan, Hannah, Claire Mulgrew and Claire Jackson for their support together with their skilful drafting of press releases.

Councillor Douglas acknowledged that behind every good Mayor there was a wonderful team who helped make things happen.

Before leaving Council staff, Councillor Douglas commented that during her Mayoral term she had witnessed the incredible commitment shown by Council officers and now wished to mention a few that had stood out:

- Patricia Hamilton's work in making the Aspect's Irish Literary Festival a huge success every year, despite financial pressures. Patricia had built up an incredible network of artists who enjoyed performing and contributing to the Festival;
- Moira O'Rourke, Heritage Officer who co-produced and co-delivered this year's Maritime Heritage Conference with stakeholders in the community;

- Dylan Freeburn, Woodland Officer for all his work in rolling out the tree-planting scheme across the Borough. Feedback from community groups had been amazing. People had been so appreciative of Dylan's support and guidance;
- Similarly for Jonny Bettes in the Parks Department for his community engagement across the Borough and supporting groups in the community;
- Emily Crawford, Arts & Heritage Manager who had diligently delivered on a number of key projects this year including anniversary events in relation to Viscount Castlereagh;
- Wendy Smith from Tourism for another successful Sea Bangor Festival; and
- Donna Mackey, Good Relations Team for all the events including the P7 school children's cross-community visit to the Somme, following which their reflections were witnessed which was very impactful.

She offered her congratulations to all.

At this stage Councillor Douglas expressed her thanks to Councillor Blaney who had been a wonderful Deputy Mayor to work with. She thanked him for his support, adding that he had been a great ambassador for the Borough.

Continuing she thanked Canon Reverend Ronnie Nesbitt who had agreed to take on the role as Mayor's Chaplain this year. She thanked him for being present at all the Council's key events this year, and for his words of comfort and wise guidance.

Turning to her three charities and their respective leaders she expressed thanks to:

- Emalyn Turkington, Chief Executive Officer of North Down & Ards Women's Aid who provided critical support and services to women and children across the Borough impacted by domestic abuse.
- Ken Scott, Chief Executive Officer of Bangor Foodbank and Community Support and Richard Porter, Chief Executive Officer of Ards Foodbank, both of whose teams provided food, basic essentials for individuals and families across the entire Borough who continued to struggle with years of austerity and more latterly the cost of living crisis.

She thanked them all for all that they did in making a difference.

Councillor Douglas then thanked everyone who had donated to the Mayor's charities either directly or online. She added that every pound donated went towards making a difference to people within the community.

Continuing Councillor Douglas stated that her theme for the year had been 'We Are One'. She explained that she had wanted to shine a spotlight on groups who were often marginalised or invisible and also to show how when people worked together greater outcomes could be achieved.

She stated that she had been delighted to meet with and host:

- Volunteers from various organisations and groups who had given their time and energy, and without whom society could not function;
- The same for unpaid carers, parents who had been carers all of their lives, whose compassion and dedication never waned;
- Looked after children who had needed kinship or foster carers to look after them until they could either return home or were old enough to set up their own homes;
- Children and adults who had learning disabilities where it had been lovely to see the beauty of the world through their eyes, and the joy they found in each other and activities they engaged with;
- Adults experiencing homelessness, without a stable and safe foundation. It was hard to focus on other matters so the critical services providing people with a safe place to call home were important;
- Community groups whose volunteers provided support to many people experiences such issues highlighted above, delivering support and services to people in need. They also did amazing work.

She had found through her year that she was able to connect people and organisations in her Mayoral role by developing and enhancing formal working arrangements and natural interfaces between Council, the South-Eastern Regional College (SERC) and the South-Eastern Health & Social Care Trust (SEHSCT). She stated that it was important the key cross-departmental agencies continued to work closely together to avoid duplication of service and to best meet the needs of the community. She had also been able to bring local businesses together by hosting a roundtable discussion with Council and the three tiers of political representation to explore how they could be supported better in the face of the cost-of-doing-business crisis which had been adversely impacting on so many. Yet, business leaders had continued to adapt and had demonstrated courage and resilience despite the challenging economic environment.

At the beginning of the year, Councillor Douglas stated that she had wanted to highlight the importance of interface with the environment and as such she had continued to facilitate her own organised beach cleans and had enjoyed joining others. Perhaps a highlight regarding environmental elements was organising a Borough-wide Coastal Clean-Up weekend where over 90 people from various groups cleaned up the local beaches and green spaces, which in turn encouraged more people to get involved, show civic pride, and who had now adopted-a-spot to look after. She expressed her thanks to Alistair Kerr and Jonny Bettes and their respective teams within Council who had helped support the event of that weekend.

It was not until one inhabited the role of Mayor that its requirements were fully understood. She reported that she had the pleasure of travelling the length and breadth of Ards and North Down, attending events, meeting new friends and engaging in a wide range of activities. Everyone had brought so much joy, inspiration and appreciation of the wonderful people who reside and work in the Borough. From attending schools for prize-giving and ceremonies; sporting events. regattas during the summer months, festivals such as: Portaferry Gala, Donaghadee Lifeboat

Festival, Holywood May Day and Sea Bangor, graduations in workplaces and colleges, opening new businesses, attending ceremonies which marked significant anniversaries such as 100 years of policing in Northern Ireland, plus visiting residents celebrating their 100th birthdays.

She added that she had also enjoyed two very different Freedoms of the Borough during the year. The Irish Guards being very much a formal affair followed by a wonderful Pipes and Drums Service and Parade in Newtownards, and a more relaxed ceremony for musician and philanthropist, Gary Lightbody, who generously had put on a concert at the McKee Clock, Bangor in aid of a local charity. Both wonderful events which the public enjoyed.

Councillor Douglas recalled that it had also been an historic year, one in which we had all celebrated her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II Platinum Jubilee in June, where Bangor welcomed the Earl and Countess of Wessex and where communities hosted parties across the Borough. Only a couple of months later however the Council mourned Her Majesty's sad passing. Charles III was proclaimed King and in recent weeks celebrations had taken place for the coronation of King Charles III and Queen Camilla. Between those events the Borough warmly welcomed the Princess Royal to the Bangor City Hall who had unveiled the Letters Patent acknowledging the awarding of City Status to Bangor. A very proud day for Bangor and the wider Borough, and one which Council must continue to build upon with the extra £10 million Levelling-up Fund from HM Government in addition to the £110 million investment into Queen's Parade and the Bangor Waterfront Masterplan.

Looking forward, she advised that she hoped to build upon the idea of creating a women's caucus, now that more women had been returned this year following the recent Council election.

In summing up the Mayor's last few words of reflection were ones of sincere appreciation to the public who had invited her to their groups, homes, places of work and communities; for greeting her so warmly, making her feel so welcome, and giving of their time to share their experiences and hopes. She stated that the Borough had the best of people and she hoped that she had served everyone proudly.

Councillor McRandal proposed, seconded by Councillor McIlveen that the Mayor's review was noted.

The proposer Councillor McRandal noted the Mayor's reference to many of the big events which had taken place throughout the last year, such as the Freedom of the Borough events and a number of Royal visits. However the Mayor's theme throughout her term "We are One" would remain memorable for him as she had met as many people as she could and radiated positivity and made people feel valued.

Commenting as seconder Councillor McIlveen congratulated the Mayor on what had been a very successful year. He too noted the conferral of the Freedom of the Borough upon the Irish Guards and Gary Lightbody, all very worthy recipients. Continuing he wished Councillor Douglas well on her return to the back benches.

On behalf of the SDLP Councillor Boyle acknowledged that the outgoing Mayor had enjoyed a very active year having managed to visit every part of the Borough. He added that the residents of Portaferry had been very pleased to welcome her to the village, adding that she had very much won the hearts and minds of those people. In conclusion she thanked her for all her efforts throughout her Mayoral term.

Councillor McKimm also acknowledged the positive impact the Mayor had had within the local community and congratulated her on what had been a very successful year.

Councillor Smith noted the tremendous schedule of events the Mayor had undertaken throughout her Mayoral term and acknowledged that she had acted with professionalism at all times. He congratulated her on doing such a good job on behalf of the Borough.

NOTED.

5. GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS (FILE CX210)

(Appendix I)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report dated 3 May 2023 from the Chief Executive detailing that Section 19 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 provided that a Council must operate a Committee system unless it decided by a qualified majority (i.e. 80% of those present and voting) to operate executive arrangements or prescribed arrangements.

Method of Nomination to Positions of Responsibility

Schedule 1 of the 2014 Act provided three options for filling Positions of Responsibility:

1. By nomination using the d'Hondt method;
2. By nomination using the Sainte-Laguë method; or
3. By election using the Single Transferable Vote (STV) method.

The default would be by nomination using d'Hondt, unless the Council by a qualified majority passed a resolution that Sainte-Laguë or STV would be used instead.

Method of allocating Committee places

If operating a Committee system, the 2014 Act provided that the Chair and Deputy Chair of Committees were Positions of Responsibility. Schedule 2 provided for the appointment of members to the remaining Committee places. Quota Greatest Remainder was the default method of appointment provided by Schedule 2, unless a qualified majority decide to select the Droop Quota method.

Committees and Terms of Reference

At the start of the 2019-2023 Council term, the Council agreed that a Committee system was its preferred form of governance and that it would have the following Committees:

Committee	Membership	No. of Members Appointed 2019-2023
Corporate Services Committee	16	14
Regeneration and Development Committee (Place and Prosperity Committee as of December 2022)	16	17
Planning Committee	16	15
Environment Committee	16	16
Community and Wellbeing Committee	16	18
Audit Committee	10	10

The Terms of Reference agreed by the Council for 2019-2023 were included in the Appendix to this report. Note that all places on the Audit Committee in 2019-2023 were appointed as Positions of Responsibility.

Positions of Responsibility

The Appendix also provided a list of proposed Positions of Responsibility based upon the Positions agreed during the 2019-2023 Council term.

RECOMMENDED that that the Council proceeds to agree its preferences in respect of:

1. The form of Governance to be adopted, default being the Committee system.
2. Method of nominations to Positions of Responsibility, default being d'Hondt.
3. Method of allocating Committee places, default being Quota Greatest Remainder.
4. The Committee structure, the number of members on each Committee, and the Terms of Reference for each Committee as set out in the report and Attachment 1; and
5. The list of positions to be appointed as Positions of Responsibility as set out in Attachment 2.

The Chief Executive guided members through the report and then sought proposals on each of the above.

1. The form of Governance to be adopted, default being the Committee system.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor McRandal, seconded by Councillor Smith, that the form of Governance be the Committee System.

2. Method of nominations to Positions of Responsibility, default being d'Hondt.

Councillor Woods noted that in respect of the PCSP, the Justice Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 specified that when making appointments to PCSPs, Councils must ensure that, so far as practicable, the political members reflected the balance of parties prevailing among the members of the Council immediately after the last local general election. As such she asked why the Council's three largest parties were the only ones able to make nominations.

In response the Chief Executive advised Councillor Woods that the attached Appendix to the report explained the legislation in detail and as such it was a matter for the Council to decide. He added that generally the preferred method of appointment was d'Hondt.

Councillor McRandal proposed, seconded by Councillor Smith, that the method of nominations to Positions of Responsibility, default being d'Hondt, be adopted.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor McRandal, seconded by Councillor Smith, that the method of nominations to Positions of Responsibility be d'Hondt.

3. Method of allocating Committee places, default being Quota Greatest Remainder.

Councillor McIlveen indicated that he was content with this arrangement as long it could be reviewed, if need be, at a later date.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor McIlveen, seconded by Councillor Smith, that the method of allocating Committee places be the Quota Greatest Remainder.

4. The Committee structure, the number of members on each Committee, and the Terms of Reference for each Committee as set out in the report and Attachment 1;

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor McIlveen, seconded by Councillor Smith, that the Committee structure, the number of members on each Committee, and the Terms of Reference for each Committee as set out in the report and Attachment 1, be adopted.

5. The list of positions to be appointed as Positions of Responsibility as set out in Attachment 2.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor McIlveen, seconded by Councillor Smith, that the list of positions to be appointed as Positions of Responsibility as set out in Attachment 2, be adopted.

6. **NOMINATION OF POSITIONS OF RESPONSIBILITY (FILE CX210)**

(Appendix II)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report dated 3 May 2023 from the Chief Executive advising that as per Schedule 1 to the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014, the d'Hondt formula was the default method used to determine the order in which parties and independent members may select Positions of Responsibility. The calculation used was:

$$\frac{S}{1 + M}$$

S = the number of Elected Members of each party (the number was 1 in the case of an independent).

M = the number of Positions of Responsibility (if any) which were held by the party / independent.

Where the figure given by the formula for two or more parties/independents was equal, the figures should be recalculated with S being equal to the number of first preference votes cast for the party/independent at the last local election.

Issues

On the assumption that d'Hondt was the Council's preferred method, the table at the attached Appendix set out the order in which the 91 available Positions of Responsibility may be selected.

The 91 Positions of Responsibility include 10 places on the Policing and Community Safety Partnership (PCSP). The Justice Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 specified that when making appointments to PCSPs, Councils must ensure that, so far as practicable, the political members reflected the balance of parties prevailing among the members of the Council immediately after the last local general election.

Members should also note that positions listed in 92-110 inclusive were spare.

The total number of choices based on 81 Positions of Responsibility (i.e. excluding the 10 PCSP places) were as follows:

- DUP - 29
- Alliance Party - 24
- UUP - 16
- Green Party - 4
- SDLP - 2
- Irvine, S - 2
- Irvine, W - 2
- McKimm - 2

The d'Hondt calculation to ensure PCSPs reflected the balance of parties on the Council was DUP 4, Alliance 4, UUP 2. Allocation of those places must be taken separately.

The attached Appendix also contained the list of Positions of Responsibility available (this was the same list provided for consideration at Item 5 and therefore would be subject to any changes the Council may make when agreeing its governance arrangements).

In respect of year 1 Positions and Council term Positions, the Nominating Officers of each party must identify the member to fill each selected Position. Other Positions could be allocated to a party at this stage.

RECOMMENDED that the Council proceeds to the appointment of the agreed Positions of Responsibility including the positions for PCSP, listed in positions 82-91 inclusive which are to be agreed separately.

D'Hondt Calculations

The Chief Executive advised that in the first instance agreement was needed on the draft list (tabled) for selection order of Positions of Responsibility by the nominating officers and he sought support for that at this stage.

Councillor McIlveen – Confirmed
 Councillor McRandal – Confirmed
 Councillor Smith – Confirmed
 Councillor Woods – Confirmed
 Councillor S Irvine – Confirmed
 Councillor W Irvine – Confirmed
 Councillor Boyle – Confirmed
 Councillor McKimm - Confirmed

Positions of Responsibility – Selection Table

The Chief Executive guided members through the process of appointing the agreed Positions of Responsibility as detailed below, commencing with the appointment of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor.

As Nominating Officer for the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), Councillor McIlveen proposed Councillor Jennifer Gilmour as Mayor.

The proposer Councillor McIlveen noted that Councillor Gilmour had served on the legacy North Down Borough Council since 2011 representing the Holywood District Electoral Area (DEA). He recalled that at that time she had been voted onto Council by the narrowest of margins, 3.60 votes to be precise. During her term on North Down Borough Council she had served as Deputy Mayor, a very busy year and noted that now she represented the Bangor West DEA and with the assistance of her family including her three children he wished her all the very best for her term of office as Mayor.

(Councillor W Irvine entered the meeting at this stage – 11.40am)

At this stage in the meeting, Councillor Gilmour took up the role of Mayor and Chair of the Meeting.

The Mayor congratulated the outgoing Mayor, Councillor Douglas on her year in office adding that she appreciated what a busy year she had enjoyed. She also took the opportunity to congratulate the outgoing Deputy Mayor, Councillor Blaney who had ably stood in for the Mayor on a number of occasions.

Continuing, the Mayor (Councillor Gilmour) thanked the electorate of Bangor West for having faith in her and giving her the opportunity to take on the office of Mayor. She also expressed her thanks to her party and colleague Councillor McIlveen for nominating her to the office of Mayor. She stated that she looked forward to working with all members and took the opportunity to welcome those new members to the Chamber and wished them all well.

Having been elected to North Down Borough Council in 2011 Councillor Gilmour stated that she had become the youngest member to take on the role of Deputy Mayor. Her interest in politics had come from her parents adding that having grown up on a farm she was not afraid to get stuck into work. At this stage the Mayor expressed her thanks to Lord Weir of Ballyholme who had given her first job and provided much encouragement and support throughout her political career.

In summing up she expressed thanks to her family without whom she added she would not have got through the past few months and advised that her theme during her Mayoral term would be 'Families'. She added that she would announce the details of her Charities for the term in due course.

At this stage, the Chief Executive extended his congratulations to the Mayor on behalf of all staff.

As Nominating Officer for the Alliance Party, Councillor McRandal congratulated Councillor Gilmour on her election as Mayor and said that he looked forward to working with her over the year ahead. He then stated that it gave him great pleasure to propose Councillor Hannah Irwin as Deputy Mayor for the forthcoming year.

Councillor McRandal stated that Councillor Irwin was a very capable and able member of the Alliance Party's team adding that she had been at the forefront of dealing with many difficult issues during the past few months.

At this stage in the meeting, the Mayor called forward the Deputy Mayor, Councillor Irwin.

Thanking the Mayor, Councillor Irwin stated that it was a true honour and privilege to take on the role of Deputy Mayor for Ards and North Down Borough Council. She thanked her colleague Councillor McRandal for his comments and the rest of the Alliance team for their support. Continuing she also took the opportunity to thank the constituents of Bangor East and Donaghadee DEA for supporting her to return to the Council. She added that she looked forward to the year ahead and also took the opportunity to congratulate the Mayor on her appointment.

At this stage Councillor McRandal took the opportunity to congratulate the Mayor on her appointment on behalf of the Alliance Party.

Councillor Smith also wished the new Mayor and Deputy Mayor well on behalf of the Ulster Unionist Party. He also thanked his colleague Councillor Blaney on ably carrying out his duties as Deputy Mayor during the past year.

Adding his congratulations to the Mayor and Deputy Mayor, Councillor Boyle wished them both well for their year in office.

The appointment to Positions of Responsibility for the four year term of Council was agreed as follows:

Position: Mayor

<u>Year 1</u>	<u>Year 2</u>	<u>Year 3</u>	<u>Year 4</u>
2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
DUP Councillor Gilmour	DUP	Alliance	UUP

Position: Deputy Mayor

<u>Year 1</u>	<u>Year 2</u>	<u>Year 3</u>	<u>Year 4</u>
2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
Alliance Councillor Irwin	UUP	Alliance	DUP

Position: Chair – Corporate Services Committee

<u>Year 1</u>	<u>Year 2</u>	<u>Year 3</u>	<u>Year 4</u>
2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
Alliance Councillor Douglas	Alliance	DUP	UUP

Position: Vice Chair – Corporate Services Committee

<u>Year 1</u>	<u>Year 2</u>	<u>Year 3</u>	<u>Year 4</u>
2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
DUP Councillor MacArthur	DUP	Alliance	Alliance

Position: Chair – Place and Prosperity Committee

<u>Year 1</u>	<u>Year 2</u>	<u>Year 3</u>	<u>Year 4</u>
2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
UUP Councillor Blaney	DUP	Alliance	UUP

Position: Vice Chair – Place and Prosperity Committee

<u>Year 1</u>	<u>Year 2</u>	<u>Year 3</u>	<u>Year 4</u>
2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
Alliance Councillor McCracken	Alliance	DUP	Councillor McKimm

Position: Chair – Planning Committee

<u>Year 1</u>	<u>Year 2</u>	<u>Year 3</u>	<u>Year 4</u>
2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
DUP Councillor McIlveen	DUP	DUP	Alliance

Position: Vice Chair – Planning Committee

<u>Year 1</u>	<u>Year 2</u>	<u>Year 3</u>	<u>Year 4</u>
2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
Alliance Councillor McDowell	UUP	UUP	DUP

Position: Chair – Environment Committee

<u>Year 1</u>	<u>Year 2</u>	<u>Year 3</u>	<u>Year 4</u>
2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
Alliance Councillor Morgan	Alliance	Green	DUP

Position: Vice Chair – Environment Committee

<u>Year 1</u>	<u>Year 2</u>	<u>Year 3</u>	<u>Year 4</u>
2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
DUP Councillor Cummings	UUP	Alliance	Alliance

Position: Chair – Community and Wellbeing Committee

<u>Year 1</u>	<u>Year 2</u>	<u>Year 3</u>	<u>Year 4</u>
2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
DUP Councillor Martin	UUP	Alliance	DUP

Position: Vice Chair – Community and Wellbeing Committee

<u>Year 1</u>	<u>Year 2</u>	<u>Year 3</u>	<u>Year 4</u>
2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
Green Councillor Woods	SDLP	Councillor W Irvine	Councillor S Irvine

Position: Chair – Audit Committee

<u>Year 1</u>	<u>Year 2</u>	<u>Year 3</u>	<u>Year 4</u>
2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
UUP Councillor McLaren	UUP	DUP	Alliance

Position: Vice Chair – Audit Committee

<u>Year 1</u>	<u>Year 2</u>	<u>Year 3</u>	<u>Year 4</u>
2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
DUP Councillor Armstrong-Cotter	Alliance	Councillor S Irvine	DUP

Position: Member of Audit Committee – 4 Years

1	UUP – Councillor McLaren
2	DUP – Councillor Armstrong-Cotter
3	Green – Councillor McKee
4	Alliance – Councillor McCollum
5	UUP – Councillor Wray
6	Alliance – Councillor McAlpine
7	DUP – Councillor Cochrane
8	DUP – Councillor MacArthur
9	Alliance – Councillor Ashe
10	UUP – Councillor Hollywood

- In the case of the Audit Committee, a nomination to the position of Chair or Vice Chair was a one year appointment, but the nomination would be dually considered as a nomination to ordinary membership of the Audit Committee for a four year term.
- The number of additional appointments to the Audit Committee was subject to the number of positions allocated as Chair and Vice Chair, in other words, if four Chairs and four Vice Chairs were selected, then there remained only two places to be filled.

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Position: Partnership Panel – 4 Years

1	DUP Councillor Adair
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Position: Member of Northern Ireland Housing Council – 4 Years

1	DUP Councillor MacArthur
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(NOTE: in accordance with the Commissioner for Public appointments NI Code of Practice, Councillors could only serve a maximum of ten years or two terms of appointment. Any Councillor who had previously served 10 years on the Housing Executive Board or served two terms of appointment, regardless of the duration, would be ineligible.)

Position: Member of Reserve Forces and Cadet Association for NI (Veterans Champion) – 4 Years

1	DUP Councillor Cummings
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Position: Member of ARC21 – 4 Years

1	DUP Councillor Cathcart
2	UUP Councillor Blaney
3	DUP Councillor Cochrane

Position: NILGA – 4 Years

1	Alliance – Councillor McDowell
2	UUP – Councillor Hollywood
3	DUP – Councillor Cochrane
4	Alliance – Councillor McCollum
5	UUP – Councillor Smart
6	DUP – Councillor Adair
7	Green – Councillor McKee
8	SDLP – Councillor Boyle

Position: Member of PCSP – 4 Years

1	DUP – Councillor Edmund
2	DUP – Councillor Douglas
3	DUP – Councillor Cummings
4	DUP – Councillor Cathcart
5	Alliance – Councillor Moore
6	Alliance – Councillor Douglas
7	Alliance – Councillor Rossiter
8	Alliance – Councillor Creighton

9	UUP – Councillor Wray
10	UUP – Councillor Smart

- The Justice Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 specified that when making appointments to PCSPs, Councils must ensure that, so far as practicable, the political Members reflected the balance of parties prevailing among the Members of the Council immediately after the last local general election.
- The above table reflected the political breakdown of the PCSP using d'Hondt.
- As those places were Positions of Responsibility (POR), the places were taken from the overall POR allowance for each party.

RESOLVED, that the above Members be appointed to the Positions of Responsibility.

7. ELECTION OF ALDERMEN (FILE CX210)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report dated 3 May 2023 from the Chief Executive stating that Section 4 of the Local Government (Transitional, Incidental, Consequential and Supplemental Provisions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 made provision for the designation of Aldermen and outlined the following:-

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

RECOMMENDED that the Council proceeds to the election of 10 Aldermen, (being one quarter of the total number of Councillors) in accordance with the provisions made in the Local Government (Transitional, Incidental, Consequential and Supplemental Provisions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015.

The Chief Executive guided members through the report and explained how the Aldermen would be elected.

The following proposals were made:

Councillor McIlveen proposed, seconded by Councillor Edmund, that Councillors Graham, McIlveen, Armstrong-Cotter and Cummings be elected as Aldermen.

Councillor McRandal proposed, seconded by Councillor Irwin, that Councillors McDowell, McAlpine and K Douglas be elected as Aldermen.

Councillor Smith proposed, seconded by Councillor Smart, that Councillors Brooks and Smith (himself) be elected as Aldermen.

As only nine nominations had been made at this stage a further nomination was sought.

Councillor McIlveen proposed, seconded by Councillor Edmund, that Councillor Adair be nominated as Alderman.

The Chief Executive sought confirmation that all those Councillors nominated for the position of Alderman, were happy to accept the position, to which they agreed.

RESOLVED:- that the following Members of Council be appointed Aldermen from 7 June 2023.

**Councillor Graham
Councillor McIlveen
Councillor Armstrong-Cotter
Councillor Cummings
Councillor McDowell**

**Councillor McAlpine
Councillor Douglas
Councillor Brooks
Councillor Smith
Councillor Adair**

8. ALLOCATION OF COMMITTEE PLACES (FILE CX210) (Appendix III)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report dated 3 May 2023 from the Chief Executive detailing that The Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 provided that if a Council was operating a Committee system, the Chair and Deputy Chair of Committees were Positions of Responsibility. As per Schedule 2 of the Act, Quota Greatest Remainder was the default method for appointing the remaining Committee places.

The method required a quota to be determined using the calculation:

$$Q = \frac{T}{C}$$

T = the number of Elected Members (i.e. 40).

C = the number of Committee places to be filled, including Chair and Deputy Chair

The quota was then used to determine how many Committee places were to be allocated to each party/independent as per the following calculation:

$$\frac{S}{Q}$$

S = the number of Elected Members of each party (the number was 1 in the case of an independent).

Q = the quota.

If the number calculated (N) was not a whole number, it must be rounded down to the nearest whole number (W). Any remaining places were then allocated to the party/independent with the greatest remainder (N – W) and so on until all Committee places had been allocated.

Issues

On the assumption that Quota Greatest Remainder was the Council's preferred method for allocating Committee places, the allocations using this method were set out in the attached Appendix to this report.

Based upon 5 Committees of 16 members each there were a total of 80 places to be allocated (Audit Committee was excluded as all places on it were filled as Positions of Responsibility).

The quota was therefore 40 (number of Councillors) divided by 80 (number of Committee places) = 0.5.

Dividing the number of Elected Members of each party (or the number 1 in the case of independents) by the quota of 0.5 provided the following number of places across the 5 Committees:

- DUP - 28
- Alliance Party - 24
- UUP - 16
- Green Party -4
- SDLP – 2
- Irvine, S - 2
- Irvine, W - 2
- McKimm - 2

Each party would automatically be allocated a minimum number of seats for each Committee as outlined in Table 1 of the attached Appendix in order to ensure proportionate representation.

They may then select their remaining places in the order set out in Table 2 of the attached Appendix. The order in Table 2 was based upon the d'Hondt tie-breaker rule in other words the number of first preference votes cast for the party/independent at the last local election.

Note that when selecting additional places, parties/independents may not exceed the maximum number of places available on each Committee as outlined in Table 1.

RECOMMENDED that the Council proceeds to the appointment of Members to Committees.

The Chief Executive with the assistance of the Head of Finance guided members through the report and explained how positions would be filled.

Councillor McKimm indicated that it appeared the process had changed from what had been discussed and he thought agreed the previous week. As such he requested an adjournment to receive clarification from the Chief Executive.

ADJOURNMENT

At this stage in the meeting, the Chief Executive suggested a 10-minute adjournment and the meeting was adjourned at 12. 25pm).

The meeting resumed at 12.32pm.

Councillor McKimm thanked members for their patience adding that it would appear to be the case that the three largest parties on the Council had come to some form of arrangement earlier that day without informing the members of those smaller or Independents, which he stated would have been helpful and appreciated.

The allocation of Committee places commenced and resulted as follows:

The nominating officers allocated the undernoted members to the **Corporate Services Committee** to take up their positions from 7 June 2023 as follows:-

1	DUP – Councillor Gilmour
2	DUP – Alderman Graham
3	DUP – Councillor Kennedy
4	DUP – Councillor Cochrane
5	DUP – Councillor MacArthur
6	Alliance – Alderman K Douglas
7	Alliance – Councillor Irwin
8	Alliance – Councillor McRandal
9	Alliance – Councillor Moore
10	UUP – Alderman Smith

11	UUP – Alderman Brooks
12	UUP – Councillor Chambers
13	DUP – Alderman McIlveen
14	Independent – Councillor S Irvine
15	Independent – Councillor W Irvine
16	Alliance – Alderman McAlpine
17	

The nominating officers allocated the undernoted Members to the **Place and Prosperity Committee** to take up their positions from 7 June 2023 as follows:-

1	DUP – Councillor MacArthur
2	DUP – Alderman Armstrong-Cotter
3	DUP – Alderman Adair
4	DUP – Councillor Gilmour
5	DUP – Councillor Edmund
6	Alliance – Councillor McCracken
7	Alliance – Alderman McDowell
8	Alliance – Councillor Ashe
9	Alliance – Councillor Rossiter
10	UUP – Councillor Smart
11	UUP – Councillor Blaney
12	UUP – Councillor Hollywood
13	UUP – Councillor McLaren
14	Independent – Councillor McKimm
15	Alliance – Councillor McCollum
16	DUP – Councillor Kennedy
17	

The nominating officers allocated the undernoted Members to the **Planning Committee** to take up their positions from 7 June 2023 as follows:-

1	DUP – Alderman Graham
2	DUP – Councillor Cathcart
3	DUP – Councillor Martin
4	DUP – Councillor Kerr
5	DUP – Alderman McIlveen
6	Alliance – Alderman McDowell
7	Alliance – Councillor Morgan
8	Alliance – Councillor McRandal
9	Alliance – Councillor McCollum
10	UUP – Councillor McLaren
11	UUP – Councillor Wray
12	UUP – Alderman P Smith
13	Alliance – Councillor McCracken
14	Green – Councillor Woods
15	Alliance – Councillor Creighton
16	Green – Councillor McKee

17

The nominating officers allocated the undernoted Members to the **Environment Committee** to take up their positions from 7 June 2023 as follows:-

1	DUP – Alderman Armstrong-Cotter
2	DUP – Alderman Cummings
3	DUP – Councillor Cathcart
4	DUP – Councillor L Douglas
5	DUP – Councillor Edmund
6	Alliance – Councillor Morgan
7	Alliance – Councillor Irwin
8	Alliance – Alderman McAlpine
9	Alliance – Councillor Rossiter
10	UUP – Councillor Blaney
11	UUP – Councillor Smart
12	UUP – Councillor Wray
13	DUP – Councillor Kerr
14	Green – Councillor Woods
15	SDLP – Councillor Boyle
16	Independent – Councillor McKimm
17	

The nominating officers allocated the undernoted Members to the **Community and Wellbeing Committee** to take up their positions from 7 June 2023 as follows:-

1	DUP – Councillor Martin
2	DUP – Alderman Cummings
3	DUP – Alderman Adair
4	DUP – Councillor L Douglas
5	DUP – Councillor Cochrane
6	Alliance – Alderman K Douglas
7	Alliance – Councillor Moore
8	Alliance – Councillor Ashe
9	Alliance – Councillor Creighton
10	UUP – Alderman Brooks
11	UUP – Councillor Chambers
12	UUP – Councillor Hollywood
13	SDLP – Councillor Boyle
14	Independent – Councillor S Irvine
15	Independent – Councillor W Irvine
16	Green – Councillor Woods

RESOLVED, that the above members of Council be appointed to each Committee as detailed from 7 June 2023.

9. APPOINTMENTS TO SUB-COMMITTEES, WORKING GROUPS AND OUTSIDE BODIES (FILE CX210) (Appendix IV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report dated 5 May 2023 from the Chief Executive stating that further to the nominations to fill Positions of Responsibility and allocation of Committee places, there were a number of Sub-Committees, Working Groups and Outside Bodies which required appointments to be made. As the method of appointing or allocating to those Bodies had not been laid in the legislation, nominations were therefore sought to fill those positions.

A list of the required appointments was found within the attached Appendix.

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

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

CORPORATE SERVICES COMMITTEE

Body: Elected Member Development Steering Group – 7 Places (4 Year Appointment)

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2019/23	2023/27
1	Councillor McAlpine	Councillor McLaren
2	Councillor P Smith	Councillor Smart
3	Alderman Keery	Councillor Moore
4	Alderman Gibson	Councillor McCollum
5	Councillor Thompson	Alderman McIlveen
6	Alderman W Irvine	Alderman Graham
7	Councillor S Irvine	Councillor Cochrane

Body: Blair Mayne Bursary Committee – 4 Places (4 Year Appointment)

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2019/23	2023/27
1	Councillor McKimm	Alderman McIlveen
2	Councillor S Irvine	Councillor S Irvine
3	Councillor Thompson	Councillor Moore
4	Councillor Smart	Councillor Smart

Body: Fair Trade Working Group – 4 Places (4 Year Appointment)

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

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

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

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2022/23	2023/24
1	Councillor T Smith	Councillor Irwin
2	Councillor Blaney	Councillor Hollywood
3	Councillor Moore	Councillor McKimm

Body: Ards and North Down's Strategic Community Planning Partnership – 4 Places (4 Year Appointment)

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2019/23	2023/27
1	Councillor Cathcart	Councillor Cathcart
2	Alderman Wilson	Councillor McCracken
3	Councillor McKimm	Councillor McKimm
4	Councillor Smart	Councillor Smart

Body: Parenting Champion – 1 Places (4 Year Appointment)

Alderman McIlveen proposed, seconded by Alderman Adair, that Councillor Gilmour be appointed.

Alderman Smith proposed, seconded by Councillor Chambers, that Councillor Wray be appointed.

Councillor McRandal proposed, seconded by Councillor Irwin, that Councillor McCollum be appointed.

A debate ensued on the matter as three nominations had been made for one place.

Councillor Woods proposed, seconded by Councillor McRandal, that those nominated took up the position on an annual basis.

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2019/23	2023/27
1	<i>Councillor Greer – Resigned 31.3.2023</i>	Councillor Gilmour (Year 1)
2		Councillor Wray (Year 2)
3		Councillor McCollum (Year 3)
4		TBC – One of the above three (Year 4)

Body: Strategic Policy and Finance Group – 11 Places (4 Year Appointment)

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2019/23	2023/27
1	Alderman Gibson	Councillor McRandal
2	Councillor Thompson	Councillor Irwin
3	Alderman Keery	Alderman McDowell
4	Councillor Kennedy	Councillor Morgan
5	Councillor Greer	Alderman Graham
6	Councillor Mathison	Alderman McIlveen
7	Alderman Muir	Councillor Gilmour
8	Councillor Blaney	Councillor Cathcart
9	Councillor P Smith	Councillor Chambers
10	Councillor Dunlop	Alderman Smith
11	Councillor T Smith	Councillor W Irvine

It was recommended that there were 11 places on the SPFG – 10 places (DUP 4, Alliance 4, UUP 2) allocated to reflect political composition of the Council in accordance with d'Hondt, and 1 additional place for a single party Member or independent Member.

FURTHER RESOLVED:- on the recommendation of Councillor McRandal, seconded by Councillor Edmund, that the 11 places on the SPFG – 10 places (DUP 4, Alliance 4, UUP 2) allocated to reflect political composition of the Council in accordance with d'Hondt, and 1 additional place for a single party Member or independent Member.

PLACE AND PROSPERITY COMMITTEE

Body: Ards Town Steering Group – 7 Places (Newtownards DEA Members) (4 Year Appointment)

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2019/23	2023/27
1	Councillor Armstrong- Cotter	Councillor S Irvine
2	Councillor Kennedy	Alderman Armstrong-Cotter
3	Councillor Mathison	Councillor Smart
4	Alderman McDowell	Alderman McDowell
5	Councillor McIlveen	Alderman McIlveen
6	Alderman Menagh	Councillor Moore
7	Councillor Smart	Councillor Kennedy

Body: Bangor City Steering Group – 6 Places (4 Year Appointment)

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2019/23	2023/27
1	Councillor Blaney	Alderman K Douglas
2	Councillor Cathcart	Councillor W Irvine
3	Councillor Douglas	Councillor Cathcart
4	Alderman Dunlop	Councillor Blaney
5	Alderman Irvine	Councillor McCracken
6	Councillor McKimm	Councillor McKimm

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Body: Comber Town Steering Group – 5 Places (Comber DEA Members) (4 Year Appointment)

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2019/23	2023/27
1	Councillor Cooper	Councillor L Douglas
2	Councillor Cummings	Alderman Smith
3	Councillor P Smith	Alderman Cummings
4	Alderman Gibson	Councillor Morgan
5	Alderman Girvan	Councillor Ashe

Body: Donaghadee Town Steering Group – 6 Places (Bangor East and Donaghadee Members) (4 Year Appointment)

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2019/23	2023/27
1	Councillor Brooks	Alderman Brooks
2	Councillor Chambers	Councillor Irwin
3	Alderman Keery	Councillor Cochrane
4	Councillor Martin	Councillor Chambers
5	Councillor T Smith	Councillor McCollum
6	Councillor Walker	Councillor MacArthur

Body: Holywood Town Steering Group – 5 Places (4 Year Appointment)

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2019/23	2023/27
1	Councillor Johnson	Alderman Graham
2	<i>Councillor Greer – Resigned 31.3.2023</i>	Councillor McLaren
3	Councillor McClean	Councillor McRandal
4	Councillor McRandal	Councillor Woods
5	Councillor Woods	Councillor Rossiter

Body: Portaferry Steering Group – 6 Places (2 Year Appointment)

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2019/ 23	2023/27
1	Councillor Adair	Alderman Adair
2	Councillor Boyle	Alderman McAlpine
3	Alderman Carson	Councillor Boyle
4	Councillor Edmund	Councillor Edmund
5	Councillor McAlpine	Councillor Kerr
6	Councillor Thompson	Councillor Wray

Body: Economic Development Forum – 7 Places (4 Year Appointment)

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2019/23	2023/27
1	Alderman McDowell	Councillor Kennedy
2	Councillor Walker	Councillor Cathcart
3	Councillor Thompson	Alderman Cummings
4	Councillor Cathcart (Replaced Alderman Irvine on 8.12.20)	Councillor Blaney
5	Councillor Cummings	Alderman McDowell
6	Councillor Dunlop	Councillor McCracken
7	Councillor Blaney	-

COMMUNITY AND WELLBEING COMMITTEE

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

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2022/23	2023/2024
1	Alderman Gibson	Councillor MacArthur
2	Councillor Kennedy	Councillor Kennedy
3	Councillor Smart	Councillor Smart
4	Councillor McKimm	Alderman K Douglas
5	Councillor Douglas	Councillor Wray

Body: PEACE PLUS – 11 Places (4 Year Appointment) – Please note, it was agreed in March 2022, that Membership be allocated on the basis of d’Hondt plus one (an Independent Member or Single Member Party)

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2022/23	New Appointment - 2023/27
1	Councillor Adair	Alderman McIlveen
2	Councillor Thompson	Alderman Adair
3	Alderman Gibson	Councillor MacArthur
4	Alderman McIlveen	Alderman Armstrong-Cotter
5	Councillor Douglas	Councillor Boyle
6	Councillor McAlpine	Alderman K Douglas
7	Councillor McRandal	Alderman McAlpine
8	Councillor Smart	Councillor McRandal
9	Councillor P Smith	Councillor Morgan
10	Councillor McKee	Alderman Brooks
11	Councillor Boyle	Councillor Hollywood

Body: Mental Health Champions – 2 Places (4 Year Appointment)

Alderman McIlveen proposed, seconded by Alderman Armstrong-Cotter, that Councillor Kennedy be appointed.

Alderman Smith proposed, seconded by Councillor Smart, that Councillor McLaren be appointed.

Councillor Boyle proposed, seconded by Councillor Woods, that Councillor McKimm be appointed.

Councillor McRandal proposed, seconded by Councillor Ashe, that Councillor Creighton be appointed.

As four members had been appointed for two places, members suggested 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.

It was suggested that the appointment of a Mental Health Champion was carried out on the basis of a four year term and this would accommodate each of the nominations which had been made.

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2022/23	Year 1 2023/24	Year 2 2024/25	Year 3 2025/26	Year 4 2026/27
1	Councillor Thompson	Alderman Armstrong Cotter	Councillor McLaren	Councillor McKimm	Councillor Creighton
2	Councillor Smart				

Body: Dementia Champion – 1 Place (4 Year Appointment)

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	New Appointment – 2023/24
1	Alderman McIlveen

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

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2022/23	2023/24
1	Alderman Armstrong-Cotter	Alderman Armstrong-Cotter
2	Councillor Kennedy	Councillor Kennedy
3	Councillor Moore	Councillor Moore
4	Alderman McDowell	Alderman McDowell
5	Alderman McIlveen	Alderman McIlveen
6	Councillor Irvine	Councillor S Irvine
7	Councillor Smart	Councillor Smart

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

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2022/23	2023/24
1	Councillor Thompson	Councillor McCollum
2	Councillor Cathcart	Alderman Cummings
3	Councillor Smart	Councillor L Douglas
4	Councillor Douglas	Councillor Smart
5	Councillor Woods (replaced Kendall Oct 22)	Councillor McKee

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

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2022/23	2023/24
1	Councillor McAlpine	Councillor MacArthur
2	Councillor Thompson	Alderman McAlpine
3	Councillor MacArthur	-

Body: Ards and North Down Sports Forum – 6 Places (4 Year Appointment)

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2022/23	2023/27
1	Councillor Chambers	Councillor Cochrane
2	Councillor Smart	Councillor Edmund
3	Councillor Irvine	Councillor Boyle
4	Councillor McRandal	Councillor Irwin
5	Councillor Thompson	Councillor S Irvine
6	Alderman Irvine	Councillor Chambers
7	-	Councillor Wray
8	-	Councillor W Irvine

Body: Cross-Party Group on Health – 11 Places (NB Council agreed to appoint members to this group by d'Hondt plus one on 31 March 2021)

Councillor McRandal proposed, seconded by Councillor Smith that the Council agrees to appoint members to this group by d'Hondt plus one.

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2021/23	2023/25
1	Councillor Adair	Councillor Martin
2	Alderman Gibson	Councillor Kerr
3	Councillor Gilmour	Alderman Armstrong-Cotter
4	Councillor Thompson	Councillor L Douglas
5	Councillor Douglas	Alderman K Douglas
6	Councillor Egan	Councillor Creighton
7	Alderman McDowell	Alderman McDowell
8	Councillor Smart	Councillor Ashe
9	Alderman M Smith	Councillor Smart
10	Councillor McKee	Councillor Blaney
11	Councillor McKimm	Councillor McKimm

EXTERNAL APPOINTMENTS

Body: Personal and Public Involvement Committee – 1 Place + 1 Substitute (4 Year Appointment)

As no nominations had been received no-one was appointed to the Personal and Public Involvement Committee.

NOTED.

Body: Belfast City Airport Forum – 1 Place + 1 Substitute (4 Year Appointment)

Alderman McIlveen proposed, seconded by Councillor Edmund, that Alderman Graham be appointed.

Councillor McRandal proposed, seconded by Councillor Irwin, that Councillor Rossiter be appointed.

Councillor McKimm proposed, seconded by Councillor Boyle, that Councillor Woods be appointed.

Councillor Smart proposed, seconded by Alderman Brooks, that Councillor McLaren be appointed.

A vote was taken at this stage as four nominations had been made for two places.

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, and having been put to a vote, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2019/23	2023/27
1	Alderman Keery	Alderman Graham

Sub	<i>Councillor Greer – Resigned</i> 31.3.2023	Councillor Rossiter
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Body: North Down Development Organisation Ltd – 3 Places (4 Year Appointment)

Alderman McIlveen proposed, seconded by Councillor Kerr, that Councillor Cathcart be appointed.

Councillor Boyle proposed, seconded by Councillor Woods, that Councillor McKimm be appointed.

Councillor McRandal proposed, seconded by Councillor Irwin, that Councillor McCracken be appointed.

Councillor Smith proposed, seconded by Councillor McLaren, that Councillor Hollywood be appointed.

A vote was taken at this stage as four nominations had been made for three places.

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded and put to a vote, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2019/23	2023/27
1	Councillor Dunlop	Councillor McCracken
2	Alderman M Smith	Councillor Cathcart
3	Councillor Cathcart	Councillor Hollywood

Body: Ards Business Hub – 3 Places (4 Years)

Alderman McIlveen proposed, seconded by Alderman Armstrong-Cotter, that the Councillor Kennedy be appointed.

Councillor McRandal proposed, seconded by Councillor Irwin, that Councillor Moore be appointed.

Councillor W Irvine proposed, seconded by Councillor Woods, that Councillor S Irvine be appointed.

Alderman Smith proposed, seconded by Councillor Chambers, that Councillor Smart be appointed.

A vote was taken at this stage as four nominations had been made for three places.

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded and put to the vote, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2023/27
1	Councillor Kennedy
2	Councillor Moore
3	Councillor Smart

Body: Somme Advisory Council – 2 Places (4 Year Appointment)

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2019/23	2023/27
1	Alderman M Smith	Alderman Cummings
2	Alderman Keery	Councillor Hollywood

Body: APSE – 3 Places (4 Year Appointment)

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2019/23	2023/27
1	Alderman McDowell	Alderman McDowell
2	Alderman Carson	Councillor Wray
3	Councillor Adair	-

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

Alderman McIlveen proposed, seconded by Alderman Adair, that Councillor MacArthur be appointed.

Councillor Smith proposed, seconded by Councillor Hollywood, that Councillor Wray be appointed.

Councillor Boyle proposed, seconded by Councillor Woods, that Councillor McKimm be appointed.

Councillor McRandal proposed, seconded by Councillor Irwin, that Alderman McAlpine be appointed.

The Chief Executive indicated that the Council would seek permission to nominate four members to the Management Committee.

Councillor Woods asked why this course of action could not have been taken for other appointments where more nominations had been made than there were places available.

In response the Chief Executive advised that with appointments to External bodies there was considered to be more flexibility with Management Committees such as this to make such requests but they would need to be approved by the receiving group.

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed subject to approval from the Management Committee:-

	2019/23	2023/27
1	Councillor McAlpine	Councillor MacArthur
2	Councillor MacArthur	Councillor Wray
3	Councillor Thompson	Councillor McKimm
4	-	Alderman McAlpine

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

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2021/22	2023/24
1	Alderman Gibson	Councillor McRandal
2	Councillor Thompson	Alderman K Douglas
3	Alderman Carson	Councillor Morgan
4	Councillor McClean	Councillor Cochrane
5	Councillor McRandal	Councillor Wray
6	Councillor Douglas	-
7	Vacant	-

Body: National Association of Councillors – 8 Places (4 Year Appointment)

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2019/23	2023/27
1	Alderman McDowell	Councillor Boyle
2	Alderman Wilson	Alderman McDowell
3	Councillor Boyle	Alderman K Douglas
4	Alderman Gibson	Councillor S Hollywood
5	Councillor Thompson	-
6	Alderman Carson	-
7	Alderman Keery	-
8	-	-

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

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:

	2022/23	2023/24
1	Councillor Edmund	Councillor Edmund
2	Councillor McRandal	Councillor Ashe

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

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2022/23	2023/2024
1	Councillor Walker	Councillor Creighton
2	Councillor Douglas	Councillor McCollum
3	Councillor Kennedy	-
4	Vacant	-

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

Councillor S Irvine proposed, seconded by Alderman McIlveen, that Councillor W Irvine be appointed.

Councillor Boyle proposed, seconded by Councillor Woods, that Councillor McKimm be appointed.

At this stage Councillors Hollywood & Wray both declared an interest in this item and left the Chamber for the duration of its discussion – 1.24pm.

There being two nominations made for one place a vote was undertaken by a show of hands with Councillor W Irvine receiving 21 votes and Councillor McKimm receiving 3 votes, Councillor W Irvine was declared appointed.

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Member be appointed:-

	2022/23	2023/24
1	Alderman Irvine	Councillor W Irvine

(Councillors Hollywood & Wray both re-entered the meeting at this stage – 1.26pm)

Body: Local Floods Forum – 1 Place (1 Year Appointment)

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Member be appointed:-

	2022/23	2023/24
1	Councillor Thompson	Councillor Wray

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

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Member be appointed:-

	2022/23	2023/24
1	Councillor McAlpine	Councillor Boyle

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

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2022/23	2023/24
1	Alderman Gibson	Councillor Kerr
2	Vacant	Councillor Wray

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

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2022/23	2023/24
1	Councillor Thompson	Councillor Rossiter
2	Councillor Woods (Replaced Kendall Oct 22)	Councillor Woods

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

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2022/23	2023/24
1	Councillor Smart	Councillor Smart
2	Councillor Irvine	Councillor Creighton

Body: Local Government Partnership on Travellers Issues – 3 Places (4 Year Appointment)

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2019/23	2023/24
1	Councillor Boyle	Councillor Boyle
2	Alderman Carson	Councillor Wray
3	-	-

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

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2019/23	2023/27
1	Councillor Thompson	Councillor Cathcart
2	Alderman Keery	Alderman McDowell
3	Alderman McDowell	Councillor Rossiter
4	Councillor Morgan	Councillor Blaney
5	Alderman Carson	Councillor Boyle
6	Councillor Boyle	Councillor McKimm

Body: East Border Region Executive Board – 3 Places (4 Year Appointment)

Councillor McRandal proposed, seconded by Councillor Irwin, that Alderman McDowell be appointed.

Councillor McKimm proposed, seconded by Councillor Woods, that Councillor Boyle, be appointed.

Alderman McIlveen proposed, seconded by Councillor Edmund, that Councillor Cathcart be appointed.

Councillor Boyle proposed, seconded by Councillor Woods, that Councillor McKimm be appointed.

Alderman Smith proposed, seconded by Councillor Chambers, that Councillor Blaney be appointed.

A vote was taken at this stage as five nominations had been made for three places.

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded and put to a vote, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2019/23	2023/27
1	Alderman Carson	Councillor Cathcart
2	Alderman Keery	Alderman McDowell
3	Alderman McDowell	Councillor Blaney

Body: Strangford Lough and Lecale Partnership – 2 Places (4 Year Appointment)

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2019/23	2023/27
1	Councillor Boyle (Resigned October 2022)	Councillor Wray
2	Councillor Thompson	Councillor Morgan

Body: Youth Council Cross Party Working Group – 5 Places (1 Year Appointment)

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2022/23	2023/24
1	Councillor Irwin	Councillor Irwin
2	Councillor Walker	Councillor Ashe
3	Councillor McKee	Councillor Cochrane
4	Councillor Chambers	Councillor Chambers
5	Councillor Thompson	Councillor Woods
6	-	Councillor S Irvine

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

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2022/23	2023/24
1	Councillor McKee	Councillor Moore
2	Councillor Walker	Councillor McKee
3	Councillor Blaney	Councillor Hollywood
4	Vacant	-

Body: Home Accident Prevention Group – 2 Places (1 Year Appointment)

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2022/23	2023/24
1	-	Councillor Creighton
2		-

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

Alderman McIlveen proposed, seconded by Councillor Kerr, that Councillor MacArthur be appointed.

Alderman Smith proposed, seconded by Councillor Smart, that Councillor McLaren be appointed.

Councillor W Irvine proposed, seconded by Councillor P Smith, that Councillor S Irvine be appointed.

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter proposed, seconded by Councillor L Douglas, that Alderman Cummings be proposed.

As four nominations had been received for three places the Chief Executive indicated that the Council could seek permission have an additional place on the Management Committee.

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2022/23	2023/24
1	Councillor Irvine	Councillor MacArthur
2	Councillor Thompson	Councillor McLaren
3	Councillor Cummings	Councillor S Irvine
4		Alderman Cummings

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

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2022/23	2023/24
1	Councillor Thompson	Councillor Creighton
2	Councillor McKimm	Councillor McKimm

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

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2022/23	2023/24
1	Councillor Gilmour	Councillor Gilmour
Sub	Councillor McKee	Councillor Martin

Body: Trustees on Northern Community Leisure Trust – 2 Places (4 Year Appointment)

Councillor McKimm proposed, seconded by Councillor Boyle, that Councillor Woods be appointed.

Councillor S Irvine proposed, seconded by Alderman Armstrong-Cotter, that Councillor W Irvine be appointed.

Alderman Smith proposed, seconded by Councillor Smart, that Councillor McLaren be appointed.

As three nominations had been made for two places a vote was undertaken.

At this stage Councillor Chambers declared an interest in this item adding that he had not participated in the vote.

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2019/23	2023/24
1	Alderman W Irvine	Councillor Woods
2	Councillor Blaney	Councillor W Irvine

Body: NI Strategic Migration Partnership Sustainable Communities and Demographics Working Group (hosted by NILGA) – 1 Place (1 Year Appointment)

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2022/23	2023/24
1	<i>Councillor Greer – Resigned 31.3.2023</i>	Alderman K Douglas

NILGA Policy and Learning Networks – 4 Years

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

Reform, Devolution and Improvement

1	Councillor P Smith	Alderman Smith
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Local Economic Development, Investment and International Affairs

1	Councillor Kennedy	Councillor Kennedy
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Place Shaping and Infrastructure

Councillor Boyle proposed, seconded by Councillor Woods, that Councillor McKimm be appointed.

Alderman McIlveen proposed, seconded by Alderman Armstrong-Cotter, that Councillor Cathcart be appointed.

On being put to the vote by way of a show of hands, Councillor McKimm received 4 votes and Councillor Cathcart received 21 votes.

1	Councillor Thompson	Councillor Cathcart
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Elected Member Development

1	<i>Councillor Greer – Resigned 31.3.2023</i>	Councillor Moore
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Health, Social and Environmental Wellbeing

1	Councillor Smart	Councillor Smart
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Ballydorn Fairways Committee (Appointed at Council October 2020 for remainder of term – to be appointed 4 years in future)

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

1	Councillor Robert Adair	Alderman Cummings
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Body: BRCD Council Panel – 4 Places (NB Council agreed to appoint Members to this group on 28/8/19)

Councillor McRandal proposed, seconded by Councillor Irwin, that Alderman McDowell and Councillor McCracken be appointed.

Councillor Boyle proposed, seconded by Councillor Woods, that Councillor McKimm be appointed.

Alderman McIlveen proposed, seconded by Alderman Armstrong-Cotter, that Councillor Cathcart be appointed.

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

As five nominations had been made for four places a vote was undertaken.

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

	2019/23	2023/27
1	Councillor Adair Councillor Cathcart (since 10/3/21)	Councillor Cathcart
2	Councillor Smart	Councillor Blaney
3	Alderman McDowell	Councillor McKimm
4	Councillor Dunlop	Alderman McDowell

Body: Northern Ireland Museums Council – 1 Place (4 Year Appointment)

Each Member having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED:- that the following Members be appointed:-

1	Councillor Karen Douglas <i>(Appointed at Council December 2022)</i>	Alderman K Douglas
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10. SCHEME OF ALLOWANCES OF COUNCILLORS
(Appendix V)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report dated 31 May 2023 from the Director of Corporate Service and attaching Scheme of Allowances (Version 7.1) – 2019/20. The report detailed Regulation 3 of the Payments to Councillors regulations which required district councils to prepare and publish a scheme of allowances payable to its members for each year.

Scheme of Allowances

The Department for Communities had issued updated statutory guidance in respect of Payments to Councillors in Circular 23/2019.

Out of the maximum permitted of £80,809, the draft scheme allocated Special Responsibility Allowances (SRA) totalling £51,040 (approximately 63%). In addition, it should be noted that the Mayor would receive the maximum permitted to be allocated to any one councillor.

The scheme was substantially the same as version 11 (approved in March 2023), however the following changes had been made:

- Section 4 and schedule amended to reflect SRAs for 6 committees had moved to a claim based on the member who chaired the meeting.
- Section 9 provided for some SRAs now to be claimed.
- Section 9 now required that claims were submitted using the online portal, in line with the requirements for staff. Claim forms had now been deleted from the appendices. Training would be provided shortly.
- New appendix had been added to detail the rules regarding the use of the Mayor's Hospitality Allowance.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approves version 11.1 of the Scheme of Allowances to replace the previous version with effect from 7 June 2023 and updates its constitution accordingly with the new scheme.

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

The proposer, Alderman Brooks offered his congratulations to the Mayor on her appointment and also took the opportunity to welcome those new and returning members to the Council Chamber. He also welcomed the proposals included within the report.

Commenting as seconder, Alderman Graham also offered his congratulations to both the new Mayor and Deputy Mayor, while acknowledging the successful year enjoyed by both the outgoing Mayor and Deputy Mayor.

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

11. SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS 2023 – FURTHER UPDATE (Appendix VI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report dated 7 June 2023 from the Chief Executive stating that at the Council meeting in January 2023, members approved an updated Schedule of Meetings for 2023.

Since then, further amendments had been requested. Accordingly, the 2023 meeting schedule had been reviewed and updated, and could be found in the attached Appendix.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approves the updated schedule as found in appendix 1.

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

12. BATTLE OF THE SOMME PILGRIMAGE – NOMINATION OF MEMBER TO ATTEND (FILE CX181)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report dated 16 May 2023 from the Chief Executive stating that the Council had participated annually in the commemorative events and wreath laying at the Thiepval Monument, Ulster Memorial Tower, and the Memorial at Guillemont, to mark the anniversary of the Battle of the Somme on 1 July.

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

Next Steps

At their meeting on 29 March, Council agreed to approve the attendance at the Commemorations of the Mayor (or Deputy Mayor) plus one additional Member, to be chosen at the Annual Meeting, and an officer. Attendance would be required from 30 June to 4 July inclusive.

The Council was now asked to nominate an additional Member to attend.

RECOMMENDED that the Council nominates an additional Member to attend the annual Battle of the Somme Commemorations 2023.

Councillor McRandal proposed, seconded by Councillor Ashe, that the recommendation be adopted and furthermore that Councillor Creighton be nominated to attend.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor McRandal, seconded by Councillor Ashe, that the recommendation be adopted and furthermore that Councillor Creighton be nominated to attend.

13. PLAYING OF NATIONAL ANTHEM

Members stood for the playing of the National Anthem.

The Mayor took the opportunity to thank everyone for attending the Annual meeting and wished members well for the coming year.

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 1.56pm.

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

A hybrid meeting of the Ards and North Down Borough Council was held at the City Hall, The Castle, Bangor and via Zoom, on Monday 12 June 2023 commencing at 7.00pm.

In the Chair: Alderman Douglas

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

Councillors: Ashe (Zoom 7.06 pm) Kennedy
Blaney (Zoom 7.32 pm) Kerr
Boyle Martin
Cathcart McCollum
Chambers McCracken
Creighton McKee (Zoom)
Cochrane McKimm
L Douglas McLaren (7.06 pm)
Edmund McRandal
Holywood Moore
S Irvine Rossiter
W Irvine Smart
Irwin (Zoom) Wray

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

OPENING OF MEETING

The Chief Executive explained that the Mayor was unavailable to Chair the meeting that evening and the Deputy Mayor had tested positive for Covid. While the Deputy Mayor would be present at the meeting via Zoom that would prevent her from Chairing the Meeting as she could not take her place in the Chamber. The Council's Standing Orders stated that if the Mayor was absent from a meeting then the Deputy Mayor should preside. The Chief Executive advised that Members may wish to suspend Standing Order 6(2) in favour of allowing the nomination of a Member to preside for the Meeting whilst the Deputy Mayor was still present in the meeting. The arrangement would be for this meeting only.

It was proposed by Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Alderman Smith, that Standing Order 6(2) and part of (3) be suspended.

AGREED.

Alderman McIlveen proposed and Alderman Smith seconded that Alderman Douglas take the role of Chair for the Meeting.

AGREED.

1. PRAYER

The Chief Executive opened the meeting with the Council prayer.

2. APOLOGIES

The Chair sought apologies at this stage. Apologies were received from the Mayor (Councillor Gilmour), Alderman McDowell, and Councillors MacArthur, Morgan and Woods. Apologies for lateness were received from Councillors Blaney and McLaren.

NOTED.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chair asked for any Declarations of Interest and the following were made:

Alderman Douglas Item 11 – Charter on Columban Way
Councillor McRandal Item 11 – Charter on Columban Way

NOTED.

4. MAYOR'S BUSINESS

In the absence of the Mayor this item was not discussed.

NOTED.

5. MAYOR AND DEPUTY MAYOR ENGAGEMENTS FOR THE MONTH OF JUNE 2023

(Appendix I)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Copy of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor Engagements for the month of June 2023.

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

6. MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING DATED 26 APRIL 2023

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Copy of the above minutes.

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

7. ARDS AND NORTH DOWN SPORTS FORUM GRANTS

(Appendices II – VIII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that Members would be aware that on the 26th August 2015, Council delegated authority to the Ards and North Down Sports Forum, in order to allow it to administer sports grants funding on behalf of the Council. £45,000 had been allocated within the 2023/2024 revenue budget for that purpose.

The Council further authorised the Forum under delegated powers to award grants of up to £250. Grants above £250 still required Council approval. In addition, the Council requested that regular updates were reported to members.

During March 2023, the Forum received a total of 42 grant applications: 33 Individual Travel/Accommodation, 3 Coaching, 4 Goldcards and 2 Events. A summary of the **41** successful applications are detailed in the attached Successful Coaching, Successful Event, Successful Goldcard and Successful Travel & Accommodation Appendices.

During April 2023, the Forum received a total of 27 grant applications: 21 Individual Travel/Accommodation, 1 Goldcard and 5 School/Sports Club Pathway. A summary of the **25** successful applications are detailed in the attached Successful Goldcard, Successful Travel & Accommodation & Successful Schools/Sports Club Pathway Appendices

For information, the annual budget and spend to date on grant categories was as followed:

	Annual Budget	Funding Awarded March 2023	Funding Awarded April 2023	Remaining Budget
Anniversary	£1,000	£0	£0	£1,000
Coaching	£3,000	*£600	£0	£2,400
Equipment	£14,000	£0	£0	£14,000
Events	£6,000	*£1,600	£0	£4,400
Seeding	£500	£0	£0	£500
Travel and Accommodation	£14,500	*£4,183.98	*£2,540.95	£7,775.07
Discretionary	£1,000	£0	£0	£1,000
Schools/Sports Club Pathway	£5,000	£0	*£500	£4,500
	*Goldcards proposed during the period March 2023 is 4 and Goldcards proposed during the period April 2023 is 1 (5 Goldcards in total during 2023/24).			

* The proposed remaining budget for Coaching of **£2,400** is based on a proposed award of **£600.00** – for Noting and Approval. * The proposed remaining budget for Events of **£4,400** is based on a proposed award of **£1,600.00** – for Approval. * The

proposed remaining budget for Travel and Accommodation of **£7,775.07** is based on a proposed award of **£6,724.93** – for Noting. * The proposed remaining budget for Schools/Sports Club Pathway of **£4,500** is based on a proposed award of **£500** – for Noting.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approves the attached applications for financial assistance for sporting purposes valued at above £250, and that the applications approved by the Forum (valued at below £250) are noted.

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

8. NILGA REQUEST FOR FUNDS FOR MEMBER REGIONAL INDUCTION 2023
(Appendix IX)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailing that the Council was asked to consider a request from NILGA for a financial contribution to the Regional Member Induction Programme.

The attached Programme was based on the coordination of each in-person workshop being delivered at two cluster locations and one via digital delivery. NILGA was covering 50% of the costs involved and seeking £1,100 contribution from each of the 11 Councils.

The Programme was beneficial for new Members and complemented local Induction events. There was available budget to cover that cost.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approves a contribution of £1,100 to NILGA for the Regional Induction Programme.

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

Councillor Boyle considered the contribution to be good value for money since the induction process was of importance to new Members and Councillor McRandal shared that view.

Councillor McKimm asked if any assessment had been made of the quality of training which was being provided in terms of feedback from participants. The Chief Executive stated that reports from the Council's HR team was that the approach appeared to be successful with the in person and online training. He also reminded Members that this was only part of the overall training provided by NILGA and local Councils in relation to induction.

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

9. RESPONSE TO DEPARTMENTAL EQIA CONSULTATIONS

(Appendices X-XV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Directors of Prosperity and Community and Wellbeing detailing that on 27 April 2023 the Secretary of State announced the 2023/24 budget for Northern Ireland. That budget would see Northern Ireland departments receive £14.2bn resource and £2.2bn capital, compared to £14.3bn resource and £2.1bn capital in 2022/23.

The figures, however, did not fully reflect the extent of the pressures facing individual departments due to inflation, rising costs, increasing demands and pay pressures.

Following publication of the Budget, each Department was now working through the implications for each respective Department and the services each provided, in order to live within the funding available.

The process of setting budgets could in some cases have an unintentionally greater impact on some specific Section 75 groups than others, for example, on males, females, young people or pensioners. In allocating budgets, each of the Departments aimed to identify any adverse impacts (via an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)) and, where possible, action would be taken to avoid or mitigate against specific adverse impacts.

Each of the Department for Communities, the Department for Infrastructure, and The Executive Office, had published an EqIA consultation on their respective Spending Plans for 2023/24, as attached, examining potential options for potential reductions and the potential equality impacts of those options.

Each consultation ran for a 12-week consultation period; however, each department had particularly encouraged responses within the initial four weeks of the consultation period. Obviously, the period coincided with the post-election period during which each of the councils were preparing for the new Council term. Despite highlighting such concerns to the relevant Permanent Secretaries and The Executive Office, each had advised that is to inform the Departments' initial allocation of funds to its business areas and Arms Length Bodies as well as any early mitigations that could be put in place (given the lateness of receiving the budget from the Secretary of State). Responses received between week 5 and week 12 of the consultation would be used to consider further mitigation measures, to inform in-year budget reallocation processes, and to direct any additional funding (or further reductions) that emerged over the course of the financial year.

A draft response to each of the EQiA consultations on the Spending Plans for 2023/24 was attached for Members' consideration and approval.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this report and approves the attached responses to the EQiA consultation to be submitted to the respective Departments and The Executive Office.

Councillor McKimm asked if he could make a further proposal to the recommendation which was seconded by Councillor W Irvine.

'That the Council notes this report and approves the attached responses to the EQiA consultation to be submitted to the respective Departments and The Executive Office.

Further that this Council robustly opposes cuts which would lead to increased processing time for those making applications to Universal Credit.

This will have a negative impact on the emotional and physical health of constituents and plunge many more children in the Borough into poverty.

This Council requests resources remain in place to process claims below the current time frames, as the withdrawal of funding will negatively impact the most vulnerable in this Borough and that would be unacceptable to this Council'.

While Councillor McKimm appreciated the comments that the officers had made in the Council's response, he was very mindful of the impact that the continuing cuts to public services would have on local constituents. Of particular concern to him was the extended times for processing Universal Credit applications and the move from the legacy benefits that it would replace. He, and other Members, found themselves continually providing support to residents who were in absolute crisis due to the slow processing times, and he believed that extending that further would plunge even more vulnerable people into poverty. Such hardship had a detrimental effect on a person's social wellbeing and mental health, and he asked Members to support his proposal.

Councillor W Irvine agreed that the current austerity measures impacted strongly on the most vulnerable in society and the application process for Universal Credit needed to be improved. The budgets proposed would have a massive detrimental impact and he hoped they would not come to pass if the government in Northern Ireland could be restored. He gave his full support to the proposal.

Councillor McKee concurred that a tough and challenging year lay ahead and the results of budget cuts would be a tragedy for many and would have very real consequences on day-to-day life. The austerity budget being introduced by the Conservative Party was harsh and the Council needed to speak out about the impact it would have.

Referring to a point of accuracy 9b page 6 of the draft response where it stated that the introduction of the UKSPF, which was expected to go live in April 2023 was expected to fill some of the void left by the ESF he stated that he was aware of UK prosperity funds on the ground already for example Youth Start had taken over from Give and Take and Belfast Works was also currently delivering in Ards and North Down. He recognised that, overall, there had been a massive reduction in funding available for the Borough and that would have both a direct and indirect effect on many people, particularly those who were most vulnerable.

Alderman Smith was happy to give his support to the proposal which he believed complemented the officers' report. Budget cuts were a massive issue for everyone but impacted the most vulnerable powerfully and it was right that the Council put in a

robust response to send a strong message over what he considered to be unacceptable.

Concluding, Councillor McKimm thanked Members for acknowledging those who were utterly struggling in these times and while the officers' report had made a very good response the extra paragraphs emphasised that further.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor McKimm, seconded by Councillor W Irvine, that the Council notes this report and approves the attached responses to the EQiA consultation to be submitted to the respective Departments and The Executive Office.

Further that this Council robustly opposes cuts which would lead to increased processing time for those making applications to Universal Credit.

This will have a negative impact on the emotional and physical health of constituents and plunge many more children in the Borough into poverty.

This Council requests resources remain in place to process claims below the current time frames, as the withdrawal of funding will negatively impact the most vulnerable in this Borough and that would be unacceptable to this Council'.

10. RETROSPECTIVE APPROVAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT GRANT FUNDING

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing:

Community groups – running costs.

Council approval was granted in March 2023 for the provision of community development running costs to 45 community groups with a total budget of £87,320.50.

Ballygowan and District Community Association contacted Community Development staff to request an update on their application. Following investigation, it was confirmed that the application had been received on time but the email had been overlooked due to the large volume of applications for a number of different streams of funding open at the same time.

The application was scored on 26 April 2023 by a panel consisting of a Community Development Officer, Grants and Funding Co-Ordinator, Neighbourhood Renewal Officer and Community Arts Development Officer.

The application scored a total of 55% which deemed it eligible for funding of £950.00.

Retrospective approval was sought for running costs for Ballygowan and District Community Association for 2023/24 of £950.00.

Coronation grants

Community Development staff were contacted on 8 March 2023 by Ms Jo Scott on behalf of Millisle Youth Forum. Ms Scott requested an update in relation to an application for a Coronation grant.

Following investigation, it was confirmed that an application had been received before the closing date. The application was scored on 9 March 2023 by a panel consisting of a Community Development Officer, the Grants and Funding Co-Ordinator and the Neighbourhood Renewal Officer and it obtained a total score of 14 out of a possible 20 marks. That was a score of 70% which deemed it eligible for funding of £500.00. The application had been omitted in error from the original Council report.

Retrospective approval was sought for a Coronation Grant 2023/24 for Millisle Youth Forum of £500.00.

RECOMMENDED that the Council retrospectively approve the following.

1. £950.00 for running costs for Ballygowan and District Community Association, and
2. £500.00 Coronation grant funding for Millisle Youth Forum.

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

Councillor Boyle welcomed the report which he believed firstly showed that officers were human and secondly that if any group had been left out, they could present their case and it would be addressed. The matter had been an oversight and he was glad that it had been put right.

Alderman McIlveen echoed those comments that the error was human and it was good that the Council had acknowledged that and had sought to put it right. He asked what lessons were being learnt so that avoiding repeating the oversight particularly on the occasions where match funding was coming through.

The Director of Community and Wellbeing explained that the cost of this oversight would be met from the current year's budget and had likely arisen since the Department had been in a state of flux at that time and was also receiving a large number of applications. With a system of checking and double checking it was believed that a similar situation would not arise in the near future. The Director also informed Members that the Council was changing the grant process portal for new grants which would further reduce the possibility of missing applications.

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

(Having declared an interest in Item 11 Alderman Douglas and Councillor McRandal left the meeting at 7.25 pm)

It was proposed by Alderman Smith, seconded by Alderman McIlveen, that Alderman Brooks Chair the meeting for Item 11.

AGREED.

11. CHARTER ON COLUMBAN WAY

(Appendices XVI & XVII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Prosperity detailing that as reported to the April Council meeting, a request had been received, via the Chief Executive's Office, from the Friends of Columbanus Bangor, for Ards and North Down Borough Council and Councillors, to sign up to a new 'Columban Charter of Partnership', see Appendix at end of report.

At April's Council meeting Alderman McIlveen asked, "*if the works referred to were religious*" and sought further clarity in respect of the religious aspect. It was agreed that a report be brought back to Council in June to clarify aspects of the request for support.

The following was provided by way of clarification:

- Support for the Charter had been sought from Councils, bodies, and individuals across Europe, to both support the development of the Columban Way as a European walking route and to further develop the relationships between the nations where Columbanus had a lasting influence. That included ROI, NI, France, Austria, Liechtenstein, Switzerland and Italy.
- In that instance, the request for support had been received from the Friends of Columbanus, Bangor. 'Friends of Columbanus' Bangor has confirmed that the group was not a religious organisation. It was a cross community, inclusive, charitable organisation that was formed in 2013 to commemorate the 1400th anniversary of Columbanus. The objectives of Friends of Columbanus Bangor are clearly stated in its constitution as per appendix 2: Friends of Columbanus Objects.
- Relationships developed to date during Columban Way work cover a range of fields as follows:
 - **Sport** - a twinning arrangement between Ballyholme Yacht Club and Andora Yacht Club each of whom now included a 'Columbanus Cup' race in their annual regattas and travel to compete in each other's events. Bangor and Imperia Rugby Club, likewise a twinning arrangement. In May 2023, an event was held to mark the first 'Tri Nations Columbanus Cup' held between clubs from NI, Italy and France with 30 children and 40 adults travelling to compete with future hosting planned to alternate between nations.
 - **Music** - Bangor Ladies and Bangor Abbey Choirs and Ards CCE, have undertaken annual exchanges to Europe with return visits from European Choirs to AND.
 - **Education** - (NB: on a European context educational activity is denoted by the heading "scientific activities"), that had included exchanges, such as Ballyholme Primary School and Columbanus College with both teachers and

- students exchanging and Bangor also hosting international university conferences.
- **Walking** - various interdenominational and non-denominational trips to European legs of the Columban Way, both outward and inward bound, for both heritage and pilgrimage have taken place through relationships developed to date. All the above, aids development across the areas concerned within tourism, community engagement, cultural and heritage education.
 - **Cultural** - Over the past nine years, Friends of Columbanus Bangor have welcomed many visitors from Europe and in September 2023 will welcome 40 French from Brittany and are working with a similar group currently planning for 2024.
- Support of the Charter, by way of signature, did not bind ANDBC or individuals to any costs or future roles. Signature was an act of support for the development of the European Walking Route and associated activities, as well as the development of relationships that the Council had previously supported in recent years. That had included welcoming visiting groups, the approval by Council in February 2021 of the development of the heritage trail Columban Way route from Comber to Bangor and the recently secured funding with other Local Authorities for the development of a Feasibility Study for an All Island Columban Way (currently a work in progress).
 - Members, if they so wished, could sign up to support the Charter on an individual basis, an online link could be provided on request. However, 'Friends of Columbanus' Bangor considered that having the support of the full Council would demonstrate to other regions that Bangor continued to be one of the most important places to visit on the Columban Way.
 - Individual members of the public and associations were being invited to show support by way of sign up with the aim of the NI group collecting over 1000 signatures to be presented at the official launch of the Columban Charter of Partnership on 7 July 2023 in St Gallen, Switzerland.
 - Support for the Charter would, it was hoped, ultimately play a part in the Columban Way European Route becoming recognised by the European Cultural Routes Association as a European Cultural Route and with it international recognition and the potential economic benefits that could bring.
 - 'Friends of Columbanus' had confirmed, "the Columban Charter of Partnership is not a religious organisation. The primary objective of the Columban Charter for Partnership is to *'help support and promote pilgrimage, cultural and scientific activities'* relating to Columbanus and his followers. The concept of 'pilgrimage' may have been misunderstood. It may historically have been a purely religious activity, but the modern understanding was much broader and included travelling on a wide variety of routes pursuing many types of cultural and environmental interests, often associated with personal development and well-being.
 - Nowhere did the Charter suggest promotion of 'religion' as such. The words, 'spiritual' and 'spirituality' did appear, but as part of a very much wider context

where 'Spirituality' had a much broader concept than 'religion'. The essential element of the Charter is, *'to work in a spirit of openness, tolerance and respect'*. The final sentence of the Charter emphasised *'each member of the partnership maintaining their full independence of freedom and action'*.

- Columbanus was a monk who studied at Bangor Abbey and whose legacy was the spread of Irish Monasticism across much of Europe and in that sense, there was a historical religious connotation. However, as highlighted above, the Columban Way and Charter were more far reaching with activities such as interdenominational walks, culture, heritage, sport, and education being the key building blocks linking the countries involved.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approves this request for the Mayor of Ards and North Down to sign the 'Columban Charter of Partnership' on behalf of Ards and North Down Borough Council, with individual Councillors opting to sign in addition of their own choosing.

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

Alderman McIlveen proposed the recommendation but stated that he was not particularly convinced about some of the religious aspects within it. At a previous meeting he had asked if there was a religious aspect to St Columbanus and believed any sane person would recognise the Saint and his role in the spread of the Christian gospel across Europe and the establishment of monasteries there.

Councillor McKimm compared how the Borough recognised the Saint in comparison to other parts of Europe and believed that St Columbanus should be embraced more fully locally for being the important historical and religious figure that he was.

Councillor Irwin was grateful for the explanation within the report and viewed the Friends of Columbanus as a separate cross community and charitable organisation and hoped that the Chamber could support the Charter.

(Councillor Blaney entered the meeting at 7.32 pm)

Councillor Kennedy believed that Members understood his deep interest in the history of the area, but he stated that he also supported objective reality and truth and considered that the distancing in the crafting of the report rendered it almost absurd. He urged everyone connected to St Columbanus to celebrate him for what he was and his legacy in the work to develop the early Church in Ireland and the spread of the Christian message throughout Europe. In his view it was a disservice to drag the matter down to a battle of semantics. The report outlined everything the group was doing to tack that on to the Saint's religious life. He hoped that the Council would take advantage of the cultural heritage which remained but urged it to do it honestly.

Alderman McIlveen wholeheartedly agreed with Councillor Kennedy's viewpoint agreeing that St Columbanus was clearly a religious figure, and that no argument could be made against that. He was happy to sign up to the Charter but felt it

should be about St Columbanus and not simply the work of Friends of St Columbanus.

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

(Alderman Douglas and Councillor McRandal returned to the meeting at 7.36 pm)

Alderman Douglas resumed he role of Chair at this point.

12. AND EVENTS AND FESTIVALS FUND 23/24 SCORING RECOMMENDATION UPDATE REPORT

(Appendices XVIII & IXX)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Prosperity detailing that in November 2020, the Council approved the Borough Events Strategic Direction 2021-2026 (BESD). Within the BESD, it acknowledged that local festivals and events played a key part in delivering social, cultural and economic outcomes. Council services provided grants to support festivals and events, including Community Development and Tourism.

A recommendation of the BESD was that the Council should continue to support the development of the local events sector through strategic funding, training and development and advice. The Strategy recommended that this support should be better structured for event organisers, and progression routes were made available for event organisers to help run their events safely, or for those who wanted their events to grow. In addition, the BESD recommended combining the two Council grant budgets that supported events and festivals ie. the Tourism Events Grant Scheme and the Community Festivals Fund.

In October 2022 the Council agreed this new fund, the “Ards and North Down Events and Festivals Fund”. Through the estimates process £175,000 had been secured for 2023/24 and that amount included match-funding from the Department for Communities (DfC) estimated at £31,400.

In line with the Strategy recommendations, the Council agreed that the Fund would follow a 4-tier model, detailed in Table 1 below to include the festival/event type, criteria, allocated budget and the minimum and maximum grants for each tier.

Table 1: Four Tier Model

Tranche	Festival/Event	No. attending	Budget	Min-Max Grant
1	Large	Min 2,000	£98,437.50	£10,001 - £20,000
1	Medium	Min 1,001	£38,281.25	£4001 - £10,000
2	Neighbourhood	Up to 1,000	£16,406.25	£1001- £4000
2	Local	Up to 500	£21,875.00	Up to £1,000

Department for Communities (DfC) Funding

It was reported to April's Council that DfC's matched funding was at risk due to the uncertainties around the Executive budgets, and as such only 82.06% of any approved award would be issued until such time as DfC confirmed its matched funding.

The Application Process

Following information workshops for potential applicants held in January 2023, Tranche 1 and 2 of the Events and Festivals Fund opened for applications earlier in the year. All applications received were assessed by a panel comprised of the Community Development Manager, Events Manager, Community Development Officer, and Events Officer and assessed against an agreed scoring matrix.

Applicants were required to indicate the primary purpose of their festival or event i.e. they determined that their event outputs were primarily for economic benefit to the borough or social benefit for the community. Whilst not scored, the question assisted the Tourism and Community Development Teams in providing the appropriate support for the successful event organisers.

Reconsideration of Bangor District Loyal Orange Lodge and Comber District Loyal Orange Lodge Applications

Also included within April's report to Council was an update on the above two applications, previously reported as ineligible, which Members had requested officers to review in respect of eligibility against the published criteria of:

"Applications will not be accepted for the following activity: Any event/festival that is perceived to support or promote any religious or political dimension".

That report detailed that officers had reviewed both applications and determined that both remained considered as ineligible, and recommendation 2 of that report to Council was:

"That the Tranche 1 applications received from Bangor and Comber Loyal Orange Lodges are ineligible for assessment".

At the meeting, Council agreed the following:

'That the Council agrees to recommendations 1 and 3 as per the report. In relation to recommendation 2 that the Council recognises the cultural significance of the Twelfth of July celebrations and scores both applications from Bangor District Loyal Orange Lodge and Comber District Loyal Orange Lodge for tranche 1 funding, bringing back the decision at the earliest opportunity.'

Scoring of the Applications

A scoring panel was convened on 4 May 2023 and both applications were scored against the agreed scoring matrix and the pass mark of 55%. The responses to the

following questions were scored from 0 – 5 on the basis of 0 reflecting a failure to provide requisite detail, and 5 reflecting an excellent response, with a total overall score available of 55:

- How the event/festival achieves its aim (determined by the applicant as either Economic or Social benefit)
- How the event can be developed (including audience development) and attract attendees
- The project description
- Safety and welfare measures
- Opportunities for and supporting volunteers
- Environmental management
- Financial breakdown including income and financial sustainability
- Attendees and participant numbers and encourage local spend in the Borough
- Marketing and promotion to attract attendees

Bangor District LOL 18 – Boyne Anniversary – 12 July 2023

Bangor District LOL 18's application was for a 'Boyne Anniversary' event on 12 July in Ward Park, Bangor, and seeking £12,050. The Panel scored the application against the agreed scoring matrix. The application scored 38.2% therefore failed to meet the required pass mark set of 55%.

Comber District LOL 15 – Celebration of Orange Culture – 10-12 July 2023

Comber District LOL 15's application was for a 'Celebration of Orange Culture' event from 10 – 12 July in Park Way Playing Fields, Comber, and seeking £5,500. The Panel scored the application against the agreed scoring matrix. The application scored 40% therefore failed to meet the required pass mark set of 55%.

A copy of each of the blank Application Form and associated Guidance provided to applicants was attached to the report.

The Council had an Appeals Procedure and unsuccessful applicants could apply within the designated timeframe.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this report.

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

Proposing the recommendation Councillor Boyle agreed to note the report and had been disappointed that it had been called for. He believed that all the information had been outlined previously and had nothing further to add.

Councillor W Irvine expressed his disappointment at the outcome of the report which would not see the Orange events receive funding since he stated they had a social, economic and cultural impact. The Orange celebrations brought visitors, many from far afield and the lack of funding would have a knock-on effect in reducing the scale of the planned events and activities. He stated that he was a member of the Orange

Order but had not been part of the application process, but the disappointment was widespread across the Borough. He asked the proposer to consider making a review of the grants policy and Councillor Boyle was open to that but considered that the application did not fit the criteria at this moment in time.

Alderman McIlveen explained to Councillor Boyle that a report had been called for at a previous meeting since it was believed that officers had not taken a consistent approach in terms of what was being assessed and the marking process. He reminded the Council that the Orange Order put on fantastic events which drew huge crowds and he hoped that lessons could be learnt for the future and a review made on how the assessments were conducted.

Councillor McKimm had supported a review of the process since the Orange celebrations meant so much to many people and he did not feel that the process was being administratively carried out well. He believed that the Council should have a clear internal working definition of what was a religious organisation and what was a political organisation to give the Council a better understanding when making decisions.

Alderman Smith believed that the process should be fair and transparent and considered that it was unfortunate that funding could not have been given since it was evident how important and impactful those events were within the Borough. He stated that it would be important that the organisations get another opportunity to apply in future and that this would be a learning curve which hopefully would help going forward.

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter had spoken on the subject previously and had a massive issue with way the event had been branded. It was important to have clarification and that was why the Columbanus event had been raised. She had never been opposed to St Columbanus but was rather proud of the work he had done spreading the gospel. She stressed the need not to box people and events when it suited, and the Council needed to look at how that was developing to ensure there was parity across events. The Orange events would be tremendous for the Borough but the message that was being sent out was that religious organisations were being excluded.

In conclusion Councillor Boyle felt everything had been discussed and that he was happy to incorporate a future review going forward.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Boyle, seconded by Councillor McRandal, that the recommendation be adopted including a future review of the grants policy.

13. DELEGATED AUTHORITY REQUEST FOR ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environment detailing that Members would be aware that as part of the budget setting process for the current year, it was agreed to implement a new online based booking system for managing access of the Council's HRCs. Accordingly, officers had been working

with the software service provider to develop and finalise the design and functionality of the system, and a report in that regard was scheduled for the meeting of the Environment Committee to be held on 14 June 2023. The current year's HRC waste management budget was predicated upon the implementation of the new arrangements.

In order to assist with meeting the target implementation date for the new access management system of Monday 4 September 2023 and maximise the time available to roll out an effective communications campaign in advance, delegated authority is sought for the Environment Committee to approve of the format and functionality of the new booking system – enabling commencement of the communications campaign to commence immediately thereafter.

RECOMMENDED that delegated authority is granted to the Environment Committee to approve a report on the format and functionality of the new online booking system for HRC access management.

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

Proposing the recommendation Alderman Armstrong-Cotter was pleased that the matter would be brought to the Environment Committee to be scrutinised by Members. She believed that it was essential that the correct message was being sent out by the Council to the public that this was not a reduction in services but a way to help people to do the right thing.

Councillor McKimm concurred with Alderman Armstrong-Cotter that bin collections were one of the Council's most visual services and that it was pertinent to get the message right. In his view it was important to take the time to get the process right and that needed the full participation of the Council, therefore he could not support the recommendation.

Councillor Smart was content for the report to go forward and on a point of clarity hoped that it would get the scrutiny that was needed and wondered if the Environment Committee would be empowered to make that decision. The Director of Environment informed Members that the Committee would be able to approve, reject or make an alternative proposal or amend it. However, he reminded Members that the decision to purchase the online HRC booking system had been made during the Rate Estimates process and this decision related to the 'form and functionality' of the system and how it would be implemented.

Councillor W Irvine thought that this was a significant report and did not feel it needed to be rushed and urged the Council not to tag itself to dates and therefore did not believe that powers should be given to the Environment Committee for a decision to be made there.

Councillor McKee echoed the comments of those who were not in support sharing the belief that the time barrier was significant. He did not think scrutiny should be diminished over this policy and was not convinced that time was a barrier to making a good decision.

Alderman Smith appreciated Members wanted to maximise scrutiny when decision making but reminded them that the longer it took to reach a decision the more impact that would have on the Council's end of year budget. The Director was cognisant of the comments of Alderman Armstrong-Cotter and was always conscious and aware that the decision affected a wide section of the population. The Head of Communications and Marketing wished to have an agreement signed off as soon as possible so that the Council could maximise the time available to advise the public of the changes if they were agreed. The Director reminded Members that the more time to bed in any changes the better for their smooth operation.

Alderman McIlveen was happy to support the recommendation and believed that the Committee was an assured group of people who were sitting in the Council and capable of making a decision which could later be scrutinised by the full Council.

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter reminded Members that the Environment Committee did not sit over the summer months, and it was not a committee where decisions were taken at face value. All Members could attend, and she would be happy to present questions on behalf of non-members of the Committee. She urged the Council to act before social media spread further inaccurate messaging.

Members were asked to vote on the recommendation with a show of hands and with 31 voting FOR, and 3 AGAINST the recommendation was CARRIED.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Armstrong-Cotter, seconded by Councillor Cathcart, that the recommendation be adopted.

14. CONSULTATIONS

14.1 Engagement Survey June 2023 on Live Links Extensions September 2023 (Appendix XX)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy correspondence from the Department of Justice.

AGREED, on the proposal of Councillor Chambers, seconded by Alderman Smith, that the consultation be noted.

15. SEALING DOCUMENTS

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

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

- (a) Grant of Rights of Burial: Nos 14664-14666 and 40000-40027
- (b) ANDBC and McAdam Design contract for the Peninsula 3G Pitch Project

- (c) Council to Origin Gymnastics Limited – Lease of Ground Floor Premises at Ards Blair Mayne Wellbeing and Leisure Complex
- (d) Lease to Community Advice Ards and North Down
- (e) Conveyance ANDBC to Department for Infrastructure
- (f) Statutory Receipt – DFI Vesting at Harbour Road, Portavogie (Plot 11)

16. TRANSFER OF RIGHTS OF BURIAL

Transfer/Assignment –
Movilla section 59 Grave 330 McCann to Black
Movilla section 59 Grave 331 McCann to Millar

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

17. NOTICE OF MOTION STATUS REPORT

(Appendix XXI)

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

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

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the report.

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

Alderman Adair referred to the Status Report and reported that one of his Notice of Motions relating to the naming of the Square at Portavogie after the late Queen Elizabeth II had dropped off the schedule. The Chief Executive explained that that was clearly an error, and the schedule would be reviewed by officers.

Other Members reported similar, and Councillor Chambers and Councillor Moore suggested that the Council be informed when Notices of Motion were completed.

Councillor Cathcart stated that he had brought a Notice of Motion in relation to naming a significant place or building in Bangor after the late Queen but that there had been a delay until the official guidance had come from the royal family in relation to naming places or buildings after Queen Elizabeth II. The Chief Executive said that that matter had been raised with the Northern Ireland Office and the Cabinet Office in London, pressing for further information, that was still outstanding but would be followed up.

Alderman McIlveen explained that the NOM Status Report had come from one of his own Notices of Motion and was a simple register of work in process.

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

CIRCULATED FOR INFORMATION

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Undernoted items of information:

- a) Northern Ireland audit Office – Pre-School Vaccinations in Northern Ireland
- b) National Association of Councillors – Information Sheet (Appendices XXIII & XXIV)
- c) SE HSC Trust – Waiting Times (Appendix XXV)
- d) DOJ – Minimum Age of Criminal Responsibility – Consultation Summary Responses Report (Appendix XXVI)

AGREED, on the proposal of Councillor W Irvine, seconded by Alderman Graham, that the information be noted.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

18. CEMETERY DIGGERS AND UTILITY VEHICLES TENDER

*****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 on tenders for Cemetery Diggers and Utility Vehicles was considered.

It was recommended that Council award the contracts for the supply and delivery of cemetery plant to the top scoring company - Laird Grass Machinery (Lot 3).

The recommendation was AGREED.

19. TENDER FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF AN INTEGRATED TEAM FOR THE WARD PARK PROJECT

*****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 on tenders for the appointment of an Integrated Team for the Ward Park Project was considered.

It was recommended that Council award the contract for the appointment of an Integrated Design Team for the Ward Park Project to Doran Consulting.

The recommendation was AGREED.

20. TENDER AWARD FOR THE PROVISION OF SPECIALIST CONSULTANCY SERVICES FOR PICKIE FUN PARK OPERATOR

*****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 on tenders for the provision of specialist consultancy services for Pickie Fun Park Operator was considered.

It was recommended that the Council awards the tender for the provision of specialist consultancy services, to enable Council to appoint an operator for Pickie Funpark, Bangor, to V4 Services Ltd.

The recommendation was AGREED.

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

It was proposed by Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Councillor Cathcart, that Standing Orders be reinstated.

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 8.30 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, 14 June 2023 at 7.00 pm.

PRESENT:

In the Chair: Councillor Morgan

Aldermen: Armstrong-Cotter McAlpine (Zoom)
Cummings

Councillors: Blaney (Zoom) Kerr
Boyle McKimm
Cathcart Rossiter
Douglas Smart
Edmund Woods (Zoom, 19:05)
Irwin Wray

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

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Woods and Councillor Kerr for lateness.

NOTED.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Morgan: Item 13 - Grant of Outdoor Entertainment Licence

NOTED.

3. DEPUTATION – INTERIM PRESENTATION BY WRAP ON WASTE COLLECTIONS REVIEW

The Director of Environment introduced Mr Gardner from WRAP who was leading on a review of Councils' kerbside waste collection services. In Mr Gardner's presentation, it was explained that WRAP worked with local authorities extensively and was an independent, registered charity that could bring objective evidence-based support to organisations to help address challenges they may be facing whilst ensuring such objectives aligned with policy priorities. Within common collection guidance proposals, three arms existed. The first was restricted residual which related to reducing available residual capacity resulting in higher recycling

participation. It was expected that the amount of residual waste would decline over the next decade with producers of waste looking to replace more and more materials with recyclable content. Flexibility existed within this option by allowing for Councils to either reduce the frequency of residual waste collections or keep collection frequency the same but reduce receptacle size. Ards and North Down Borough's figures showed that total residual waste volume was relatively positive, but that recycling was sub-par, especially when compared to other Councils.

(Councillor Woods arrived at 7.05pm)

Councillor Smart asked what the view would be to restriction of capacity in relation to a three-week collection or smaller bin model. With the latter, he was curious as to how it may work when including blue bins, and whether benchmarking against other Councils would provide information on trends and the rationale behind poorer recycling figures. Mr Gardner explained that when one measures performance, it is done so by tonnage or, 'yields,' as the term would be in the sector. Less yield was considered better for residual waste whilst conversely, higher yields were good for recycling. He believed that Ards and North Down could do better with residual waste and it would be worthwhile discovering how they compared with other Council areas by investigating what they did differently. If this Council were to use a restriction on residual waste method, compensation may be required via extra recycling to balance the scales. He provided some additional examples of how other Councils and authorities had introduced compensatory measures such as additional bins or medical waste bin collections.

Councillor McKimm was curious as to how the Council could create change. He recalled that the Director of Environment and his Department had put clear messaging out to the Borough in regard to sorting rubbish, yet the figures in the presentation showed almost half of what was found in grey bins was recyclable. He believed the Council would need to understand the minds and thought processes of residents in order to provide the correct guidance that would steer the negative trend in the right direction. He asked if the scenarios in the presentation were being proposed as courses of action. Mr Gardner explained that they were just scenarios that were based on evidence and hoped that they were not seen as prescriptive as the information existed only to inform the Council of what common collection guidance may mean in relation to costs, resources or performance of services. He advised it was unlikely that the Council could improve the situation drastically without the assistance of other entities and exemplified Wales whose performance stood above others for reduction of refuse and increase in recycling. He believed this had been supported by a nationwide campaign that resulted in a change of social norms.

Councillor Cathcart welcomed a review into waste collection, explaining that using ratepayer money appropriately was paramount given it was one of their greatest financial inputs as well as one of the most important services. He asked the Director of Environment if, as part of looking at waste comprehensively, the Council should look at for example a Bryson style box system for recycling to reach the correct decision for ratepayers. The Director of Environment advised that the presumption was to maintain the existing style of kerbside collections as opposed to the box system used by other councils. This was based on an assessment of the appetite of the Council over the past few terms in regard to scale of change and style of service.

If this presumption was wrong, he advised Members that now was an opportunity to raise any suggestions for Mr Gardner to include in his research such as the box-style system.

Councillor Woods asked if, in the absence of dealing with key waste strategy challenges that the scenarios outlined could work. Mr Gardner explained that authorities in England also had to wait on clarification from UK Government stance and strategy but that as time moved on, WRAP's advice was to explore what options may mean in practice so when clarity was offered from the Government, authorities and Councils would be in a much better position to act with agility. Councillor Woods asked if consideration had been given to the destination of waste to ensure it was not being shipped to poorer countries. Mr Gardner explained that such had not been in the scope of the one agreed. It would be within the scope to look at carbon impact of particular scenarios; something he would discuss with colleagues to discover how practicable it would be to include that detail.

Councillor McAlpine asked for clarification on how figures were compared against other Councils to reach the conclusion that Ards and North Down were not succeeding at recycling. Mr Gardner explained that the process involved tonnes of waste divided by households, so whilst refuse was low compared to other Council areas, with recycling it was the exact opposite and to understand those figures, benchmarking was required. He advised that communication plans were fundamental as there was no point in providing schemes without explaining how they worked or what their benefits would be. Further efforts would be discussed with the Environment Team with a view toward investigating what other Councils had done in relation to policies.

Councillor Edmund asked how often bins were collected in Wales and if such collections consisted of different waste makeups. Mr Gardner explained that Wales had twenty-two authorities and that variation in terms of collection regimes existed. However, they were unified in terms of the types of waste they collected. Whilst some authorities collected food waste weekly, others had reduced frequency which suggested a one size fits all approach was not necessarily appropriate given circumstances were different dependent on location.

The Director of Environment summarised the proposal to Members. A draft review report from WRAP would be brought back to the Council at the end of the Summer which would be reviewed by Officers who would then provide an update to Members at September's Environment Committee. It was envisaged that a preferred option would be identified that was most likely to give the best return for ratepayers and the various targets the Council hoped to reach. A consultation exercise would then follow facilitated by our Corporate Communications team. With that timeframe, it could potentially allow for decisions to be made by the Council in regard to any changes to its service model, by November/December - allowing any positive financial impacts to be factored into the estimates process for 2024-25.

AGREED, on the proposal of Councillor Smart seconded by Councillor Edmund, that the presentation be noted.

4. Q4 SERVICE PLAN PERFORMANCE REPORTS

4.1 Assets and Property Services

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment advising that Members would have been 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 this requirement, the Council approved the Performance Management Policy and Handbook in October 2015. The Performance Management Handbook outlined the approach to Performance Planning and Management process as:

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years
- Corporate Plan – published every 4 years (Corporate Plan Towards 2024 in operation)
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually (for publication 30 September 2022)
- Service Plan – developed annually (approved April/May 2022)

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

Reporting approach

The Service Plans was to be reported to relevant Committees on a quarterly basis as undernoted:

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
Quarter 1 (Q1)	April – June	September
Q2	July – September	December
Q3	October – December	March
Q4	January - March	June

The report for Quarter 4 2022-23 is attached.

Key points to note:

- Budget overspend includes substantial increases in utilities costs, diesel costs and the roof repairs at Aurora. These costs were unbudgeted and unavoidable.
- The biofuel trial remains unviable due to ongoing difficulties in sourcing the fuel at a competitive rate. Officers will keep this under review.

Key achievements:

- All refurbishment projects planned for this year were completed, including works at Queens Hall Newtownards, Groomsport boathouse, Kircubbin community centre and Westwinds Community Centre.
- Several regeneration projects were delivered, including Comber car park resurfacing.
- Over 4900 property maintenance defects completed over the year.

Quarterly Performance Report - Assets and Property Services

Generated on: 05 June 2023

Last Update Q4 2022/23

Performance Data Traffic Light Icon	PI Short Name	Performance Data Current Value	Performance Data Current Target
🟢	% of applicable properties achieving an E rating or better (cumulative)	95%	80%
🟢	Set Action Plan implementation dates for Sustainable Energy Management Strategy (cumulative)	Yes	Yes
🔴	Trial of Biofuel in the fleet completed and results reported back	No	Yes
🟢	Trial of roof mounted Solar Panels in the fleet completed (cumulative)	Yes	Yes
🟢	No. of roadside audits complete per quarter	30	30
🟢	% of fleet is audited every quarter	5%	5%
🟢	% of condition surveys completed against schedule (cumulative)	100%	100%
🟢	Required number of refurbishments carried out according to the schedule	Yes	Yes
🟢	% of time that life belts are serviceable	98%	90%
🟢	% of vehicles that pass PSV first time	96%	95%
🟢	% of maintenance jobs completed within timescales	85%	80%
🟢	% maintenance jobs quality assured	40%	10%
🔴	% spend against budget	116.08%	100%

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Performance Data Traffic Light Icon	PI Short Name	Performance Data Current Value	Performance Data Current Target
🟢	Internal Customer Feedback surveys completed	Yes	Yes
🟢	Review findings of customer feedback survey and implement improvements where possible (cumulative)	Yes	Yes
🟢	% questionnaires issued to berth holders	100%	100%
🟢	Consultation and roll out of Port Marine Safety Code Compliance Document (cumulative)	Yes	Yes
🔴	% staff attendance	86.69%	95%
🟢	% staff receiving team briefings	100%	100%
🟢	% planned training Vs actual completed as per training register (cumulative)	80%	80%
🟢	% Playground inspections are carried out as per schedule	100%	90%
🟢	Planned maintenance of public areas carried out according to the schedule	Yes	Yes

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the report.

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

Alderman Cummings welcomed the improvement of the Comber car park and would await the local response to the one-way system. He asked if there was an update on the electric charge points to which the Head of Waste and Cleansing Services answered, stating that dock work had been carried out to future proof the possibility of charging points though there was no funding at the moment.

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

4.2 Regulatory Services

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment advising that Members would have been 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 this requirement the Council approved the Performance Management Policy and Handbook in October 2015. The Performance Management Handbook outlined the approach to Performance Planning and Management process as:

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

Reporting approach

The Service Plans were to be reported to relevant Committees on a quarterly basis as undernoted:

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
Quarter 1 (Q1)	April – June	September
Q2	July – September	December
Q3	October – December	March
Q4	January – March	June














The report for Quarter 4 2022-23 is attached.

Key points to note:

- The objective of developing a cross Borough market working group is now being taken forward through the Council's Tourism Department.
- The target of redesigning and launching a new environmental education programme (project ELLA) was delayed due to the impact of Covid upon our ability to engage over the past year with schools, but this is now progressing well and will be the subject of a separate report to be brought to Committee.

- The target to maintain a top 3 ranking position in relation to level of fixed penalty activity for environmental offences (dog fouling and littering) is an annual target and NI wide data for the past year compiled by KNIB, is not yet available.
- In relation to the target on distribution of our RCIF budget, we are awaiting a final budget update from our Live Here Love Here Small Grants partners KNIB.
- Our target for 90% self-financing across services within the department was missed by a small margin, largely due to less than budgeted off-street car park income.
- Substantive progress in the implementation of our agreed Car Park Strategy has been stalled, pending the remedying of a legislative impediment which requires a functioning Assembly.
- Development and implementation of a Building Control awareness programme to promote more sustainable building measures has commenced and is ongoing.

Last Update Q4 2022/23

Performance Data Traffic Light Icon	PI Short Name	Performance Data Current Value	Performance Data Current Target
	Deliver LHLH grants through RCIF		£75,000.00
	Redesign the delivery model for the Environmental ELLA programme to year 8's	No	Yes
	% spend against budget	116.42%	100%
	% of all applications made online (cumulative)	73%	55%
	Maintain top 3 position for Fixed Penalty Enforcement in NI		Yes
	Develop and implement Building Control awareness campaign	Yes	Yes
	% customer satisfaction survey (services easily accessed)	86.5%	70%
	% customer satisfaction survey (Regulatory Services processes)	84%	70%
	% customer satisfaction survey (staff courtesy and helpful)	93%	80%
	% customer satisfaction survey (regulatory services outcomes)	91%	80%
	Develop a cross borough market working group		Yes
	% Staff attendance	95.19%	95%
	% staff receiving regular team briefings	100%	100%

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Performance Data Traffic Light Icon	PI Short Name	Performance Data Current Value	Performance Data Current Target
	Review of income generation – % self-sustained	80.1%	90%
	Implement agreed car park strategy	No	Yes

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

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter explained that several residents had contacted her in relation to Kiltonga Wildlife Reserve and the unusual behaviour of rats in the area

and their lack of fear which could lead to a dangerous incident. The Director of Environment advised that he would liaise with the appropriate department.

Councillor Smart asked if recruitment was necessary in regard to maintaining fixed penalty activity for environmental offences. The Director of Environment advised that Neighbourhood Enforcement was now more or less back to a full complement of staff and that they were in the process of regrouping to restore levels of enforcement activity.

Councillor Woods asked if recruitment had been carried out for the Head of Regulatory Services. The Director of Environment explained that this was still on hold in the context of the planned organisational review and in the meantime the three service unit managers had taken on shared Head of Service responsibilities.

Councillor Boyle was concerned as to the over-budget costs and sought further clarification in-committee as to facts and figures relating to other committee in-confidence reports. Following that request, he asked if any updates existed since the report before Members was written under the 'Live Here, Love Here,' campaign. The Director of Environment explained that KNIB administered that on the Council's behalf and he understood that grants had been given out as intended. Update information had not been available at the time of writing the report, but a further report on the subject would be provided in due course.

Councillor Boyle referred to the car park strategy and whether it had been due to a non-functioning government that it had been held back. The Director of Environment explained that before implementation, a new Car Park Order was required for the Borough; that had been drafted by the Council solicitor and was ready for sending when the Assembly restarted.

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

4.3 Waste and Cleansing Services

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

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

Reporting approach

The Service Plans were to be reported to relevant Committees on a quarterly basis as undernoted:

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
Quarter 1 (Q1)	April – June	September
Q2	July – September	December
Q3	October – December	March
Q4	January - March	June

The report for Quarter 4 2022-23 is attached.

Key points to note:

- There continues to be an encouraging trend in terms of landfill tonnage falling by over 4000 tonnes in comparison to the previous year. Our renewed recycling engagement campaign was operational during this reporting period and a detailed progress report will be brought to the September meeting of the Environment Committee.
- Problems encountered with the functionality and repair of the new street washing machine have impacted upon the target performance on our in-house street washing programme. This matter is being followed up with the equipment supplier.

Key achievements:

- Most performance targets were met.














Emerging issues:

- The current difficult economic conditions are directly impacting waste arisings, as reductions in tonnages of recyclates collected is also noted. Overall waste arisings were down by almost 5500 tonnes.

Action to be taken:

- Continue to try and resolve the issues with Keep NI Beautiful in relation to providing independent Litter surveys, that arose during Q3 of 22/23 and has resulted in no data being available for the last two quarters.

Last Update Q4 2022/23

Performance Data Traffic Light Icon	PI Short Name	Performance Data Current Value	Performance Data Current Target
	Tonnage of municipal solid waste sent to landfill	35,876	37,000
	% of household waste recycled, reused and composted	52%	60%
	Amount (tonnes) of biodegradable waste sent to landfill	17,124	19,017
	Improve the recycling rate at the Council's HRCs	64.9	60
	Local Environmental Audit and Measurement Score (LEAMS) (Street Cleansing)	0	0
	Deliver an enhanced Public Realm street washing service in-house	1	3
	Develop Strategy for improving recycling rates across HRCs	Yes	Yes
	% spend against budget	104.91%	100%
	No of temporary traffic management controls (days) implemented during the quarter	5	5
	Loo of the Year Awards	5	5
	% staff attendance	91.96%	95%
	% staff receiving regular team briefings	100%	100%
	Amount (tonnage) of Local Authority Collected Municipal Waste Arisings	85,976	89,999

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

Councillor Woods asked if any update existed on street washing and the supplier. The Head of Waste and Cleansing Services informed Councillor Woods that the street washing machine was back in use and a local supplier had been engaged to deal with any future servicing/repair problems. Comber public realm had been washed again recently and the team was working to get back on planned schedule.

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

5. HRC ACCESS BOOKING SYSTEM

NOTE: Proposed by Councillor Cathcart seconded by Councillor Edmund, that Item 5 be brought out of confidence on the proviso that in-confidence figures would not be discussed.

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment advising that Members would have recalled that during the estimates process for 2023-24, the budgets for the HRC service were finalised on the basis that a revised site access model would be adopted, involving an online booking system. A decision had already been taken previously by the Council to adopt an online system to apply for van and large trailer access permits.

Officers had worked with an online booking platform service provider, retained under a procurement framework process used by the Council, to develop an integrated online booking system that would facilitate both general access as well as permit access for vans and large trailers. The cost of this was within the limits of officer authorisation.

Testing of the platform had commenced and officers were confident that the system developed would meet the key requirements of a robust, convenient, user-friendly service portal which would also help deliver upon the other key strategic target outcomes for our HRC services. These booking system features included:

- User web browsers will auto-fill key required information fields such as name and address, making the booking process simpler and faster.
- The standard access booking process takes just 1-2 minutes.
- Bookings can be made between one hour and 14 days prior to visiting a site.
- Booking process directs users quickly and easily to available slots across sites.
- Highlights key recyclable waste streams that are not accepted at certain sites and directs users to book at sites where they can be recycled.
- Highlights key site access and recycling rules at time of booking – prioritising the key rule that waste must be sorted, and recyclable waste will not be permitted in landfill waste containers.
- Regulates the flow of site users through sites, capping the number of bookings accepted during any one time slot and spreading total user numbers evenly across the entire working week – thereby ensuring that each site user is assured of more support and guidance from staff on how and where to dispose of their waste, and maximising recycling outcomes on sites.
- Provides booking confirmation via an automated email, communicating details of the booking slot along with key information about access and recycling rules that must be observed. A detailed HRC site map will also be included in the confirmation email, which guides visitors to the relevant receptacles on site which will make their visit to site more user friendly.
- Calendar confirmation is sent to user at time booking – plus email reminder sent the day before the booked slot.

It is planned that a video demonstration of the new online booking system would be available to show Members at the Committee meeting.

The booking platform would be flexible, and at any time the service provider could make adjustments deemed necessary by the Council to further suit its specific requirements. It had been anticipated that the new system would be ready to commence accepting bookings from 4 September 2023, with booked access commencing Monday 18th September. It was planned that a marketing and promotions campaign would be operated over an 8-week period beforehand. Access to the web-based booking portal would be available through a hyperlink featured on the Bin-ovation App, and the marketing and communications campaign would include text notifications about the new system to Bin-ovation App users.

The booking system would provide a range of key customer benefits:

- Protects the Borough's HRCs for disposal of household waste by residents/ratepayers of the Borough only, with associated cost savings and greater availability of sites for our own residents.
- Help avoid lengthy queuing outside sites, at traditionally peak periods.

- Smooth out user traffic flow through sites, meaning site users will find it easier to access receptacles for various waste streams and there will be greater availability of site attendant assistance (providing greater guidance on recycling etc.).
- Avoid users turning up when sites outside closing hours.
- Avoids users turning at a site which cannot accept the particular waste material types being disposed of (and having to detour to a different site).

As a consequence of the new booking system, it had been possible to streamline and merge the existing policies regulating HRC access and avoid the need for a separate policy relating to permit access for vans and trailers. Consequently, the attached revised Policy on Access and Use of HRCs covers all aspects of HRC access and use management – with rules around regular car/car plus single axle trailers and other forms of transport, being contained within the one policy. The new booking system meant that we had been able to remove the paperwork/bureaucracy associated with the need to apply for permits for non-standard access, and the previously agreed rules relating to the latter will automatically be applied during the online booking process. The revised single integrated policy also reflected the move to an online access booking system (with the option for telephone assisted bookings where required).

Approval had been sought from the Council meeting held on 12th June 2023, for delegated powers to be granted to the Environment Committee to approve this report.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approves the new integrated online booking system for HRC access and the revised single policy on HRC access and use.

The Director of Environment summarised the decision making that led to an appointment-based system at HRCs and the fact that associated projected savings had been built into the budgets for the 2023-24 financial year. A video was played to the meeting showing a demonstration of a prototype user interface for the online booking system. After it was shown, the Director of Environment explained that second and subsequent bookings would take less time than a first time booking by a resident, due to address, email and car registration details being stored and able to be auto-filled into boxes. A major benefit of the new system was that a separate permit application system would no longer be required – rather, application of permit rules for vans and large trailers would automatically be applied via the online booking system thereby removing the paperwork and bureaucracy associated with that.

In the event that someone attended the HRC on an above-average basis, the system would flag a message to the user asking them to telephone to request further bookings. This feature was necessary to allow Council to identify and weed out attempted continued abuse of sites for non-permitted waste via the booking system. Another feature of the system was a filter to ensure those visiting HRCs with particular types of waste were directed to the correct sites that could facilitate recycling of that material.

Councillor Woods asked who, when and how the prototype had been tested and whether there was scope to include individuals with disabilities under Section 75. The Director of Environment explained that the demonstration shown to Members was only a prototype and was subject to change dependent on feedback from users and pilot-testers. At the time of writing, the user-interface was based on good practice elsewhere and upon already operating working systems in other GB Councils, and if Members agreed on this report officers would look toward further robustness testing before roll out in September. In regard to accessibility, those unable to use the online system would have the option of a telephone service with staff able make bookings for them. Councillor Woods queried the booking confirmation system and whether smaller sites and closing times for refuse emptying would be implemented to block times out for users. The Director of Environment advised that the system would smooth out traffic and volume of material entering HRCs at any one time, which would in itself assist with management of skip servicing and minimise instances of short notice site closure. Staff would also be able to disable certain time slots in advance of planned servicing of sites.

Councillor Woods wanted clarity as to whether access to sites based on transport modes meant that homes were limited to six visits per year or if it was vehicles themselves. The Director of Environment explained that the limit of 6 visits per year for the likes of vans and larger commercial style trailers, related to the residential address and not the actual vehicle registration.

In answer to Councillor Irwin, the Director of Environment advised that the booking system would provide examples of different waste types, such as hard plastics relating to plastic garden furniture and play equipment. In regard to data, the company that would be used already provided services of a similar nature across GB and was very robust in terms of GDPR compliance.

Councillor Rossiter queried transition times and communication plans regarding the new system. The Director of Environment advised that it was planned that communications would begin quickly after tonight's meeting. Such communications would be multifaceted over a period of weeks including leaflets distributed at HRCs over the summer describing the changes, social media and local press and face to face information sessions at local community venues. Key messaging about the need for and advantages of the system would be highlighted, such as the protecting HRCs from non-Borough and non-household abuse, saving money and better customer recycling experience.

Councillor Wray was concerned that the lead-up time from looking to book an appointment to getting a date could be between one hour and fourteen days given that many HRC visits tended to be more on the spot, and wondered how much of a lead time would be required for bookings as well as whether users will know in advance as to what they're planning to bring to the HRC. The Director of Environment explained that a one-hour minimum time between booking and attending HRCs existed to avoid users queuing up at sites and trying to book while queuing. He undertook to look at the possibility of reducing the minimum time in advance of a booking from 1 hour to 30 minutes. In relation to materials that a user would list when making the booking, this was not meant to be a definitive/restrictive list but rather designed to encourage residents to think about sorting their waste into

particular categories of recyclable waste materials and to help direct them to sites that were capable of accommodating recycling of as much of their waste as possible.

Councillor McAlpine hoped that, as the company had operated with other authorities and Councils, a good portfolio existed to ensure that the work with Ards and North Down communications team would allow for the best possible outcome and that operation would not require additional strains on staff. The Director of Environment had spoken with the company and a plan to use as many communications channels as possible for as long as possible would allow for a wider reach, whilst the system itself could produce automated reports which would not place undue burdens on staff.

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter had several questions and concerns. To these, the Director of Environment provided the following explanations. It was recognised that a proportion of the population would have online accessibility issues and though some may be able to get online booking assistance from family members and friends, the option to make a telephone call would exist for any who didn't. If the requirement for telephone booking assistance was greater than anticipated, resources would be reviewed to meet demand.

Regarding concerns as to the handing over of personal details for both current and ex-services personnel, the Director of Environment explained that he would take advice on the matter.

As the system would produce a flag message for those using the services above average, it was confirmed that this would only exist to monitor attempted abuses of the system. The system would have quite a lot of flexibility to make changes as necessary through time and experience, though the key parameters would not be changed/loosened to the extent that the system became useless as a means of delivering the key planned/target outcomes.

Councillor Cathcart expanded on Alderman Armstrong-Cotter's questioning of flexibility, asking if return visits could be carried out in the event that one HRC run was not enough and what would happen if non-attendance was to occur. He also had great concerns that Saturdays would be a big demand given many worked 09:00-17:00 during weekdays and whether there would be enough slots to service the Borough whilst keeping in mind the possibility of non-attendance. Lastly, Councillor Cathcart wanted the reassurance of an assessment period to ensure the phasing and bedding-in period had gone to plan. The Director of Environment explained that more than one slot could be booked at a time by a resident, as could recurring slots and the option to cancel a visit would be supplied in the booking confirmation email. With phasing, it was hoped that booking could begin from the 4th September with a dual-system that could last two weeks as suggested.

Councillor Cummings queried if the department was confident that behaviours could be predicted in terms of when the sites would be serviced by lorries and closed to the public. He was also curious as to whether an auto-notification system existed for those who had booked in advance and the plans for communications such as connecting via third party sector like charity groups. The Director of Environment explained that Ards and North Down was by no means the first Council to use the

system and that it had been well rehearsed in other authorities. The company that provides the system had offered assurances over the management of the system, to address the issues raised by Cllr Cummings. In the event of a site requiring an unexpected closure, notifications by email could be sent allowing for those who may already have booked appointments to receive notification and book alternative slots. An email reminder would also be sent residents a day in advance of their booked slots, whilst connecting with the public through third party sector would be investigated.

Councillor Blaney was concerned about the ability to make multiple or block bookings and its effect for those who could only visit sites at weekends as well as non-attendance. He also wished to know if a checkbox would be added to notify users of GDPR, the timeframe for such information to be held and whether too many visits would allow for a booking to still be made or if a block would be put in place until a telephone call was made. Finally, Councillor Blaney queried the number of visits that could be made and whether a limit existed. The Director of Environment advised that all appropriate GDPR safeguards would be implemented in the final booking system prototype. As for the system, the user would have to make a call first to bypass the flag for having used the service on an above-average basis. There would most assuredly be no arbitrary binding number of visits per residence, rather the system of flagging above-average visits was merely to prevent fraud. If a pattern was recognised that an individual was disposing of large amounts of waste over and above what would be expected from a normal residential setting, the flagging system would allow for Officers to ensure a business was not masquerading as a residence for the purposes of waste disposal.

Councillor McKimm echoed Councillor Blaney's concerns, proffering the example of gardeners who attend jobs without knowing how much garden waste may be produced from a job and their ability to make appointments whilst being flagged for using an HRC at an above-average level. It could be that a gardener has to do three or four runs to an HRC instead of what may have been assumed as one visit, all the while being unable to attend the desired HRC due to it being booked out. In addition, he wondered what would happen in the scenario where an individual rang for the third time to bypass the flagged above-average message and the HRC attendants were not happy with the reason given. Lastly, he was curious as to what service or assistance might exist for the less abled who attend HRCs. The Director of Environment described the key rationale for the new online system as closing loopholes for abuses in the use of HRCs, and that genuine householders disposing of their household waste should have no concerns over it. In regard to assistance at sites, general advice had always been if an individual could not manage a specific item to bring necessary support with them. However, if an individual who was less abled arrived on site, exceptional arrangements could be made to assist. In answer to Councillor McKimm's query of those who carry a blue badge, the Director of Environment would need to discuss the possibility of flagging blue badge holder assistance requests on the booking system.

Councillor Smart sought clarity on the rollout of the program such as whether face-to-face engagements would occur, if any projected savings existed and if extended opening hours could be investigated due to the general belief amongst Members that Saturdays would become an extremely pressured day for bookings. There would

also have to be some training of staff. The Director of Environment highlighted that one of the key stated benefits of the booking system was to make for more efficient use of existing opening hours of sites, spreading traffic flow more evenly across the day/week. The projected savings had been explained in the business case with comparisons made in tonnage to other NI Councils and waste received. If Ards and North Down Borough Council could do better than other Councils due to a more efficient system, additional savings could occur above and beyond these estimates. Recycling Officers were undertaking face-to-face engagements whilst training of staff would be undertaken, including a dedicated half day training event for all staff planned for August just before the new system going live.

Proposed by Alderman Armstrong-Cotter, seconded by Councillor Cathcart, the new integrated online booking system for HRC access and the revised single policy on HRC access and use. In addition, starting 4th September, to be reviewed as a matter of process at September Council when a further decision can be made regarding onward implementation.

Councillor Cathcart believed it was important to give delegated authority on functionality and not on the time scale suggesting that the full Council meeting in September would allow for a reasonable timeframe to review the process and agree roll-out.

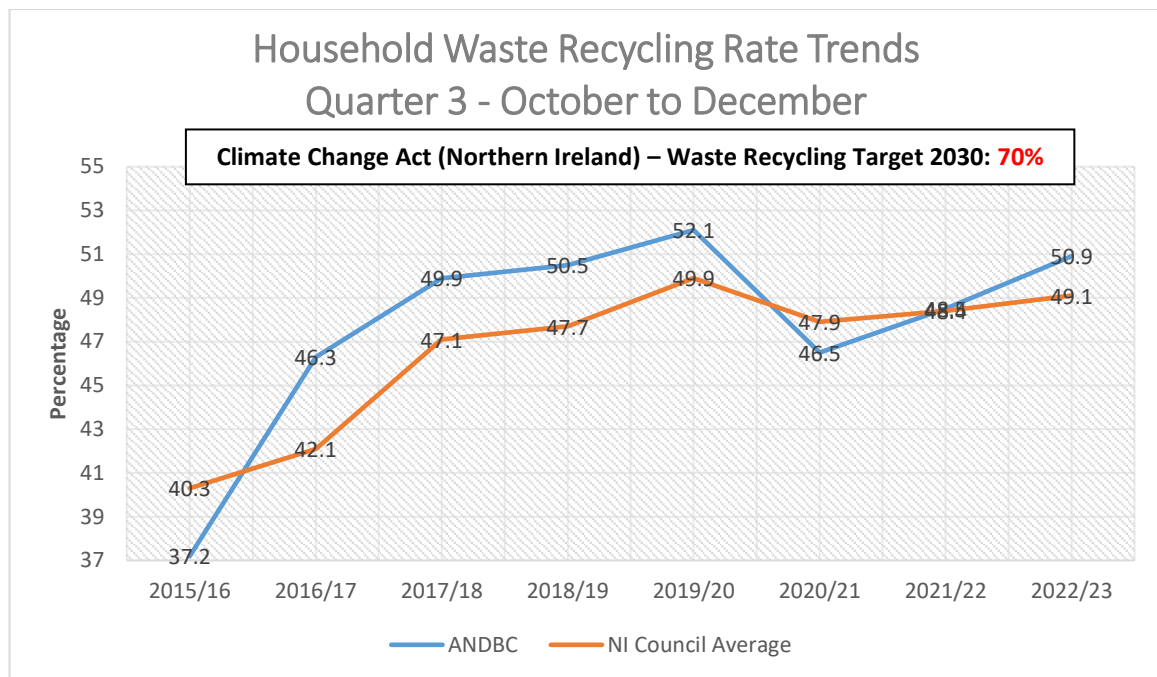
AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman Armstrong-Cotter, seconded by Councillor Cathcart, that the recommendation be adopted in addition, starting 4th September, to be reviewed as a matter of process at September Council when a further decision can be made regarding onward implementation.

6. NORTHERN IRELAND LOCAL AUTHORITY MUNICIPAL WASTE MANAGEMENT STATISTICS, OCTOBER TO DECEMBER 2022

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment advising that the official waste management statistics for the third quarter of 2022/2023 (October to December 2022) had been released by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency.

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

- i. Our household waste recycling rate **rose by 2.4%** compared to Q3 last year, (from 48.5% to 50.9%) but was still 1.2% lower than our peak recorded Q3 rate of 52.3% (in Q3 of 2019/20).

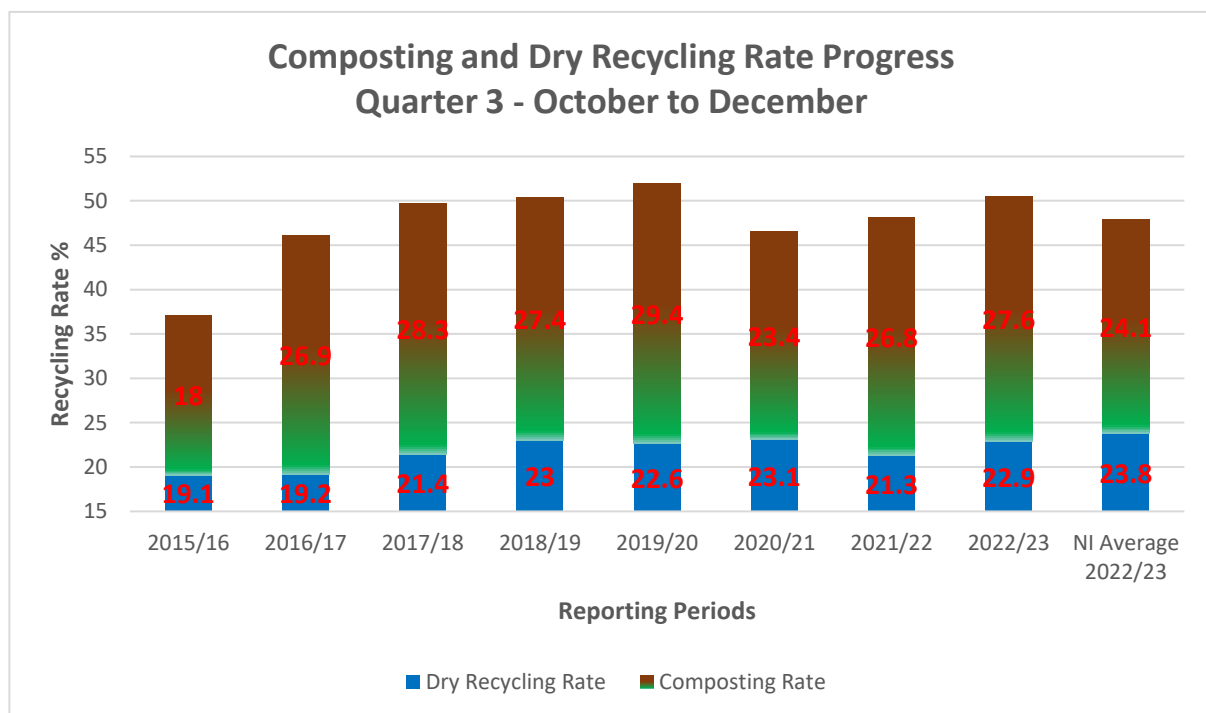


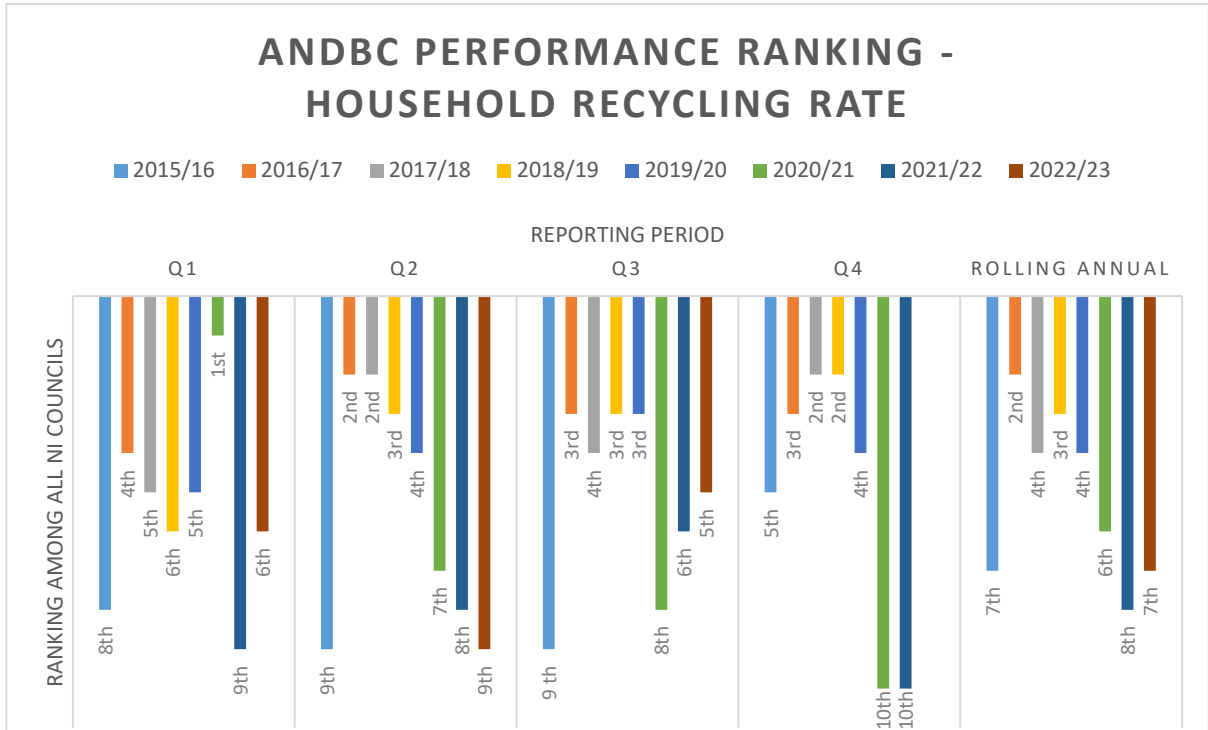
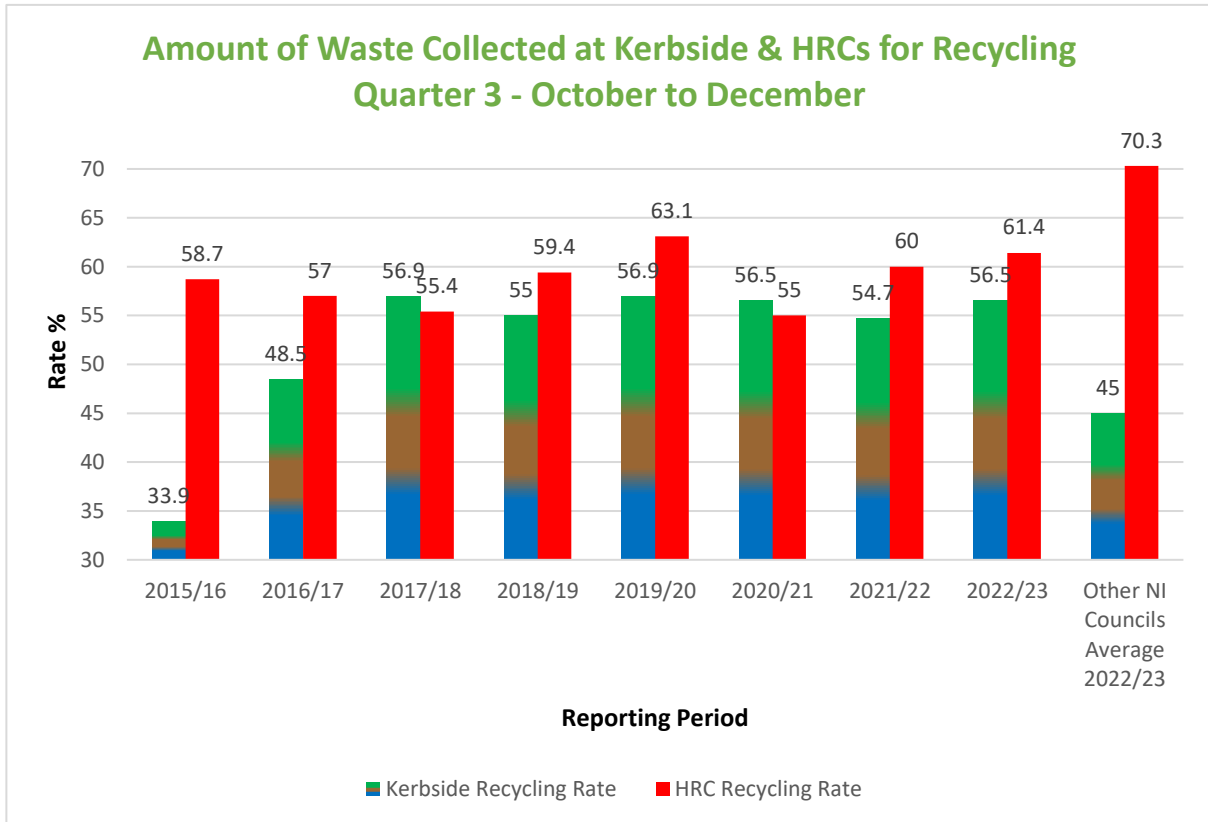
- ii. Our household waste recycling rate of 50.9%, was 1.8% higher than the NI average of 49.1%.
- iii. We were ranked fifth out of the eleven NI councils for our household waste recycling rate.
- iv. Our household waste composting rate **rose by 0.8%** - from 26.8% to 27.6%. Our household waste dry recycling rate **rose by 1.5%** - from 21.3% to 22.9%.
- v. Our household waste composting rate of 27.6% was **3.5% higher** than the NI average of 24.1%.
- vi. Our household waste dry recycling rate (i.e. recycling of items other than organic food and garden waste) of 22.9% was **1.9% lower** than the N.I. average of 23.8%.
- vii. Our kerbside recycling capture rate of 72.2% for household compostable waste materials compared to a NI council average of 63.2%.
- viii. Our kerbside capture rate for major categories of recyclable materials was as follows:

Kerbside Capture Rate for Recyclable Waste Types - July to September		
Recyclable Material	Kerbside Capture Rate for Recycling %	NI Average Kerbside Capture Rate for Recycling %
Glass	59.9	50.2
Paper & Card	63	53.6
Mixed Metals	40.2	32.3
Mixed Plastics	27.1	22.8

Organic/Compostables	72.2	63.2
Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE)	9.9	2.2

- ix. We were at the bottom end of the performance table for ‘dry’ recycling rate, ranking ninth out of eleven councils.
- x. We received 21% more total waste and 57% more residual/landfilled waste per capita at our HRCs compared to the average for other NI councils.
- xi. The amount of waste collected at our HRC sites for recycling was significantly less than the average for other councils – 61.4%, compared to an average rate of 70.3% for other councils.
- xii. The amount of waste collected for recycling through our kerbside bin collection system was higher than the average for other councils – 56.5%, compared to an average of 45% for other councils.





Our rolling 12-month average recycling rate of 50.4% remained well below our peak annual recycling performance of 54.7% achieved in the 2019/20 reporting year; it is some 20% lower than the target set in the Climate Change Act

(Northern Ireland) 2022, which specified at least 70% of waste to be recycled by 2030. Our rolling 12-month landfill rate of 43.6%, is 33.6% higher than the 10% landfill limit set for 2035 by the UK circular economy package.

As part of the estimates process for 2023/24, Members agreed a new system of access management for HRCs based on an online booking platform, and a separate report to the June 2023 Environment Committee provided an update on this subject. This new HRC access management system, coupled with improvements to on-site recycling controls being implemented at the time of writing, would be key measures in the drive towards achieving our statutory recycling and landfill goals. Officers had also commenced the process of reviewing the kerbside waste collections model, in line with another key decision taken by Members during the 2023-24 estimates process. This would also be a key aspect of our strategy to maximise the sustainable management of our waste.

The next quarterly waste statistics report (for Q4 of the 2022-23 reporting year) would correspond with commencement of a renewed recycling engagement programme that we had been implementing since December 2022, targeting both HRC and kerbside waste collection services. This report would detail the progress being made in relation to that.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the report.

(A recess was called at 9.26pm, with the meeting resuming at 9.42pm)

The Director of Environment summarised the key points in the report for Members.

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

7. NOTICE OF MOTION REGARDING UNCLAIMED BINS ON PUBLIC FOOTPATHS

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment advising that, as requested through a recent Notice of Motion, the Council wrote to the Department of Infrastructure regarding the issue of wheeled bins remaining on footpaths between collections, urging the Department to tackle this issue (Appendix 1). A response has been received from the DfI Permanent Secretary (Appendix 2).

As previously indicated, enforcement of the existing relevant statutory provision at the time of writing, fell under Article 88 of The Roads (Northern Ireland) Order 1993 and is a matter for the PSNI.

Presently, where the Council was aware of a problem existing on a particular street, households would be contacted by the Waste Collections Service with an advisory letter (Appendix 3); this had varying degrees of effectiveness but was unfortunately as far as the Council could take the matter as things stood legally.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the contents of the correspondence from the Department of Infrastructure.

Proposed by Councillor McKimm, seconded by Councillor Cathcart, that an alternative recommendation be made. That this committee requests a report from officers which includes an Equality Screening of the kerbside collection service that we provide to identify the extent of the disproportionate and negative impact our method of collection had on those with disabilities which blocked footpaths causing considerable problems to those with a range of disabilities. Further, that the report also looked at models of good practice utilised by other Councils in relation to making footpaths accessible to those with disabilities and in particular looks at actions beyond what we have historically used to ensure that unclaimed bins are removed from the footpaths. In addition, that the Council writes to Ards and North Down PSNI, providing the Department's correspondence, asking how many fines had been issued under the Article 88 of the Roads (Northern Ireland) Order 1993 in the district over the last ten years in respect to bins causing an obstruction of the public road, including a footway. Furthermore, asking what action the Police was taking to enforce this article?

Councillor McKimm related the Equality Act, Section 75 and that since its introduction in 2015, equality screening had not been carried out with regard to kerbside methodology on disabilities; something that was dependent on external bodies. As of the time of writing, no action had been taken beyond letters being sent to those who refused to comply. With the risk of residents involved in accidents on roads and falling hazards, a change was required. Councillor McKimm explained that responsibility lay with the Council to act. He referenced England's action plans when designing inclusive models of kerbside collection whilst many with disabilities found street accessibility a problem, feeling let down by both central and local governments. The alternative recommendation was potentially the first step in allowing for the delivery of a kerbside collection that was inclusive under Section 75.

Councillor Cathcart, having made the final addition to the alternative recommendation in regard to writing to the PSNI, advised that he had raised the issue as a Notice of Motion months ago as the retrieval of bins by owners appeared to be as difficult as ever with little to no action by various agencies. A response letter had been received by the PNSI which read, '*Department is happy to support Councils with the promotion of campaigns or enforcing powers...*' He provided an example of a resident in Bangor who, due to the nature of an adjoining street, thirty bins would be positioned beside their address with twenty or more still remaining 24 hours after collection. In instances such as this, Councillor Cathcart suggested the Council should have powers to take action akin to those of Councils in England and wondered whether agencies such as SOLACE, NILGA or others would support legislation for additional powers.

Councillor Irwin agreed with the thoughts of fellow Councillors, as did Councillor Smart who explained that the issue was widespread, whether due to a lack of space or residents not being mindful of their neighbourly duties. He explained it only took one or two bins in a busy area with parked cars for access to be completely halted. That led to Councillor Smart querying if the current kerbside collection was sufficient given how other NI Councils had outsourced with box systems. The other alternative would be reminding residents that they owned bins and if any were to be left, go missing or be damaged, the cost would be theirs to bear.

Councillor Boyle, echoed Councillor Cathcart's mention of SOLACE suggested the possibility of discovering how other Councils had rectified the issues in their areas. He agreed that the powers of the Council were very limited and if options were exhausted such as letters to other departments etcetera, further action would be required.

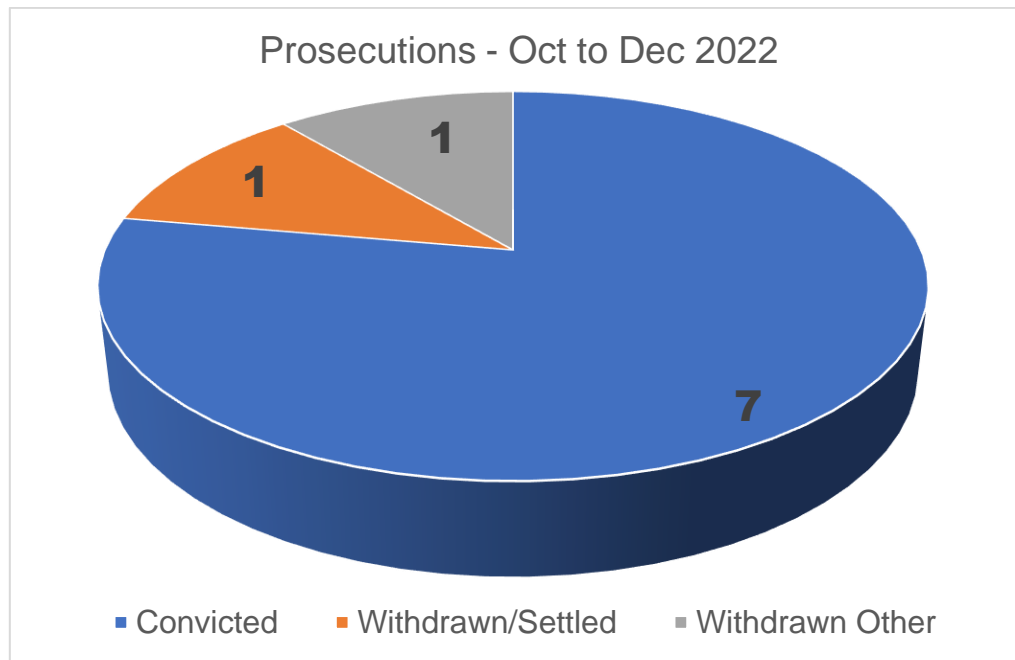
An agreement was made on a further addition to the recommendation by Councillor Cathcart; that the Council writes back to the Permanent Secretary at the DfI asking for the Department to legislate for powers to be provided to Councils, similar to those of English local authorities to take potential enforcement action against those that leave bins left on public roads and footways long after collection date.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor McKimm, seconded by Councillor Cathcart, that an alternative recommendation be made. That this committee requests a report from officers which includes an Equality Screening of the kerbside collection service that we provide to identify the extent of the disproportionate and negative impact our method of collection has on those with disabilities which blocks footpaths causing considerable problems to those with a range of disabilities. Further, that the report also looks at models of good practice utilised by other Councils in relation to making footpaths accessible to those with disabilities and in particular looks at actions beyond what we have historically used to ensure that unclaimed bins are removed from the footpaths” In Addition, That the Council writes to Ards and North Down PSNI, providing the Department’s correspondence, asking how many fines have been issued under the Article 88 of the Roads (Northern Ireland) Order 1993 in the district over the last ten years in respect to bins causing an obstruction of the public road, including a footway. Furthermore, asking what action the Police is taking to enforce this article? And that the Council writes back to the permanent secretary at the DfI asking for the Department to legislate for powers to be provided to Councils similar to that of English local authorities to take potential enforcement action against those that leave bins left on public roads and footways long after collection date.

8. RESULT OF COURT PROCEEDINGS – NEIGHBOURHOOD ENVIRONMENT TEAM FROM 1 OCTOBER TO 31 DECEMBER 2022

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment advising that the following convictions had been secured at Newtownards Magistrate's Court between 1 October 2022 and 31 December 2022. See Appendix A attached.

In accordance with the instructions of the Resident Magistrate, the Council's solicitor would notify defendants upon first appearance in court in response to a summons, that they may seek to have the matter withdrawn upon payment of legal costs and any fixed penalty notice previously offered. The cases were then adjourned to permit a further opportunity for payment. This had resulted in a number of cases being settled on the day of court upon payment of all costs and fines.

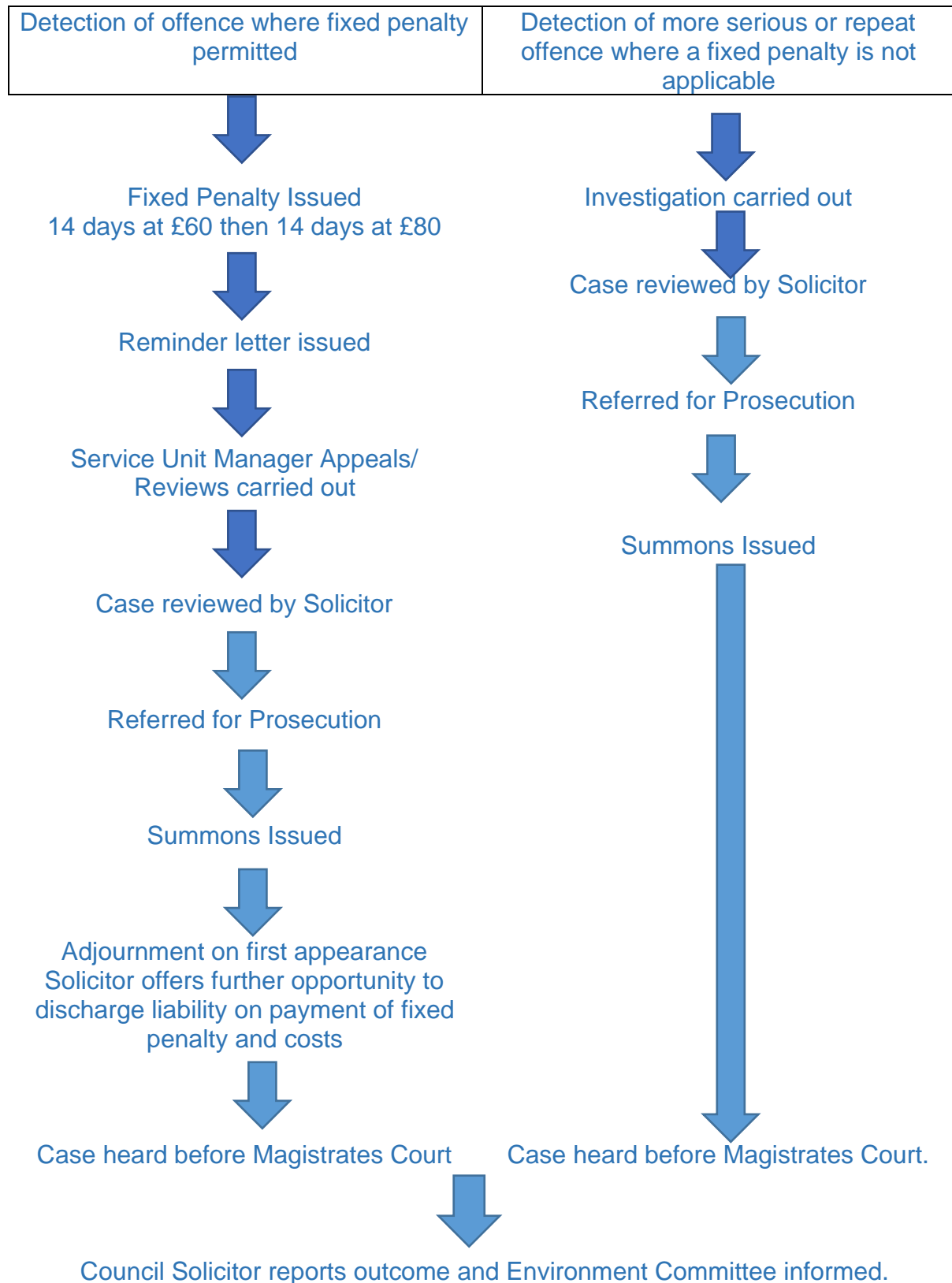


The above pie chart outlined how each of the nine prosecution cases were disposed of during the period of the report. A further twenty cases were, at the time of writing, awaiting a court hearing. Convictions were secured against seven defendants during the period of the report.

Please note in some cases a defendant may be prosecuted for more than one offence. One further case was 'Withdrawn/Settled', i.e., withdrawn following payment of the relevant fixed penalty sums along with Court and Council legal costs, and one case was withdrawn for various procedural/evidential reasons.

One of the seven cases was in relation to a severe dog attack on another dog and a person, which unfortunately resulted in the death of the dog. The defendant was given a prison sentence of four months suspended for three years, and legal costs of £200 and service fee of £42 were awarded to the Council.

The enforcement process carried out by the Neighbourhood Environment Team is as follows:



Appendix A
Result of court proceedings from 1 October 2022 until 31 December 2022

Reference	Offence	Court	Fine	Legal costs awarded	Service fee	Offender levy	Total	Comments
2022/252226	Littering	21/10/2022	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Withdrawn
2022/250148	Littering	21/10/2022	£150.00	£150	£30.00	£15.00	£345.00	
2022/253665	Dog Attack on Dog & Person	21/10/2022	Suspended prison sentence of four months for 3 years.	£200	£42	£0	£242	Suspended prison sentence of four months for 3 years.
2022/248671	Straying x 2	18/11/2022	£160	£100	£0	£15	£275	
2022/244143	Littering	18/11/2022	£160	£100	£0	£15	£275	
2022/247535	No Licence & Straying	18/11/2022	£320	£175	£26	£15	£536	£160 Straying £160 No Licence
2022/251347	Littering	18/11/2022	£80	£150	£30	£15	£275	
2022/260925	Littering	16/12/2022	£0	£150	£30	£0	£180	Settled & Withdrawn
2022/259952	Littering	16/12/2022	£80	£50	£0	£15	£145	

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the report.

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

Alderman Cummings advised that the suspended sentence case was a significant penalty and asked what it related to. The Director of Environment explained that it had been due to a dog attack on another dog and person with aggravating factors. The investigating officer could give Alderman Cummings full details if required.

Councillor Wray noted what he believed to be a low number of convictions in relation to littering by comparison to reports of littering online, though he understood this was due to limited resources of the Council. He asked if any information existed on how conviction decisions had been met and if any lessons could be learned on trends and how such perpetrators had been caught. The Director of Environment advised Members that this report was routinely brought separately from the quarterly NET service activity report, which gave details of other enforcement actions such as Fixed

Penalty Notices served. The report only gave information on the relatively small number of cases that proceeded to court.

Councillor Woods regarded the figures supplied as having been from some time ago and asked if costs were covered, how much it cost the Council to convict and whether that information was available. The Director of Environment explained that in general, costs were awarded at the discretion of the magistrate on the day of any given court sitting. Generally, there was a net cost to Council for the undertaking of enforcement action. Sometimes a full cost recovery was achieved, but it was more likely for only a proportion of legal costs to be recovered. The Director of Environment would ask the Officer to ensure figures were added to the report in the future as well as the possibility of adding details of when incidents took place.

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

9. BUILDING CONTROL Q3 ACTIVITY REPORT (OCT TO DEC 2022)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment advising that, the information provided in the report covered, unless otherwise stated, the period 1 October 2022 to 31 December 2022 (Q3). The aim of the report was to provide Members with details of some of the key activities of Building Control, the range of services it provided along with details of level of performance. This report format had been introduced across Regulatory Services.

2.0 Applications

Full Plan applications were made to Building Control for building works to any commercial building, or for larger schemes in relation to residential dwellings.

Building Notice applications would be submitted for minor alternations such as internal wall removal, installation of heating boilers or systems, installation of all types of insulation and must be made before work commences. These applications were for residential properties only.

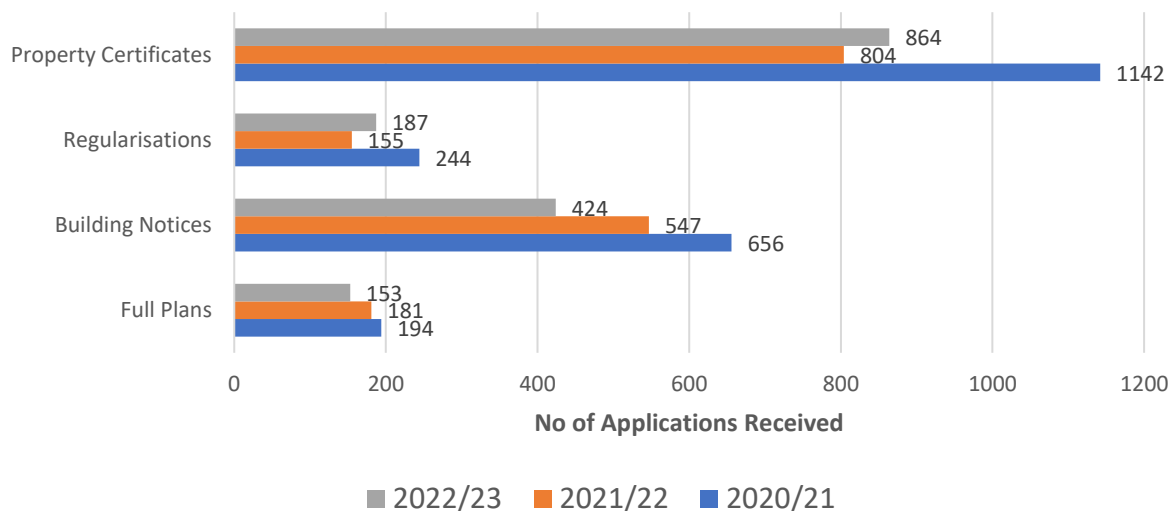
Regularisation applications would consider all works carried out illegally without a previous Building Control application in both commercial and residential properties. A regularisation application considers all types of work retrospectively and under the Building Regulations in force at the time the works were carried out.

Property Certificate applications were essential to the conveyancing process in the sale of any property, residential or commercial, and provide information on Building Control history and Council held data.

	Period of Report 01/10/2022 – 31/12/2022	01/10/2021- 31/12/2021	01/10/2020 – 31/12/2020
Full Plan Applications	153	181	194

Building Notice Applications	424	547	656
Regularisation Applications	187	155	244
Property Certificate Applications	864	804	1142

Building Control Applications Received Quarter 3



The number of Full Plan applications received is very much determined by the economic climate, any changes in bank lending or uncertainty in the marketplace may cause a reduction in Full Plan applications. There were no direct internal means to control the number of applications received.

3.0 Regulatory Approvals and Completions

Turnaround times for full plan applications were measured in calendar days from the day of receipt within the council, to day of posting (inclusive).

Inspections had to be carried out on the day requested due to commercial pressures on the developer/builder/householder, and as such any pressures on that end of the business reflected on the turnaround of plans timescale.

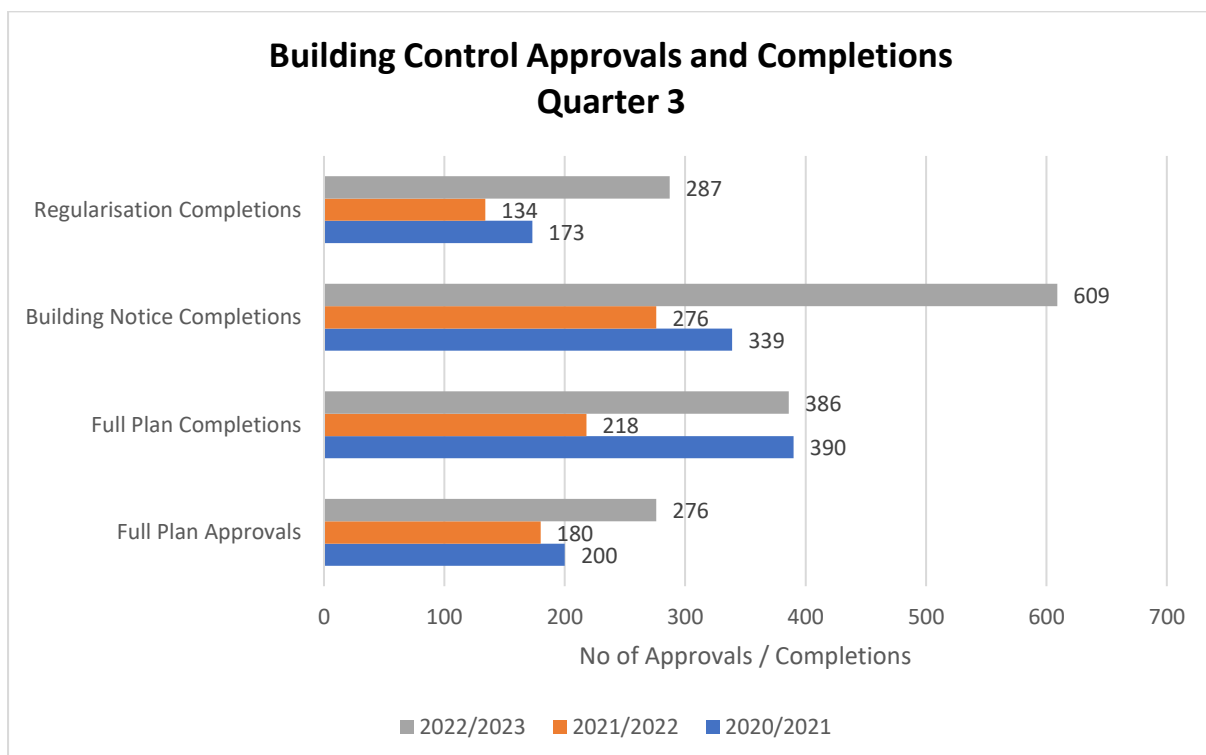
	Period of Report 01/10/2022 – 31/12/2022	Same quarter last year	Comparison	Average number of days to turnaround plan
Domestic Full Plan Turnarounds within target (21 calendar days)	77%	52%	↑	21
Non-Domestic Full Plan Turnarounds within target (35 calendar days)	85%	70%	↑	22

4.0 Regulatory Approvals and Completions

The issuing of Building Control Completion Certificates would indicate that works had been carried out to a satisfactory level and met with Building Regulations at the time of writing.

Building Control Full Plan Approval indicated that the information and drawings submitted as part of an application met Building Regulations at the time of writing and works could commence on site.

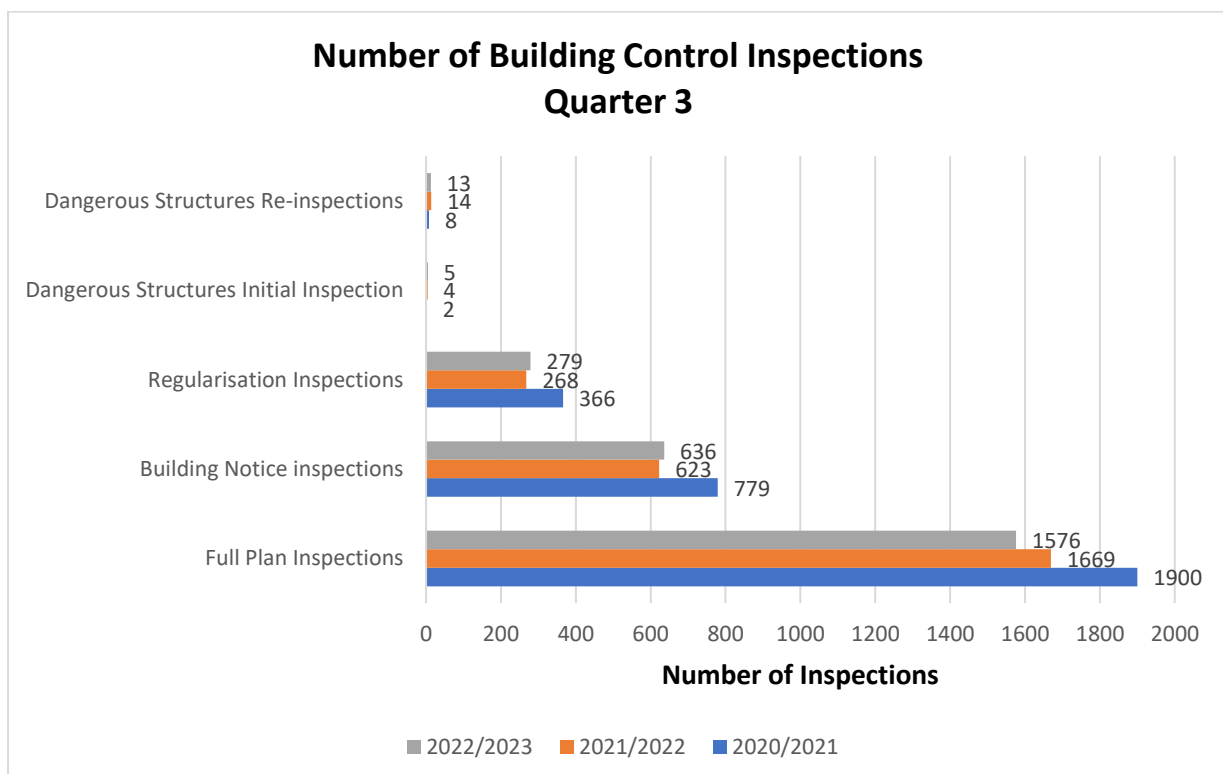
	Period of Report 01/10/2022 – 31/12/2022	01/10/2021 – 31/12/2021	01/10/2020 – 31/12/2020
Full Plan Approvals	276	180	200
Full Plan Completions	386	218	390
Building Notice Completions	609	276	339
Regularisation Completions	287	134	173



5.0 Inspections

Under the Building Regulations applicants were required to give notice at specific points in the building process to allow inspections. The inspections would be used to determine compliance and to all for improvement or enforcement.

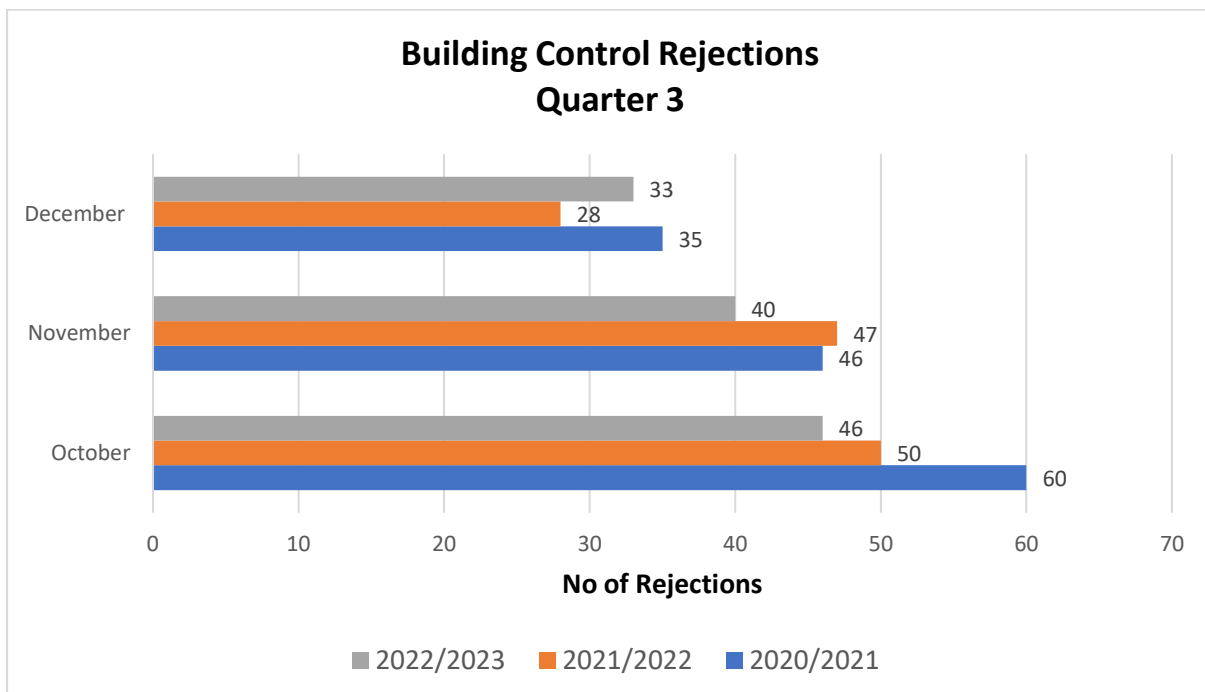
	Period of Report 01/10/2022 – 31/12/2022	01/10/2021 – 31/12/2021	01/10/2020 – 31/12/2020
Full Plan Inspections	1576	1669	1900
Building Notice Inspections	636	623	779
Regularisation Inspections	279	268	366
Dangerous structures initial inspection	5	4	2
Dangerous structure re-inspections	13	14	8
Total inspections	2509	2578	3055



6.0 Non-Compliance

Where it was not possible to Approve full plan applications they were required to be rejected. Building Control Full Plan Rejection Notices indicated that after assessment, there were aspects of the drawings provided that did not meet Building Regulations at the time of writing. A Building Control Rejection Notice set out the changes or aspects of the drawings provided that needed to be amended. After those amendments were completed, the amended drawings should be submitted to Building Control for further assessment and approval.

	Period of Report 01/10/2022 – 31/12/2022	01/10/2021 – 31/12/2021	01/10/2020 – 31/12/2020
Full Plan Rejection Notice	119	125	141
Dangerous Structure Recommended for legal action	0	0	0
Court Cases	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0



RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the report.

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

Both Councillor Cathcart and Councillor Wray noted the quick turnaround times and congratulated Officers.

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

10. REVIEW OF LOCAL AUTHORITY (COUNCIL) PROPERTY CERTIFICATE FEES 2023

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment advising that Members would have been aware that the Council Property Certificate system arose from an agreement in the early 1990's between the Law Society (representing solicitors) and local councils, as a means of ascertaining information which was useful in legal searches relating to the conveyancing process for land and property. The Council Property Certificate was a series of questions asked about a specific address, which in our council area, would be answered by mainly Building Control.

Detail

Members may have recalled that in 2020, councils agreed to increase the Council's Property Certificate fee from £60 to £70 - fixed until a further review in 2023.

This review had since been undertaken by officers at a regional level and given the increasing cost pressures on councils, officers had obtained SOLACE approval for the following proposal.

To mitigate against future inflationary costs to councils, SOLACE had agreed to the concept of applying a 3-year inflationary fee review cycle meaning a further review would not be required until 2026, unless there were significant changes to the Council Property certificate process - in which case, councils would reserve the right to review the fees.

Therefore, an assumption was built in for future rises to Consumer Price Index's (CPI's), along with other increasing cost pressures on councils, officers felt that it would be reasonable to propose an increase to the councils' Property Certificate fee for a standard 10-year search from £70 to £90 fixed for three years.

This proposed increase would assist councils in maintaining adequate resources to ensure that the service as delivered in a prompt, efficient and professional manner.

The slight differential between the Regional Property Certificate and the Council Property Certificate would also address the previous concerns raised by the Law Society that the two fees being the same had sometimes led to confusion among solicitors and agents in relation to property certificate applications.

The above would increase the fees below from 1 July 2023, as outlined below:

Standard Charges

	<u>Current Fee</u>	<u>Inflationary cycle added</u>
a) Standard 10 year search	£70	£90
b) Search back to 1973	£95	£122
c) Specified 10 year search	£70	£90
d) Follow-up 10 year search	£30	£38

Financial and Resource Implications

There would be significant increase to the income raised but exact figure would depend on the number of applications received.

Equality and Good Relations Implications

Officers were not aware of any equality or good relations implications in relation to this report/proposal.

RECOMMENDED that the Council agree the proposals for increase in Council Property Certificate fees set out in this report.

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

Councillor Smart asked, in terms of additional fees to make the service fit for resident needs and working with colleagues from a legal perspective, if there was a need to bring additional staff resources in for turnaround times. The Building Control Services Manager explained that with the slowing of the housing market, there was no need for increasing staff at this time but there was an ongoing cost to provision of the system and the backup of it. If the workload was to increase significantly, there may be a possibility in the future for an increase of staff, but not at the current time.

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

11. PROPOSED STREET NAMING – TULLYGARVAN MILL, BALLYGOWAN

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment advising that a small development comprising of a combination of 4 apartments and 6 townhouses was, at the time of writing, under construction adjacent to 44 Ballyknockan Road, Killinchy.

The developer had suggested the name Tullygarvan Mill, Ballygowan, due to the existing building formerly being the Tullygarvan Flax Spinning Mill and was known by the local community as the Tullygarvan Mill which as in keeping with the general neighbourhood.

RECOMMENDED that the Council agrees that the street name of Tullygarvan Mill be adopted for this development and that the Council accepts the general name and delegates acceptance of suffixes to the Building Control department.

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

Councillor Douglas noted that the document stated the location was adjacent to Killinchy and further down noted being nearer to Ballygowan and asked for

clarification. The Building Control Services Manager explained that the location would be off Ballyknockan Road which was not in Killinchy but on its border. Alderman Cummings commented further, stating that it was at the southern end of Ballygowan.

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

12. CONFIRMATION OF PROVISIONAL AMUSEMENT PERMIT

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment advising the following:

Premises: Oasis Gaming, 39 High Street, Newtownards

Applicant: Mr Martin Trimble, Gowan Heights, Belfast
Mr Gerald Steinberg, Ailsa Road, Holywood

The Council granted a provisional Amusement Permit for the above premises on 10 October 2022.

A **provisional licence** application was made before the premises are completed. Once completed to the Council's satisfaction, the application would need to be brought back to the Council to confirm it.

The permit holder had advised that they hope to finish the premises to the satisfaction of the Council by 5 July 2023 and would hope to open the premises to the public on that date.

It was proposed that the Provisional Amusement Permit is confirmed pending the provision of a satisfactory Building Control Completion Certificate.

RECOMMENDED that the Council agrees to confirm the Provisional Amusement Permit once a Building Control Completion Certificate is provided.

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

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter asked that it be noted she was against the granting of the permit. Though she understood protocols were being followed, there was a strong community feeling against it with the location as it was.

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

13. GRANT OF OUTDOOR ENTERTAINMENT LICENCE

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment advising that Applications for outdoor entertainment licences had been received from:

Castle Espie, 78 Ballydrain Road, Comber

Applicant: Paul Whitcombe, 24 Woburn Drive, Millisle

The proposal was for an audience of less than 500 on 14 unspecified days.

No objections had been received to this application from local residents.

Type of entertainment: Public musical / theatrical entertainment events to be held wholly or mainly in the open air.

Walled Garden, Bangor Castle

Applicant: Mr Kieran Gilmore, 16 Quay Street, Bangor

Days and Hours: 16 – 19 August 2023 between the **hours** of 12 noon and 11pm and 12 noon to 10pm on Sunday.

Type of entertainment: A public musical event to be held wholly or mainly in the open air as part of the Open House Festival.

RECOMMENDED that the Council grants licences with the condition that they will not be issued until the licensees provide and implement Event Management Plans to the satisfaction of the PSNI, NIFRS and Council Officers.

(As the Chair, Councillor Morgan had declared an interest in Item 13, she left the room at 10:21pm and Alderman Cummings as Vice Chair held the meeting.)

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

(Councillor Morgan returned to the room at 10.22pm resuming as Chair).

14. GRANT OF PAVEMENT CAFÉ LICENCES

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment advising that the following applications had been received for the grant of a Pavement Café Licence:

1. The Willow Tree, 10-12 The Square, Comber

Applicant: Mrs Carole Spratt, 15 Dalton Park, Comber

Day and hours of use:

Monday - Saturday	09:00 – 17.00
Sunday	09:00 – 15.00

2. Sandwiches, 55 High Street, Bangor

Applicant: Mrs Marlene Base, 8 Coulters Hill Lane, Kircubbin

Day and hours of use:

Monday - Saturday 09:00 – 16.00

3. The Narrows, 12 Shore Road, Portaferry

Applicant: Mr Krystof Piorek, 16 Shore Road, Portaferry

Day and hours of use:

Monday - Sunday 08:30 – 21:30

4. Nugelato Ice Cream Boutique, 62 High Street, Bangor

Applicant: Mr Nicky Pell, 5 Evesham Lane, Bangor

Day and hours of use:

Monday - Sunday 13:00 – 22:00

5. The Portaferry Hotel, 10 The Strand, Portaferry

Applicant: Kieran Quinn, 12 Millview, Portaferry

Day and hours of use:

Monday - Sunday 11:00 – 21:00

Comment

The applications had been publicly displayed on the relevant premises for 28 days as required in the legislation. No objections had been received.

DFI Roads and the Planning Service had been consulted and where necessary, the PSNI. No objections had been raised to these applications.

Under the agreed conditions of licence, the pavement cafes would be required to:

- only use the agreed area to be outlined in the licence,
- provide only the approved furniture,
- completely remove any furniture from the pavement at the end of each day's trading
- keep the area used for the café to be kept clean of litter and liquid spills.

RECOMMENDED that that the Council grants the above licences.

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

15. GRANT OF STREET TRADING LICENCE

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment advising that an application had been received for the grant of a Stationary Street Trading Licence to trade at designated sites within the Borough:

Applicant: Olivia Georgina Irvine

Address: 2 Moyle Hill, Ballywalter

Goods to be supplied: Hot beverages, soft drinks, tray bakes.

There were no objections to this application.

RECOMMENDED that the Council grants the Street Trading Licence.

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

16. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

CIRCULATED FOR INFORMATION

- a. Letter from Dfl – Unclaimed Bins on Public Footways

As this item had been covered earlier in the meeting, the Committee moved onward to in-committee.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

AGREED, on the proposal of Alderman Armstrong-Cotter, seconded by Councillor Edmund, that the public/press be excluded during the discussion of the undernoted items of confidential business at 22:25.

17. NOM REPORT – LOCAL ANIMAL WELFARE OFFENDERS REGISTER

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

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

A Notice of Motion report on the potential for publication of a local Animal Abuse Register of Offenders was considered. It was recommended that a local animal welfare offenders register is not created by the Council.

The recommendation was agreed.

18. TENDER REPORT ON THE TREATMENT OF STREET SWEEPINGS

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

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

A report on the provision of services for the treatment, recycling and disposal of street sweepings was considered.

It was recommended that a contract be awarded to R Heatrick Ltd, as the most economically advantageous tender.

The recommendation was agreed.

19. SINGLE TENDER ACTION – SUPPLY OF DENNIS EAGLE PARTS

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

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

A report was considered for the supply of replacement parts for our fleet of Dennis Eagle Refuse Collection Vehicles.

It was recommended that Council agrees a contract with Manvik Plant to provide Dennis Eagle parts.

The recommendation was agreed.

20. SINGLE TENDER ACTION – SUPPLY BMI EJECTOR TRAILERS

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

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

A report was considered for the supply of trailers for use at the Balloo waste transfer station. It was recommended that Council purchases trailers from BMI Trailers (Dungannon).

The recommendation was agreed.

4.1. ASSETS AND PROPERTY SERVICES

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

The Committee discussed a question from a Member around maintenance and repairs at Bangor Aurora Aquatic and Leisure Complex.

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 22:39

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

A hybrid meeting (in person and via Zoom) of the Place & Prosperity Committee was held at the Council Chamber, Church Street, Newtownards on Thursday 15 June 2023 at 7.00pm.

PRESENT:

In the Chair: Councillor Blaney

Aldermen: Adair
Armstrong-Cotter
McDowell

Councillors: Ashe McKimm
Gilmour (Zoom) McLaren
Hollywood Rossiter
McCracken Smart
McCollum

In Attendance: Director of Place (S McCullough), Director of Prosperity (A McCullough), Head of Regeneration (B Dorrian), Head of Tourism (S Mahaffy), Head of Economic Development (C McGill - Zoom) and Democratic Services Officer (J Glasgow)

1. APOLOGIES

An apology for inability to attend was received from Councillor MacArthur and Councillor Edmund.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were notified.

3. PRESENTATION BY ALAN MCKEOWN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRANSFORMATION, INVEST NI

(Appendix I)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of presentation.

The Chairman welcomed Mr McKeown to the meeting who undertook a powerpoint presentation.

Mr McKeown commenced his presentation by outlining the role of Invest NI whose primary function was to grow the local economy in Northern Ireland. They helped new and existing businesses to compete locally and internationally, by attracting new investment to Northern Ireland and critically to help businesses to sell outside Northern Ireland. Their primary function was to help businesses who were exporting globally and they wished to see businesses reach a threshold of £250,000 of a

turnover within 5 years and to have at least 25% of their sales outside Northern Ireland.

Mr McKeown outlined that they provided support through the following ways:

- Job creation
- Inward investment
- Exports
- Entrepreneurship
- Innovation
- Skills.

Invest NI recently published its headline KPIs for supporting businesses, showing an increase across sales, external sales and exports. Sales had increased by 15.4% and export sales were up by 16.1%. Every year Invest NI provided a sub-regional briefing to elected Members and partners in respect of what was occurring in the local area.

Mr McKeown outlined a number of headline statistics which were shown in the slides.

In terms of Invest NI support to businesses locally within the Borough, Mr McKeown outlined that over the five years to March 2022, Invest NI made 747 offers of support to 258 businesses in AND. That represented c.£17m in assistance, leveraging total investment of £87m and 628 assisted jobs. In addition to that Invest NI worked closely with Economic development on the LED and Ambition to Grow Programmes.

A review of Invest NI was published in January 2023 and it made recommendations against 17 thematic areas. All recommendations had been accepted by the Department and DfE. The review concluded that profound change was needed to ensure full alignment to the 10x Vision. The review recognised that there were challenges for DfE. Both agencies were committed to acting on the recommendations. A Joint DfE/Invest NI steering group had been established. An action plan would be developed and published in the summer of this year with implementation anticipated to be delivered over a number of years.

Mr McKeown was of the view that Invest NI worked incredibly well within Ards and North Down Borough Council and he wished for that to continue. Invest NI worked closely with the Council on a range of areas including;

- active engagement with AND Council on the development of its Economic Strategy;
- active statutory member of the Strategic Community Planning Partnership;
- Involvement in the development of the City Deal projects through the BRCD;
- active member of the AND Labour Market Partnership; and
- working with all councils on the launch of ESS
- Ambition to Grow Programme.

That concluded the presentation and the Chairman invited questions from Members.

Alderman McDowell raised a number of questions, firstly in respect of the lack of industrial premises available in the Borough in particular referring to Newtownards and, in his view, there was market failure in that regard. He highlighted the stringent conditions that were set by Invest NI for businesses to obtain land which was putting businesses off. Alderman McDowell asked what role Invest NI was providing in relation to the industrial land that it used to provide.

Mr McKeown stated that the provision of industrial land across Northern Ireland was an issue and the report from Michael Lyons set that as a matter that Invest NI needed to conduct a review on and reach out and work in partnership with Local Councils. At the current stage Invest NI were working through that review and were looking at having positive engagement with Councils. Invest NI needed to be open to the pressures that individual areas in Northern Ireland were facing and listen to the concerns from Councils. Mr McKeown highlighted that Invest NI was a public body and therefore there were rules in relation to the disposal of land and wished to ensure that land was earmarked for industrial use and primarily offered to Invest NI clients. He wished to point out that land was very expensive and to purchase land at the current time Invest NI would need to make a very strong case for market failure and to bid for capital resources.

Alderman McDowell wished to highlight that the other part of the failure was that the land that was previously industrial land was sold for housing and referred to Weavers Grange, Newtownards, as an example. Alderman McDowell stated that there needed to be a closer role with Invest NI to maximise the opportunities to create jobs and growth. At the current time he felt there was little contact between Invest NI and Council members. Alderman McDowell also wished to highlight the lack of inward investment to the Borough over the last 20-40 years.

In respect of ongoing engagement with Council, Mr McKeown viewed that as strong and positive. He wished to ensure Invest NI and Council were aligning and working together at the appropriate stages to support businesses. In terms of engagement with elected members, Mr McKeown took on board the comments of Alderman McDowell and stated that he was happy to come back to have further discussion.

Councillor McKimm asked what investment and projects Invest NI were bringing to the Borough in contrast to other Council areas. Councillor McKimm referred to the recent funding cuts to the LMP and he asked if there were ways in which Invest NI could assist those that were economically inactive within the Borough.

Mr McKeown highlighted the importance of an effective partnership working including with those Community Planning partners. In terms of the support given to the Borough he referred to detail outlined in his presentation. He further outlined support that was provided to businesses during the pandemic. Mr McKeown recognised that Invest NI could do more and what form that took was for further discussion to look at shared priorities.

Councillor Rossiter asked if there were early indications of foreign investment opportunities into the region and referred to the Windsor framework. Secondly, he asked what Invest NI would do to ensure there was a good regional spread. In response Mr McKeown explained that Invest NI would be looking to take the

advantages of dual market access. He highlighted the importance of being a globally competitive market and to advertise what Northern Ireland had to offer. It was a hugely competitive market and Invest NI were fighting hard in that regard. The International Team were at the disposal of the Council for international trade visits and there would be an International Trade Conference coming to Northern Ireland in the Autumn.

Councillor Smart stated that since 2014-15 the commercial rates base of the Borough had shrunk year on year, not only having an impact on the economic wellbeing of the Borough but also putting pressure on the domestic rate base. He felt the Borough was always on the wrong end of Invest NI investment and he asked if the review would take account of that and when the actions of the review would start to be seen. Mr McKeown recognised that more needed to be done in partnership on shared priorities and voiced his commitment in that regard. He stated that the outcome of the review would be published late Summer 2023.

Alderman Adair asked if Invest NI had a policy or strategy that aimed to bring jobs to zoned land for industry into rural areas. He in particular referred to efforts that he had made in the past when there had been job losses on the Princess Anne Road, Portavogie, that land was zoned for industrial use and he stated that land would have been lost if it was not for the support of Ards Business Centre. He questioned why that particular area had been ignored. Mr McKeown highlighted that Invest NI worked hard in relation to inward investment across Northern Ireland. Furthermore, it worked hard with companies to ensure that they were availing of support to grow, selling outside of Northern Ireland and were retaining workforces. The Ambition to Grow programme was an innovative and existing programme offering an attractive package to new start up companies.

Alderman Adair voiced his disappointment with the work in the Borough and felt more needed to be done. Mr McKeown referred to the figures which he had outlined of the assistance provided and reiterated the £17m in assistance, leveraging a total investment of £87m and 628 assisted jobs.

The Chairman thanked Mr McKeown for attending and he withdrew from the meeting.

NOTED.

4. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PERFORMANCE REPORT Q4 (Appendix II)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Prosperity attaching Quarter 4 performance report. The covering 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 Performance Planning and Management process as:

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years

- Corporate Plan – published every 4 years (Corporate Plan Towards 2024 in operation)
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually (for publication 30 September 2022)
- Service Plan – developed annually (approved April/May 2022)

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

Reporting approach

The Service Plans would be reported to relevant Committees on a quarterly basis as undernoted:

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
Quarter 1 (Q1)	April – June	September
Q2	July – September	December
Q3	October – December	March
Q4	January - March	June

Please note that, unfortunately, due to the timing of reports, some financial information had not been updated.

Key points to note:

- Performance in certain areas of the Service has been affected as difficulties in recruiting staff to fill posts has continued into this year, as have some instances of staff illness and member of staff requiring a career break. Workstreams had to be prioritised in line with the resources available and therefore some targets for the year had been not met and some budgets would be underspent.
- Following a joint meeting with DfE and the NI Audit Office (NIAO), it had been agreed that Councils should reference both the statutory targets and the *Go for It* programme targets. We are therefore reporting on the two sets of targets for Business Start-up activity: the original target set as part of transferring functions under RPA (referred to as NIBSUP2) and the revised target issued last year by DfE for *Go For It*. The new target would not be formally agreed to replace the original until the Executive was in place. The revised target was significantly higher and due to the challenging economic climate, the number of enquiries received concerning starting a business had slowed and those progressing to setting up in business had slowed.

Key achievements:

- The Labour Market Partnership was successfully established and delivered a wide range of interventions that demonstrated real and immediate impact in helping people to achieve new skills and get into employment.
- The Digital Growth Programme exceeded its targets assisting businesses to create new digital tools to develop and grow their markets.

- While our attractions have come under pressure due to increased costs and footfall numbers, they have continued to develop their offering and have ensured all elements of the contract have been delivered.

Emerging issues:

- The Department for Communities announced in May 2023 that the budget for any LMP activity in 2023-24 would be cut by 75%. That would obviously have a huge negative effect on the work that has been planned and would have implications for the viability of the LMP going forward.
- The new service to replace the existing *Go For It* programme was currently out to tender and timelines were extremely tight to ensure we would have continuity of service and support of sufficient quality.

Action to be taken:

- Timelines are tight but officers continue to work with all other Councils, and through Belfast City Council, with DLUHC, to receive confirmation of funding and to prepare plans for continuity of support for a new business start-up and the creation of a new support service.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this report.

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

Councillor McKimm referred to the future of the LMP and asked for comment in that regarding questioning the direct impact of any closure or reduction. He expressed particular concern on the impact that would have on those who were economically inactive and young people. The Head of Economic Development stated the matter had been very challenging with the recent announcement that the budget for LMP activity in 2023-24 would be cut by 75%. That had a huge impact on the coming year and there was to be no spend on activity post 30 June 2023. Not only was there an impact internally on staff resources but also there was a great impact on the action plan that was ready to address skills, assist people into employment and help new funding streams for bursaries and training. The Head of Economic Development advised that work was continuing on the projects that had already proceeded and Officers were currently working on maximising funding streams to try and leverage additional funding. Together with other service areas in Council there would be a collective response to the Department to demonstrate the impact in response to the Equality Impact Appraisal consultation on the proposed budget cuts. Officers were hopeful that would have an impact for influencing budget allocations. One member of staff had been lost as a result with another member of the team on a reduced period until further security be found for the LMP.

Councillor McKimm expressed his disappointment regarding the huge impact the cut of funding would have particularly given that the scheme had taken a long time to commence.

Councillor Smart shared those concerns specifically given that the service was particularly needed at the current time. He raised a question regarding staff levels if funding was successful later in the year. In response the Head of Economic

Development stated at the current time it was a watching brief. The Partnership had taken the decision to use the allocation of budget to put the LMP on what she described as a slow burn. Difficulties had been faced recruiting staff in the first instance. The Partnership had taken the decision to let one member of staff go with one other staff member being maintained to work on the projects that would run to December 2023. A review would be carried out in September to see what actions could be taken however at the moment it was uncertain time.

(Councillor Gilmour withdrew from the meeting (via zoom) – 7.43 pm)

Councillor Rossiter echoed the sentiments expressed regarding the cut in funding with yet again the poorest and most vulnerable in society being impacted by the cuts. He expressed disappointment regarding the impact the inaction in Stormont was having on local communities. Councillor Rossiter asked if there were any early indications of the impact the cuts would have in particular on youth unemployment rates within the Borough. The Head of Economic Development explained that Officers had compiled an evidence based response that would be brought to Council. The cuts had demonstrable and very clear and immediate impact. Without the interventions it was clear that there would be an impact on job opportunities for those that were economically inactive.

The Director of Prosperity advised that the draft response had been presented to the Council meeting held on 12 June 2023 and the response had been issued to DfC the previous day to this committee meeting.

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

5. INNOVATE UK: LOCAL INDUSTRIAL DECARBONISATION PLANS (ED136)

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

Background

The Innovate UK: Local Industrial Decarbonisation Plans (LIDP) provided **£5 million through a competitive process to support dispersed industrial sites and other public, private and third sector stakeholders to develop strategic plans** that plot a route **to decarbonising** industry in their area.

The competition would be open to collaborative local cluster project teams formed of industrial manufacturers and other key stakeholders, such as Local Authorities. Invest NI has approached the 11 Councils to seek non-financial support to submit a bid under this fund.

LIDP Overview and planned activities

- The development of credible, context-sensitive, strategic plans for decarbonisation of local industrial clusters not located within the UK's existing

industrial clusters, to develop plans to reduce their emissions and carbon leakage.

- Increased organisational collaboration between closely located industrial businesses, other stakeholders and strengthen decarbonisation planning skills, capacity and capability in local clusters.
- Evidence gathering to inform decarbonisation of other local clusters and dispersed sites.

LIDP Project Requirements Summary

Total Grant Available	£75,000 - £800,000	
Project Start Date	1 Jan 2024	
Project End date	31 Dec 2024	
Project Lead	UK Registered Business of any size Research Organisation Public Sector Organisation Charity Not for Profit	Carry out project work in the UK Intend to exploit results from or in the UK Collaborate with other UK registered organisations
Project Team	As above plus academic institutions	Carry out project work in the UK
Subcontractors	Allowed. Must be from the UK. Costs to be justified and appropriate to the total eligible project costs	
Collaboration	Collaboration with other organisations is required. Innovate UK will not accept applications from single industrial facilities	

Invest NI Proposal

Invest NI (INI) had approached Innovate UK with a view to submitting a Northern Ireland-wide LIDP project proposal. This collaborative approach had been received favourably by Innovate UK and Invest NI had moved to engage all 11 Councils within its overall ILDP project proposal, circa £800,000.

An introductory meeting took place in INI's Headquarters in May with Council representatives to present the outline of the project and assess the willingness of local government authorities to support the project.

The proposal was currently at a very early stage and the aim of this report was to seek permission to involve relevant Officers in the development of this project.

Ards and North Down Borough Council's role

The role of the Council would be to participate in the bid proposal phase (May-Sept), attend meetings, gather data, endorse strategies and provide a letter of support. If successful, the Council would participate in the project, funded through a proportional share of the £800,000.

Note: This project, if successful, is fully funded (100%) with no additional/matched funding required.

RECOMMENDED that Council approves officer participation in the Local Industrial Decarbonisation Plans initiated and applied for by Invest NI in a strategic and supporting capacity and at no financial cost to the Council other than officers' time.

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

Councillor Smart recognised that the plan was in its infancy; however, if the Council were to be successful he wondered would there be a spilt across the Borough and how the divide would work.

The Head of Economic Development noted that it was early days, the fund had to be business-led and Invest NI would be facilitating clusters. Work would need to occur with Invest NI on ideas and the appetite in that regard.

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

**6. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ANNUAL ACTIVITY REPORT
2022-23 (FILE ED55)**
(Appendix III)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED :- Report from the Director of Prosperity attaching Item ED Annual Summary 2022-23. The report provided the undernoted detail:-

Ards and North Down Business Support Services

The role of the Economic Development Section (ED) within the Economic Development Service Unit was to promote and encourage local economic growth and to work to develop a pipeline of support from enterprise awareness, business start and business growth, employability and skills and sector development.

To encourage skills development, enterprise, growth and innovation, ED provides a suite of support, projects, interventions, and collaborations. Local businesses and entrepreneurs benefit from 1:1 confidential business advice, a business intelligence service, signposting to other support agencies, workshops, advice sessions, networking opportunities and mentoring programmes.

This year, the ED Section had continued to deliver its support, as well as managing the delivery of the Labour Market Partnership Action Plan.

The team had worked in conjunction with colleagues across other service units to provide timely and crucial advice and support to assist businesses in navigating the issues associated with the cost-of-living crisis and other emerging issues.

This annual report, as in previous years, provides a summary overview of the elements of the support services provided to local businesses between April 2022 - March 2023.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this report.

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

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter stated that it was notable that most of the targets that had been set had been achieved in abundance. Despite the workforce difficulties within the Department it was clear that work was proceeding, and it was important that Council funding remained at a sustained level. The lack of investment within the Borough was not as a result of the lack of work by Council and the successes within the report was an indication of that.

Councillor McKimm referred to and welcomed the green business programme. In that regard he asked if there was any indication how that could progress further or be skilled up. The Head of Economic Development stated that it was hoped to run a further program again; however, it was currently not a top priority as work was occurring on the new entrepreneurial support service.

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

7. SHINE – END OF PROGRAMME REPORT (ED79)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Prosperity providing the undernoted detail:

Background

The SHINE Programme was the Council's principal business support and growth programme. It was funded by Invest Northern Ireland and the European Regional Development Fund under the Investment for Growth & Jobs Northern Ireland (2014-2020) Programme. The SHINE Programme was officially launched in February 2019.

The SHINE Programme aimed to create new jobs and improve the competitiveness of existing SMEs operating in the Ards and North Down Borough Council area. The Programme offered mentoring to develop the capacity and capability of small business owners/managers to prepare growth strategies that could drive new investment, increase sales turnover and profitability, improve efficiency, and create employment to increase job creation in the borough.

The Economic Development section reported to the Regeneration, Development and Planning Committee in February and November 2021 with a recommendation to note the SHINE Programme Mid Term Evaluation Report, programme progress and to agree to continue with the programme delivery until the end of the Programme in December 2022.

At its August Council meeting, Council agreed to approve the request from Invest NI to extend the SHINE programme's delivery period by a further three months up to 31 March 2023 and to authorise Officers to liaise with CPD and Invest NI in relation to making the necessary amendments to the Letter of Offer and contract with the delivery agent. This was carried out to maximise the funds available under the

programme and ensure that more companies could benefit from the programme.

SHINE Programme Mentoring Delivery

The SHINE Programme Delivery main objectives and outputs to date were listed below:

Objectives/targets	Outputs to date
360 individual businesses engaging in the Programme	192 businesses have completed a diagnostic form for the Programme, 188 appointed onto SHINE.
330 businesses recruited for mentoring support	154 businesses completed the Programme in full, using all allocated mentoring hours. 34 businesses did not complete the programme.
Deliver at least 6250 hours of “one to one” mentoring to at least 330 participating businesses by 31 March 2023.	Total of 3,222.08 hours since the beginning of the programme up to 31 March 2023.
280 jobs to be created within 3 years by 31 December 2023	Total number of FTE jobs created since start of programme is 176.69 jobs (119 F/T 43.49 P/T 14. contract)
30 businesses referred to Invest NI (the pipeline)	9 quality business referrals added to portal and emailed to Invest NI Executive, 7 referred.
70 businesses referred to other sources of support and assistance.	38 participants have been referred to other business support providers, excluding Invest NI financial Support. A total of 74 referrals to business support services.
6 per annum Economic Development Business topic half day workshops/events with minimum of 12 participants	24 workshops/webinars delivered since start of programme, on business development support topics. Sales & Marketing, Bookkeeping, Finance & Cashflow, HR Solutions Digital Marketing (the most common support since Covid); <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social Media - Facebook - Instagram - TikTok - Website, (SEO)

The COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions imposed from 2020 to 2022, Brexit and the cost-of-living crisis affecting businesses had a significant impact on the recruitment and delivery of the SHINE Programme. Officers saw a decrease in demand for the programme from March 2020 and a few businesses failed to fully complete the mentoring. The Delivery Agent communicated with participants and recorded the reasons for not continuing with the programme.

Some of the reasons were as follows:

- ‘Not trading any more’

- 'No further intervention required'
- 'Don't want to continue'
- 'Too many hours, don't know what to do with them'
- 'Non-Starters - Have no time'
- 'Non-Starters' – businesses allocated hrs (incl extra hrs) and client with no time to use them.

The Council tried to meet the targets based on reasonable endeavours through a range of different mechanisms to assist with recruitment and mentoring.

In 2020 after consulting with Invest NI, it was decided to move the one-to-one mentoring online through ZOOM or equivalent platforms. The interactive workshops were delivered on ZOOM to allow the programme to continue. Mentoring continued at the choice of the participant, either via in person or online with their mentor.

In 2021 the creation of an on-line application platform offered clients the opportunity to complete an application on-line. Seventy-two clients completed the online application.

Although targets were not met by the end of programme, the ED Team used the principle of best endeavours to deliver as many mentoring hours as possible to local companies. This was done via a rigorous recruitment drive by telephone contact and a marketing campaign on social media and council.

SHINE Marketing and Recruitment

The table below outlines promotional activity:

PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITY	DETAILS OF EVENTS	DATES OF EVENT
Monthly Ezine	Ezines issued by the ED Unit	86 SHINE ezine items featured, and stand-alone ezines to promote SHINE Programme and workshops
Social media	Social Media marketing: - posts on Facebook - posts on Instagram - posts on Twitter - posts on LinkedIn	A social media plan for the duration of the programme up to March 2023 delivered by agents Directus. Marketing content created from August – March 2022 with new images/content. Regular posts on council Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and tagged to other support organisations, i.e. Ards Business Hub, NDDO
Inclusion in Business Support Programmes	The SHINE advert was included in our Business Support Programmes as	Businesses that were attending other events run by ED were being contacted post event.

	part of the overall programme of activities run by the Council The advert adhered strictly to the publicity guidelines.	SHINE was promoted to chambers of Commerce, and the LEAs to communicate with their networks.
Videos	Promotional Videos with existing participants	Four promotional videos were made using SHINE participants and an end of programme video with four participants was created.
ANDBusiness Website SHINE Page	Detailing SHINE programme with access to download application, dates of webinars and testimonial videos	The website page was a useful tool to promote and provide up to date information on the programme. Quarterly reporting on unique views to the page and its contents, i.e. application as also recorded.

A coordinated approach with Council's Communications Team and the programme marketing delivery agent was used to develop a marketing and social media portfolio, with the development of posters, newspaper advertisements, radio ads, ads on buses circulating the borough video production (4 video case studies), dedicated website page on ANDBusiness.co.uk to promote the SHINE Programme.

Funding

The total value of the Programme, which ran from 2018 to 2023, was £343,450, resource grant (not exceeding £274,760) at a rate of 80% funded by Invest Northern Ireland and the European Regional Development Fund under the Investment for Growth & Jobs Northern Ireland (2014-2020) Programme. The remaining 20%, funded by Ards and North Down Borough Council, came from existing budgets, and amounted to £68,690 over the duration of the Programme.

As the targets were not fully met, the programme was underspent. SHINE's total claim was £166,915 for the full programme, £158,917 for mentoring delivery and £7,998 for the marketing campaign.

The SHINE programme mentoring and marketing ended 31 March 2023. A final evaluation was due six months after end of programme delivery: 30 September 2023. A report on the programme's final evaluation would be brought to Council in October 2023.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the content of this report.

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

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter referred to the number of jobs that had come from support of the SHINE programme. Those were small businesses who did not have the confidence to draw up their own business cases and the support that was provided to enable those small business owners excited Alderman Armstrong-Cotter and she congratulated those involved in the programme. The SHINE programme

was a successful programme and the Council needed to ensure that it stayed exciting, remained engaging and enabling.

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

8. DIGITAL PROJECTS UPDATE (FILE DEVP25)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Prosperity providing an update summary on the undernoted ongoing digital projects:

1. FFNI (Full Fibre Northern Ireland)
2. The Digital Growth Programme
3. Digital Transformation - Digital Surge
4. Digital Transformation Flexible Fund
5. IoT (Internet of Things) in ANDBC
6. Innovation Hub

1. FFNI PROJECT UPDATE

Summary

Members would be aware from previous reports, that Ards and North Down Borough Council was a key partner within the Full Fibre Northern Ireland (FFNI) Consortium. The Consortium was made up of 11 partners (including 10 Councils) and has successfully secured total funding to the value of £24 million through the Local Full Fibre Networks (LFFN) and Rural Gigabit Connectivity (RGC) programmes, for the purpose of installing ultrafast gigabit capable fibre broadband to public sector buildings.

Background: What are LFFN and RGC?

The Local Full Fibre Networks (LFFN) programme and Rural Gigabit Connectivity (RGC) from the DCMS were designed to stimulate commercial investment in full fibre networks in rural and urban locations across the whole of the UK.

The aims were to:

- Stimulate more commercial investment to deliver more gigabit-capable connectivity.
- Directly maximise the availability and benefit of gigabit-capable broadband services to public sector, business and residential users.
- Improve commercial investment conditions in local areas.

Ultimately the outcome of these schemes was to stimulate the telecoms market to invest in more fibre connectivity for homes and businesses.

The schemes have important long-term benefits, although it was likely to directly improve availability of high bandwidth connectivity in some areas, the main impact would be felt more slowly through the commercial investment that would follow in time.

Final Outcomes – Ards and North Down

In total, the FFNI project drew down £751,936.80 from DCMS for the purposes of broadband connection to council sites across the Borough. The total number of council sites that have been connected by the FFNI project sits at 53 out of a potential total of 57. The outstanding four sites currently sit in Openreach's Commercial Plans.

This long-term infrastructure would bring in next generation connectivity technology that would be incorporated in Council's WAN (Wide Area Network) services through the future network services contract which Council's Business Technology Service Unit has procured alongside the other nine NI Councils.

Beyond the long-stop date and next step

In order to address the four outstanding sites, ANDBC continued to maintain contact with Openreach via a communication provider to determine when these sites would be addressed. Council would also investigate what products are offered and were currently supplied by Openreach and the potential costs outside of the FFNI contract to address the outstanding sites.

The FFNI consortium was set up in 2018 specifically to draw down funds from the Department of Culture Media and Sport funding mechanism LFFN (Local Full Fibre Network). This funding has now ended.

The FFNI consortium mechanism was now playing a role in the delivery of a Northern Ireland wide Digital Transformation Flexible Capital Fund. More details in regard to this programme are noted further on in this report.

Project Gigabit

Council was continuing to play a part in the both the UK Project Gigabit updates via BDUK and through the DfE (Department for the Economy) updates. Under project Gigabit, DfE has completed an Open Market Review (OMR) with digital infrastructure providers and officers had informed they were in the process of collating these results. The next phase would be a Northern Ireland wide public review.

This formal process would aim to validate the outcome of the OMR and ensure that it correctly represents the information provided by suppliers and ensure that the right areas are targeted with government investment. Council was awaiting an update on the results of the OMR and we have agreed to promote where possible the upcoming public review. DfE would update when the review goes live.

Project Stratum

The overall Project Stratum project across NI was now 67% complete, with Ards and North Down being one of the next councils to receive intervention in the coming months. Latest reports show we currently have 87 sites passed with 3,994 still to be passed by the rollout of fibre broadband via Project Stratum. DfE has confirmed that the OMR would act as a useful mechanism to determine any gaps that this phase of Project Stratum would leave. Council officers would ensure they continue to monitor the progress and feed in to support any interventions to enhance broadband connectivity across the Borough.

2. Digital Growth Programme

Summary and Background

The Digital Growth Programme was a collaborative programme between Newry, Mourne and Down District Council and Ards and North Down Borough Council with Newry, Mourne and Down as the lead partner. That was an ERDF (European Regional Development Fund) project and was now in its final completion and review stages.

The project was cross sectoral and aimed to contribute to business growth through addressing specific digital skills within the applying business. This was achieved through a combination of one-to-one mentoring, workshops and masterclasses delivered by a dedicated pool of procured mentors with the relevant digital skills.

Programme Outputs

This programme has now finished, and the key target outputs of the programme have been achieved as outlined below. Outputs delivered over the lifetime of the programme were:

- 104 AND businesses recruited onto DGP programme receiving mentoring support
- Over 1,764 hours delivered of 1:1 mentoring.
- 18 one-to-many ½-day Digital Growth workshops
- 4 Master Class Events

3. Digital Transformation - Digital Surge

Background

This project was developed out of the engagement between SOLACE and Invest Northern Ireland and named *Digital Surge*. Subsequently, following the receipt of the letter of offer and appointment of a delivery agent consortium, the project was now in the final stage of delivery throughout all 11 NI Council regions with the final mentoring sessions wrapping up in June 2023.

Current Status

Digital Surge was led by Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council.

The project held workshops to engage with potential businesses for the purposes of driving digital innovation and demystifying digital technologies amongst SMEs. The programme aim was to really drive *new* innovations and to stimulate productivity and offer businesses a unique chance to tap into new knowledge bases and networks.

Throughout the duration of the programme 30 masterclasses, in addition to 24 innovation workshops, have been held.

13 Ards and North Down businesses, from the sectors summarised below participated on the programme:

Construction
Health and beauty
Food and drink

*Consultancy
Craft
Designers*

No more businesses are being accepted on to the programme; programme review process was planned to begin in June 2023.

4. Digital Transformation Flexible Fund (DTFF)

Background

As Members would be aware, supporting digital innovation was a key priority in the development of the spectrum of projects emerging through city and growth deals across Northern Ireland.

The Digital Transformation Flexible Fund (DTFF) concept was initially developed in response to the low levels of innovation and digital transformation taking place across the region - particularly among the small business community. The DTFF aims to address the financial barrier that small businesses face when seeking to digitally transform by establishing a capital grant fund that would support investment in the types of capital equipment considered critical to their strategic digital transformation ambitions (e.g. hardware, software, bespoke system development).

To date £6m of funding for this project has been ring-fenced through the NI City & Growth Deal Complementary Fund. The Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) has committed a further £1.1m. Due to its ineligibility for the Complementary Fund, the Derry City & Strabane Growth Deal was currently also in the process of securing an additional £450k to create a total capital grant fund of £7.5m.

Outline Business Case (OBC) Development

Over the past six months Councils have participated in a process to develop the outline business case required to release this government funding. The business case has been informed by detailed and continuous engagement with a range of stakeholders including more than 40 businesses and organisations such as Digital Catapult, Catalyst, Innovate UK, Intertrade Ireland and Invest NI.

Following a robust business case process the delivery and management of the DTFF project was as summarised below.

- **Business Eligibility:** micro and small businesses and social enterprises (up to 50 employees) across all sectors, with the exception of primary agriculture and fisheries. Eligible businesses must be able to demonstrate at least one year's trading history;
- **Grant funding levels:** would range from £5,000 - £20,000 with a grant subvention rate of 70% of total project costs;
- **Eligible expenditure:** would be limited to the purchase of capital equipment and/or resources for software or bespoke system development. It would be aligned to advanced digital technologies;

- **Application Process:** Up to seven funding calls would be opened across the three-year delivery period of this Fund. Pre-application workshops would be held in local council areas in advance of calls to help stimulate demand. Businesses would be required to submit a digital transformation plan to demonstrate the strategic fit and economic return of their proposed investment projects through a competitive application process. There was an imperative to progress the business case process at pace to ensure alignment with the Councils' Digital Surge programme which was likely to lead to business plans that would require financial investment to which the DTFF was directly aligned to support;
- **Management of the Fund:** the project would be managed on a cross council basis through existing governance structures created through the existing Full Fibre NI Consortium, led by Newry, Mourne & Down District Council. Whilst the centralised management structure would deliver economies of scale for managing the overall fund, its operation would be managed through cross council governance structures. Local council Economic Development teams would play a key supporting role to animate and promote the Fund, assess funding applications etc.

Current Status

The OBC for the project was submitted to Invest Northern Ireland on 5 April 2023 and the second assessment was on 10 May 2023. Invest Northern Ireland was scheduled to present the project to the Department of the Economy on 8 June 2023.

Financial Implications

As previously agreed through the Council estimate process, the total revenue contribution from Ards and North Down Borough Council to support delivery of DTFF was £60,938 over 4 years. That would be met through existing budgets and was broken down as follows:

Financial Year	Contribution £
2022 / 23	£7,672
2023 / 24	£21,582
2024 / 25	£23,682
2025 / 26	£8,002

5. IoT (Internet of Things)

Background

IoT was the application of networked sensors (things) within a specific context. These sensors measure specific variables, record this data and then through network communication and purpose-built software would present this data in a meaningful way to the user.

Digital Strategy - Digitally Connected

The Ards and North Down Borough Council Digital Strategy “Digitally Connected 2019-2022” recommended that Council adopt an IoT (Internet of Things) focus.

Subsequently, Council had sought to identify potential IoT use cases within the Borough. One of the obstacles facing the development of IoT in Ards and North Down (and elsewhere in the UK) was the very low level of awareness of the technology and its applications. That had presented a significant barrier to bringing together the stakeholder groups required to develop IoT use cases for various sectors.

To provide a practical step in addressing this issue within the Borough, a short series of targeted online seminars were held which brought together the key stakeholder groups in the following areas: Agriculture, Tourism, Manufacturing, and the delivery of Public Services.

One of the key recommendations from the seminars was that: *“The Council should seek to adopt IoT as a strategic approach to delivery of Council services. We recommend a pilot project be conducted to demonstrate the power of IoT and to raise awareness of the potential within Council.”*

IoT within Council Services

Following this recommendation, a delivery agent was procured who achieved the following outcomes:

1. Business cases for two IoT use cases identified within Council services.
2. Design and implementation of an IoT project within Council services for a nominated use case.

IoT Use Case 1: Automated Street Light Monitoring Project

Ards and North Down Borough Council was responsible for 43 car parks across the Borough; 28 of these include car park lighting. To ensure health and safety standards are being met and minimise the risk to car park users, Council staff regularly visit each of the car parks throughout the Borough. As part of the visits, an inspection of each light takes place to ensure they are functioning correctly.

IoT Use Case 2: Automated Meter Reading

Council was responsible for over 300 utility meters across the Borough. These include a mix of modern ‘pulse’ meters, which provide a digital output and traditional analogue meters that have to be read visually. The meters could be broken down as 170 electric – 75% of which were pulse meters (128).

Meter readings were currently taken annually by a Council employee and recorded onto a central Estates Management System.

A business case had been developed to demonstrate the potential benefits and savings of providing an IoT solution for both these scenarios.

Officers are currently engaging with external funders to investigate potential funding streams for these projects. Engagement was also taking place with the Belfast

Region City Deal team to investigate the possibility of funding through the Digital Pillar of BRCD.

Design and Implementation project: IoT in the North Down Museum, Bangor Project Background

Within the North Down Museum there was a current requirement to measure the light levels, humidity and temperature of various exhibit cases in addition to the rooms. To date this had been a manual process which could be more prone to human error and time consuming.

An IoT solution had now been installed with the Museum using 19 IoT sensors, each of which records light, humidity and temperature levels in real time and which can be accessed at any time by the Museum Manager.

Having an automated solution in place provides consistent and reliable data on the environmental conditions in the museum and exhibit cases. This data was viewed via an online dashboard, enabling staff to identify trends and peaks in the data, thus enabling staff to rapidly gather the information they need to answer relevant questions and save staff valuable time.

IoT project outputs

The outputs of this overall IoT project could be summarised as follows:

- An effective IoT solution in place and operational in the Museum.
- Adding value to existing roles, by providing the opportunity to develop skills in line with emerging technologies and an understanding of the application and savings of an IoT solution.
- Allowing the museum to easily demonstrate an ability to meet standards set by Museum Ireland regarding exhibits.
- Freeing up resources within the Museum.
- Clear demonstration of cross department effective collaboration between Development Projects, North Down Museum and Assets and Property.
- Two business cases that detail IoT solutions that could potentially save money for Council should funding be secured.

This IoT use case was connecting the installed networked sensors (things) in the Museum with the specific context or goal of collecting meaningful data. That data was allowing the Museum to better manage resources such as staff, heating and humidifiers whilst allowing the museum to better position itself to attract subsequent exhibits.

6. Innovation Hub

BRCD Background

The vision of the Belfast Region City Deal to create 20,000 jobs through a £1 billion capital investment programme across a number of projects, under the four key themes: Digital and Innovation, Tourism and Regeneration, Infrastructure, Employability and Skills.

Innovation Hub Background

Officers had previously reported that work was being done to develop an outline business case for the creation of an Innovation Hub aimed at the Film/TV and Digital Technology sectors. Following discussion and review of an initial Innovation Hub OBC draft with the Department for the Economy and Invest NI, work was progressing to update the OBC, working with the appointed consultants to reflect the identified demand and sector preference for the location of the Innovation Hub in Hollywood, where a creative cluster already exists.

The initial vision and concept remain the same, but as previously reported to Council, following an Expression of Interest to identify potential sites in Hollywood, one response was received from the developer of the land at Hibernia Street in Hollywood. LPS had been instructed to enter into discussions with the site owner to assess how the site could be taken forward. Engagement with businesses, Studio Ulster and other key stakeholders was ongoing and work to complete the OBC to present for casework and BRCD funding was currently being progressed.

This work continued and subsequent update reports would be brought forward in due course as work on the OBC develops.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes:

- 1) the updates on the Digital Support Interventions.
- 2) the further development of the OBC for an Innovation Hub in Hollywood.

Proposed by Alderman McDowell, seconded by Councillor McCracken, that the recommendation be adopted.

Alderman McDowell felt it was vital that the Innovation Hub was brought to the Borough. He would like to see a strategy and vision for the future for satellite hubs in each of the areas within the Borough.

Councillor McCracken highlighted that digital was a huge growth industry for Northern Ireland and therefore it was only right that there were focused resources on that sector. He welcomed the initiative both in term of entrepreneurship, training and the potential facility of an innovation hub. It was essential that a landing space was provided for those involved in the digital economy and he shared the view of Alderman McDowell in term of satellite hubs. Councillor McCracken raised questions in respect of the process for the OBC and the indicative timeline. The Head of Economic Development advised that Officers were currently working through the different parts of the OBC together with experts to have a draft finalised and with Council for approval. There was no definitive timeline, but she hoped that would occur over the next couple of months.

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter remarked that Belfast had been renowned in Europe of being the cyber security capital. She was aware of a recent piece of work highlighting to the MOD the opportunities there were in the Borough for cyber security. The work occurring within the scheme was essential to bring external investment, she was excited to see the scheme in Hollywood and hoped that it would continue in other parts of the Borough. There was the facility and ability in place in

the Borough and she welcomed a foundation being put in place to encourage companies to the Borough with the digital capacity being an essential component.

Alderman Adair noted that the Civil Service had been looking at introducing digital hubs to reduce their office space and he felt that was something which the Council could look at in partnership with the NI Civil Service to bring digital hubs across the Borough. He welcomed hubs within the rural areas cutting travelling costs and reducing emissions. Alderman Adair advised in the Republic of Ireland derelict and disused buildings had been transformed into digital hubs.

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

9. EAST BORDER REGION PEACE PLUS CONCEPT NOTE SUBMISSION (FILE DEVP23)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Prosperity providing an update on the recent concept proposal submission by East Border Region to Special European Union Programmes Body (SEUPB) under the PEACE Plus funding mechanism.

The East Border Region collective was made up of the three Northern Ireland Councils (Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council and Ards and North Down Borough Council) and the three border Councils of the Republic of Ireland (Monaghan County Council, Louth County Council and Meath County Council).

PEACE Plus

The upcoming new European Union funding programme was designed to support peace and prosperity across Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland. It had been divided into six themes each of which have several investment areas. Under theme 2 “Delivering Socio-Economic Regeneration and Transformation” one of the strategic priorities is “Smart Towns and Villages”.

SEUPB had invited potential applicants to submit concept notes for review and to be considered for the PEACE Plus fund. Feedback would be provided by SEUPB based on the concept note submissions with a view to assisting the application process once the call opens. It was anticipated that the call would open in September 2023 however, that was awaiting confirmation.

Ards and North Down concept note submission

Ards and North Down Borough Council’s concept note, which had been worked up, was for a potential project and had been submitted through the East Border Region.

The concept note, which fell under the Smart Towns and Villages priority, was to develop visitor trails characterised by digital augmented reality underpinned by a network of sensors throughout the Council areas. The concept had been given the name C.H.A.R.I.O.T. (Communities Harnessing Augmented Reality and Internet of

Things). The project aimed to enhance visitor experiences and to support measures to attract and measure increased footfall to Ards and North Down.

The project concept was aligned to the Economic Development Service Unit Plan for 2023 – 2024 and also the corporate vision as outlined in the Corporate Plan 2020-2024, The Community Plan (The Big Plan) Outcome 4: All people in Ards and North Down benefit from a prosperous economy, and the Integrated Strategy for Tourism, Regeneration and Economic Development 2018-2030 (ITRDS).

In addition to the wider Council Plans and Strategies, the project was aligned to the ANDBC Digital Strategy “Digitally Connected” which specifically recommends that Council adopts an IoT (Internet of Things) focus.

Outcomes

It must be noted that the current submission was only a concept note and was not at full application stage. Following feedback from SEUPB with regard to the concept note, and the call opening for the PEACE Plus funding, there would be the opportunity for Council, in partnership with EBR, to make a full application. It was currently estimated that the call would open in August/September 2023 with a project start date of Spring 2024 and completion date as May 2027.

Financial Implications

Should the project be worked up, submitted, and successful, it would be fully funded by PEACE Plus for both capital and revenue expenses.

Final details of the full project application are yet to be determined; however, it was anticipated that a successful project may require three members of staff to ensure successful delivery. These fully funded roles would relate to the disciplines of Administration, Finance and Communications.

Next steps

Officers would continue to work up the concept note to full application stage following the SEUPB feedback which is anticipated soon. The submission of a full application would involve developing the full project revenue costs which would include specific staff members appointed for the purposes of project delivery across the project partner regions. It would also detail that all costs were drawn down from the PEACE Plus funding and would be at no cost to Council. Further update reports would be brought to Council as plans emerge under the different priorities of PEACE Plus.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this report.

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

Alderman Adair advised that the Peace Partnership had been working well and good work was occurring. He hoped the Partnership and the East Border Region would bring a lot of investment and he looked forward to the future opportunities.

Councillor Rossiter commended the submission and asked about the scope of the funding and he felt it would be good to see something with greater ambition.

The Head of Economic Development stated that the submission was under the priority Smart Towns and Villages and therefore projects would be looked at under that criteria and how digital assets worked within towns and villages. Other partners within the East Border Region would be bring forward projects which the Council would be able to avail of.

Alderman McDowell stated there was a lot of opportunities for the funding. He highlighted the need to bring forward good positive ideas that would assist to ensure the Council did not miss out on funding and the opportunities from that. He suggested in the near future a workshop be held to look at the areas for funding opportunities and come up with ideas and solutions.

The Head of Economic Development confirmed that that suggestion would be taken on board.

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

10. TOURISM PERFORMANCE REPORT Q4 (FILE TO/MAR4/160167)
(Appendix IV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Prosperity attaching quarter 4 report. Members would be aware that Council was required, under the Local Government Act 2014, to have in place arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions. To fulfil that requirement Council approved the Performance Management Policy and Handbook in October 2015. The Performance Management Handbook outlined the approach to Performance Planning and Management process as:

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years
- Corporate Plan – published every 4 years (Corporate Plan Towards 2024 in operation)
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually (for publication 30 September 2022)
- Service Plan – developed annually (approved April/May 2022)

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

Reporting approach

The Service Plans would be reported to relevant Committees on a quarterly basis as undernoted:

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
Quarter 1 (Q1)	April – June	September
Q2	July – September	December
Q3	October – December	March

Q4	January - March	June
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Please note that, unfortunately, due to the timing of reports, some financial information had not been updated.

Key points to note:

- That was the first full operational season for the tourism service since the global pandemic.
- Tour operator familiarisation trips had predominately moved back to in person. The number of opportunities had therefore decreased and the 2023 target had been adjusted.
- The impact of the cost-of-living crisis had meant that spend by customers at events had been reduced.
- Destination awareness campaigns had been delivered during spring and autumn via multi-channel integrated marketing.

Key achievements:

- Additional funds of £27,130 were secured from Tourism NI (TNI) to deliver a series of 9 new pilot concept experiences. These were successfully delivered in March with 116k reach with 7k social media engagements.
- Out of borough % of visitors to both events and experiences was above target.
- The events programme exceeded its target for attendees.
- Additional funds of £19,000 were secured from TNI to assist the delivery of the spring destination campaign.
- Digital platforms for visitor servicing and promotion are a key focus for the service. Digital social channels followers (increase by 52%) and ezine sign-ups (increase by 23%) have increased as well as the blog content on visitarsandnorthdown.com.

Emerging issues:

- Reduced budgets and increase in costs would likely present challenges in event planning, delivery and stakeholder expectations in season 2023.
- Partnerships are increasingly important for the Tourism service.
- Latest consumer sentiment, reported by TNI, indicates that consumers of NI and ROI would be less likely to engage in paid activities and more likely seek out free activities.

Action to be taken:

- Continue to work with stakeholders to agree mutually satisfactory event programme for 2023.
- Continue to develop relationships and partnerships across programming and service delivery.
- A balanced approach was required for the promotion of the area with key messaging on value and breadth of available activity.

RECOMMENDED that Council note the report.

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

Councillor McCracken noted that the indicators within the report were green; however, the wider strategic picture for the Borough was not as positive. He referred to a number of statistics including a fall in visitor numbers and visitor spend for 2014-18, pre-pandemic, indicating a long term decline in tourism in the Borough despite the fact that Tourism had nearly doubled as a sector in the last decade. Councillor McCracken was of the view that the report suggested that tourism was significantly underperforming despite there being important assets across the Borough such as the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, Pickie Funpark and Mount Stewart. Councillor McCracken wished for his concern to be noted and asked for comment in respect of the strategic picture.

The Head of Tourism advised that the data was compiled by NISRA and the most recent data available was from 2019. It was hoped that data would be available for 2024. The Head of Tourism stated that she was optimistic that progress would be seen. She outlined the work that had been occurring including on the Integrated Tourism Strategy, experience development, destination marketing with extensive growth having been seen in digital platforms.

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter welcomed funds being secured from Tourism NI and noted there was greater piece work to be done in that regard. She alluded to just some of the Borough's offerings including facilities for water sports and Mount Stewart being one of the top 10 gardens in the world. She voiced the need for the Council to look strategically to allow people to convert and achieve appropriate planning to transform properties into tourism accommodation. The Borough had the facilities to offer for tourists but there was not a large offering of bed nights. Alderman Armstrong-Cotter highlighted the need to be work more closely with Tourism NI to remind them of the Borough's capacity and deliver package experiences.

Alderman Adair commended the Head of Tourism for her work. He made mention of the four corners funding, and he hoped funding opportunities would come from that. He felt experiences needed to be developed upon and to market to families for staycations.

Councillor McCracken welcomed the comments and noted there were many other ideas to be explored to bring tourists into the Borough. He noted that there was £200m being spent in hotels in Belfast and highlighted the need to attract those tourists who were staying in Belfast into the Borough.

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

11. ANNUAL TOURISM EVENTS PROGRAMME EVALUATION REPORT 2022
(Appendix V)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Prosperity attaching Tourism Events 2022 Evaluation Summary and Tourism Events Programme 2023

Background

In March 2022, Council agreed the following Tourism Events programme:

Event	Date (2022)	Budget
May Day, Holywood	02 May	£10,000
Ards and North Down Pipe Band Championships, Castle Park, Bangor	14 May	£21,500
Sea Bangor/Queen's Platinum Jubilee	04 & 05 June	£80,000
Summer TASTE Food Festival including Comber Earlies Food Festival (Saturday 25 June)	20 June – 03 July	£71,500
Autumn TASTE Food Festival incorporating Tide and Turf, Portavogie (Saturday 24 September)	10 - 25 September	£71,500
Bangor Switch On	19 November	£15,000
Newtownards Switch On	26 November	£15,000
TOTAL		£284,500

In addition to the figures in the table above, an additional budget of £30,000, approved by Council for Her Majesty The Queen's Platinum Jubilee, contributed towards the Sea Bangor budget. This allowed an enhanced programme to include the Jubilee lunch and hosting of Royal Visitors. Contributions from both Newtownards and Bangor Chambers of Trade also supplemented the Switch On budgets.

This report presents an evaluation of the seven events delivered in the period from May to November 2022.

The 2022 Tourism Events Programme delivered a total of 94,804 attendees against a target of 75,000. There were no reportable health and safety or anti-social behaviour matters.

This was the first year since Covid-19 that a full programme of events 'without restrictions' was able to be delivered. The public's enthusiasm and desire to attend these events was noticeable both in attendance numbers and in anecdotal feedback received by staff.

All tourism events had independent market research undertaken. Sample sizes for each event ranged from 107-201 surveys. Results should be interpreted by the reader accordingly. A summary was included in Item 11.1.

May Day Event – Monday 2 May 2022

This was the first May Day event delivered in partnership with Holywood and District Community Council (HDDC) in three years. The usual programme, a mixture of community events, such as Bonnie Baby and fancy-dress competitions were

organised by HDCC. Two Maypole dancing sessions were a very popular attraction, with many spectators.

As a new aspect to the event, all commercial stalls were moved to the car park at Hibernia Street. Feedback to staff suggested that this was well received by both traders and visitors. Additional entertainment at this market area created a festival atmosphere with the extra space allowing the creation of a large seating area.

Art on the Rails along Church Road had 20 arts and crafts stalls which created variety and encouraged longer dwell time and opportunities for local artists.

Considerations for 2023

- Significant reliance on gazebos – no alternatives possible for May Day as over 70 traders/exhibitors are in attendance. Limits mitigations for weather events occurring and event cancellation.
- Successful use of Hibernia Street car park and Art on the Rails. To include in 2023.

Ards and North Down Pipe Band Championships – 14 May 2022

The Royal Scottish Pipe Band Association Northern Ireland (RSPBANI) Pipe Band Championships were held at Castle Park, Bangor. This was the first full competition in the Borough since Covid-19. In addition to the Pipe Bands, a Highland Dancing competition took place. The event was well attended by participants and visitors, which consisted of 41 bands competing and visitor numbers were recorded at 5000.

Feedback from RSPBANI was positive with only one challenge from the day, which was identified as the requirement for additional toilet facilities at the Castle site.

Considerations for 2023

- Traffic management and parking for vehicles requires additional investment and planning.
- A park and ride service would be implemented in 2023 to ensure movement of spectators from the Airfield to town centre. This site had ample parking.

Sea Bangor celebrates the Platinum Jubilee – 4 and 5 June 2022

Sea Bangor was used as a platform to celebrate Her Majesty The Queen Elizabeth's Platinum Jubilee in June 2022. All activities were themed to mark the occasion. These included a Platinum Palace, Jubilee Jukebox, cookery demonstrations with celebrity chef Jean-Christophe Novelli, and a specially created urban beach. A Big Lunch was hosted by SERC and Jean-Christophe Novelli and attended by competition winners. A range of food stalls lined Eisenhower Pier with an artisan bar at the far end, extending attendees' dwell time at the event.

The Council was honoured to host the Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh on the Saturday morning of the event. The weather was very favourable with the special occasion attracting large crowds.

Considerations for 2023

- The footprint of this event using a mixture of stretch tents and self-contained trucks worked well with minimal reliance on gazebos. A similar layout was proposed for the event in 2023.
- The event budget had been reduced and it would be important to manage customers' expectations. However, the Events Team would work with local providers to produce a high-quality experience.

Summer TASTE Food Festival 18 June – 3 July 2022 Incorporating Comber Earlies Food Festival

The Festival aims to celebrate authentic food and drink. 15 events combining 'AND delivered' and third-party events occurred during the period. Activity included food tours, restaurant themed nights (such as 'meet the maker' and bespoke 'local produce' menus), artisan markets in local establishments and experiences on and off the water incorporating food/drink as a key element.

Comber Earlies Food Festival – 25 June 2022

Comber Earlies Food Festival was identified in the Borough Events Strategic Direction 2021 – 2026 (BESD) as a 'Growth' event. Officers worked very successfully with several local stakeholders in 2022 to extend the length of the programme with local premises hosting their own complementary programme, such as No. 14 at The Georgian House, Indie Føde, McBride's and Horner's Farm Shop.

Two additional elements were added to the Comber Earlies Food Festival to extend the duration of the programme. These were Open Farm Tours (Friday 24 June); an event to be held at the farm of an Earlies grower, with a demonstration and talk by Paula McIntyre followed by a 'potato pizza' in No.14 at The Georgian House. In addition to this a family picnic event was scheduled for Sunday 26 June at Island Hill. Unfortunately, both events had to be cancelled, the Farm Tours due to low ticket sales and the picnic due to poor weather conditions.

The main Comber Earlies Food Festival event on Saturday was adversely affected by strong winds, forecasted as 'dangerous gusts'. This had a direct impact on the use of gazebos, which could not be used in wind weather conditions above 14 mph. At short notice, officers had to install a stretch tent to house traders, which unfortunately resulted in some late cancellations as some traders (hot food) could not be accommodated due to this change. However, the change enabled the event, albeit in a slightly reduced footprint, to proceed with 31 traders.

Another new and very successful addition to the event was an artisan bar, both in terms of numbers attending and feedback from traders. Using local suppliers, McBrides on the Square worked with Indie Føde and offered a selection of paired local beers and cheeses.

Theo Randall and Paula McIntyre were the celebrity chefs at the event, supported by SERC, who cooked a range of different dishes featuring Comber Earlies.

Considerations for 2023

- All outdoor events are now severely impacted by changeable weather; on this occasion the Events Team was unable to use any gazebos and had to source

alternatives at very short notice and additional cost. The dependence on use of gazebos at events carries the high risk of event cancellation.

- The use of Comber Square presents some event set-up restrictions. The site could not be 'set up' until the morning of the event due to the timed road closure and the open site allowed cars to park overnight presenting difficulties for site clearance in the morning. Accommodating a Tesco early morning delivery also delayed site 'set up'.
- Since last year's event the Events Team had completed a consultative exercise with local businesses and stakeholders. In 2023, the event would be hosted at the car park beside Comber Leisure Centre. That would enable earlier site set-up, negate the need for/expense of road closure, use of wooden chalets, accommodate partnership arrangements and provide a larger footprint which should encourage longer dwell time.

Autumn Taste Food Festival - 10-24 September 2022 Incorporating Tide and Turf, Portavogie

This Festival aims to celebrate authentic food and drink focussing on meat and fish and sustainability. Eight events occurred combining 'AND delivered' and third-party events. One Council event was cancelled due to the national mourning period for Her Majesty The Queen Elizabeth II.

Tide and Turf Festival, Portavogie – 22-24 September 2022

Also identified as a 'Growth' event in the BESD, officers added two additional activities to this programme to extend the event as follows.

Stargazing at Burr Point – Thursday 22 September

This pilot ticketed event was organised in conjunction with The Northern Ireland Amateur Astronomy Society (NIAAS) and was attended by 100 visitors with all tickets sold. Transport was provided by bus from Millisle car park to alleviate car parking issues and create a more sustainable event. Volunteers from NIAAS set up eight telescopes and offered customers instruction on how best to view the planets. Customers were able to clearly see Jupiter and Venus. At the end of the evening all visitors were given a complimentary hot chocolate.

Dine at the Dock - Friday 23 September

The vision for this event was to transform the Fish Market at Portavogie into a temporary space offering a high-end 'restaurant quality' food experience. Officers worked with Theo Randall and SERC to devise an attractive menu, showcasing the best of local produce (based on the Tide and Turf theme). SERC also provided front of house staff with a mixture of staff and students.

Theo Randall started preparation and worked with the students from the day before the event to event delivery, and whilst the students had only been in college for three weeks, it was a once in a lifetime experience for all involved.

60 tickets priced £60 per person, which included transport to the event and five course meal, sold out within a week of being released.

SERC students set up the 'restaurant', dressed the table and operated a very professional service at the event.

Tide and Turf Event - 24 September 2022

Successful additions to the programme in 2022 included a music stage and bar area. Both were popular with good attendance recorded for the performances from the String Ninjas and a Beach Boys Tribute act, both extending attendees' dwell time. There were two kitchens at the event compered by two celebrity chefs, Theo Randall and Suzie Lee. Both were well attended throughout the day long programme.

A children's area was created at the entrance of the harbour hosting 'The Beach', which had been created for the Platinum Jubilee, along with other children's small-scale activities.

To mitigate potential adverse weather, wooden chalets were trialled at the event. The chalets created a 'festival feel' while ensuring trading could take place in most weather conditions.

Considerations for 2023

- Consideration in management planning for the extended distance to the site for deliveries, set up, site meetings, plus challenges setting up in a working harbour and commercial requirements. Good communication and agreed timings required.
- Introduction of wooden chalets mitigates potential impact of unfavourable weather conditions. The new footprint with music stage and bar were successful and the intention was to repeat the model.

Bangor Christmas Switch On – 19 November 2022

Working in partnership with Bangor Chamber of Commerce, this event took place on Saturday 19 November. Working in partnership, Officers and the Chamber reviewed alternatives for programming elements, to ensure a safe and secure event, while taking cognisance of potential changeable weather conditions. It was decided to pilot the use of the vacant TK Maxx building. After discussions with the Department for Communities (DfC) colleagues, it was agreed this could be facilitated by agreeing a 'Licence to Occupy on Short Term Basis'. DfC worked very hard to ensure that the building was available to the Council. The large space housed 41 stalls with an entertainment space populated by local choirs and groups. This element of the event took place on Saturday and Sunday with a total of 8,000 attendees recorded across the two days (5,000 and 3,000 respectively).

Additional entertainment and hot food stalls were placed at the McKee Clock, with shows by 'The Elf on the Shelf' and the 'Real Princesses' proving popular with a family audience. Local businesses including Boom Studios, Seacourt, the Geek Retreat and YMCA took part in the Switch On programme. Trinity Presbyterian Church also ran a musical programme outside the church.

Based on previous year's unexpected high number of attendees, extensive work was carried out by officers on traffic management, with a road closure required for a short period of time only.

Considerations for 2023

- Weather was an ongoing challenge and use of other areas such as vacated TK Maxx site require health and safety considerations and traffic management.
- The use of the vacated TK Maxx building was well attended and provided an additional 'market type' space.
- Successful partnerships with the Chamber, local businesses and stakeholders added to the entertainment offering and programming.
- It was anticipated that McKee Clock Arena would not be available for 2023, therefore discussions had commenced with Bangor Chamber regarding the use of Bangor Castle grounds. That was currently a work in progress.

Newtownards Christmas Switch On – 26 November 2022

Organised and managed in partnership with Newtownards Chamber of Trade this event was held on Saturday 26 November. The format included a road closure with a market comprising a combination of the traditional Ards Saturday market, food kitchen demos and local artisan stalls and businesses.

During planning meetings with the Chamber, it was agreed that concerns about event cancellation (as happened in 2021 due to adverse weather conditions) meant a range of measures should be implemented to enable the event to proceed in strong winds. This included the introduction of stretch tents to house an artisan market. To facilitate this, a road closure had to be implemented on Friday night to allow for early event opening on Saturday morning. The Chamber's request to facilitate the extended entertainment programme and stretch tent required an increase in its contribution of budget.

A total of 23 stalls from Ards Saturday Market were in attendance, with an additional 27 local artisan suppliers. The Chamber managed and delivered a successful community entertainment programme.

Unfortunately, the weather on the day of the event was very poor, with very strong winds meaning the programmed musical acts could not take place. The main Switch On event had to be limited to a speech from the Mayor and an appearance by Santa.

Considerations for 2023

- Ongoing challenge with event delivery and requirement to weatherproof the event finale.
- Positioning of stretch tent requires an installation time of six hours. Additional lighting was a requirement and significant resource required for set up for all market elements.
- Successful partnership with the Chamber who can provide excellent community programming and engagement. Good number of local businesses taking part in the event.

- Discussions have commenced with Newtownards Chamber of Trade to develop the Switch On event, acknowledging the challenges presented in previous years and the incoming year.

Market Research

Independent market research was carried out at all the events. The methodology from the previous year was revised, due to the ease in Covid-19 restrictions, with face-to-face surveys undertaken along with the collation of email addresses for post event research.

The research carried out at the events delivered a positive economic impact into the Borough by varying degrees for each event. The indicative spend generated by the seven events was based on attendee spend at the event such as main meals, snacks, shopping and sightseeing.

Additional data showed an average of 89.9% of respondents rating a positive customer satisfaction at the events. Social media was still the most effective way to reach our audiences with an average of 33.6% attendees reported finding out about the events via Facebook.

A full summary was attached to the report.

Emerging Issues Facing Tourism Events Delivery in 2023

- The overall budget for Tourism Events 2023 had been reduced. The impact may result in more limited programming at events, with more reliance on partnership working and local producers.
- The cost-of-living crisis had led to an increase in many event budget items, including materials, delivery charges, first aid requirements and wages both internal and external (security requirements).
- Some events were overspent in 2022. This occurred due to a range of reasons including unexpected increases in prices, additional legal requirements in terms of road closures, additional expenses attached to unpredictable weather, additional security requirements and a decrease in anticipated external funding. The overspend had been covered by underspend in other areas of the Events Service. Contingency budget planning would likely prove challenging for 2023.
- Sustainability was a key aspect of event delivery. This year, the focus would be on using local performers and service providers where possible. It was the intention to maintain free public transport, at certain events, to decrease the numbers of cars travelling to the site. The amount of printed marketing material would continue to be reduced. Ongoing work with stallholders continues with requirements for them to use compostable materials.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this report.

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

Alderman Adair commended the Council on the great events that had taken place across the Borough. He made particular mention to the Seafood Festival in Portavogie.

Councillor McCracken made mention of Sea Bangor which was an excellent event and congratulated those involved.

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

12. ANNUAL TOURISM EVENTS GRANT SCHEME REPORT 22/23 **(FILE TO/EV67)**

(Appendix V)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Prosperity attaching Events Grants Summary. The report detailed that the Tourism Events Grant Scheme 2022/23, for events taking place from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023, opened on Thursday 21 October 2021 and closed on Friday 12 November 2021, with 16 applications received.

Council approved a report detailing the Tourism Events Grant Scheme awards for 2022/23, supporting 10 applications in January 2022. Two appeals were further upheld and reported to Council in April.

The Events Manager and Events Officer met with all 12 successful applicants and agreed the final terms and conditions within the Letters of Offer, which were subsequently issued in late March 2022.

Final budget

A total budget of £81,750 was approved by Council to fund the 2022/23 events, with no contingency budget for appeals. However, due to event cancellations and some events not drawing down the full amount, the actual amount drawn down by applicants was £82,661. The overspend was accommodated across the overall Events service budget.

- The Narrows Regatta, Portaferry Sails and Sounds and Ards Peninsula Kite Festival's actual eligible expenditure was less than its original grant offer. Therefore, the grants paid out were reduced accordingly.
- Irish Sailing Youth Nationals did not meet all elements within its Letter of Offer, resulting in an agreed reduction in award.
- The Carol Ship on Strangford Lough and Songs of the Big Blue were cancelled by promoters.

The table in Item 12.1 summarised the events with approved awards, plus targets contained within the Letters of Offer, and the applicants' post event evaluation figures.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the report.

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

Alderman Adair referred to the Kite Festival and highlighted that had previously been a terrific event for families. The report outlined examples of events that volunteers could run whilst adding value to the tourism offering and he was delighted to see them achieving funding.

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

**13. VISITOR INFORMATION CENTRES ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23
(FILE TO/VIC4)
(Appendix VI)**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Prosperity attaching VIC summary. The report provided the undernoted detail:-

Background

The Tourism unit manages two permanent Visitor Information Centres (VICs) located in Bangor City and Newtownards. Both Centres open daily, Monday to Saturday, servicing visitor and local enquiries, encouraging longer dwell time, and more spend in the Borough. The VICs service both those who make contact prior to visiting, and those who do so during their time here. They also offer information on “what’s on” locally and a retail/box office ticket service for events – services used by both visitors and residents.

In 2022/23, both Centres remained open to the public for the full year, with no periods of closure related to Covid restrictions. Unfortunately, the Centres had a number of ad hoc closures as a result of Covid-19 impacts related to staffing e.g. extended secondments and sickness.

This report provides an overview of the activity at Bangor and Newtownards Visitor Information Centres from April 2022 – March 2023.

Visitors and Enquiries

The numbers of visitors and types of enquiries changed radically during the global pandemic. However, evidence now showed that NI was slowly returning to pre-pandemic trends. Locally, in the VICs, the profile of visitors continued to be dominated by the ‘Staycation’ and ‘Day trip’ market.

Council events, other events, experiences and tours all returned during this reporting period. The VIC had the role of the primary point of contact for information and ticket sales relating to these.

Almost 91% of VIC customers, whose enquires were serviced, visited the centres in person, highlighting the importance of face-to-face interaction.

Excluding self-service visitors or “browsers”, a total of 19,970 customers were serviced via various platforms - direct engagement at the counter, telephone, post and email. Those enquiries covered a wide range of topics from what’s on in the area, where to stay or eat locally and across NI, directions, local history, activities and attractions, and ticket sales. The VIC team acted as ambassadors for the local area.

Bangor and Newtownards VICs	April 22 - March 23
Total footfall to the Centres	19,245
ENQUIRY TYPE	
Face to face enquiries	17,484
Self-service visitors/browsers	1,761
ENQUIRIES Post/Fax/Email	533
ENQUIRIES Phone	1,953
TOTAL SERVICED	21,731

In comparison to last year, that was an increase of 18% in overall total of customers serviced.

Enquiries by origin (where known)	April 22 – March 23 % of total
NI	83%
GB & ROI	10%
Rest of the World	7%
TOTAL	100%

In comparison to the previous year’s visitor profile, the VICs serviced over 3,000 more visitors from outside NI and had a 4% increase in Rest of World visitors.

See Item 13.1 for summary of enquiries and retail for VICs.

Income

Whilst visitor information provision was the core function of the VICs, both provided a retail space, comprising mainly of locally produced gifts, souvenirs and books as per customer demand. Both VICs encouraged sales via special promotions, for example Christmas, Mother’s Day, Valentine’s Day, with themed displays and regularly change/restock merchandise to attract new customers and offer something different to returning visitors.

The VICs also actively advertised a ticket agent service for local events and operate as a sales agent for external events. This allowed third parties such as drama groups and musical events to be bookable on the VisitAND website. Commission on ticket sales covered administration costs and was an additional source of income. The positive return to ticket events, in the last year, had generated almost £1,500 in commission.

Retail sales increased substantially on 21/22, due to all restrictions being lifted. This allowed Bangor VIC to permit more customers to access the centre at any one time, rather than the previous traffic light system. Overall, income increased by almost 20% in comparison to the previous year. Customers visiting the VICs continued to support the retail element with an average spend in Newtownards of £1.75 and £2.07 in Bangor respectively per customer.

Income type	April 22 - March 23
Retail sales	£32,680
Ticket sales commission	£1,482
Total income	£34,162
Total income ex vat	£28,341

VIC Performance Summary

It should be noted that while, not unexpectedly, footfall and enquiries remained below pre-pandemic figures, there had been a positive increase in the number of enquiries serviced (over 3,200). Aligning with visitor behavioural changes, phone calls and correspondence were down on last year, likely serviced by the increasing traffic on the VisitAND website and social channels, but positively face to face interaction increased.

Throughout the year, members of the VIC team were allocated local tourism businesses to renew and develop 'client' relationships. A monthly trade ezine was introduced to highlight the existing services and remind them of the full complement of support available from the Tourism Service.

The VIC team was also active in supporting the wider Tourism team with 'call outs' to trade for campaigns, experiences and food and events programming, and the ticketing of the walks, tours, and experiences.

Visitor Information Advisors (VIAs) worked alongside marketing, maintaining and updating content of the VisitAND website, as well creating digital content for social media. The VIC also participated in activity with both Ards Chamber of Trade and Bangor Chamber of Commerce.

Portaferry Local Visitor Information Office

The Local Visitor Information Office (LVIO), in the reception area of Exploris, offered visitor servicing 10am – 5pm daily, seven days per week, all year (except for limited Exploris closure at Christmas). With a footfall of circa 118,000 per year, the exposure to visitors was significant.

The Council provided brochures on the local area and key attractions across NI. There was also an interactive touch screen for visitors to explore the Borough and extended tourism information in digital format. Exploris staff were trained by ANDBC on the local tourism product and FAQs to enable them to address visitor enquiries directly.

The LVIO had been well used by self-service visitors making use of the tourism literature on display and the touch screen. The Council's VIC staff had provided visitor servicing support at peak periods during July and August, Hallowe'en and on Bank Holidays (a total of 14 days). On those dates a Council VIA engaged with 2,390 visitors in total. Total customers serviced was more than four times last year's total.

Exploris LVIO	
ENQUIRY TYPE:	
Exploris Face-To-Face Enquiries	1137
Exploris Phone Enquiries	496
ENQUIRIES supported by ANDBC Staff (14 Peak Visitor Days)	6,529
TOTAL SERVICED	8,162

Cockle Row Cottages

Due to the nature of the cottages, this facility remained closed during the summer of 2022, with small scale outdoor family entertainment delivered in front of the Cottages once a month between June-October attracting approximately 770 attendees.

The cottages would open for the summer of 2023 Thursday–Sunday (11am–5pm) and would include weekend entertainment.

Outreach Activity

The production of VisitAND literature and its distribution commenced in 2022, after the restrictions of the pandemic which allowed for more engagement opportunities with the use of new visitor guides and visitor maps. Outlets include Visit Belfast, Bangor Train Station, Pickie Fun Park, The Ark Farm and other tourist honey pots, with regular requests for top up stock. The VIC teams also created and distributed bedroom packs for the accommodation sector. An additional 1,980 visitor enquiries were serviced at manned pop-up information stands at Portaferry Market on a number of dates throughout the season, Comber Earlies Food Festival, the Europro NI Masters Golf Tournament and Tide and Turf, Portavogie.

Summary

The Council's VICs had a vital role emerging from the pandemic, engaging with visitors, and reminding locals of the Ards and North Down offer – from miles of coastline and outdoors spaces to award winning attractions. Staff engaged with over 23,000 customers via its VICs, Outreach and LVIO, promoting the region for holidays, short breaks, day trips and events.

The VIC statistics demonstrate that visitors still seek the 'trusted' and 'personalised' service offered at VICs with face-to-face enquiries dominant at the centres. In the ever-changing/uncertain travel atmosphere in 2022/23, the knowledgeable staff helped put customers at ease with up-to-date information, ideas and itineraries.

In 2023/24 the VICs would

- build on the communication and relationships with the local trade; through regular contact, ezines and the reintroduction of familiarisation visits;
- deliver seasonal promotions and advertising campaigns, to encourage increased footfall;
- identify new suppliers to enhance the retail offering in both locations;
- deliver a monthly programme of exhibitions at the established 'Discovery Hub' in Newtownards VIC; and
- reopen Cockle Row Cottages (reopened in 2023 on Easter Sunday).

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this report.

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

Councillor McCracken was unsure about the results outlined in the report. He referred to the VICs, noting the low footfall and viewed those as underperforming. He had received statistics from Visit Belfast who had 200,000 people through doors for the same period with 550,000 enquiries. Councillor McCracken expressed concern on the statistics including the retail sales and asked for comment in that regard.

The Head of Tourism noted that the footfall had dropped, a marketable decrease had been seen since and there was recognition that visitor servicing was changing. Officers were looking at a model of increasing outreach were the team would actively been going to the visitor. In respect of retail from a VIC point of view the primary goal was not retail and did not operate under a retail model. It was a supplementary offering and the teams worked hard to provide a range of products with a limited budget. The Head of Tourism noted the concerns of Councillor McCracken and stated that Officers were working on a level of transformation in that regard.

Alderman Adair felt one of the issues for the VIC in Newtownards was its location and his view remained that should be located in the Town Hall. In respect of the move of the VIC into Exploris, Alderman Adair felt this move had been a success. He noted that at Exploris there was an interactive screen which displayed events across the Borough and Northern Ireland and he hoped to see those screens appear in the other Visitor Centres. Alderman Adair made specific mention of employees: Anne Marie Denver Curran and Alex Irvine who both worked in the Tourism Information Centres and congratulated them for their work in assisting visitors.

Councillor Smart agreed with Alderman Adair that the VIC in Newtownards could be better placed. He welcomed the approach mentioned in terms of outreach work and wondered if there was merit in further discussions occurring with the National Trust. The Head of Tourism advised that the team worked closely with Mount Stewart on a range of activities and more recently on experience development. An MOU had been set up between Council and the East Property Portfolio who now meet twice a year to share and collaborate on projects of interest. Where there were events potentially taking place at Mount Stewart and the resource could be aligned to do a piece of outreach work, that would occur.

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

14. PGA EUROPRO TOUR NORTHERN IRELAND MASTERS 24-26 AUGUST 2022 UPDATE REPORT (FILE TO/EV89)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Prosperity detailing that in March 2022, Council was presented with a report on the above event and approved a maximum of £34,900 towards the delivery of the PGA EuroPro Tour Northern Ireland Masters on 24-26 August 2022. This was funded via the Council's Tourism Event Bid for Fund. The 2022 event was the second year of a three-year contract with EuroPro to host the event at Clondeboye Golf Club.

The Event

The EuroPro Tour was an official satellite tour of the European Tour. Its season started in May and completed in September running a series at 12 UK golf clubs. Clondeboye Golf Club (CGC) was one of the 12 chosen clubs and one of only two in Northern Ireland. The EuroPro team manages the event, the PGA manages the tournament, and the Club provides the facilities, course, clubhouse complex and extras, e.g. volunteers, buggies, food and beverages, plus local knowledge. Unfortunately, the PGA announced on 28 September 2022 that the EuroPro Tour had been cancelled, therefore the event that took place in August 2022 was the last EuroPro Tour event at the Club.

2022 Post Event Information

The event was launched on 22 June 2022 at Clondeboye Golf Club, with attendance by the Mayor and local MLAs.

Coverage of the launch included:

- UTV 6pm news
- Local newspapers
- PGA and Council social media

The Club had also organised a pre-event reception at the then Bangor Town Hall on 22 August 2022, to welcome EuroPro team and players to the Borough before the official event began on 23 August.

Marketing

All social media included reference to the support from ANDBC such as use of hashtags, showing venue dressing/logo and verbal acknowledgement. U105 ran a social media competition that reached 23,225 people. The Club also ran several radio ads on U105 with a listenership of 185,000 per week. The Club negotiated with golfing publication Tee to Green, and the event featured in the magazine in the lead up to the event and post event. It also featured online, where they have 6,500 followers.

The event received reach through the Club's social media channels promoting the event, as well as things to do in the Borough while visiting.

Television coverage

Sky Sports – two-hour programme repeated four times during the week on Sky Sports Golf and available via YouTube (footage included Council signage/branding, an interview with the Mayor and verbal acknowledgement of Council support). Sky Sports Golf had up to 250,000 viewers with the potential to reach 500 million homes in up to 150 countries.

The Club took the opportunity to have some drone footage of the event made and they plan to use this to assist with bidding for future championships and tournaments.

Participants, Spectators and Economic Impact

The event was free to attend and reported 4,432 attendees.

The Club employed an independent company to undertake market research at the 2022 event. The findings of the market research include:

- 91% of visitors came from Northern Ireland, breaking down further with 25% of these attendees were from out of the Borough
- 6% were from Great Britain
- 3% from Republic of Ireland

Visitors attended on average two days, therefore (using Tourism NI's economic calculator) the spend by these visitors was £25,326.

The Club indicated that approximately 323 visitors stayed overnight in paid accommodation for an average of two nights, generating 646 bednights and £35,530 revenue for the accommodation sector (again, using Tourism NI's economic calculator).

The Club indicated 349 Participants broken down as 146 Golfers, four EuroPro staff, eight PGA staff, 150 volunteers, six vendors, four ANDBC, four Covid bus staff, 26 Club employees and one Tourism NI representative. Those participants were at the event on average four days. 162 of those participants came from outside of the Borough and generated approximately £11,664 spend. There were 149 participants staying an average of five nights in paid accommodation which generated £40,975 into the accommodation sector.

The food village was well received with six traders in total, all local.

The final amount paid out to the Club was £28,689, based on eligible invoices submitted. Using the information supplied to Council by the Club, and the market research findings, the event generated the following indicative economic impact:

Total visitor spend	£60,856
Total participant spend	£52,639
Total	£113,495

Using Tourism NI's economic calculator, deducting out of NI spend (£7,700), the event generated a total Direct Economic Impact of £105,795, which was a Return on Council Investment of £3.69: £1.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the report.

Proposed by Councillor Rossiter, seconded by Councillor Smart, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor Rossiter congratulated the Council on pushing for such events to be held in the Borough. The Borough had of the best golf courses in Northern Ireland and those were an asset to be used. He congratulated Tom McKibben on his first tour win of the European Tour in recent weeks. Councillor Rossiter asked if there was any plans or proposals to work with Golf courses within the Borough to put on similar events.

The Head of Tourism advised that the Council's Tourism Manager worked closely with a number of the Golf Clubs in terms of events and visitor experience.

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

15. TASTE AND FOOD AND DRINK DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2023-2027 (FILE TO/TD68)

(Appendices VII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Prosperity attaching 15.1 - TASTE AND Food and Drink Destination Development Plan 2023-2027. The report detailed that in 2018, Council adopted the Food Destination Development Plan (FDDP) 2018-2021 in parallel with the Integrated Tourism, Regeneration and Economic Development Strategy (ITRDS) 2018-2030 and was launched by the Mayor in September 2018.

The FDDP set out to consolidate the Ards and North Down food tourism offering by delivering against key outcomes. These included:

- Positioning the local food sector as a key economic driver for the borough and increasing visitor awareness of the food offer and identity
- Visitor experiences which support the Borough's food and drink identity and key propositions
- An innovative, creative sustainable food sector
- Supply chains and distribution networks responsive to sector needs
- A local community with access, and appreciation of, of the local food offer
- A sector which significantly contributes to the targets within the ITRDS

A series of steps to delivery were agreed. The first of those tasks was to recruit a Food and Drink Officer, with the second step to establish a Food and Drink Development Network to help shape the development of the food destination. The Network was formalised in September 2019 with 42 members, and a Network

Committee, comprising sector representatives, was subsequently created in January 2020.

Unfortunately, progress on the FDDP came to a halt in March 2020 due to the global pandemic. Advisory and recovery support continued during this very challenging time for the sector, along with some activity in accordance with government restrictions. Although the Network could not continue in its intended form, support to members was provided by Officers as restrictions allowed. All plans for Food activities/experiences/events during 2020 were effectively cancelled until further notice. The FDDP was undeliverable in its original 'form' for the following 18 months. Some trade activity was able to be established in 2021, along with the development of pilot showcases, experiences food activity and events (within appropriate restrictions). The Network was reconvened formally in May 2022 and a Committee re-established in summer 2022. This provided a platform to review the FDDP and engage on the new Plan. It was acknowledged that the sector had changed considerably during this time.

The TASTE AND Food and Drink Destination Development Plan (FDDDP) 2023-2027

In December 2022, Council was advised that consultation on a revised FDDDP 2023-2027 was underway. The consultation phase included engagement with Network members, the wider tourism and business sector, internal Council services and other external agencies such as Food NI, Hospitality Ulster, Tourism NI, NI Food and Drink Association and Ulster University. The discussions had informed the plan.

It was assumed that the sector would continue to face issues regarding recruitment, supply chain and supplier costs. It was also assumed, that for the incoming year and beyond, it was likely that the general population would reduce frequency and/or value of spend on higher cost food and food activities. It was acknowledged that businesses would need to continue to be adaptable to the economic climate and customer behaviour. Therefore, the resources, both financial and human throughout the term of this Plan were potentially limited. Feedback from consultation indicated that any actions set, were to be realistic within the four-year timeframe.

Outcome and Key Actions

Ards and North Down would continue a path to achieve its goal of developing a recognised and vibrant Food and Drink sector that was sustainable for businesses, showcased to visitors and supported by the local community.

TASTE AND Food and Drink Destination Development Plan Actions 2024-2027

Action	Lead	Timeline
1. A fully embedded calendar of food and drink events and activities.	ANDBC	By 2027
2. An increase in bookable food and drink experiences within the Borough.	ANDBC/Sector	Annual activity
3. Development of Taste AND into a locally recognisable brand/identity (with	ANDBC/Sector	By 2027

accompanying brand guidance for implementation).		
4. Restaurants clearly signposting local suppliers and utilising a range of local produce.	Sector/ANDBC	Annual activity
5. RAI Food Destination Accolade.	ANDBC	By 2027
6. Investigation into the creation of resource platform for the sector e.g., online resources.	ANDBC with industry partners	By 2027
7. Exposure of 'Taste AND' via trade shows.	ANDBC/Sector	Annual activity
8. Delivery of annual awards lab (training session on Award applications) and winners' recognition event.	ANDBC	Annual activity
9. Delivery of trade and careers engagement week.	ANDBC with industry partners	Annual activity
10. Development of working relationships with industry e.g., Invest NI, NFIDA, HU, TNI, Food NI Visit Belfast, SERC, Ulster University, AFBI.	ANDBC with industry partners	Annual activity
11. Food journalists/bloggers content, food familiarisation trips - delivered annually.	ANDBC	Annual activity
12. Sustainability development (Sustainable Food Places, WRAP, training courses delivered annually by ANDBC or in partnership).	ANDBC/sector and industry partners	Annual activity
13. Delivery of 'Markets' future' planning report.	ANDBC	By 2024

Subject to approval by Council, the intention was to formally launch the new TASTE AND Food and Drink Destination Plan 2023-2027 in September 2023.

RECOMMENDED that Council adopts the attached TASTE AND Food and Drink Destination Development Plan 2023-2027.

Proposed by Councillor McKimm, seconded by Alderman Armstrong-Cotter, that Council adopts the attached TASTE AND Food and Drink Destination Development Plan 2023-2027 and further that the Council brings back a report with a view of appointing a designated Officer to lead as a Development Officer to utilise the opportunities available in developing our market offering within the Borough.

Councillor McKimm clarified that he was not asking for an Officer to look at the regulatory aspects of market. He outlined that markets fell within a number of service areas within the Council and there was not a single place that looked at market as a tool. Markets were a key tool in urban regeneration and highlighted the strength of the key pillar of food and drink within the Borough. He felt the key concept to take that food and drink forward was through the market platform. In his view the Council was failing to utilise the best of its food and drink as there was not a dedicated Officer in terms of development and regeneration around the concepts of markets. He welcomed a report being brought in that regard to explore the matter further.

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter was content for a report being brought back to explore the matter further.

The Head of Tourism drew attention to pages 23 and 24 of the draft plan, where the concept of markets and their importance were acknowledged. The Council had a range of markets and those were delivered through different models. The Officers undertook engagement with those current providers of markets on the best approach and it was felt that an independent report was needed on the scoping of the market, potential market delivery and the outputs. Also, within Action 13 there was the delivery of a Markets Future Planning Report and a timeline set aside by 2024. There was a Food and Drink Development Officer in place who was tasked to deliver the broad area of work. She highlighted that to dedicate an Officer would require a business case. The Head of Tourism believed the plan offered a way forward.

Councillor Smart questioned if the proposal was for an additional post or nominating an existing Officer to take on a lead responsibility regarding the matter.

The Chairman read out the proposal to provide clarity to Members.

Councillor McKimm was open to the area of work being a responsibility of an existing Officer, he did not feel that needed to be a new post and welcomed a report back in that regard. Markets were seen as one of the most robust and sustainable tools for regeneration. He felt there was a fractured approach to the issue at the moment.

The Director of Prosperity wished to ascertain if the proposal should be delayed until the report referenced by the Head of Tourism was delivered. She expressed concern regarding the stretching of resource.

The Head of Tourism noted that the action plan included a report on markets. She wondered if the best approach would be to await the outcome of the report and then look at the specifics required.

Councillor McKimm was of the view that the reports could progress in parallel. He highlighted the need to identify how the Council engaged in markets and utilise those fully. To have an Officer with a dedicated responsibility of the matter would ensure that matter did not slip.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor McKimm, seconded by Alderman Armstrong-Cotter, that Council adopts the attached TASTE AND Food and Drink Destination Development Plan 2023-2027 and that further to the recommendation, this Council bring back a report with a view to appointing a designated Officer to lead as a Development Officer to utilise the opportunities available in developing our market offering within the Borough.

16. NI REGIONAL FOOD PROGRAMME (NIRFP) FUNDING (FILE TO/EV119 AND TO/EV120)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Prosperity detailing that on 23 March 2023, Officers received notice that the Northern Ireland Regional Food

Programme (NIRFP) 2023-2024 was open (subject to budget availability) and was inviting submission of applications for funding. The return date for applications was 6 April 2023.

The Fund

The overall aim of the NIRFP was to raise the profile of quality regional food and increase its consumption within NI, ROI and GB.

The objectives of the programme were:

- to assist the NI agri-food industry to develop and expand profitable and sustainable markets;
- to assist the development of a sustainable and thriving rural economy by raising the profile of quality NI food and
- to increase integration and efficiency within the NI agri-food supply chain through enhanced co-operation and communication between/ within sectors.

The programme encouraged all sectors of the agri-food industry to work together and stated it would provide financial assistance for eligible additional activities.

Awards were made on a competitive basis and only eligible projects that were judged to have best met the programme objectives would receive funding. Hence some projects which were eligible in principle may not automatically be funded.

Applications were invited for projects occurring between 21 April 2023 and 31 March 2024 under four categories of support including:

Category 1: 'Regional Fairs/Exhibitions'

Category 2: 'Seminars/Workshops'

Category 3: 'Information Programmes' and

Category 4: one 'Generic Agri-Food Sector Promotional Campaign.

Any application under Category 1-3, as listed above, if successful, was to receive financial assistance of up to 40% of expenditure against eligible project items.

Applications

The Tourism Service submitted applications under Category 1. Two were successful in receiving Letters of Offer.

- Comber Earlies Food Festival - £9,022.50 (30% of eligible costs) and
- Tide and Turf, Portavogie - £8,796.60 (30% of eligible costs)

Event publicity, infrastructure and participation fees form the basis of eligible items for funding.

The match funds available to support those Letters of Offer were within the existing event budgets for 2023/24.

Due to the very tight submission window, Officers progressed the applications and Council was being notified retrospectively.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the above funding update report.

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

Alderman Adair welcomed the funding for the Comber Earlies Food Festival and the Portavogie Seafood Festival.

Councillor Smart asked in the future if the Council were to expand those events would there be future opportunities for funding. The Head of Tourism advised that for this particular fund the Council had applied before and been successful however there was cap on the number of times that an event could receive a grant. Officers would continue to review the criteria for such funding opportunities to see if the Council would be eligible for such event grants.

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

17. STRATEGIC CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT Q4 PERFORMANCE REPORT (FILE 160127)

(Appendix VIII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place attaching quarter 4 report. 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 outlined the approach to Performance Planning and Management process as:

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years
- Corporate Plan – published every 4 years (Corporate Plan Towards 2024 in operation)
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually (for publication 30 September 2022)
- Service Plan – developed annually (approved April/May 2022)

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

Reporting approach

The Service Plans would be reported to relevant Committees on a quarterly basis as undernoted:

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
Quarter 1 (Q1)	April – June	September

Q2	July – September	December
Q3	October – December	March
Q4	January - March	June

Please note that, unfortunately, due to the timing of reports some financial information had not been updated.

Key points to note:

- There continued to be good investment in staff briefings with regular fortnightly team meetings, alternating between Teams and in person.
- Professional development was also continuing as the unit continued to deliver a capital portfolio in excess of £170m over the next 10 years.
- There continued to be a good level of consultation with other Councils and Government departments through BRCD, Community Estates, the Greenways projects, Councils Estates Forum, and individual meetings.

Key achievements:

- Continued to share capital knowledge and allow a holistic approach to all large, small and maintenance capital projects undertaken by a wide range of directorates through CPAG.
- Working with CPD to produce tender documents which take account of social value on all funded project as council policy develops.
- Letters of Offer from Dfl signed for Comber to Newtownards and Newtownards to Green Road Greenways and MoU finalised with LUF.

Emerging issues:

- Delays in statutory responses to planning are creating knock-on delays in programming projects.
- Council resources to deliver ambitious capital delivery.
- High construction inflation.

Action to be taken:

- Continue to review capital cost estimates.
- Assist in the Estate Strategy development.
- Assist in capital transformation projects.

RECOMMENDED that the Council note the report.

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

18. REGENERATION Q4 PERFORMANCE REPORT (FILE

(Appendix IX)

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 Performance Planning and Management process as:

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years
- Corporate Plan – published every 4 years (Corporate Plan Towards 2024 in operation)
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually (for publication 30 September 2022)
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The Council's 18 Service Plans outlined how each respective Service would contribute to the achievement of the Corporate objectives including, but not limited to, any relevant actions identified in the PIP.

Reporting approach

The Service Plans would be reported to relevant Committees on a quarterly basis as undernoted:

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
Quarter 1 (Q1)	April – June	September
Q2	July – September	December
Q3	October – December	March
Q4	January - March	June

Please note that, unfortunately, due to the timing of reports some financial information had not been updated.

Key points to note:

- The review of the five City/town Masterplans had been completed.
- The review of the village plans was progressing well.
- Portavogie Harbour Environmental Improvement Scheme had been completed bar the design of the mural.
- The Covid Recovery projects had been completed.
- Small Settlement projects are progressing well.

Key achievements:

- The regeneration project at Portavogie Harbour had been well received by the local community.
- Community consultation on the Small Settlement projects had commenced and was proving to be positive.
- Two new play parks had now been installed in Portaferry and Cloughey using funding from the Rural Development Scheme.

Emerging issues:

- It was now understood that funding under the Peace Plus programme would not be available in the next financial year as there were still legislative and operational issues to be resolved by SEUPB. However, the Council would continue to work with EBR to develop projects which may be suitable for funding once it was announced, however, there was now concern over the types of projects that may be funded.
- As yet the Council had still received no information from DAERA about a replacement scheme for the Rural Development Programme. That was most concerning.

Action to be taken:

- To continue to work with EBR to get a better understanding of the requirements of Peace Plus and then to carefully review the criteria to see what projects we may have that meet this.

RECOMMENDED that the report is noted.

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

Councillor McCracken commended the Officers for the achievements within the report. He noted the concerns surrounding Peace Plus and encouraged the Officers to keep working on projects that could be delivered at short notice, despite the difficult financial issues that the country was facing there were pockets of capital available from government departments. Councillor McCracken referred to the areas that were highlighted as red within the attachment and noted them as significant issues. In terms of Portaferry Public realm project he viewed that as an ambitious date and felt it would be more beneficial to segregate that project into smaller schemes to develop, agree, secure funding and commence delivery. He also raised questions regarding Ballyholme Yacht Club and the Marine Gardens development that was outlined. Councillor McCracken asked for comment on the three capital projects that were detailed.

The Head of Regeneration explained that the report provided output until the end of March 2023. He outlined that in terms of Portaferry the funding and planning permission had been secured and the scheme was due to commence in October 2023. The Marine Gardens project also took time to achieve an agreed design and Officers hoped to bring an update to Council in July. In respect of Ballyholme Yacht Club that scheme was progressing well.

Alderman Adair commended the Head of Regeneration and his team for the work in particular with the funding for Portaferry Public Realm scheme as he felt that without the team the scheme would not have happened. He expressed his frustration with the length of time it took to achieve planning permission which often resulted in time targets not being met. In relation to Portavogie Public Realm that had brought great change to the village which had seen no investment for some time.

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

19. THE MOAT CAR PARK (Appendix X)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place attaching Car Park Visuals and Plans. The report detailed that as Members would recall it was agreed by the Council to seek additional public realm works at the Moat. This was to include external lighting, railings and CCTV. As that was a listed building, input from the Historic Environment Division (HED) would be key in taking this project forward. HED had been consulted and had indicated what would be acceptable to secure a positive outcome from a planning application. HED had confirmed that additional lighting and CCTV would not be acceptable, however, railings in an agreed location would. Therefore, the addition of railings, upgrading of sections of the path and some landscaping had been included in the proposed planning application.

As previously reported, Alistair Coey Architects had been appointed to develop the plans for the public realm around the Moat and the adjacent car park with a view of applying for planning permission for both areas.

1. Current situation

Coey's had now finalised the designs for the Moat public realm and Council officers have also consulted local residents adjacent to the car park on the proposals. The result of the consultation were as follows:

Residents Location	Comments
Anchor Watch	Looks Well. Would like 1). Height barrier 2). No overnight stays/caravans/motorhomes 3). Good planting needed
Anchor Watch	Overall acceptable but consideration should be given to provide yellow lines along Moat Entry. Height Restriction to Car Park. Ref: wider Moat scheme cutting of grass more than twice per year.
Anchor Watch	Overall, the design seems to have no major impact, which is positive, however would like it if possible, to have height restriction at entrance, yellow lines in Moat Entry would be helpful to stop parking of boats etc, as it is Anchor Watch's main access to underground car park.
Anchor Watch	Yellow lines on Moat Entry and Shore Street
Anchor Watch	The design looks well especially with the greenery. Worried about overnight campervans staying so a height restriction would be necessary. Also parking in Moat Entry is a problem double yellow lines would be necessary. Access to underground car park can be difficult at times.
Anchor Watch	Looks Good. Height restriction and no overnight parking
Anchor Watch	The design is acceptable to me.
Anchor Watch	We both like it – would need height restriction
Anchor Watch	Acceptable with 23 proposed spaces and installation to prevent overnight campervans etc and prevent parking issues at entrance to Shore Street.

Shore Street	If it is an asset to the town, it will be a benefit
Kock Eden	Objecting – could lead to Anti-social behaviour, Car Park needs to be closer to the Town. Flower beds are dirt catchers
Knock Eden	Supportive – would like seating on outskirts of car park to remain
Knock Eden	Supportive

Subsequently, comments from the Donaghadee TAG were sought and several members expressed concerns over the proposals to the car park and requested further information, discussions and consultation around these.

RECOMMENDED that as the contract with Coey's is now finalised and as there is no consensus around the proposals for the carpark, it is recommended that the Council agrees:

- (1) To submit a planning application for the public realm works around the Moat to enable this part of the project to proceed and
- (2) That after considering the comments of the TAG, agrees not to proceed with the car park proposals at present and continues discussions with the TAG in the future.

Proposed by Councillor McCollum, seconded by Alderman Armstrong-Cotter that the recommendations be adopted.

Councillor McCollum welcomed the attention that the iconic asset of the Moat was now attracting. She noted the importance of proper consultation and questioned if there was a framework around the car park proposals on how those discussions could continue to take place in the future.

The Head of Regeneration advised that Officers had consulted widely with the residents and the vast majority of those residents were in favour of the scheme. The scheme proposed taking out some of the hard standing areas, there were currently nine spaces in the car park and the proposal increased that to 23 car parking spaces. The members of the Donaghadee Town Action Group were vocal in their opposition to the proposal. As there was no capital to deliver the scheme, nothing had been lost and there was time to work through the issues.

On behalf of Councillor MacArthur, Alderman Armstrong-Cotter raised issues regarding the lighting of the area and recalled previous discussions that had taken place in that regard. There had been problems of damage to the area and a resident had complained about anti-social behaviour. She asked if there was scope to enhance the lighting in the area.

The Head of Regeneration explained that Coey's were specialists in this type of development and they had held a number of meetings with Historic Environment Division (HED). HED had made it clear that it would not support lighting.

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter noted the comments and was mindful of the residents concerns.

The Head of Regeneration suggested that if there was a move to look at the car park in the future, lighting could be explored as part of that area.

Councillor Smart raised a question regarding the landscaping works including in the planning application. The Head of Regeneration said it was hoped to level the path that ran down the back of the car park and include some landscaping.

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

20. BOROUGH WIDE CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE (FILE RDP236)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place detailing that as Members would be aware the Council was successful in securing funding from the Department for Communities, Department for Infrastructure and DAERA under the Covid Recovery Programme for interventions to encourage modal transport shift to healthy travel options including cycling and walking.

All the Town and City Advisory Groups, as well as the rural group, agreed that as part of their localised response to encourage healthier options and reduce dependence on the car, they collectively agreed to install cycling infrastructure to support these aims across the Borough.

Sustrans was commissioned to advise on what type of infrastructure would be suitable and on potential locations. Both the Rural and Urban groups agreed the interventions and their locations. Subsequently, cycle stands, shelters, maintenance stations and scooter racks have been installed in all towns and villages across the Borough.

In order to facilitate the installations, the Council needed to gain permissions from two private landowners to install the last remaining infrastructure by way of legal agreement as not all of the stands could be installed on Council or DfI land. These permissions have been agreed and the equipment installed on land at the Poacher's Pocket and the Old Post Office, both in Lisbane.

Once those were finalised that would conclude the cycling element of what had been a very successful Covid Recovery Programme.

RECOMMENDED that the Council now formalises the legal agreements as outlined in the report.

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

Councillor McKimm advised that there were a number of enthusiastic residents in the Bangor area who were interesting in seeing the cycling infrastructure developed and he asked if there were any plans to build upon what had occurred.

The Head of Regeneration explained that the cycling infrastructure works that had taken place were funded through the Covid recovery money. Unfortunately, there was no funding available at the current time to take anything more forward.

Councillor McKimm asked that Officers kept an eye on any future external funding opportunities to further develop the cycling infrastructure.

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

RECESS

The meeting went into recess at 9.01 pm and resumed at 9.12 pm.

21. TOWN AND CITY ADVISORY GROUP MINUTES

(Appendices XI - XV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy minutes for the undernoted Town and City:-

- a. Bangor CAG 23.2.23
- b. Comber TAG 21.2.23
- c. Donaghadee TAG 20.2.23
- d. Holywood TAG 28.2.23
- e. Newtownards TAG 2.3.23

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Smart, seconded by Councillor McKimm, that the minutes be noted.

22. SMALL SETTLEMENTS REGENERATION PROGRAMME – PROJECT PROGRESS UPDATE (FILE RDP43)

(Appendices XVI - XX)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place attaching information and visuals of; Ballygowan Village Infrastructure Improvement, Improvements to School Lane, Ballywalter, Greyabbey Community Park & Viewing Platform, Kircubbin Coastal Path, Groomsport Harbour Environmental Improvement Scheme and Millisle Park - Phase One Lagoon Project. The report detailed that Council was previously advised of the COVID Recovery Small Settlements Regeneration Programme, which aimed to build upon the successful collaborative approach of the COVID-19 Recovery Revitalisation Programme. A budget for rural projects was set at £547,000. This was a mixture of capital and revenue funding which was to be used to develop and deliver projects. This was part of a cocktail of funding received from DfC, DfI and DAERA. The lion share of the funding had been allocated to the delivery of the Portaferry Public Realm scheme. A budget of £50,000 had already been used to complete the Portavogie Promenade Scheme.

A budget of £350,000 had been allocated to small scale capital projects in Ballygowan, Ballywalter, Greyabbey and Kircubbin. Revenue funding of £147,000

had been assigned to the technical development of projects in Millisle and Groomsport to generate readiness for future capital opportunities. All these projects were previously agreed by Council.

The schemes which had been developed for those villages were based on internal officer and community consultation feedback. They also delivered on the aims and objectives of the Small Settlements Regeneration Programme and were in line with projects identified in the various village plans.

The below update outlined the current position on each of those projects:

Capital Schemes

1. Ballygowan Village Infrastructure Improvements

Budget: Revenue £25,000 | Capital: £150,000

AECOM was appointed to develop a small-scale village enhancement concept plan for Ballygowan which had now been completed. A range of options were presented as part of the overall Plan, that was to allow for a project to proceed with the Small Settlements capital budget, and also to identify further projects should future funding become available.

Two engagement meetings had been undertaken with the local community to ascertain their priorities for the capital scheme. Their priorities were:

- Enhancements to War Memorial space – replace damaged paving to provide new surfacing, additional ornamental planting, replacement seating, wall mounted feature lighting and new litter bin.
- Planter Tubs with decorative planting – high quality planter tubs planted to complement existing roundabout planting scheme – only provided at traffic islands where they do not conflict with visibility displays.
- Footway planter tubs with planting – high quality planter tubs utilised throughout the village centre to unify and brighten the streetscape, consideration to small species tree planting within planters were space permitted.

AECOM was currently developing a technical specification for the above proposals. A costing exercise would determine which of the above proposals could be delivered within the capital budget available.

Subject to Council approval, it was recommended that the scheme proceeded should it be costed within budget. If cuts were required a further report would be presented.

2. School Lane, Ballywalter

Budget: Revenue: N/A Managed Internally | Capital £20,000

A plan had been developed for the improvement works to School Lane, Ballywalter. This lane leads from housing developments to the Village, as well as to the school and playpark.

A proportion of the land was in the ownership of the Education Authority, and as such, its approval was sought to undertake these works, which had recently been obtained.

Subject to Council approval, it was recommended that this scheme proceeds to construction stage when all appropriate arrangements were finalised.

3. Greyabbey Community Park & Viewing Point

Budget: Revenue: £25,000 | Capital £120,000

AECOM was appointed to develop a concept plan for Greyabbey, which had now been completed.

Prior to the development of the concept plan, Officers were made aware that the viewing point had been subject to objection by some members of the local community.

A significant proportion of the scheme was planned for development on Council-owned land, however, a section of pathway through the woods, and the viewing point was located on private land, which was leased to the National Trust from the Montgomery Estate. Officers attended a meeting with both parties in April 2023 and they now support the scheme in principle, subject to further public consultation.

A public consultation meeting took place in Greyabbey on 24 May 2023 to gauge the level of support for the scheme. There were no objections to the proposal at the public meeting, however some areas for consideration were highlighted, those would be investigated, and further discussions would take place with the National Trust and private landowner with a further report to be brought back to Council.

It was recommended that the Council notes the above, with a further report to follow.

4. Kircubbin Coastal Path

Budget: Revenue: N/A Managed Internally | Capital £60,000

This concept was developed internally by Council officers.

The plan had been shared with members of the local community association, who are largely in support of the implementation of the scheme.

Given the environmental designations in close proximity to the location of this site, a Habitat Regulations Assessment was undertaken which was submitted to the Planning Service for a Pre-Application Discussion. NIEA and Shared Environmental Services have determined that a planning application was required, and that had recently been submitted.

Officers had prepared a project brief and specifications for costings.

Subject to planning permission being granted, it was recommended that construction works commence at the earliest possible opportunity should the scheme be costed within budget. If cuts were required a further report would be presented.

Revenue Schemes

1. Groomspout Environmental Improvement Scheme

Budget: Revenue: £20,000 | Capital: N/A

AECOM had developed a concept plan which had now been completed. The options had been developed in a phased approach for delivery, so that realistic and achievable projects could be delivered if future capital funding opportunities become available.

Two engagement meetings had been undertaken with the local community to obtain feedback on the proposals and ascertain their current priorities for a Phase One scheme should future capital funding become available. Planning permission was not required for this scheme.

AECOM was currently developing a technical specification for phase 1 which would be used to undertake procurement in the event funding becoming available.

It was recommended that members note the above update.

2. Millisle Park – Phase One Lagoon Project

Budget: Revenue £37,000 | Capital: N/A

AECOM had now developed a concept for the Lagoon. The options were presented via a phased approach for delivery, so that realistic and achievable projects could be delivered if future capital funding opportunities become available.

Two engagement meetings had been undertaken with the local Steering Group to obtain feedback on the proposals and ascertain current priorities for a Phase One of the scheme.

Some elements of this scheme require planning permission. AECOM was now in the process of preparing the application which necessitated the requirement for several environmental and ecological surveys.

AECOM was also currently costing the project which would be used to undertake procurement in the event of capital funding becoming available.

RECOMMENDED that Council agrees this report.

Proposed by Alderman Adair, seconded by Alderman Armstrong-Cotter, that further to the recommendation the Council writes to The Department for Agriculture Environment and Rural Affairs thanking it for the Small Settlements Funding in the Borough that has delivered regeneration projects making a lasting difference across our Rural Areas and requests an update when funding would be allocated for the second round of this funding opportunity.

Alderman Adair was delighted with the small settlements funding and felt it important that the Council not only asked for funding from the Departments but thanked them for the allocation recognising the value that those brought. He knew of two shovel ready projects and therefore sought for an update on the next round of the funding. In relation to the Greyabbey Project he asked about the response to the consultation and if there were any other projects that Officers were considering for the next round of funding.

The Head of Regeneration advised that up to the current week there had been 70 responses to the consultation regarding the small park in Greyabbey, all of which had been positive about the proposed scheme. As part of the rates setting process the Rural Development team was given a budget to work up new projects and aimed to bring an update to the Committee in September in that regard.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND on the proposal of Alderman Adair, seconded by Alderman Armstrong-Cotter, that further to the recommendation the Council writes to The Department for Agriculture Environment and Rural Affairs thanking them for the Small Settlements Funding in our Borough that has delivered regeneration projects making a lasting difference across our Rural Areas and requests an update when funding will be allocated for the second round of this funding opportunity.

23. ITEM WITHDRAWN

24. CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE YEARLY BUDGET (FILE RDP60)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place detailing that as Members would be aware the Council currently provides funding to the five Chambers of Commerce/Trade to undertake the following types of activities:

- Promotion of the Chambers to attract new members.
- Events for Chamber members on current issues effecting the Town/City Centres.
- Marketing activity to attract visitors and shoppers to the Town/City Centres.
- Administration to assist the running of the Chambers.

Last financial year the Chambers submitted two-year business plans which were reported to Council and over the last six months the Chambers had presented these to the Place Committee. They also gave their aspirations for each of the Towns/City and Chamber growth for the future.

The relationship between the Council and the Chambers had continued to be productive with all working in partnership to achieve growth and assist the Chambers to be more representative of the business community in their area.

The annual budget had remained the same for the last eight years at £12,000. Given the rapid increase in prices for goods and services and having reviewed the annual budget with each Chamber, the Chambers had confirmed they were finding it difficult to continue matching their activity within their current budget. In an effort to address this issue and to continue with the partnership working, it would be reasonable to agree a modest increase of the annual budget to £15,000 per annum. This can be met from existing budgets.

RECOMMENDED that the Council increases the annual budget to the Chambers of Commerce/Trade to £15,000 per annum.

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

Councillor Smart highlighted the commitment of the Chambers and welcomed the increase.

Councillor McKimm acknowledged the valuable work of the Chambers and highlighted how those Chambers allowed the Council to understand the needs of the businesses within the towns. He wished to note the work undertaken in Bangor recently by Sharon Regan where all the businesses in the City had been compiled into a list and he found that to be very helpful.

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

25. FREE WI-FI PROVISION (FILE RDP163)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place detailing that as Members would be aware the Council has provided free Town/City Centre Wi-Fi provision for the last 10 years.

This provided free internet access to residents and visitors in the commercial core by way of a Wi-Fi service which was originally funded by the Department for Social Development (DSD) as a marketing tool to enhance town centres.

As technology had moved at a rapid pace, the equipment and provision had struggled with download/upload speeds and the usage of this service had fallen dramatically over the last couple of years. Most people who owned a mobile device usually had a data allowance and 4G connectivity, which was faster and easier to use than the Wi-Fi. The current service had an annual upkeep costs of £15,000 per annum, not including obsolete equipment repairs and replacement.

As part of the rate setting process the Council agreed that the Wi-Fi provision and the on-going maintenance was no longer sustainable.

2. Next Steps

The Wi-Fi provision was effectively switched off as of 31 March 2023 and the Council was now in the process of decommissioning the equipment.

There are 68 Wi-Fi antennas that form the network to broadcast the free outdoor Wi-Fi. Of these 38 were located on private property, with the remainder on CCTV poles and other Council buildings. The following had now commenced:

- Terminate the broadcasting of the Wi-Fi system with Wi-Fi Spark
- Power off the gateway hubs in each of the towns.
- Stock-take existing equipment and locations.
- Update names of tenants and owners of buildings which currently host antennas.
- Notify those that the scheme was being discontinued and the Council would follow up in relation to the removal of the equipment.

That process would take approximately three months to complete.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the report.

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

Councillor McCollum agreed with the recommendation on the grounds of its ineffectiveness and she asked for the cost of the decommissioning.

The Head of Regeneration advised that Wi-fi Spark would provide an end of term cost, the budget was available to do the decommissioning.

Councillor Smart acknowledged the contents of the report and why the decision had been made. He asked about the incentive to do it at the current stage.

The Head of Regeneration advised that the Council removed the budget as a savings. The infrastructure needed to be dismantled as the landowners needed to be paid for the usage and there was no budget for any future bills.

Councillor McKimm asked if the equipment could be repurposed within the community. He recognised that the equipment may have lost its commercial value as it had been in place for some time. The Head of Regeneration stated that equipment could be reviewed once it was received.

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

26. CONWAY SQUARE COVERING PROJECT (FILE RDP230) (Appendix XXI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place attaching Conway Square Covering Project - Outline Business Case. The report detailed that as Members would be aware the Council appointed Hall McKnight to undertake an economic appraisal of the proposed Conway Square covering project to ascertain the financial viability, economic benefits and fundability. There was a break clause included in the appointment that required a positive economic appraisal before moving to a detailed design and planning application for the project.

3. Economic Appraisal

The Outline Business Case (OBC) had been prepared in accordance with Treasury guidance and followed the 'Five Case Model'. That also took account of the previously undertaken Feasibility Study. The structure of the OBC was as follows:

- Introduction: To set out the background and context to the Conway Square development.
- Strategic Case: To demonstrate strategic fit with local and regional policies, and to set out the clear and compelling case for intervention.
- Economic Case: To identify options to take forward the Project, acknowledging the need for a sustainable and viable option. This section also details the cost of the Preferred Option.
- Commercial Case: To outline the commercial arrangements underpinning the development of Conway Square.
- Financial Case: To demonstrate the affordability, fundability and financial sustainability of the Preferred Option.
- Management Case: To set out: the proposed governance arrangements, including project management and project assurance and the risk and benefits management processes.

The OBC clearly identified several key constraints:

- Availability of capital funding from ANDBC and no identified external funder.
- Availability of revenue funding to manage the facility.
- Availability of human resources to manage the facility.
- The need to operate in a financially viable and sustainable manner as to add to the economy of Newtownards.
- Planning (although there has been engagement with Planning and HED).

The construction costs for the project were estimated in the region of c£800k. This budget had not been included in the current Council's project portfolio capital budgets profile.

A further key issue was the management of the Square and its events. The Council currently did not have the funding or resources to manage and deliver additional events in the Square besides those which were normally held.

Based on the limited data available, the project was not forecast to present a net economic benefit to the economy, although there would be non-monetary benefits. In

light of this, it would be most difficult for the Council to proceed with the project as it was not considered to represent Value for Money.

4. Outcome

Whilst some benefits would be experienced from the project, they were outweighed by the risks and low economic benefits to Newtownards, especially in trying to enhance the evening economy. Given the findings set out in the OBC it would also be extremely unlikely that this project could attract external funding as a positive economic appraisal would be essential.

RECOMMENDED that Council does not proceed to the detailed design and planning application stage, due to the low economic benefit as detailed in the OBC.

Proposed by Alderman McDowell, seconded by Councillor Smart, that this Council defers the decision on the Conway Square Covering proposals until this report can be presented to the Newtownards Town Advisory Group to enable it to make comments or come up with new ideas or solutions.

Alderman McDowell highlighted that the project was important to the traders to enhance Conway Square. He expressed concern regarding the decision-making process and he felt the message being sent was that the Council had no money for the project or to run any future events in the Square and therefore the project would not be viable. Alderman McDowell felt it would be right to discuss the matter fully at the next meeting of the Newtownards TAG to see if there any ways to make future suggestions and solutions. The project was brought forward with an aim to attract external funding to enhance the facilities in Conway Square to make the area an all year round facility. Alderman McDowell felt it would be good manners and courtesy to have a discussion with members of the TAG. He hoped the project could go forward in some format and felt it was important that it be given proper consideration.

Councillor Smart thanked the Head of Regeneration for his work on the matter. He welcomed the opportunity to have a discussion with the TAG and work through the viability.

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter asked when the next TAG meeting would take place. The Head of Regeneration advised that would take place in September. He highlighted that the Outline Business Case had been sent out to all members of the TAG and he had asked them to respond with comments; however, no comments had been received. The Consultants met with the Chamber of Trade on a number of occasions and the Chambers had undertaken to achieve letters of support for the project, with three being received. To get a project of this magnitude onto the Council's Capital scheme would need to have a very positive OBC to show it had economic benefit to Newtownards.

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter understood the position and out of courtesy she agreed with the deferral.

Alderman McDowell stated that his proposal was no criticism of the officers but there had been an oversight in areas. He felt his proposal was the right thing to do to find a way forward.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman McDowell, seconded by Councillor Smart, that this Council defers the decision on the Conway Square Covering proposals until this report can be presented to the Newtownards Town Advisory Group to enable them to make comments or come up with new ideas or solutions.

27. NOM REQUEST RE FOOTPATH PROVISION AT SHORE ROAD, BALLYHALBERT (FILE
(Appendix XXII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place attaching response from the Permanent Secretary of the Department for Infrastructure dated 24 May 2023. The report detailed that the Council was recently advised of a serious road safety issue in the village of Ballyhalbert. At present there was no footpath on Shore Road between the Village and with the many new homes constructed on the former caravan park site a number of pedestrians had raised concerns as they believe it was intolerable that they must move into the verge or up on the grass bank to avoid oncoming vehicles.

The Council was also advised that a possible solution was for DfI to take control of a path that currently runs from the housing development to the centre of the Village. Although in private ownership, and in poor condition, it was believed this may be a cost-effective solution to the road safety issues.

It was agreed that the Council would write to the Permanent Secretary and request a review of this situation and suggested the Department look at whether the path could be a solution to this matter. A response was attached to the report from Dr Julie Harrison.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the response.

Proposed by Alderman Adair, seconded by Alderman Armstrong-Cotter, that Council writes to the Permanent Secretary of the Department for Infrastructure expressing disappointment in the response that despite being a priority need and road safety concern in the village of Ballyhalbert or over 20 years the construction of a footway link on Shore Road Ballyhalbert is currently not a priority for the Department. The Council further notes the correspondence in relation to the alternate footway proposal asking the Department to reconsider and task officers to work with land owners and the caravan park to explore options to develop a safe pedestrian walkway at this location as a potential village renewal project.

Alderman Adair expressed his disappointment with the response from the Department of Infrastructure and felt it was unacceptable. The matter had been an issue for 20 years in Ballyhalbert and the number of houses continued to grow at the St Andrews Longfield and Park development which was cut off from the rest of the

village. There were children walking to school and people walking along that busy road. There was a road safety concern with many vehicles not obeying the speed limit of the road. The only progress made by the Department in 20 years was the undertaking of a feasibility study. An alternative proposal had been put to the Department and its response was that land acquisition was required; however, the original scheme required land acquisition and he did not feel the alternative proposal had been given due consideration. The footpath was the number one issue for the people in Ballyhalbert.

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter agreed that it was unacceptable. It was bad stretch of road and unfortunately a child had been knocked down and killed in that area.

Alderman Adair reiterated his concerns and urged for action to be taken.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman Adair, seconded by Alderman Armstrong-Cotter, that Council Write to the Permanent Secretary of the Department for Infrastructure expressing disappointment in the response that despite being a priority need and road safety concern in the village of Ballyhalbert or over 20 years the construction of a footway link on Shore Road Ballyhalbert is currently not a priority for the Department. The Council further note the correspondence in relation to the alternate footway proposal asking the Department to reconsider and task officers to work with land owners and the caravan park to explore options to develop a safe pedestrian walkway at this location as a potential village renewal project.

(Alderman McDowell withdrew from the meeting – 9.48 pm)

28. NOTICES OF MOTION

28.1 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Smart and Councillor S Irvine

“In acknowledging the many negative impacts of long term commercial and residential dereliction, officers are tasked with reviewing current powers and how council could best effect positive change.

As part of this review officers would investigate using part or all of Newtownards town centre as a pilot scheme to tackle dereliction, which could then be broadened across the Borough if successful. The review may form a working group which would consider what incentives could be provided through, DFC whom hold regeneration powers, the Planning system, Building Control, or by other means, to encourage the re-use or redevelopment of local derelict buildings to provide new business opportunities or homes. Consideration would also be given to what limitations can be placed on public and private property owners who are not willing to work in partnership for regeneration and the public good.

Any potential pilot would have relevance for all of the Ards and North Down Borough and may highlight the need for additional powers for council or new partnerships with central government departments. The research of officers would be expected within a reasonable timeframe but would not be time limited. Should other professional

expertise be required for elements of this research, a report seeking consent to spend would be returned to committee for consideration.”

Councillor S Irvine was admitted to the meeting via Zoom.

Proposed by Councillor Smart, seconded by Councillor Hollywood, that the Notice of Motion be adopted.

Councillor Smart believed that everyone across the community in Newtownards were rightly proud of the town’s achievements. In recent years the town had won the Great British High Street Award, High Street of the Year and High Street Heroes Award with the success of the independent traders and the active Chamber of Trade. One significant detriment to the town was the amount of long-term dereliction throughout the town centre particularly in Court Street and South Street. So often the cause of dereliction was the lack of market demand, however in Newtownards the demand was positive for both commercial and residential. Despite this some properties had lay un-used for 30 years without a word or action from the owner or a care for the long-term implications for the town. The powers to counteract that were limited and were fractured, with central government having a leading role and the Council the subsidiary. The review suggested within the motion would allow Officers, partners and Members to see how the issues could be best tackled holistically and furthermore what powers would be needed to do so and what budget. Councillor Smart felt it was important that the solutions were ready and prepared for when finance became available. Not all aspects were costly and as example he outlined the suggestion of offering free planning fees to derelict property owners for a period of two years. He stated that he had discussed the contents of his motion with DfC Officers who believed the issue would benefit from a focused approach and had offered their willingness to discuss the matter further. An equitable solution would identify what was holding an area back and tackle that rather than a blanket approach. He hoped the approach would provide insight on how pockets of dereliction could be tackled across the Borough. He wished for a report to come back to the Place and Prosperity Committee on how Officers could see the make-up of a working group. The timeframe was not specific and provided time to think and consult.

Councillor S Irvine outlined that his concerns were in relation to anti-social behaviour in the derelict buildings especially in Court Street and South Street. Fly-tipping and attraction of vermin were also issues which was not attracting investment into Newtownards.

Councillor McKimm asked if Council could utilise such funding schemes such as white paper or levelling up.

The Director of Place highlighted that the brown field funding referred to was only applicable in England but the report coming back would explore all funding opportunities.

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter concurred with Councillor Smart and noted that the anti-social behaviour was encouraged by the dereliction. She expressed concern regarding the danger for the youth people in those properties. In particular she

referred to property in Court Street and advised that she had made contact with the owner who had advised that was a protected building and they were unable to demolish the property despite wanting to. Council needed to allow orders in such circumstances for demolition. The investment in the Castlebawn site and linkage into the town were held back by the way the area looked.

Councillor McCracken noted that over a period of decades, dereliction had been a blight on many towns and villages. He felt it was only right that the Council stood up and welcomed the motion in that regard. Although, Councillor McCracken did voice the view that the motion was broad in its term with some aspects beyond the responsibility of Council. He felt the motion could benefit from highlighting a more specific area to achieve more impact within the time and resources available.

Councillor Smart noted the danger to the youth people for anti-social behaviour and the problems faced by the PSNI and the Street Pastors. He agreed with Councillor McCracken that the motion was wide and stated that it was deliberate in that way to start wide and narrow the issue right down. The issue was a huge problem in Court Street in particular however there were other areas including South Street and Mill Street.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Smart, seconded by Councillor Irvine, that the Notice of Motion be adopted.

28.2 Notice of Motion submitted by Alderman Adair and Councillor Armstrong-Cotter

That this Council recognises the issues and concerns detailed in the letter sent to the Chief Executive by The Kircubbin Harbour Action Group and agrees to write to the Permanent Secretaries of the Departments of Infrastructure and Communities, asking them to provide details of the responsibility they have in ensuring the public safety of the harbour and listing any details of dealings their departments have had with the owner.

Proposed by Alderman Adair, seconded by Alderman Armstrong-Cotter, that the Notice of Motion be adopted.

Alderman Adair stated that the harbour was the heart of Kircubbin and unfortunately was in a state of disrepair. The only progress made was that it became an historic monument and in 2020 it was added to the at-risk register with a danger of being lost. It was close to the road and there was concern regarding coastal erosion. The Kircubbin Harbour Action Group had written to the Departments of Infrastructure and Communities but had received no response. He recognised the Council responsibility was limited however felt the Council needed to challenge the Departments for the people of Kircubbin.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman Adair, seconded by Alderman Armstrong-Cotter, that the Notice of Motion be adopted.

28.3 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor McKimm and Councillor McCollum

That this Council brings back a report that looks at the restoration of much missed events namely the Bangor Easter activities (including the Easter parade), Donaghadee Lights Up and Groomsport Music Festival.

As part of this report, officers should engage and consult with local communities and business to gauge not only their support for the return of these events but also ask, if they do return, what could be done to improve these events to allow for more community involvement and also to maximize footfall and trade for local businesses.

Proposed by Councillor McKimm, seconded by Councillor McCollum, that the Notice of Motion be adopted.

Councillor McKimm was aware there was a policy in respect of events and a shortage of money. He wished for the matter to be looked at in two parts, engage what people including how the events could enhance footfall and spend and secondly that Officers would look at external funding.

Councillor McCollum stated that those type of events brought communities together and enhanced business opportunities. The events would be much welcomed by the communities.

Alderman Adair encouraged trying to achieve external funding for such events.

Councillor Smart stated that he could not support the motion, the events were legacy events, a Council wide review and strategy had been agreed. He expressed concern that it was not a whole Borough approach and a wider scope was needed.

Councillor McKimm understood the comments of Councillor Smart and the events listed were examples and not prescriptive.

The proposal was put to the meeting and declared CARRIED with 7 voting For, 3 Against, 1 Abstention and 5 Absent.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor McKimm, seconded by Councillor McCollum, that the Notice of Motion be adopted.

29. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

There were no items of any other notified business.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

30. BANGOR MARINA Q4 REPORT 2022-23 (FILE 141671)
(Appendix XXIII)

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

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

Schedule 6 – Part 3 – Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person.

It was recommended that the Council noted the report detailing the performance of Bangor Marina over Quarter 4 of the 2022-23 period, as provided by Boat Folk. which operates Bangor Marina on behalf of the Council.

The recommendation was AGREED.

31. PICKIE QUARTER 4 REPORT - 1 JANUARY - 31 MARCH 2023 (FILE 171006)
(Appendix XXIV)

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

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

Schedule 6 – Part 3 – Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person.

It was recommended that the Council noted the report detailing the performance of Pickie Fun Park over the fourth quarter of the 2022/2023 financial year, as operated by Pickie Ltd on behalf of the Council, in respect of visitor numbers and financials.

The report highlighted that the year had proved challenging for the Fun park due to a number of bad weather closures impacting upon Halloween and Christmas events; cost of living crisis; recovery from the pandemic; and issues with the Pickie Puffer.

Members were asked to note that the Operator had worked hard to maintain the Fun Park, having delivered new attractions including a refurbished Pickie Puffer locomotive, new train halt, and ongoing general maintenance of the Fun Park.

The recommendation was AGREED.

32. EXPLORIS QUARTER 4 REPORT - 1 JANUARY - 31 MARCH 2023 (FILE DEVP3C)
(Appendix XXV)

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

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

Schedule 6 – Part 3 – Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person.

It was recommended that the Council noted this report detailing performance of Exploris, as operated by AEL on behalf of the Council, for Quarter 4 of the 2022/23. Members' attention was drawn to how Exploris had recovered well due to the efforts of the AEL team, despite the huge challenges brought about by the pandemic and closures. Some disappointment was expressed in respect of fall in visitor numbers over that period.

The recommendation was AGREED.

33. BELFAST REGION CITY DEAL AND BANGOR WATERFRONT UPDATE (FILE RDP22/RDP56)
(Appendices XXVI – XXVIII)

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

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

Schedule 6 – Part 3 – Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person.

It was recommended that the Council noted this report which outlined the current position of Belfast Region City Deal projects, and included an update on the Innovation, Digital, Tourism and Regeneration, Infrastructure and Employability and Skills programmes. The Report also provided a update on the Bangor Waterfront Regeneration project, including the current ten year spend profile, now that the Contract for Funding has been secured. The Report provided an update on the recent BRCD Members Panel correspondence, discussions on construction inflation and provided a copy of a study that was done on the Belfast region Carbon footprint. Members discussed and welcomed the update, highlighting the need to ensure effective communications on the Bangor Waterfront project.

The recommendation was AGREED.

34. LABOUR MARKET PARTNERSHIP UPDATE REPORT ON FUNDING (ED123)
(Appendix XXIX)

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

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

Schedule 6 – Part 3 – Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person.

It was recommended that Council:

- i. noted the content of this report;

- ii. Authorised the officers to liaise with the DfC to progress the matter;
- iii. Officers report back to Council when an update is available.

This report updated Members on an intention by the Department for Communities to pause funding for the Labour Market Partnership (LMP) from start of July 2023, only providing 25% of the proposed funding for the financial year. The report detailed the outcomes of the Ards and North Down LMP achieved to date, through working collaboratively with statutory, voluntary and community organisations to assess need and improve local labour market conditions. Members were advised of a contingency plan as agreed by the Partnership and of response provided to the Department's EQIA consultation on funding proposals.

The recommendation was AGREED.

35. POTENTIAL LIMITED LIABILITY PARTNERSHIP WITH PUBLIC SECTOR PLC UPDATE (FILE RDP209)

(Appendices XXX – XXXI)

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

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

Schedule 6 – Part 3 – Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person.

It was recommended that Council noted this report which detailed that, further to a review by the Strategic Investment Board (SIB) into the Council's Estate and potential models for development of same, the Council had previously agreed to enter into a Limited Liability Partnership with Public Sector Plc. The aim was for the partnership to review two of the Council's surplus sites and develop business cases to see how these could be developed to deliver community, economic and environmental benefit to the Borough. The report provided Council with a letter recently received from PSP outlining that after careful consideration and review of its business plan, it had taken the strategic decision to move away from Limited Liability Partnerships and was therefore not seeking to conclude the establishment of the LLP with Council. Members expressed their disappointment and agreed that the models should be kept under review.

The recommendation was AGREED.

36. OPEN HOUSE FESTIVAL – SEASIDE REVIVAL UPDATE REPORT (FILE TO/EV90)

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

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

Schedule 6 – Part 3 – Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person.

It was recommended that the Council approves an amendment to the Open House Service Level Agreement, Year 3, removing the requirement for match funding for the £15,000 Council allocation towards the Seaside Revival Festival, August 2023.

This report updated Members on the detail of the existing Service Level Agreement between Open House and the Council, and the impact of wider budget cuts in relation to anticipated grant funding for the Seaside Revival event seeking an amendment to the SLA in respect of match funding.

The recommendation was AGREED.

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 10.38 pm.

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

A hybrid meeting (in person and via Zoom) of the Corporate Services Committee was held at the Council Chamber, Church Street, Newtownards and via Zoom, on Tuesday 20 June 2023 at 7.00pm.

PRESENT:

In the Chair: Alderman Douglas

Aldermen: Brooks Mclveen
Graham Smith
McAlpine (Zoom)

Councillors: Chambers (Zoom) W Irvine
Cochrane McRandal
Gilmour Moore
Irwin

Officers: Director of Corporate Services (M Steele), Head of Administration (A Curtis), Head of Finance (S Grieve), Head of HR (R McCullough) and Democratic Services Officer (R King)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor S Irvine, Councillor Kennedy and Councillor MacArthur.

NOTED.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairman sought any Declarations of Interest and none were made.

NOTED.

3. PERFORMANCE REPORTS Q4 2022-23:

A) COMMUNITY PLANNING (Appendix I)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED- Report from the Chief Executive detailing the undernoted:

Context

Members would be aware that Council was required, under the Local Government Act 2014, to have in place arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions. To fulfil that requirement Council approved the

Performance Management Policy and Handbook in October 2015. The Performance Management Handbook outlined the approach to Performance Planning and Management process as:

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years
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- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually (for publication 30 September 2022)
- Service Plan – developed annually (approved April/May 2022)

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

Reporting approach

The Service Plans would be reported to relevant Committees on a quarterly basis as undernoted:

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
Quarter 1 (Q1)	April – June	September
Q2	July – September	December
Q3	October – December	March
Q4	January - March	June

The report for Quarter 4 2022-23 was attached.

Key points to note:

- Ards and North Down's Strategic Community Planning Partnership met on 14 March 2023.

Key achievements:

- Considerable work had been undertaken in Quarter 4 to promote and roll out usage of the Here2Help. Initial figures provided by the app developer indicated a notable increase in the number of downloads.
- Dementia Friendly was raised as a notice of motion and had been discussed within the Age Friendly Alliance. A South Eastern area regional group had been established to develop a regional action plan that would then have a localised implementation action plan. This local action plan would have actions specific to Council. The Big Game (a consultation tool developed by Ards and North Down Borough Council's Community Planning Service) was being adapted by Community Planning to enable us to gather feedback from people who lived with dementia, and their carers, that would help influence both action plans.
- Ards and North Down Borough Council, and the Strategic Community Planning Partnership, had initiated work on the Whole Systems Approach to

Obesity. This was being undertaken as part of the Community Plan with the Community Planning Manager leading this work within Council. Training on a Whole Systems Approach had been undertaken and a project plan put in place. Workshops had taken place with key stakeholders.

- Analysis of Census info was ongoing as new data was released. Reports had been produced for each data release.
- The Community Planning Service updated its analysis of the local labour market which was used to develop the second LMP action plan.

Emerging issues:

- A priority for 2023/24 would be to move forward the WSA to Obesity workstream. Other Big Plan priorities may have had to take a back seat depending on the resources needed to implement this project.
- Considerable time was being spent on new Integrated Care System. The Community Planning Manager was a member of both a Regional Working Group and a Design and Implementation Group. This was an important area of work as this new system would influence the wellbeing of people living in Ards and North Down. The Assessment of Wellbeing that the Community Planning Services had undertaken, and our Big Plan outcomes, may influence some of the priorities of any newly formed Area Integrated Partnership Board.
- Cost of Living and Poverty continue to be an issue. In quarter 4 we signed a data sharing agreement between Council and Trussell Trust. This meant that Trussell Trust could share the data they collected via the two local food banks. This, alongside other data we collected from the Well-Fed Social Supermarket, would improve our understanding of poverty in Ards and North Down. This information would feed into work we were undertaking with Ards and North Down's Poverty Forum to develop an anti-poverty action plan.
- Other priorities and commitments had meant that we had been unable to publish our Community Planning Newsletter 'Engage'. This had been removed from our 2023/24 service plan.
- The grouping of Census data was changing which may have impacted on how Ards and North Down area data had previously been grouped.
- LMP funding had been suspended but we would continue to monitor the local labour market.

Action to be taken:

- As we stopped producing our engage newsletter, we planned on reviewing our method of communicating community planning activities with stakeholders including the public.
- We had started to revise the Age Friendly Strategy and Action Plan in collaboration with our Over 50s Council and the Age Friendly Alliance.
- We would be rolling out our consultation exercise with people living with dementia and their carers.
- We would be continuing our project researching poverty in Ards and North Down.

B) CORPROATE COMMUNICATIONS (CMR Q22223)
(Appendix II)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED- Report from the Chief Executive detailing the undernoted:

Context

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

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Reporting approach

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Reference	Period	Reporting Month
Quarter 1 (Q1)	April – June	September
Q2	July – September	December
Q3	October – December	March
Q4	January - March	June

The report for Quarter 4 2022-23 was attached.

Key points to note:

- We continued to be unable to recruit to the post of Multi-Media Technician – a key role in the delivery of the service's technical support duties. Alternative options e.g., recruitment of a student/apprentice were being considered.
- The development of a new .gov.uk website remained a priority, but progress had been slowed due to staff shortages in a number of service areas that were key to delivery. This KPI had been rolled into the 2023-24 financial year for delivery in Q2.

Key achievements:

- Delivery of six Chief-Executive-led Roadshows on a range of dates and in different formats to facilitate as many employees as possible to attend. These were held to explore themes from the Council's recent IIP report and to give employees across the organisation an opportunity to feed back to management on several key issues including agile working, recognition, and line manager communication. The Council's People Plan (staff engagement and development) will be produced to help address the points raised. In feedback received, 95% of those who attended found the sessions useful and informative.
- Production of the Borough Magazine (distributed to all households and businesses) in March. This provided residents with updates on several key initiatives including the TASTE AND Food Awards, the new NI Planning Portal, progress on our recycling targets and the positive impacts of the Rural Development Programme across the Borough.
- Ongoing programme of communications (PR/ graphic design/ technical event support/ social media content) work to promote a range of Council initiatives including the Ards International Guitar Festival, Sports Awards, Levelling Up Funding Announcements, Community Orchards, In Bloom Campaign, Prevent the Cough (air pollution) campaign and consultation opportunities.
- A 'Let's Support Local' Campaign ran throughout March 2023 across digital and traditional media channels. Given the challenges associated with the cost-of-living crisis, the campaign messaging focussed on value for money and actively promoted 74 offers from businesses in a range of industries and across the Borough with very strong engagement from businesses and chambers of commerce during the campaign.
- Production of Ards and North Down content for the Belfast Region brochure (Renewed Ambition Programme). Development of sector-specific business case studies for publication in Q1 23-24.
- Announcement of the Contract for Funding for Bangor Waterfront and launch of a new e-zine for stakeholders interested in the redevelopment scheme.

Emerging issues:

- Based on feedback from the Investors in People report, staff satisfaction with the Council as a 'great place to work' and in terms of engagement was slightly below KPI targets. This had been discussed with the IIP Assessor and was typical of responses across the sector following on from the disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and challenges to the way in which we had been working. The recent Chief Executive-led Roadshows had provided an opportunity to discuss this in more detail and the development and implementation of a new 'Agile Working Policy' (Q2 – 23/24) would go some way to address this.
- Work was ongoing on the development of proposals for new and more innovative way to engage and consult, including the procurement of a digital consultation platform.

Action to be taken:

- Communication plans had been agreed for the Council's Coronation programme and would be implemented throughout April and May.
- Work around media and communications support for the local government election count was being progressed.
- Plans were in place for the launch of the Tourism Experiences Programme and ongoing proactive promotion to ensure strong visitor engagement and ticket sales.

Please note at the time of preparing the report budget data in relation to Q4 was not available.

C) FINANCE (FIN76)
(Appendix III)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED- Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailing the undernoted:

Context

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

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


Reporting approach

The Service Plans would be reported to relevant Committees on a quarterly basis as undernoted:

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
Quarter 1 (Q1)	April – June	September
Q2	July – September	December
Q3	October – December	March
Q4	January - March	June

The report for Quarter 4 2022-23 was attached.

Key points to note:

- Attendance for the first half of the year was poor and that had had an adverse effect on performance in most other areas, particularly around statutory deadlines and completion of improvement initiatives.
- Reactive workload pressures continued to dominate staff time constraining the time available to value added activities.
- Due to resourcing issues, it was not possible to set up processes to measure four KPIs (all marked with a  in the table below).
- Significant work had been carried out on Finance Policies in the second half of the year and the early part of the new financial year and this should hopefully show positive results in future reports.
- Budgetary performance was significantly better than expected due to additional investment income arising from increased interest rates.
- The Pride in Performance process was suspended during the year, due to the development of a new scheme.
- A new month-end close down process had been put in place and this should result in better performance with regard to control account reconciliations and issuing of budget reports.

Key achievements:

- Core transactional targets continued to be met.
- The audited financial statements were published on time having received a clean audit report, despite resource constraints.

D) STRATEGIC TRANSFORMATION AND PERFORMANCE
(Appendix IV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED- Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailing the undernoted:

Context

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Reporting approach

The Service Plans would be reported to relevant Committees on a quarterly basis as undernoted:

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
Quarter 1 (Q1)	April – June	September
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Q3	October – December	March
Q4	January - March	June

The report for Quarter 4 2022-23 was attached.

Key points to note:

- Spend against budget was slightly lower than expected due to the ongoing vacant Procurement Officer post.
- The Performance Improvement Manager was appointed as the Digital Services Manager (previously Business Technology Manager) on a temporary basis (until March 2025).
- Attendance was well above the Council average at 98.23% (against a target of 95%).
- % time invested in staff development remained slightly lower than expected, given the ongoing review of the appraisal process.

Key achievements:

- It should be noted that the PSU continued to deliver compliant procurement processes across Council with reduced resourcing and with zero challenges. In addition, procurement savings were over target for the year (£270,110 versus £250,000).
- A Strategic Priorities and Resource Requirements Paper, linked to the Strategic Transformation and Efficiency Programme (STEP), was approved by Council in April 2023. This had enabled substantive work to commence with regard to key STEP projects.
- The Digital Strategy project, a key strand of the Strategic Transformation and Efficiency Programme continued to progress with regular meetings taking place with an external specialist.
- The Corporate Plan Working Group was established in May 2023 incorporating representatives from each Directorate, and most Service areas. This Group would guide the development of the 2025-29 Corporate Plan in conjunction with the new Council and other key stakeholders.

Emerging issues:

- The PSU would return to a full staff complement in June 2023, following the successful recruitment of a Procurement Officer during Q4.
- The Performance Improvement Unit was evolving to have a greater focus on transformation. As a result, the vacant Performance Manager post was converted into a Transformation Manager role (currently being recruited). In addition, the vacant Performance Improvement Officer role was converted into a Transformation Officer role, which was currently being recruited along with two new Transformation Officer posts. The future 'Transformation Service' will consist of a Transformation Manager, 3 Transformation Officers and a Performance Improvement Officer.

Action to be taken:

A key project for the new Transformation Service would be to review the performance management and continuous improvement framework and processes.

E) ADMINISTRATION
(Appendix V)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED- Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailing the undernoted:

Context

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Reference	Period	Reporting Month
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Q3	October – December	March
Q4	January - March	June

The report for Quarter 4 2022-23 was attached.

Key points to note:

The majority of targets in the Administration Service Plan were measured annually.

Table 1: Q4 performance update - Business as Usual activities

Business as Usual activities we will deliver in 2022/2023 (actions)	Q4 update
Monitor the implementation of the action plan in the Roadmap to Sustainability	Meeting target. 6 monthly updates were provided to Council. An advisory audit had taken place with highlighted some additional work required to ensure that this roadmap was delivering on the actions set.
Catalogue and digitise all PROWs (alleged and asserted) and investigate any encroachments where required	Met target. Digitisation project was complete and the Officer was working their way through the queries on current database. Status update report would be presented in near future.
EMS – Retain accreditation and use framework in all Council buildings to ensure best practice	Meeting target – The Council had retained accreditation.
Confer 2 Freedom of the Boroughs	Met target – Conferred the Freedom of the Borough on the Irish Guards in June 2022 and Gary Lightbody in August 2022.
All agendas circulated within 5-day notice period	Met target - 100% of Agendas went out 5 days in advance of all Committee and Council meetings.
Hold 4 Corporate Health and Safety meetings – with input from directorate Health and Safety meetings	Meeting target. Group met on the 6 th May and 15 th August 2022 and 5 th December 2022 and 6 th March 2023 . Meetings scheduled on a quarterly basis.
Deliver ‘It Takes Allsorts’ programme to address current identified issues of minority populations annually	Met target, programme had concluded and was well received as always.
FOI/EIR Information response times in compliance with legislation	Missed Target – 97% This was an improvement from 93% for same period last year and given the increased number and complex nature of many FOI requests this was an excellent compliance rate.

Business as Usual activities we will deliver in 2022/2023 (actions)	Q4 update																				
	<p>A summary of this quarter compared with the same quarter last year was as follows:</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>1 January 2023 to 31 March 2023 (2022/23 Q4)</th> <th>1 January 2022 to 31 March 2022 (2021/22 Q4)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Number received</td> <td>193</td> <td>147</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Number responded to within 20 working days</td> <td>187</td> <td>137</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Responses issued within 20 working days – compliance rate (%)</td> <td>97%</td> <td>93%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Average time for a response to be issued</td> <td>11 working days</td> <td>10 working days</td> </tr> <tr> <td>% change in number of requests received from 2021/22 Q4 statistics</td> <td>+31%</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>				1 January 2023 to 31 March 2023 (2022/23 Q4)	1 January 2022 to 31 March 2022 (2021/22 Q4)	Number received	193	147	Number responded to within 20 working days	187	137	Responses issued within 20 working days – compliance rate (%)	97%	93%	Average time for a response to be issued	11 working days	10 working days	% change in number of requests received from 2021/22 Q4 statistics	+31%	
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Train all CLT/HOST in emergency planning response protocol	Met target, new members of HOST were trained in Autumn.																				
Have 2 emergency planning test activations	Met target.																				
Hold 2 Emergency Planning Implementation Group meetings	Met target: Meeting held on 20 October 2022 and 19 April 2023.																				
Continue review of the use of resources (paper, postage, stationary) to ensure sustainability is paramount.	Met target. Review completed. Customer Services Manager reviewing use of paper, postage and stationery and working with services to reduce use where appropriate.																				
DSAR response times in compliance with legislation	18 DSARs were processed in this period and all in compliance with legislative timeframes.																				

Table 2: Q4 performance update - Service development/improvement activities

What service development/improvement will we undertake in 2022/2023?	Q4 update
Pilot paperless filing for new files in 1 Directorate or Service Unit	Missed target : This was now included in the larger digital transformation project. Of the new files created 11% were digital only.
Monitor complaints consistently via Tascomi across Council	Met target – Tascomi rolled-out to all services. The Customer Services Manager now has oversight of other databases for customer complaints.
75% rate for resolution of issues or enquiries at first point of contact in Customer Service. Trend analysis to be carried out as part of this.	Met target - Of the management information that we hold on Te-care (Tascomi) and Enquiries database, the resolution of issues at first point of contact is 93%.
E Learning module to be created for complaint handling/customer service	Missed target - E-learning module was being developed and would be rolled out once new complaints handling process is in place.
Update Customer Service Excellence Strategy and Action Plan for 2020-2024	Missed target: This would be finalised early in new financial year. Delay due to multiple new procedures and policies being developed and alignment with document.
Implement Screening App	Met target. This was now completed and is working well.
Screening 100% of all new and revised policies to ensure compliance with disability duties and Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1988, Rural and Sustainability.	Met target - All existing policies were checked to ensure that they were screened and if not, screening was completed. All new policies were screened as they are being developed.
Review participation and recruit members in/to the Consultancy panel	Met target -The group had met and a gap analysis was carried out of Section 75 categories that may not have been represented. Additional members had been recruited and further update could be found in Quarterly update.
Develop Claims Management Policy	Missed target - Development underway and would be completed before Autumn 2023.
Increase Participation and recruit members in the Council Disability Forum by 50%	Met target: This had been carried out and 1 new member had been recruited.

What service development/improvement will we undertake in 2022/2023?	Q4 update
Complete Climate Adaptation and Action Plans	Missed target: This was progressing – 3 workshops had taken place and officers had reviewed risk register with individual service units and identifying actions. This had been summarised into themes of functional and operational actions. Aim to sign off Adaptation plan in September 2023.

Table 3: Q4 performance update – Corporate wide improvement activities

Performance Measures	Q4 update
% Staff Attendance (95%)	Met target – 96.41%
% Spend against budget (+/-5% of budget)	Missed target – 106%
% Staff reporting regular receipt of team briefings	100% - Teams meet at least once a month

Key achievements:

The Roadmap to Sustainability was continuing to serve as a great document to ensure that actions are continuing and constantly improving. The Council-wide awareness of their service's impact on all elements of sustainability had dramatically increased and projects now considered sustainability as a matter of course as opposed to an afterthought. In order to ensure that this was meaningful an Advisory Audit was commissioned, and Officers would work through the recommendations in the coming year.

Emerging issues:

There were a number of issues with requests for information coming through various channels where officers were dealing with the similar queries and spending a significant amount of time investigating, collating, responding and subsequently reviewing follow up queries. This had led to some policies being developed and reviewed to ensure these issues were being dealt with in an efficient and effective manner.

The Council had adopted the NIPSO Model Complaints Handling Procedure which reduced the procedure from 3 to 2 Stages before the complaint could be escalated to NIPSO. This would be a change culturally and required additional formal reporting from Local Authorities. This would be launched and implemented within the next 6 months.

Action to be taken:

We continued to work towards all of the KPIs.

F) HUMAN RESOURCES

(Appendix VI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED- Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailing the undernoted:

Context

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Reference	Period	Reporting Month
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Q4	January - March	June

The report for Quarter 4 2022-23 was attached.

Key points to note:

- This report gave updates on performance against the 19 Service Plan KPIs. Good progress was being made against the PIs with 12 currently having been achieved.
- 7 targets had not been achieved, however, considerable progress had been made

Key achievements:

- HR and OD had been successful in ensuring that there had been good communication with trade unions throughout the year and regular meetings took place between management and Trade Union Officials.
- Resourcing staff was extremely efficient in informing candidates for employment of the outcome of recruitment exercises with 100% of candidates being informed of the outcome within 2 weeks of a shortlisting meeting or from attendance at interview.
- The HR and OD service had remained within budget for the year.
- Whistle blowing training had taken place via the E learning system.
- A review of the current Flexible Working Policy had taken place and it had been updated to include a section on Hybrid Working with the formulation of a new policy entitled the Agile Working Policy. This policy was currently out for consultation with the Trade Unions and staff.
- There had also been team building days within the HR and OD team, which took place post pandemic and an Action Plan had been activated as a result.
- In addition to this, some informal visits to other locations by the HR team had taken place to discuss ongoing issues Managers may have and these visits will be formalised in the year ahead.
- Absence within the HR and OD team was above target at over 96%.

Targets not achieved

Although 7 key indicators were not achieved, considerable progress had taken place in these areas as set out below:

- Excellent process had been made on the People Plan with 75% of the actions being achieved at the end of the year and the Council had continued to hold Silver IIP accreditation following its 3 year assessment.
- A substantial amount of work has taken place with regard to developing a Workforce Planning Strategy including the establishment of a Working Group, focus groups and questionnaires. The Strategy would be ready for consultation with Trade Unions in the year ahead.
- Work was ongoing on developing a formal Corporate Induction Policy to enhance the departmental Induction Scheme which is already in place.
- The target of 5% for Corporate Absence had not been attained, however, work is progressing on establishing an Absence Action Plan following a report on Absence from APSE commissioned by the Council.

Action to be taken:

- Continued to work on progressing with implementation of a Workforce Planning Strategy, Corporate Induction Policy and Absence Action Plan in the year ahead.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman Smith, seconded by Councillor Gilmour, that items 3(a) to 3(f) be noted.

4. CHARGING AND INCOME POLICY (FIN58)

(Appendix VII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services stating that the attached policy was required to formalise and revise the governance framework brought forward from legacy organisations with respect to charging, income management and credit control. This addressed a number of outstanding Internal Audit recommendations.

The policy had been developed in line with the Council's policy development process and Corporate Leadership Team, Heads of Service and Service Unit Managers had all been consulted.

The objectives of the policy were set out on page 3 and the policy itself on page 4.

Key points to note were:

- Pg 4 – it was the Service Unit Managers' responsibility to ensure that proper Service Unit procedures were in place.
- Pg 6 – charges should be increased by the higher of inflation or the cost of increasing the service.
- Pg 6 – bin sales and delivery should have been at cost recovery.
- Pg 7 – Approval for charges would now be delegated to Heads of Service provided the policy was followed. Minor exceptions would require a director's approval and substantial deviation would require Council approval.
- Pg 15 – Formal credit control procedure including the suspension of service or access where there was non-payment after the third reminder.
- Pg 17 – formal write off thresholds were set.
- Pg 18 – record keeping improvements for legal actions, to allow better income management.
- Pg 19 – Establishing a grants inward register, to improve corporate knowledge with the requirement for all claims to be reviewed by Finance.

If approved the Finance Service would conduct a number of briefing sessions across the organisation in order to raise awareness, in addition to publication on ANDi, the Council intranet.

RECOMMENDED that Council approves the attached Charging and Income Policy and amends the Scheme of Delegation to comply with the new arrangements.

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

Alderman Smith had noted that charges could be increased in line with higher inflation rates or increased costs of running the service. He was concerned about the latter however, as unlike inflation rates, running costs could be an open-ended number. He sought clarity from the Officer.

The Head of Finance advised that the purpose of that provision was to manage the level of subsidy coming in from the District Rate and ensure that managers were

keeping that subsidy within a reasonable level. There was provision within the policy for deviations and if a deviation was deemed excessive then there would be requirements for officers to bring a report to the Committee to explain the reasoning.

Responding to queries from Alderman McIlveen, the Head of Finance confirmed that this would be a new policy rather than an amendment to an existing one.

Previously all charging policies had come before the Committee regardless of how minor the variations were. The purpose of this policy was to provide a framework in which officers could operate and therefore this would delegate decision making to officer level. Minor deviations would be referred to a Director, and significant deviations, exceeding 25% of prices, would be brought to Committee for Member approval.

Alderman McIlveen asked how Members would bring price changes outside of the proposed officer managed framework arrangement and it was advised that Members would have the opportunity to do this in the rate setting process.

Alderman McIlveen recalled Members, albeit not supported by his own Party, agreeing to changing bin pricing mid-year and was concerned of potential restrictions that this policy could bring in similar circumstances. On reflection he withdrew his seconding of the proposal.

While recognising the importance of discounts for non-commercial use, Councillor W Irvine raised concerns about separate pricing structures for room and equipment hire charges which he was aware resulted in unexpected charges for many of those particular groups. He would have liked to see those pricing schedules linked together to avoid that.

The Head of Finance said he would not expect Council officers to levy an unexpected charge in the way outlined by Councillor W Irvine and would expect officers to be mindful of the full charges at the time of taking the booking. The point of the policy was to ensure non-commercial use received a discount and it was not to penalise anyone or present them with hidden charges.

Responding to a query from Councillor McRandal, the officer confirmed that the policy did not apply to pricing schedules of outsourced services and that would be covered in the relevant operator agreement.

Councillor McAlpine noted that Appendix 3 listed facilities that were no longer in operation and the officer advised that an up-to-date schedule would follow.

Councillor Gilmour appreciated the importance of having a policy in relation to cash handling, recalling previous audit recommendations. However she was not comfortable with passing over the responsibility of price setting to officers as Members were ultimately accountable to the rate payer. For those reasons she was unable to support the recommendation.

The Director of Corporate Services explained the policy was to provide lead officers with greater agility around market factors such as inflation and also to address some

of the issues arising from audit recommendations. He felt that some of the wording in the policy could be changed because he felt that discussion was straying away from the intent of the policy and it was being wrongly interpreted. He asked if the Committee would be minded to defer the matter to allow some of those issues to be addressed in a new report which would be brought to the next full Council meeting.

Members indicated their agreement to that approach.

AGREED, to defer the item to full Council meeting on 5 July 2023.

5. RESERVES POLICY (FILE FIN58)
(Appendix VIII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services stating that in line with good practice, it was appropriate for the Council to have a formal reserves policy. This draft policy sought to formalise and review existing practices.

It was expected that this would require review as part of the next Estimates process.

The key points to note were:

1. A more detailed definition of the minimum General Fund balance target including increasing the target balance from 7% to 7.5%.
2. Rules on the use of the General Fund to cover unbudgeted expenditure.
3. A more detailed definition of the purposes of the Earmarked Fund, including an increased focus on supporting strategic initiatives.
4. Inclusion within Council Processes of the CIPFA guidance regarding the considerations important to determining what reserve balances should be.
5. Formal processes for the use of the strategic Earmarked Funds and the Capital Receipts Reserve.

The End of Year Outturn report later in the agenda would detail current balances and proposed transfers out of and into these reserves.

RECOMMENDED that Council approves the draft Reserves Policy.

Outlining the report, the Director advised the Committee that this was to formalise some of the processes that were in practice along with some elements that were agreed in previous years as part of the guiding principles in the Estimates process.

He explained that a key aim of the recommendation was to increase financial resilience given the high level of inflation and Council having greater ambition around capital investment - there was a desire to increase the general fund to approximately 7.5% of the overall Council expenditure as a target.

This policy also set out rules of how the general fund was used in relation to budgetary expenditure and provided clarity of Member and Officer roles.

This was also to provide definition around more strategic purposes such as sustainability, transformation and a tax-based development fund.

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

6. FINAL OUTTURN AND RESERVES 2022/23 (FILE FIN49) (Appendix IX)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services stating that in line with the Reserves Policy considered earlier in the agenda, this report set out the summary corporate budgetary performance for the last financial year and the movements in reserves that were considered appropriate in order to ensure the Council retained adequate reserves for future years.

	Variances £'000	Funds Released £'000	Funds Provided £'000	Final Variances £'000
National Pay Award	1,798	1,798	250	250
Local Pay Award	1,718	1,718	0	0
Vacancies	(1,034)	0	0	(1,034)
Energy	1,631	1,631	0	0
North Down Coastal Path	184	0	0	184
Property and Vehicle Maintenance	1,044	0	0	1,044
Additional Grant Income	(879)	0	0	(879)
Additional Service Income	(1,564)	0	0	(1,564)
Additional Rates Income	(852)	0	0	(852)
Other Variances	674	824	3,045	2,895
Deficit for the Year	2,720	5,971	3,295	44

Outstanding Government support brought forward was allowed to be used to assist with mitigating additional expenditure arising from the cost-of-living crisis. This had now all been disbursed during the past year.

The table below set out movements in the Earmarked Fund that had been summarised above.

	Opening Balance £	Net Transfers In or (Out) £	Closing Balance £
Contingencies			
Bangor Aurora - dilapidation works	185,000	0	185,000
Bangor Aurora - loss of income claims	155,000	0	155,000

	Opening Balance £	Net Transfers In or (Out) £	Closing Balance £
20/21 Covid 19 – DfC	154,600	(154,600)	0
21/22 Covid 19 – DfC	1,537,600	(1,537,600)	0
21/22 Covid 19 Council Contingency Fund	2,975,000	(2,975,000)	0
21/22 Covid 19 – DfC marketing & promotion	60,000	(60,000)	0
Incomplete Projects Fund	200,000	0	200,000
Pay Award Equalisation Fund	900,000	(650,000)	250,000
Rates Non-domestic Revaluation Fund	1,200,000	0	1,200,000
Rates Future Bad Debts Fund	1,200,000	0	1,200,000
Utility Price Fund	1,200,000	0	1,200,000
DfC Hardship Fund	0	344,027	344,027
Land Registry fees – transferred car parks	35,000	0	35,000
Legal Fees re old ALC site	22,000	0	22,000
Bangor Castle Lightning Conductor	62,000	0	62,000
Periodic Expenditure			
Election Fund	250,000	490,000	740,000
Residents Survey	40,000	0	40,000
Freedoms of Borough	80,000	0	80,000
Economic Development	52,164	(15,164)	37,000
Strategic Workstreams			
Transformation Fund	2,610,000	390,000	3,000,000
Sustainability Fund	500,000	750,000	1,250,000
Tax Base Development Fund	0	489,532	489,532
Interest	7,836	252,632	260,468
Totals	13,426,200	(2,676,173)	10,750,027

These transfers had followed the reserves policy by seeking to re-focus the Earmarked Fund on strategic workstreams, (23% of the opening balance and 42% of the closing balance). They had been used in the preparation of the draft financial statements that would be presented to the Audit Committee meeting at the end of the month.

The balance of funds would be kept under review by management throughout the financial year and would formally be reviewed during both the Estimates and year end processes.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the budgetary performance for the last financial year and approves the net transfers into and out of the Earmarked Fund.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor W Irvine, seconded by Alderman Brooks, that the recommendation be adopted.

7. 2022/23 ANNUAL PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS AND TREASURY MANAGEMENT REPORT

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailing the undernoted:

Introduction

The Local Government Finance Act (NI) 2011, and the supporting Prudential and Treasury Codes, issued by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA), required the Council to approve financial policies and strategies for its capital financing and treasury management activities. As a minimum, the Council was required to receive and approve an annual strategy at the commencement of the year, a mid-year review and an annual report after the close of each financial year.

This report met the last requirement of an annual report for the 2022/23 financial year. The purpose of this report was to highlight performance against the Prudential Indicators which were set for capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management activities set out in the Council's annual strategy, which was approved in February 2022.

Note that the annual strategy for 2023/24 was approved in February 2023. Members would receive the mid-year review for this strategy during the autumn months of 2023 and the annual report in the summer of 2024.

Report

1 Capital Expenditure & Financing

The Act and CIPFA's Prudential Code required the Council to set and monitor a series of Prudential Indicators (PIs) for capital expenditure and financing which ensured that, within a clear framework, the capital investment plans of the Council were affordable, prudent and sustainable.

1.1 Capital Expenditure

The following table summarised the total amount of capital expenditure incurred during 2022/23 compared to the original estimate approved by Council.

	Estimate	Actual	Variance
Indicator	£'000	£'000	£'000
Capital Expenditure 2022/23	17,152	5,187	11,965

The variance showed that actual expenditure for the year was below the estimate by approx. £11.96m, which was largely due to delays in progressing work planned for 2022/23. These budgets had now been re-profiled in line with revised plans.

1.2 Capital Resourcing

The table below summarised how the capital expenditure for 2022/23 of £5.187m had been financed:

	£
Capital Expenditure 2022/23	5,186,715
Financed by:	
Capital Receipts Reserve	(1,079,969)
Grants	(1,383,766)
Revenue	(296,141)
Balance to be met from borrowings	2,426,839

The unfinanced balance of £2.427m is required to be met from borrowings. This formed part of the Capital Financing Requirement (see 1.3 below) and was financed through an annual charge for minimum revenue provision (MRP).

1.3 Capital Financing Requirement

The Council's underlying need to borrow to finance capital expenditure was termed the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR). The CFR was simply the total cumulative historic capital expenditure which had not yet been met from either revenue or capital resources.

The actual positions on the CFR and Gross Borrowing at 31/03/23 compared to the estimates were as follows:

	Estimate 31/03/23	Actual 31/03/23
Indicator	£'000	£'000
Capital Financing Requirement ¹	83,042	76,328
Gross Borrowing ¹	66,625	63,725
Under/(Over) Borrowing Requirement	16,417	12,603

¹the estimates figures have been revised to remove the impact of the proposed change in accounting treatment for leases, which has now been postponed to later years

The difference between the CFR and the Gross Borrowing figures represented the Council's underlying need to borrow (£12.6m at 31st March 2023) and indicated that historic capital expenditure had been temporarily financed from internal revenue resources. This had been made possible due to an increase in the Council's cash reserves in the current and previous years. The position had been similar for several years now with the Council last taking out long-term borrowings in November 2018.

In order to ensure that borrowing levels were prudent over the medium term, the Council's gross external borrowing should not have, except in the short term, exceeded the total of the CFR in the preceding year plus the estimates of any additional CFR for the current and following two financial years. The forecast CFR for 31st March 2026 (based on the Council's latest approved capital investment plan) was approx. £94.5m. In this regard, it was considered that the Council's borrowing level at 31st March 2023 of £63.7m was prudent.

When making borrowing decisions, management will continue to work with its treasury advisors, Arlingclose, to develop the most appropriate borrowing strategy. This was expected to consider the benefits, risks, and impacts of both short-term and long-term loans, with the aim of minimising long-term interest costs.

1.4 External Borrowings

Long-Term Loans

During 2022/23, no new long-term loans were taken out and loan principal repayments of £3,135,427 were made against existing loans.

This resulted in a level of long-term borrowings at 31 March 2023 of £63,724,548.

Short-Term Loans

There was no requirement to take out any short-term borrowings during the year, resulting in a level of short-term borrowings at 31 March 2023 of £nil.

Maximum Gross Borrowings

The maximum gross borrowings at any point during the year was £66,859,975. This meant that Council maintained its borrowings within its authorised limit during the year, as can be seen from the table below.

	2022/23
Indicator	£'000
Operational Boundary for External Borrowing *	83,042
Authorised Borrowing Limit ^	88,042
Maximum Gross Borrowing (within Authorised Limit)	66,860

* **The operational boundary** – the operational boundary was the expected borrowing position of the Council during the year and was based on expenditure and cash flow modelling. Periods where the actual position was either below or over the operational boundary are acceptable subject to the authorised limit not being breached.

^ **The authorised limit** - Section 13 of the Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 required the Council to set an authorised limit for borrowing at the beginning of each financial year. During the year, the Council did not have the power to borrow above this level.

1.5 Ratio of Financing Costs to Net Revenue Stream

This indicator measured the proportion of the revenue budget that was allocated to finance capital expenditure and the table below shows that the actual for the year was favourably comparable to the estimate. (The term 'financing costs' includes both minimum revenue provision and interest payments.)

Indicator	2022/23
Financing costs as a % of net revenue – Actual	14.0%
Financing costs as a % of net revenue – Estimate	14.9%

1.6 Debt Rescheduling and Average Interest Rates

Officers were not able to avail of any debt rescheduling opportunities during the year as the combination of relatively low interest rates and the differential of 1% between new borrowing rates and premature repayment rates on government loans did not create any viable options. At 31 March 2023, the average interest rate for the Council's total debt portfolio was 3.90%.

2 Treasury Management

The Council's Treasury Management Policy and Strategy adopted the key principles of CIPFAs Code of Practice and have been set in accordance with the guidance issued by the Department of the Environment (now the Department for Communities).

2.1 Investment Strategy 2022-23

The objectives of the Council's investment strategy are safeguarding the repayment of the principal and interest on its deposits, with return or yield being a secondary objective. As with previous years, the climate for 2022/23 was one of overriding risk consideration, particularly that of counterparty risk. As a result, implementation of the operational strategy during the year required that funds, when available, were placed on a short-term basis with the Council's approved high-quality counterparties. Increases to the Bank of England base rate during the year, however, had resulted in higher-than-expected interest earned.

For the year to 31 March 2023, Council earned interest of £209,160 on deposits with the approved financial institutions summarised below.

	Average Deposit Size	Deposit Type	Average Interest Rate	Interest Earned £
Other Local Authorities	£3.0m	Fixed Term	1.87%	35,561
CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund	£3.2m	Call A/c	2.16%	66,728

SSGA Money Market Fund	£3.0m	Call A/c	3.37%	26,424
Barclays	£2.3m	Call A/c	2.10%	45,805
Santander	£2.7m	Call A/c	1.29%	28,534
Bank of Scotland	£1.4m	Call A/c	0.90%	4,611
Lloyds	£0.7m	Call A/c	0.21%	1,497
Total				£209,160

The amount of funds held on short term deposits at 31/03/23 was £9.5m at an average interest rate of 4.1%.

The Council's limit for total principal sums invested for periods longer than 364 days is £500k. During 2022/23, the Council did not enter into any investments which were for periods longer than 364 days.

Currently the Council placed surplus funds in call accounts with a limited number of 'credit quality' approved counterparties. A number of institutions now offered 'green' investment options; however, these were generally for longer fixed term investments. Management would consult with its treasury advisors regarding availability of call accounts of this nature. Nonetheless, it should be noted that Council's primary responsibility in respect of this strategy was that of security.

2.2 Debt Related Treasury Activity Limits

There were three debt related treasury activity limits. The purpose of those were to restrain the activity of the treasury function within certain limits, thereby managing risk and reducing the impact of any adverse movement in interest rates. However, if those were set to be too restrictive, they would impair the opportunities to reduce costs / improve performance. The indicators were:

- Upper limits on variable interest rate exposure. This identifies a maximum limit for variable interest rates based upon the debt position net of investments;
- Upper limits on fixed interest rate exposure. This was similar to the previous indicator and covered a maximum limit on fixed interest rates;
- Maturity structure of borrowing. These gross limits were set to reduce the Council's exposure to large fixed rate sums falling due for refinancing and were required for upper and lower limits.

The table below showed the position at 31 March 2023 against the limits set for the year for each those indicators. The Council remained within the limits set for all indicators.

Interest rate exposures	Limit set for 2022/23	Actual at 31/03/23
Quantity of debt held at variable interest rates - upper limit	30%	3%

Quantity of debt held at fixed interest rates - upper limit	100%	97%
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Maturity structure of fixed interest rate borrowing	Lower Limit set for 2022/23	Upper Limit set for 2022/23	Actual at 31/03/23
Under 12 months	0%	15%	6.4%
12 months to 2 years	0%	15%	4.4%
2 years to 5 years	0%	20%	14.6%
5 years to 10 years	0%	30%	25.4%
10 years and above	30%	90%	49.2%

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the 2022/23 Annual Report on the Prudential Indicators for capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management activities.

The Director outlined the report, advising that initial outturn, as an overspend, before any release of reserves was £2.7m. This was resulting largely from the staff pay award and energy costs. Those were known at budget setting and provided for in the reserves with an expectation of releasing £5.7m from the reserves in order to combat those pressures. Vacancy management and income streams recovering more quickly than expected had meant that more money could now be put back in to reserves than had been expected earlier in the year.

While still early into the new financial year, he explained there were still uncertainties around pay awards and energy costs along with other inflationary pressures such as construction costs. While these were recommendations around the use of reserves currently it was possible that this would need to be re-examined later in the year.

Alderman Smith proposed, seconded by Councillor W Irvine, that the recommendation be adopted.

Alderman Smith was pleased to see that borrowing was healthily within the set parameters and hoped that trend would continue.

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

8. CLIMATE CHANGE ACT NORTHERN IRELAND - REPORTING CONSULTATION (FILE SUS1)

(Appendix X)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services outlined as follows:

Background

The Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 ('the Act') received Royal Assent on 6th June 2022. A briefing of the Act was reported to Corporate Committee, 15 February 2023. To summarise The Act would:

1. set targets for net zero for the years 2050, 2040 and 2030 for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions
2. set out a carbon budgeting framework (Carbon budget was a term used to refer to the maximum amount of carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions allowed over a period of time, to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius);
3. provide for reporting and statements against those targets and budgets;
4. confer power to impose climate change reporting duties on public bodies;
5. establish a Northern Ireland Climate Change Commission and appoint a Climate Change Commissioner to oversee and report on the operations of the Act and stated a commitment to developing a climate action plan within 2 years of the Act receiving Royal Assent.

What were the reporting guidelines under the Act:

- a) There was a statutory requirement in the Act under Section 42 for DAERA, acting on behalf of the Northern Ireland Executive, to make new legislation (i.e., new regulations), which would require climate change reporting by specified public bodies.
- b) The new legislation needed to be made and come into operation before **6th December 2023**.
- c) The Act requires prior consultation with relevant stakeholders before the regulations came into operation. This was currently being carried out by Climate NI on behalf of DAERA.
- d) Section 42 of the Act gave powers to make new regulations which set duties on specified public bodies to report on climate change.
- e) However, it did not contain any powers or duties to require public bodies to deliver their functions in a certain way or to take any other specific actions beyond fulfilling their climate reporting duty.
- f) The climate change reporting duties that the regulations may impose, on specified public bodies, included preparing reports containing any of the following:
 - an assessment of the current and predicted impact of climate change in relation to the body's functions;
 - a statement of the body's proposals and policies for adapting to, or mitigating the effects of, climate change in the exercise of its functions;
 - a statement of the timescales for implementing those proposals and policies; and
 - an assessment of the progress made by the body towards implementing the proposals and policies set out in any previous reports prepared under the regulations.

What public bodies may have to consider when preparing reports:

The Act gave powers to DAERA to include in the regulations a requirement for the specified bodies, when preparing the reports, to have regard for:

- a) the most recent report under section 56 of the Climate Change Act 2008 (i.e., the latest UK-wide Climate Change Risk Assessment);
- b) the most recent programme under section 60 of that Act (i.e., the latest Northern Ireland Climate Change Adaptation Programme); and
- c) the desirability of co-ordinating the body's proposals and policies for adapting to, or mitigating the effects of, climate change with corresponding proposals and policies of bodies in other parts of the United Kingdom, in the Republic of Ireland or elsewhere.

DAERA was seeking views to inform the development of new regulations that would place climate change reporting duties on specified public bodies.

In developing this response council had considered comments from Sustainable NI, Climate NI and other councils for a more collective and consistent response.

An extension had been requested to the response due to elections.

RECOMMENDED that Council approved this consultation response.

Alderman Smith proposed, seconded by Councillor McRandal, that the recommendation be adopted.

Alderman Smith wished to reiterate what was stated in the response, agreeing that any new system needed to be user friendly.

Councillor McRandal felt the response was comprehensive and well considered.

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

9. ROADMAP TO SUSTAINABILITY (FILE SUS1) (APPENDIX XI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services stating that the Roadmap to Sustainability (the Roadmap) was agreed by Council in March 2021. It had been developed to formalise the Council's commitment to becoming more sustainable and to act as a key enabler in that regard.

The Roadmap ran from the period 2021 to 2028 to coincide with 2 Corporate Plan phases. It would be updated periodically, with the accompanying Action Plan reviewed and updated on an annual basis.

The first update report summarising progress against the key actions agreed in the Roadmap was provided to Council in December 2021 with further updates provided every six months since. The latest six-monthly update against actions had been prepared for Members and was attached.

As a result of an advisory audit by Deloitte in Jan 2023, a number of changes had been recommended for the Roadmap going forward to ensure that the delivery of the

actions was realised and of value. Those had been reviewed by officers and changes would be implemented for the next Roadmap update in December 2023.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this update report.

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

Alderman Smith welcomed the update and the reported progress. Referring to targets listed under the Tree and Woodland Strategy section within the attached appendix, he asked how the reported 15,000 trees planted related to the percentage of population accessibility target of 10.3% by 2025 and UK average of 21.1% by 2030. The Head of Administration would report back directly with that information as it sat with another directorate.

Alderman Smith noted that exploratory work was ongoing to move the Council's vehicle fleet – infrastructure and capital – towards net zero and asked for an indication of timescale for this, feeling that it should be a priority.

The Officer advised that relevant officers were reviewing each of the actions in order to provide a comprehensive plan which would provide a clear timeline and that would coincide with the six-monthly update.

Alderman McIlveen recalled previous intentions discussed in the Mayoral term of Councillor Smart, for the Council to begin purchasing zero carbon vehicles but he did not believe that had been actioned to date and would welcome an update.

In terms of tree planting, he was aware that not all newly planted trees would survive the initial root establishment phase and asked what action was being taken to ensure as many as possible would survive. This information would be requested and reported back given it fell under the remit of the Parks unit.

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

10. UPDATE ON NOTICE OF MOTION - EVENT MANAGEMENT

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services stating that the following Notice of Motion was agreed by Council at its meeting in March 2023:

'That this Council acknowledges the exceptional work which community and voluntary groups carry out, often staging events which were previously run by this Council. Risk Management and Event Management Plans should assist the planning and the safe running of these events. However, many voluntary groups find the process arduous and inflexible, especially when trying to organise events on Council owned land. This Council therefore requests that a full review of this process takes place in consultation with community groups to ascertain their concerns, ensuring that Health and Safety expectations are realistic and meet the necessary requirements. Groups should be more actively supported as part of the process and

that, if necessary, a wide range of supporting materials should be provided for a range of events; thereby ensuring that voluntary groups are more robustly assisted in their work rather than hindered by the current burdensome process.'

Further to this, relevant officers met to review the process that organisers of events on Council land were required to follow to secure approval for the event to proceed, with a particular focus on the health and safety evidence requirements that formed part of the approvals process. Such requirements usually included a Risk Assessment and, depending on the size of the event, an Event Management Plan to be submitted to Council in advance of the event. Officers were content that the requirements imposed were proportionate, necessary and in accordance with industry standards and legal advice. Guidance had been produced by the Council in the form of an Event Management Toolkit and Risk Assessment Templates. These were available on the Council's website - Event Management Toolkit | Ards and North Down Borough Council) and officers processing land requests would direct the event organisers to these helpful resources and would engage with organisers should they have had any queries.

If there were any aspects of an event that Council officers, who were professionally trained in risk management, had concerns about, further information would be proactively sought from the event organiser at an early stage as to how they planned to manage and mitigate any risks. There would be occasions when certain types of activity at particular locations may have presented a risk that could not be sufficiently mitigated and therefore permission could not be granted, however, officers would always discuss options with the organisers in the first instance to try and find a solution where possible.

Risk Assessments and Event Management plans that sufficiently matched the risk profile of an event were essential to ensure a safe and successful event. These documents were therefore a vital part of the Council's approvals process. While completing the paperwork may have seemed burdensome to some, it protected organisers as much as it protects the Council and attendees of the event as it will be the organiser ultimately responsible should anything untoward have occurred as a result of their management of the event. Officers could only recall 2 occasions in the past few years where dissatisfaction was expressed by event organisers at the level of scrutiny applied by the Council to event details and corresponding paperwork required. This was in the context of hundreds of requests from third parties processed by the Compliance team each year (approximately 250 in 2022) in which permission was given to use Council land for a variety of reasons requiring risk assessments, including for events such as fun fairs, parades and markets. This did not suggest to officers that there was an inherent problem with the processes currently in place; on the contrary the hundreds of successful and incident-free events that had been run on Council land over the years would suggest to officers that the guidance and support provided by officers was adequate, and feedback was regularly received to thank officers for their support.

It was accepted that health and safety, in particular Risk Assessments and Event Management Plans, could be a complex area to navigate therefore, to further support event organisers, officers intended to hold an Event Organisers workshop in October/November 2023. Elected Members would also be invited to attend should

they wish to further their understanding of the process. Officers wrote to 59 event organisers to seek feedback on the aspects of event management that caused them the most difficulty or concern, in order that these issues could be factored into the design of the workshop. Only eight responses were received, all indicating they would welcome the workshop, and one suggesting that Council support for organisers of events should be covered by the workshop.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the review that officers have undertaken and agrees that the Notice of Motion has been addressed.

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

In supporting the Notice of Motion, Councillor Brooks spoke to welcome the report and the plans for a workshop. He encouraged members and voluntary and community group representatives to attend it. Councillor W Irvine echoed those comments, adding that it was important for Council to take on board the feedback from attendees provided at the workshop.

Alderman Smith spoke of some of the unexpected challenges faced by organisers of community events. For example, many people were caught out in the planning phase, unaware that two ambulances were required in the event that one would be in use. This ensured that a first aid team could remain on standby. He was also aware that guidance from different Council departments could often be contradictory, so a joined-up approach would be beneficial.

Alderman McIlveen was aware that the issues affected smaller events too. The workshop would be useful for feedback but he felt the solution to the Notice of Motion needed to be an ongoing one and feedback from the workshop could be reviewed.

The Chair asked if Officers could take the comments in relation to feedback on board and the Head of Administration responded that a follow up report could be provided. However she advised that only two complaints had ever been made to the Council in terms of the event organisation process so she was concerned to hear from Members that so many people were unhappy with the process.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman Brooks, seconded by Councillor W Irvine, that the recommendation be adopted.

11. EQUALITY COMMISSION NI ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT 2022/23 (FILE EQ4) (Appendix XII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services advising that at the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI) had requested that all Councils complete a template every year to demonstrate progress on their implementation of the section 75 statutory duties contained within the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and progress on implementation of positive duties under Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Order (DDO) 2006.

The attached completed template covered the period 1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023. The template was to be returned electronically to ECNI by 31 August 2023.

RECOMMENDED that Council agrees to adopt and forward to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland the attached Annual Progress Report for the period 1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023.

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

12. ATTENDANCE AT SOLACE SUMMIT (FILE CX1)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services advising that Solace represented Local Government Chief Executives and Directors throughout the United Kingdom. They were committed to public service excellence and supported their membership with learning and development as well as contributing to policy work, responding to consultations and representing the professional views of the sector.

Solace UK held a range of events throughout the year as part of their role. The Annual Conference, known as the Solace Summit, was to be held in Birmingham this year. This provided a vital opportunity for networking and debating challenges and solutions to common issues facing the Local Government sector at a senior level.

The Summit would be held in The Hilton Birmingham Metropole, 17 – 19th October 2023 and the delegate fee for members (including the Conference and Charity Dinner) was £435 plus VAT (Early Bird).

The Summit presented an opportunity for the Chief Executive to attend, contribute and report back to colleagues and Members on a range of current challenges and opportunities facing the Council now and in planning for the future.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approves the attendance of the Chief Executive at the Solace Summit in Birmingham 17-19 October 2023, with delegate fee, travel and accommodation costs to be met from existing budgets.

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

13. RESPONSE TO NOTICES OF MOTION:

- (A) **NOM 175 – REQUEST FOR A PEDESTRIAN CROSSING AT MOAT STREET, DONAGHADEE (FILE NOM175)**
(APPENDIX XIII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services advising that a Notice of Motion was debated at Corporate Committee in February 2023 and subsequently ratified by Council which stated:

“This Council supports local residents who have started a petition which calls for a pedestrian crossing on Moat Street, Donaghadee, near to the Spar store. This road can be extremely busy, and residents have real safety concerns when trying to cross it. Not only do many people use this area to cross to shop at the Spar store, others need to cross the road to get children to and from the local schools.

This Council will write to the Department of Infrastructure and call on them to listen to local residents, take on board their concerns and take the necessary steps to install a pedestrian crossing in this vicinity.”

A letter was sent from the Chief Executive on 8 March 2023 to the Permanent Secretary of the Department for Infrastructure and a reply was received on 16 March 2023 and a copy was attached.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the response to the Notice of Motion.

Alderman Brooks proposed, seconded by Councillor Gilmour, that the recommendation be adopted.

Alderman Brooks welcomed the Department of Infrastructure’s plan to carry out an assessment of the site. Councillor Gilmour also welcomed the response, noting that the letter was dated 15 March 2023 and hoped that a further update should therefore be in the pipeline. The same view was expressed by Councillor Irwin.

The Director said Officers would request a further update from the Department.

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

(B) NOM 178 – HIGHEST LEVEL OF POTHOLES IN NORTHERN IRELAND
(FILE NOM 178)
 (APPENDIX XIV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services advising that a Notice of Motion was debated at Corporate Committee in March 2023 and subsequently ratified by Council which stated:

“That this Council is concerned that recent data shows that the Ards and North Down Borough Council area has the highest level of potholes in Northern Ireland and calls on DfI Roads Service to produce an action plan to improve the quality of roads in the Borough.”

A letter was sent from the Chief Executive on 18 April 2023 to the Permanent Secretary of the Department for Infrastructure and a reply was received on 2 May 2023 and a copy was attached.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the response to the Notice of Motion.

Alderman Smith proposed, seconded by Councillor W Irvine, that the recommendation be adopted.

Alderman Smith was disappointed though not surprised by the response. The Department had argued with his definition of what a pothole was, it had implied that the Borough's pothole statistics were not as bad as claimed by the Council, and finally even if it did agree with the Council, it had made clear it did not have the finances to do anything about it. He reminded Members that the figures the Committee had worked from were the number of reports about potholes while the DfI was referring to defects that had been actioned. The issue therefore was the Department was not actioning the number of defects that did exist.

Budgets were tight and there was an intention to focus on the 10% of potholes that were most dangerous so it looked like nothing was going to change going forward. There was a glimmer of light following the appointment of a new road surfacing contractor.

Councillor W Irvine was also disappointed with the response and added that Council was only asking for a fair share of the pot in terms of what other Council areas were receiving. Alderman McIlveen understood that the agreed decision at the previous Committee meeting, currently the one before members, had been amended at full Council and further information had been requested as part of that which referred to priorities and funding models. He asked for clarity if the letter instructed as part of the amendment had also been sent.

The Director would seek clarity on that and ensure the matter was rectified if that had not been actioned as agreed.

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

14. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

There were no items of Any Other Notified Business.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

15. APSE REPORT ON SICKNESS ABSENCE AND DRAFT ABSENCE MANAGEMENT ACTION PLAN

(Appendix XV)

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

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

A report was presented from the Director of Corporate Services which had been commissioned from APSE to examine the Council's absence management. An action plan to address issues raised by the report was also presented.

The report recommended that Council approves the absence report for noting and the absence management action plan for implementation.

The recommendation was AGREED.

16. REQUEST FROM GEDA CONSTRUCTION LIMITED TO PLACE A SITE COMPOUND IN WARD PARK

(Appendix XVI - XVIII)

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

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

Council had received a request from a contractor, Geda Construction Limited, acting on behalf of NI Water, seeking permission to locate a temporary site compound within Ward Park in order to facilitate works to rehabilitate an existing combined sewer through the Park.

It was recommended that Council accedes to the request and grants a licence to NI Water/Geda Construction Limited for a period of 3 months or on completion of the work (whichever is sooner) subject to the terms and conditions as listed in the report.

The recommendation was AGREED.

17. LICENCE TO PARKRUN NI - SITES AT WARD PARK, BANGOR; PARKWAY, COMBER; AND BANGOR SPORTSPLEX (FILE LP)

(Appendix XIX - XXI)

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

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

There were currently three weekly parkrun events held on Council land at Ward Park; Parkway, Comber; and Bangor Sportsplex (Junior Parkrun). To regularise these arrangements, it was recommended that the Council accedes to the request and grants a licence to Parkrun NI for a period of five years subject to the terms and conditions as listed in the report.

The recommendation was AGREED.

18. RENEWAL OF THE LEASE TO COPELANDS MARINA LIMITED OF THE BOATYARD AT MARINE DRIVE, DONAGHADEE

(Appendix XXII)

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

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

The Council leased the Boatyard at Marine Drive to Copelands Marina Limited. The report recommended that Council agrees to grant a further Lease of the Boatyard to Copelands Marina Limited for a period of 10 years subject to the terms and conditions listed in the report.

The recommendation was AGREED.

19. RENT REVIEWS - CROWN ESTATE LICENCE OF PICKIE PONTOON AND LEASE OF BALLYWALTER HARBOUR

(Appendix XXIII - XXIV)

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

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

The Council held land owned by the Crown Estate at Pickie Pontoon by way of a Licence, and at Ballywalter Harbour by way of a Lease. The Crown Estate had reviewed the licence fee and rent for each and the report recommended that Council agrees to accept these revised fees.

The recommendation was AGREED.

20. WHITESPOTS – HEADS OF TERMS AGREEMENT WITH THE CLANDEBOYE ESTATE

(Appendix XXV)

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

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

The Council was developing a long-term vision for a Regional Park at Whitespots Country Park. Funding of £7.4 million from the NI Executive's Complementary Fund had already been secured and further funding opportunities from other sources were being explored. Officers had been liaising closely with the Estate to secure agreement on the Heads of Terms.

The report recommended that Council agrees to enter into the Heads of Terms Agreement with the Clandeboye Estate Ltd.

The recommendation was AGREED.

21. REQUEST FROM NI WATER TO PURCHASE LAND AT NEWTOWN BRIDGE, COMBER

(Appendix XXVI - XXVII)

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

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

The Council had received a request from NI Water to purchase land at Newtown Bridge, Comber. NI Water had a scheme called Event Duration Monitoring under which it was proposed to install monitors on the Combined Storm Overflow manholes (CSO) to record discharges via the overflow. These manholes had an overflow to nearby rivers/watercourses so that in the event of prolonged or very heavy rainfall in the drainage area they prevented the sewers backing up and surcharging from the manholes. NI water therefore sought to acquire Council land at Newtown Bridge, Comber in order to install a kiosk that would house monitors and the cable duct to a nearby CSO.

It was recommended that the Council accedes to the request from NI Water and disposes of the land, subject to the terms and conditions as listed in the report.

The recommendation was AGREED and it was FURTHER AGREED that Council writes to NI Water to highlight the recent and ongoing sewage spills into the Enler River at Ward Bridge and calls for action to ensure that there is no repetition.

22. RENEWAL OF LEASE - OFFICES AT CONWAY BUILDING, SOUTH STREET, NEWTOWNARDS

(Appendix XXVIII)

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

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

The Council leased offices at Conway Building, South Street, Newtownards. The report recommended that Council should ask the Landlord for a renewal of the Lease subject to the terms and conditions listed in the report.

The recommendation was AGREED.

23. EXTENSION TO VALUATION SERVICES CONTRACT
(Appendix XXIX)

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

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

Council's contract for valuation services with Land and Property Services (LPS) was detailed in a Service Level Agreement (SLA) and covered the following broad areas:

1. Estate Surveying Services
2. General Valuation Advice
3. Asset Valuations for Financial Reporting

It was recommended that Council agrees to extend the Service Level Agreement with Land and Property Services for a further one-year period until 1 October 2024.

The recommendation was AGREED.

24. LEASE OF SIR SAMUEL KELLY LIFEBOAT SITE
(Appendix XXX- XXXIV)

*****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)

It was recommended that the Council gives authority to officers to proceed with the application to the Department for Communities to seek consent to waive the rent payable by the Donaghadee Heritage Preservation Company Limited at the Sir Samuel Kelly site in Donaghadee, and that assuming the Department consents, to thereafter waive the rent insofar as there is no commercial trading on the site.

The recommendation was AGREED.

25. RENEWAL OF LICENCES TO ULSTER BANK - SITES AT DONAGHADEE AND KIRCUBBIN

(Appendix XXXV – XXXVI)

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

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

The Council had received a request on behalf of Ulster Bank seeking approval to renew their licence agreements for the Mobile Banking Units at The Parade, Donaghadee and The Green Carpark, Kircubbin. The report recommended to renew the licences subject to the terms and conditions listed in the report.

It was recommended that the Council accedes to the request from Ulster Bank to renew the licence agreement for The Parade, Donaghadee until 28th February 2025; and renews the licence agreement for The Green, Kircubbin until 15th June 2025, subject to the terms and conditions as listed in the report.

The recommendation was AGREED.

26. REQUEST BY DUCKPOND NI TO RENEW THE LEASE AT 3 PARK DRIVE, BANGOR (PARKLIFE CAFÉ, WARD PARK)

(Appendix XXXVII – XXXVIII)

*****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)

It was recommended that the Council accedes to the request from Duckpond NI to renew the Lease for 10 years for the premises at 3 Park Drive, Bangor (Parklife Café, Ward Park), to include the additional grass area, subject to the terms and conditions outlined in the report and agrees to relax the restrictions in the Lease regarding alcohol consumption and opening hours, but subject to the officer comments outlined in the report being reflected in the revised Lease.

The recommendation was AGREED.

27. RENT DEFAULT

*****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)

It was recommended that Council agrees to instruct its Solicitor to initiate proceedings to recover the debt and to seek vacant possession of the premises as the tenant was in breach of the covenant contained within the lease in respect of the payment of the rent.

The recommendation was AGREED.

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 8.45pm.

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

A virtual meeting of the Community and Wellbeing Committee was held via Zoom on Wednesday 21 June 2023 at 7:00 pm.

PRESENT:

In the Chair: Councillor Martin

Aldermen: Adair Cummings
Brooks Douglas

Councillors: Ashe Douglas
Boyle Holywood
Chambers S Irvine
Cochrane W Irvine
Creighton Moore

Officers: Director of Community and Wellbeing (G Bannister), Head of Community & Culture (N Dorrian), Head of Leisure Services (I O'Neill), Head of Parks & Cemeteries (S Daye), Head of Environmental Health, Protection & Development (A Faulkner) and Democratic Services Officer (H Loebnau)

In Attendance: Chris Kelly, Contract Manager,
Northern Communities Leisure Trust.

1. APOLOGIES

The Chair, Councillor Martin, welcomed everyone to the meeting, particularly those Members who were new to Council and the Community and Wellbeing Committee. He asked for apologies and those were noted from Councillor Woods.

NOTED.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairman asked for any Declarations of Interest and the following declarations were made:

Councillor W Irvine – Item 26, Northern Community Leisure Trust Quarter 4 2022/23

Councillor Chambers – Item 26, Northern Community Leisure Trust Quarter 4 2022/23

Councillor Boyle – Item 4, Caravans Act (NI) 1963 Response to Department of Infrastructure

NOTED.

3. ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH PROTECTION AND DEVELOPMENT Q4 PERFORMANCE

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

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years
- Corporate Plan – published every 4 years (Corporate Plan Towards 2024 in operation)
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually (for publication 30 September 2022)
- Service Plan – developed annually (approved April/May 2022)

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

Reporting approach

The Service Plans would be reported to relevant Committees on a quarterly basis as undernoted:

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
Quarter 1 (Q1)	April – June	September
Q2	July – September	December
Q3	October – December	March
Q4	January - March	June

The report for Quarter 1 2022-23 was attached.

Key points to note:

- Staff absence rates were now on target with a number of staff on long term sick returning to work.
- The Q4 target for PTO inspections was not met as during this period officers worked to complete property inspections that were delayed as a result of Covid lockdowns. That backlog had now been cleared and should not impact future achievement of targets. There was confidence that the property inspection service had now recovered to pre-Covid levels of performance and that would be indicated positively on future reports.

Key achievements:

- The Service had generally performed well against the KPI's for Q4

Emerging issues:

- None

Action to be taken:

- None

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the report.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Brooks, seconded by Councillor W Irvine, that the recommendation be adopted.

(Having declared an interest in Item 4 Councillor Boyle was removed from the meeting at 7.04 pm)

4. CARAVANS ACT (NI) 1963 RESPONSE TO DEPARTMENT OF INFRASTRUCTURE

(Appendix I)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that the purpose of the report was to seek Council agreement to a response to the Department of infrastructure in relation to a proposed change to the Caravans Act (NI) 1963, to provide an exemption to licences being required for Traveller sites on land owned by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

Background

The Department for Infrastructure (DfI) had written to Chief Executives requesting a response to a proposal to adopt one of the recommendations from the summary report issued following the 2021 Review of the Caravans Act (NI) 1963 by the Department for Communities (DfC).

The recommendation was in respect of Irish Travellers and stated:

“DfC on behalf of the Housing Executive, will pass to DfI for its consideration proposals for an amendment to the 1963 Act seeking exemption to licences being required for sites on land owned by the Housing Executive”.

DfI currently held responsibility for the Caravans Act (NI) 1963. Under the 1963 Act, the development of caravan sites including residential sites and their physical standards were controlled through planning permission granted for the use of a caravan site and the 1963 Act's site licensing scheme.

The licensing scheme under the 1963 Act was administered by District Councils who were responsible for the issuing and enforcement of Site Licences.

The Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) had been responsible for the provision of serviced sites for the Irish Travelling Community since 2003 and were not exempt from the requirement to hold a site licence. Prior to 2003 such sites did not require a licence as District Councils were responsible for their provision, and a site licence was not required for the use as a caravan site of land occupied by a District Council. That had resulted in a difference in the licensing arrangements between Northern Ireland and the other UK jurisdictions. Elsewhere Traveller sites did not require a site licence.

Having agreed to consider the request, the DfI was now seeking the views of the Council on the proposal to exempt the NIHE from the requirement to hold a site licence for its Traveller's sites.

The DfI had stated that even if a decision was made to exempt the NIHE they would still be required to have regard to the Department's Model Licence Conditions and the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service Fire Safety Guide for Caravan Site Operators when providing appropriate sites. They had also declared that any subsequent proposals to amend the 1963 Act to exempt the NIHE would be subject to public consultation, the agreement of an incoming Minister and Executive, as well as the availability of a suitable legislative vehicle.

It should be noted that if NIHE were to be exempt from the requirement to hold a site licence for its Traveller sites, District Councils would have no remit on those sites in relation to the 1963 Act. The Health and Safety Executive NI was the enforcing Authority for the Health and Safety at Work (N) Order 1978 on residential sites.

Please note that the closing date to reply to this letter was 30th June 2023, therefore the Council's response would be submitted before that date with Committee endorsement, with a note that it was subject to Council ratification.

RECOMMENDED that the Council agree that, whilst at this time there were no sites provided by the NIHE for the Irish Travelling Community within the Borough, the Environmental Health Protection and Development Service would recommend that a letter of response be sent from the Council making the following comments:

- It was understood that while the current licensing regime did go some way to provide a safeguard to ensuring traveller sites in Northern Ireland were adequately habitable and serviced it had presented challenges to regulation and enforcement of sites provided by NIHE for members of the travelling community in other areas.

- The standards and protections on sites for the travelling community should be of no less than what was expected on a holiday/residential caravan site. In its response to the 'Consultation on New Model Licence Conditions for Caravan Sites' (June 2019) Ards and North Down Borough Council welcomed the amalgamation of the current Model Licence Conditions for holiday caravan sites, residential sites and Traveller sites into one document, creating clarity and ease of reference.
- Revised and updated Model Licence Conditions should be in place prior to the implementation of an exemption; and
- Ards and North Down Borough Council welcomed the opportunity to respond to public consultation on the proposal in due course.

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

(Councillor Boyle returned to the meeting at 7.05 pm)

5. AFFORDABLE WARMTH UPDATE

(Appendix II-IV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that the Affordable Warmth (AW) Scheme provided a package of energy-efficiency and heating measures, tailored to each household that met the assessment criteria in targeted areas. Funded by the Department for Communities (DfC) and delivered by Councils and Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) in partnership, Council AW Officers made contact with occupants from a list of addresses provided by DfC in order to undertake an assessment and determine eligibility. The primary criteria was a household income less than £20k per annum and the AW Scheme therefore assisted some of the most vulnerable in the community to tackle fuel poverty. It could, however, require as many as five letters/visits and numerous telephone calls in order to secure access to properties and examine the relevant documentation – the Borough experienced an extremely high contact to referral ratio compared to the majority of councils. Not all assessments would result in a referral being made to the NIHE to complete the grant application, as would be expected within a means tested screening process.

It should also be noted that the role of Councils had changed considerably since the start of the Scheme in 2014. Since December 2015 AW Officers had been responsible for undertaking income verification, which was previously carried out by NIHE. As a result of that enhanced role, there had been a marked increase in staff time to complete the application process. The benefit, however, had been the considerable reduction in those households dropping out of the scheme, which

occurred when NIHE delivered that part of the service, therefore making the whole process more efficient, lower cost and better for the ratepayer.

In addition, those households that did not meet the requirements of the scheme were directed, where possible, to other schemes, such as boiler replacement, thus assisting additional households in fuel poverty and helping to meet the objectives of DfC's Fuel Poverty Strategy. The AW Officers also provided a holistic service for the clients and made onward referrals to a wide range of other internal and external partners, including our Home Safety Team for accident prevention, Policing and Community Safety Partnership (PCSP) for home security and the Social Security Agency for benefit checks which nearly always resulted in an increase in benefits for the client.

Funding Proposals

Since the scheme started in 2015 there had been a decline in funding to the Council and despite contributions "in kind" (management and accommodation costs) it had been impossible to meet the targets within the DfC allocated budget, which was originally supposed to run the scheme at no cost to councils. A report dated 23 February 2017 outlining those concerns was brought to Committee and Council in March 2017, and it was agreed that up to **£30k** of Council monies would be provided, and that was then included in the annual budget for Affordable Warmth. That recognised both the difficulties experienced in bringing referrals on board (thereby requiring more staff resource to meet targets than the grant allowed for); and the significant value of home improvements that the scheme brought into the Borough, addressing fuel poverty for some of the most vulnerable households.

Members were well aware of ongoing difficulties with operational requirements of the scheme (lack of committed funding, fluctuations in permitted referral rates affecting economies of scale, staff training and retention, adherence to an 80:20 targetted:non-targeted referral ratio etc) which had been reported to the Council in several reports, resulting in numerous written communications to DfC. In July 2019, a cross party delegation of Elected Members, accompanied by Officers, met with the Permanent Secretary, Tracy Meharg, to discuss concerns and shortly afterwards confirmation was received that a 5 year business case to the Department of Finance (DoF) had been approved, which would provide greater certainty of budget.

Unfortunately, part of the stipulation of the DoF approval was that the Councils were funded on a "pay by referral" basis with an offer of £222.92 for the first 300 referrals and £186.25 per referral thereafter (in this year 52). Whilst recognising the economies of scale in relation to the referral targets, Councils would contend that that was not a true reflection of the cost of providing the scheme, as they now contributed management and accommodation costs, which were initially covered, and had reminded DfC that this was supposed to operate at no cost to the councils.

The “pay by referral” stipulation had been unanimously rejected by council officials as historically the funding was issued as quarterly grants, based on the agreed referral numbers, and was not affected by performance. That provided councils with some degree of financial security for employing staff as salaries could be covered.

DfC stated that for 2020/21 “pay by referral” was the only option as it was a requirement of DoF. They did, however, provide a one-off payment of £10,888.56 for Q1, because of the unique circumstances with Covid-19 preventing normal operation of service whilst DfC still required emergency cover provision – but the grant was only paid after much pressure from Councils.

DfC was now asking for 44 referrals per month to be delivered from August 2020 – March 2021 on a “pay by referral” basis and that had financial implications for the Council. To put into context, the table below showed DfC funding to the scheme since 2015, alongside referral targets, the financial summary and staffing levels.

Year	Referrals	Grant provided	Council provision*	Value of Approvals	Staffing
15/16	1000 Based on NIHE doing eligibility checks. Target met.	£153,000	-	£1,603,057.25	1 Co-ordinator 3 X AW officers 1X Admin Officer = 5 FTE
16/17	506 Enhanced Council Role doing eligibility checks. Target met.	£107,000	-	£1,782,811.79	1 Co-ordinator 2 x AW officers 6 mths. 3 X AW officers 6 mths = 3.5 FTE
17/18	405 Enhanced role. Target met.	£73,305	£19,096.18	£1,178,478.90	1 Co-ordinator 2 x AW officers 11mths 3 x AW officers 1 month = 3.08 FTE
18/19	337 Enhanced role. Target met.	£68,780	£3,881.87	£1,043,366.86	1 Co-ordinator 3 x AW officers 3 mths 1 x AW officer 8 mths = 2.4 FTE
19/20	275 Enhanced role. 255 referred – unable to submit remaining due to COVID 19.	£55,965	£17,614.73	£939,749.24	1 Co-ordinator 3.6 x AW officers 2 mths 2.2 x AW officers 1 mth 1 x AW officer 5 mths = 2.2 FTE
20/21	No target Apr-Jul emergency referrals only	£10,888.56	£1,450	£56,358.80 (Q1)	1 Co-ordinator 0.2 AW Officer (6weeks)

	352 Aug-Mar	£76,561 if target met	To be determined		Funding, if target met, will pay for 3.5 FTE
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*Council provision did not include in kind contribution i.e. management costs and overheads.

The proposal for 2020/21 funding would allow the Council to pay for 3.5 staff but from experience it would take 4 staff to deliver 352 referrals in 8 months which would cost the Council up to £10,000 provided targets were met. That would be in line with previous contributions but with a potentially higher return in terms of value of approvals than in recent years. The concern would be if the team failed to achieve the set referral rate, the Council would also have to meet the resulting deficit in income at £222 per referral.

If targets were not met and officers achieved the **worst case** scenario:

30 referrals per month = 240 referrals = £53,500.80 funding

Therefore Council contribution required was £23.5k to maintain 3.5 staff or £33k to maintain 4 staff (budget is £30k).

The Council had to date always met targets, primarily due to the ability to access the existing Council contribution and it was felt that a return as low as 30 referrals per month was unlikely if 4 staff were employed.

39 referrals per month = 312 referrals = £69,111 funding

Therefore Council contribution £8k to maintain 3.5 staff or £17.5k to maintain 4 staff (**£10k less than budget**)

44 referrals per month = 352 referral = £76,561

Therefore, no Council contribution to maintain 3.5 staff or £10k to maintain 4 staff. (**£20k less than current budget**)

To date the Council contribution had been carefully managed and only utilised as and when required to meet targets, with less than £41k spent of an agreed £90k budget over 3 years. Demand on budget was impacted by sudden increases in referral rates set mid-year, high staff turnover due to job insecurity, the need to recruit and train up new staff, difficulties in obtaining targeted area lists, etc which were all outside Council control. Every effort had been made to ensure that staff numbers were appropriate and at the minimum level required to deliver service.

Based on previous experience, 3.5 may struggle to achieve targets therefore 4 staff were now in place to deliver 44 referrals per month thereby maximising likelihood of obtaining full DfC payment with the smallest Council contribution. There was however the concern that the new requirements to ensure households were not

shielding, to assist with arranging a technical inspection by the NIHE, may make obtaining normal referral rates more difficult. Questions had also been raised with DfC regarding the implications for the service should a second wave occur and the need to provide guaranteed income rather than the “pay by referral” basis.

Letter to Chief Executives

On 14 August 2020 DfC wrote to the Chief Executive (attached “*Letter to Council Chief Executives and Senior Officers August 2020 about delivery of Aws*”) asking Councils to confirm their commitment to the scheme otherwise they would reserve the right to seek a different provider. They continued to offer Councils a payment per referral (£222.92) but had relaxed slightly the 80:20 criteria stating that “As far as possible the majority (at least 60%) of those referrals should be from the targeted list however the Department is currently reviewing this requirement.”

Options:

1. Decline to continue with the scheme.

In view of the stipulation of DfC/DoF that the scheme was on a “pay by referral” basis, that placed the Council at greater financial risk should targets not be achieved. Whilst to date, the AW team had always met targets, it had been assisted to do so by the ability to recruit additional manpower because of the up to £30k budget provision made available to manage the scheme - yet that was originally supposed to be a “no cost to council” scheme. The increased uncertainty regarding ability to meet targets with the additional burden of having to ensure that clients were not shielding, coupled with the threat of a second wave, further increased the financial risk to the Council.

2. Agree to continue with the scheme as per the DfC proposed SLA.

Members were aware that the benefits on the scheme had resulted in over £6.6 million of home improvements in the past 5 years to some of the most vulnerable households in the Borough. In addition, households had been assisted with signposting to other support services and undoubtedly Council involvement had resulted in an enhanced, more efficient, holistic service to clients. Careful management had ensured the service was delivered on target and within budget and projections based on the experience, as detailed in this report, would be that we should be able to do so, albeit there was greater uncertainty regarding the ongoing impact of Covid- 9 on service delivery.

3. Agree to continue with the scheme but review after 4 months.

In recognition of the value of the scheme and previous past performance but tempered with the greater uncertainty on the current and future impact of Covid-19, the Council could agree to continue the service with the existing 4 staff but review both targets and the subsequent financial position after 4 months to determine future viability. It would also provide a better indication of the additional challenges arising in relation to service delivery. Further, the

Council should continue to raise its ongoing concerns with DfC as to how the scheme was being rolled out and press for more positive responses to the Council's concerns.

RECOMMENDED that the service should be able to meet the targets with 4 staff and operate within the existing Council budget if the future impact of Covid-19 did not significantly restrict service delivery. It was therefore recommended that the Council chose Option 3 and agree to continue to provide the service but review progress in 4 months, in order to minimise the potential financial risk of continuing to support the scheme, should service delivery conditions become untenable.

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

Proposing the recommendation Councillor W Irvine considered it very disappointing to see the outworking of what had come back from the Department. He stressed the importance of the project that the Council had taken a lead role in and was discouraged that DFC did not want work to be continued by the Council and wondered about the effect of that decision for the officers involved. The Member felt that the Council should strongly challenge the decision.

The Chair suggested that the staffing query should be discussed later in the meeting 'In Committee' due to the confidential nature of staffing matters, but invited the officer to comment on very general terms. She confirmed that there would be staffing implications and could address in further detail later if required.

Alderman Cummings was in agreement with those comments and wished to register his regret since it was his belief that local councils were best placed to identify areas of need. He said that he would be keen for a robust response and continued dialogue with the Department to seek further clarification. He wondered if either SOLACE or NILGA planned to make a collective response to the matter on behalf of the councils.

The officer informed the Committee that SOLACE had been made aware of the decision but was not sure about NILGA and it was unclear if a collated response from them would be made. She suggested that not all councils were of the same view so a collective response could prove to be difficult, and two councils had already withdrawn from the scheme.

Alderman Adair proposed an amendment to the recommendation which would keep the officers' recommendation but call for an urgent meeting with the Department to discuss the matter in more detail. That was seconded by Alderman Cummings.

that Council:

Requests an urgent meeting with the Permanent Secretary of the Department for Communities to discuss the ongoing delivery of the Affordable Warmth Scheme.

Councillor Adair was disappointed at the decision which had come from the Department which had been a bolt from the blue. There had been a meeting recently with officials from the Department, Council staff and Members and he had thought the discussions had been open and frank but there had been no suggestion of what was coming and so the news had come as a surprise. The scheme was of great importance to local people and was too good to be lost, the Housing Executive was already stretched so in his opinion the Council was best placed to deliver it locally. He asked Members to support his call for an urgent meeting with the Permanent Secretary.

Seconding the amendment Alderman Cummings believed that increased dialogue would be beneficial.

Alderman Douglas rose to support the amendment sharing the disappointment that had come after such an open meeting where discussions had taken place on how the Department and Council could work better together. She welcomed a further meeting and was happy to give her support.

Councillor Boyle also gave his support to the amendment and suggested that Ards and North Down had been very active in the administration of the scheme. There had been no indications of this change at the recent meeting, and he believed that elected representatives knew constituents better than the Housing Executive and were best placed to administer the scheme and hoped a cross-party delegation could meet with the Department.

Councillor Chambers shared the view of other Members and although there had been an underlying current that the Department wanted to wind the programme down it had still come as a kick in the teeth to the Council and local constituents and it needed to be addressed with urgency.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman Adair, seconded by Alderman Cummings that the amendment be adopted and that Council:

- 1. Approves the signing of the Affordable Warmth Service Level Agreement 2023-2024 for governance and audit purposes.**
- 2. Notes the changes in delivery model for the scheme being implemented by DfC as part of their budgetary controls, which will exclude Councils.**
- 3. Agrees to write to DfC asking how the decision to exclude Councils was reached in the absence of a response to the current budget consultation exercise, and expressing concern over how such a decision will impact the most vulnerable in the Borough, seeking assurances that every effort will be**

made by NIHE to identify and support eligible residents in our area to avail of the scheme for the remainder of its lifetime.

4. Explores ways to continue to support the most vulnerable in the Borough, in the absence of the Affordable Warmth scheme, including consideration of an interim energy efficiency advice role, with a further report being brought to Council in due course.

Further Council Request an urgent meeting with the Permanent Secretary of the Department for Communities to discuss the ongoing delivery of the Affordable Warmth Scheme.

6. FOOD SERVICE PLAN REVIEW

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing:

Delivery of the Food Service Plan 2022/2023

Background

The report demonstrated the delivery of the Food Service Plan 22/23 which was approved by the Council on 28 September 2022. The plan set out the numbers of inspections and activities to be carried out by the Food Control team during the year.

Food Hygiene and food standards interventions were carried out as defined in the Food Law Code of Practice and priority had been given to higher risk premises and manufacturers. Intervention activities had been prioritised in accordance with advice.

Throughout the year the Food Standards Agency had carried out quarterly temperature checks to assess resources on the delivery of food controls.

Service Delivery

During the year the food service had had some movement of experienced officers, long-term illness, and an increased number of newly registered premises. In general, there had been a decline in standards of premises, in particular structural repairs, and an increase in pest activity. That had also been experienced in other Council areas and may be due to a combination of Covid-19 recovery and the increase in utility, commodity, and food prices.

An inspection programme was implemented to include the outstanding inspections from 21/22 which amalgamated due to Covid-19 restrictions.

The tables below showed the total number of food hygiene and food standards inspections completed in the year 22/23 including the backlog from 2021 and newly

registered food businesses. The figures showed that the food team had met or exceeded the targets in almost all the risk categories.

Food Hygiene Inspections

Food Hygiene risk rating of premises.	Inspections due in 2022-2023	Backlog inspections 2021	Total number of inspections due in 2021-2023 (Including backlog)	Inspections completed 2022-2023 (includes new premises)
A	0	0	0	3
B	21	43	64	64
C	54	34	88	158
D	36	90	126	117
E	122	38	160	160
Total	233	205	395	502

Food Standards Inspections

Food Standards risk rating of premises.	Inspections due in 2022-2023	Backlog inspections 2021	Total number of inspections due in 2021-2023 (Including backlog)	Inspections completed 2022-2023
A	7	0	7	7
B	32	27	59	70
C	240	62	302	321
Total	279	89	368	398

New Business Registrations

All food businesses were legally required to register with the Local Authority. 181 new businesses were registered during 22/23 which was a 38% increase on the previous year and had created pressure on the team as new businesses were required to be inspected within 28 days of registration.

Investigation of food poisoning and other infectious diseases

Investigation of food poisoning was provided by the Council on behalf of the Public Health Agency. The Food Service Plan estimated 16 individual cases per year, however, this year the team had undertaken 82 investigations regarding infectious diseases. 66 cases (80.5%) of those were reported from the Public Health Agency and 16 (19.5%) cases were reported by members of the public alleging illness from food consumed within the Borough.

Further information

The Council provided a comprehensive service to consumers and food businesses such as education, advice and signposting to other resources e.g. Food Standards Agency online allergen training.

Sampling

The Northern Ireland Food Managers Group policy for food sampling had been implemented within the Council's Food Control Service. The target number of bacteriological samples for routine analysis was 12 per week totalling 650-700 for the year. During 22/23 615 ready to eat food samples were collected with the results showing 90.5 % satisfactory and 9.5% unsatisfactory. Unsatisfactory samples were taken again along with advice given to the business until a satisfactory result was received. Unsatisfactory samples may arise from poor handling practices, poor temperature control or incorrect storage conditions.

The service also took part in a national survey regarding hygiene standards in take away sandwich shops/cafes which involved taking nine sample swabs for indicator organisms such as Listeria from ready to eat surfaces. 33% of the swabs were unsatisfactory and were re-sampled and reported as satisfactory. There was a small shortfall of 35 samples which was mainly due to bank holidays.

The Food service plan targeted 318 routine chemical samples to be taken. 104 chemical samples were collected and analysed for composition and labelling, allergens, and food complaints 50.9% were non-complaint for labelling, 49.1% were compliant. The reduction in number was due to budget restraints.

The Food Control Service assisted the business to achieve compliance with the labelling regulations and provided guidance in new product development. The service participated in an FSA survey on the nutritional content of children's restaurant meals. 8 meals were collected for analysis as part of a Northern Ireland project. Results of this survey were pending.

Complaints and Service Requests

The food section responded to 491 complaints and service requests mainly from members of the public. Of those 175 related to hygiene standards in premises or issues with food products. All service requests were responded to within two days, however depending on the nature of the request they may be acted on immediately

such as evidence of an imminent risk to public health for example, rodents in a commercial kitchen.

Enforcement Actions

The service operated within the Council's generic Regulatory Services Enforcement Policy which included an appendix providing specific information on food safety. A summary of the formal enforcement activity for the year was summarised below.

Hygiene Improvement Notice	10
Remedial Action Notice	1
Voluntary Closure	4

Advice and Education

As outlined in the Food Service Plan officers had provided advice and education to businesses including the following:

- providing free food hygiene training to 3 volunteer catering groups in church settings
- facilitating a food safety talk to event managers at SERC
- engaging with food vendors at Sea Bangor in June 2022
- awarded a Gold Award for Caloriewise to the SERC Bangor campus café

2023/2024

A Food Service Plan for 2023/24 was currently under development and would be presented to the Council at the September 2023 meeting.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the successful delivery of the Environmental Health Protection and Developments Food Service Plan on behalf of the Council.

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

Alderman Brooks had been pleased to read the report and congratulated the team on its success. He stated that after 43 years working in the catering industry he had seen at first hand that Environmental Health was always available to give advice and assistance.

Seconding the recommendation Councillor W Irvine stated that food safety was one of the most important functions of the Council and the report gave confidence that the hospitality industry was in good health.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman Brooks, seconded by Councillor W Irvine, that the recommendation be adopted.

7. PUBLIC ANALYST SERVICES

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that Article 27(1) of the Food Safety (NI) Order 1991 required that the Council appoint one or more persons (Public Analyst(s)) to act as Analyst(s) within the district of the Council.

Furthermore, the Framework Agreement on Official Feed and Food Controls by Local Authorities, amendment of 5 April 2010, Chapter 2, paragraph 12.8, stated that Ards and North Down Borough Council should ensure that a Food Analyst was appointed to carry out examinations and analysis of food samples. In making those appointments, all relevant legal requirements and Codes of Practice shall be satisfied.

In 2021 Belfast City Council had undertaken the procurement on behalf of the 11 Councils. The Public Analyst had been awarded a two-year contract in 2021 which had 2 x 1 year extensions. The Current Public analyst was Public Analyst Scientific Services Ltd.154 Business Park, Valiant Way, Wolverhampton, WV9 5GB. It was therefore proposed that the current Public Analyst contract was extended for a further year.

The qualifications required by Analysts were set out in the Food Safety (Sampling and Qualifications) Regulations (NI) 2013. The Environmental Health Protection and Development service was satisfied that the following persons, who were employed by Public Analyst Scientific Services, fulfilled the requirements of the Regulations for appointment as Public Analysts on behalf of the Council.

Duncan Kenelm Arthur BSc, MChemA, CChem, MRSC
Nigel Kenneth Payne MSc, MChemA, CChem, MRSC
Lilian Emma Jane Downie MChem, MChemA, CChem, MRSC
Michelle Evans BSc, MChemA, CChem, MRSC
Donna Hanks BSc, MChemA, MRSC
Mary Butts MSc MChemA MRSC

RECOMMENDED that the Council approves an extension of the above Company and persons as Public Analysts to the Council under Article 27(1) of the Food Safety (NI) Order 1991, effective from January 2023.

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

8. SEA SWIMMING UPDATE ON BATHING WATERS IN ANDBC – RESPONSE TO NOTICE OF MOTION

(Appendix V)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that further to a Motion agreed at Council in January 2022, Officers wished to update Members on progress in relation to increasing the number of designated bathing waters in the Borough.

The Environmental Health Protection and Development Service had been in discussion with DAERA since the Motion was agreed, primarily to discuss concerns about water quality at beaches nominated through DAERA's public consultation exercise.

A meeting was held with DAERA and Northern Ireland Water (NIW) in August 2022 to discuss Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs) at nominated sites. At that meeting NIW provided data in relation to the CSO at Brompton Bay, which was previously believed to present a risk to bathers due to its regular discharging at the beach.

However, there had been significant investment to upgrade infrastructure at Brompton Bay, which should ensure that discharges during the bathing season were unlikely to occur. NIW also provided reassurance that CSOs did not present a significant risk at Skippingstone Beach or Donaghadee Harbour. Following the meeting DAERA agreed to write to the Council in due course and ask the Council to confirm its willingness to act as Bathing Water Operator (BWO), at beaches that met beach user criteria.

A formal request was received from DAERA on 21st April 2023, asking for the Council to act as BWO at two candidate beaches: -

Brompton Bay, Bangor Donaghadee Harbour

Water quality was currently being tested at the candidate beaches and DAERA had invited BWOs to display the results of monitoring at their sites. If that was approved by the Council, it would be temporary signage as formal signs must be produced if the beaches became fully designated. The Council would intend to attach QR codes to existing Council signage at the candidate beaches, which linked to water quality information on the Council's website.

A process would now be undertaken by DAERA to formally reveal the identity of the locations as Designated Bathing Waters as per The Quality of Bathing Water Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2008.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approve that officers continue to work with DAERA and accepts the role of Bathing Waters Operator for Brompton Bay, Bangor and Donaghadee Harbour following the formal identification of these sites as designated bathing waters. It is further recommended that Council approves that temporary signage is erected placed at the candidate beaches, to inform the public of water quality at that location.

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

Alderman Douglas rose to welcome the report stating that the Notice of Motion had been brought by her former party colleague, Councillor Egan, and which she had seconded. She was delighted to see the inclusion of the two beaches and was aware of the benefits sea swimming provided. She knew that Alderman Brooks would also be pleased to read the report being a swimmer in Donaghadee.

Referring to signage she hoped that would be accessible to all and the Head of Environmental Health, Protection and Development explained that there would be a QR code for water information which was being kept up to date by the Department. DAERA had been advertising its App for water quality and she accepted that a person would need a Smart phone to access that. The Alderman hoped that if additional signage was provided by the Council, it would be mindful not to cause information clutter in the natural environment.

Councillor Cochrane agreed with the sentiments expressed by Alderman Douglas stating that the Borough's beaches and waters were the jewel in the crown of Ards and North Down.

Alderman Adair congratulated officers and welcomed the report and asked if the Council would put forward further beaches such as Cloughey and Ballyhalbert.

The officer outlined the process by which beaches were identified through public consultation and included the number of people who used them, but she hoped that more would be added in the future and that this was simply a start.

Alderman Brooks was encouraged to see the Council taking action and welcomed the report and the growing number of people taking up open water swimming. Councillor Creighton agreed and was delighted to hear about the improved water quality at Brompton beach which was greatly used and appreciated by residents at Bangor West.

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

9. COMMUNITY AND CULTURE Q4 PERFORMANCE

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

The Performance Management Handbook outlined the approach to Performance Planning and Management process as:

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years
- Corporate Plan – published every 4 years (Corporate Plan Towards 2024 in operation)
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually (for publication 30 September 2022)
- Service Plan – developed annually (approved April/May 2022)

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

Reporting approach

The Service Plans would be reported to relevant Committees on a quarterly basis as undernoted:

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
Quarter 1 (Q1)	April – June	September
Q2	July – September	December
Q3	October – December	March
Q4	January - March	June

The report for Quarter 4 2022-23 was attached.

Key points to note:

- Community consultation and engagement in preparation for the PEACE PLUS programme had concluded and 828 people had been involved to date. The Programme had not yet been formally launched by SEUPB.

Key achievements:

- A new Education Programme for the Museum was now in place, following the appointment of an Education Officer.
- There had been some key achievements including the Community Safety multi agency meetings that had been held, including the standing forums for Ards Blair Mayne, Aurora and multi-agency meetings in relation to ASB at Helen's Bay beach. Those meetings had been extremely beneficial for the

collective engagement of key stakeholders including the PSNI, Community Safety, Youth Services and Street Pastors, working together to reduce ASB.

- Increased engagement in a number of schools in the Borough with partner agencies in relation to ASB issues.

Emerging issues:

- The number of young people recruited to the Youth Voice Programme had increased and a rolling programme of recruitment was underway with further recruitment scheduled for September 2023.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the report.

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

Councillor W Irvine thanked officers for the report and asked for an update on ongoing community safety matters at Aurora, Bangor and Ards Blair Mayne, Newtownards. The Head of Community and Culture reported that there had been no recent issues reported to community safety at Aurora and at Blair Mayne. Monthly multi agency meetings took place and were introducing a number of initiatives to assist with the existing challenges that were on going regarding youths. The CSOs had a base at the Ards centre at present in the evenings.

The Chair welcomed that information and thanked the officer for the update.

Councillor Hollywood welcomed the success of the Youth Voice programme and explained that he worked with disadvantaged young people across the Borough and asked about the demographic of the young people who participated. The officer explained that the recruitment to Youth Voice was open to all and was led by the Education Authority. Council staff were involved in the interview process and meetings took place monthly and the next recruitment would take place in September. She did not know the detail of where the young were located in the Borough but that information could be provided to the Member following the meeting.

Alderman Douglas wished to raise a matter in relation to Youth Voice and asked if membership could be extended to include young people who had special needs since the voice of children with learning disabilities should be captured.

She also referred to community volunteers and the Council's wish that more volunteers come forward from within the community. The Head of Parks and Cemeteries spoke of the 'Friends of' groups and several volunteers had started working in the Walled Garden, Bangor, but that the initiative was being extended more widely. It was a general policy of the Council and the parks section was leading the way in promoting volunteering.

The Chair concluded by commending the performance of the section and the targets that were being met.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor W Irvine, seconded by Alderman Adair, that the recommendation be adopted.

10. RECONSTITUTION OF PCSP 2023/2024

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that following Council elections in May 2023 the NI Policing Board commenced the process to appoint Independent Members to the PCSPs in 2024.

The appointment process consisted of three stages which was provided for in Schedule 1 of the Justice Act (NI) 2011 and followed guidance outlined in the Code of Practice for the Appointment of Independent Members published by the Department of Justice.

- **Stage 1** – Pre-launch activity including targeted publicity and advertising campaign, application process and eligibility sift.
- **Stage 2** – Councils identifying a pool of candidates who were suitable for appointment, shortlisting/interviews taking place at Council level and a list of ‘appointable’ candidates provided to the Board by each Council; and
- **Stage 3** – The Policing Board appoints independent members to the partnerships.

Stage 1 of the process was supposed to commence on 30 June 2023, however due to the issues connected with the Northern Ireland Budget the commencement date had been provisionally moved to 1 September 2023 (depending on clarification for the NI Policing Board budget by that date).

The Policing Board would be appointing HR experts to carry out the role of external HR provider for all Councils. The role of HR experts would be to support Council panels and ensure a consistent approach to the process. That was the same process as used in past reconstitutions in 2015 and 2019.

In 2019, Board officials worked with Council HR Managers and PCSP Managers to confirm those appointed to recruitment panels and it was likely this step of the process would commence by Autumn 2023.

The Policing Board would require that Council had selected three Councillors to be appointed to the interview panel and the two reserve Councillors were available as back up. They would all receive appropriate training. The five Members should be from the ten Members appointed to PCSP.

The training would involve sessions on best practice in shortlisting/interviews, good governance for panels and key roles and responsibilities. Panel members would also be walked through the process and paperwork that they would be using. In 2019 a bespoke training session was also provided for Panel Chairs to support them in the duties of their role, and it was likely that would be replicated.

Stage 2 would commence in late 2023 (assuming a commencement date of 1 September for the application process) when shortlisting meetings and interview days would take place involving the three Councillors appointed by Ards and North Down Borough Council.

Stage 3 would proceed in line with the current Code of Practice, and it was anticipated that formal reconstitution would occur on 1 June 2024 with the appointment of the new independent members.

The current independent Members would therefore stay in place until 31 May 2024.

RECOMMENDED that the Council appoint three Councillors to sit on an interview panel to select new independent members and also appoints two Councillors in reserve for contingency purposes.

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

It was further proposed by Alderman Douglas, seconded by Alderman Adair, that Councillor Moore be nominated.

Proposed by Councillor Chambers, seconded by Alderman Cummings, that Councillor Wray be nominated.

Proposed by Alderman Adair, seconded by Alderman Douglas, that Alderman Cummings be nominated.

It was further proposed by Alderman Douglas, seconded by Councillor Ashe, that Councillor Creighton be placed on the reserve list.

Proposed by Alderman Cummings, seconded by Councillor Cochrane, that Councillor Cathcart be placed on the reserve list.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman Cummings, seconded by Alderman Douglas, that the recommendation be adopted and that Councillor Moore, Councillor Wray and Alderman Cummings be nominated. It was further agreed that Councillor Creighton and Councillor Cathcart be placed on a reserve list.

11. MOVILLA COFFIN LIDS – RESPONSE TO NOTICE OF MOTION

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that a Motion agreed in March 2023 that “Officers write in response to Historic Environment Division expressing concern that a reinstallation of the Movilla Stones to the Movilla Abbey walls might risk further damage to the stones, what reassurance can HED give that this will not be the case, whether alternative means of display of the stones has been given consideration and, if so, that Council offers assistance in this regard”.

Recent correspondence (May 2023) between the Heritage Development Officer and HED’s State Care Monuments Team had provided the following statement from Inspector Guillermo Santamaria:

Historic Environment Division appreciated and shared the concerns raised by Ards and North Down Borough Council officers regarding reinstating the stones to the Movilla Abbey walls. The Department was not proposing to reinstall them in the previous location, which would only result in the same issues due to continued exposure to the elements. Instead it intended to restore the section of the north wall and install a new protective shelter accessible to visitors, elsewhere within the cemetery, which would appropriately house and hopefully interpretate the slabs.

This was a high priority project for the Department and as such it was hoped to put it out to tender this year, budget dependent, to conservation specialists. The stones were currently stored safely and appropriately at Historic Environment Division’s conservation depot at Moira. They had been allowed to dry out, and were now safely stored, awaiting conservation work before their return to site.

Senior Inspector Martin Keery further clarified that the Historic Environment Division had met with officers from the Parks and Cemeteries team a few years ago to discuss a viable location to display the stones once they were returned to site. The options put forward at that time would need to be revisited and further discussion between the Historic Environment Division and Council would take place once the tender went out for the consolidation of the stones. The Historic Environment Division would keep the Heritage Officer updated on progress of the works and copied into any correspondence with other Council service units.

RECOMMENDED that the Council, upon completion of conservation repairs, work closely with the Historic Environment Division for return of the objects for display at Movilla Abbey and for them to be located as described in the report.

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

Alderman Cummings explained that the Notice of Motion had come on the back of a Notice of Motion brought by Alderman McIlveen. He appreciated that officers were looking at the issue with DFC with a view to ensuring that the items were preserved and thanked officers.

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

12. COMMUNITY TRANSPORT – RESPONSE TO NOTICE OF MOTION

(Appendices VI&VII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing explaining that the following Motion was agreed at the Council meeting on 26th April 2023, “That Council writes to the Permanent Secretary of the Department for Infrastructure highlighting the benefits of Community Transport and the Dial a Lift Service for elderly, disabled and socially isolated residents living in rural areas who depended on the service. Further request that funding be allocated on a longer-term basis to continue that vital transport service for our residents going forward”.

A letter was sent on 5 May 2023 to the Permanent Secretary, Department for Infrastructure outlining the benefits of the scheme which were enjoyed by numerous residents within the Borough, many of whom depended on those services as their only mode of transport, asking that the Department allocated further long-term funding to this vital transport facility for residents.

A letter of response was received on 25 May 2023 from the Permanent Secretary of the Department for Infrastructure.

That provided confirmation that funding would continue to be provided at 2022/23 levels until the end of July 2023. That would enable Community Transport organisations to continue providing transport services, while the department analysed the responses to a consultation exercise that it was currently undertaking.

The letter further stated that a review of Community Transport provision was intended for the longer term to ensure that both value for money and outcomes were maximised, through investment in those key services. DfI said it fully appreciated that the current circumstances remained far from ideal. The community transport organisations would be kept updated once any further information was available.

The consultation document referred to could be accessed at:

<https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/consultations/dfi-resource-budget-2023-24-equality-impact-assessment-consultation>

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the above and the attached reply from the Permanent Secretary of the Department for Infrastructure.

Alderman Adair made an alternative proposal which was seconded by Councillor Douglas.

That Council Write to the Permanent Secretary of the Department for Infrastructure expressing concern at the lack of clarity on the future funding of Community Transport services beyond July 2023.

Council further highlight the benefits of the Community Transport and Dial a Lift Service for elderly disabled and socially isolated residents living in rural areas who depend on this service and request funding is allocated long term to deliver this vital transport service for our residents going forward.

Alderman Adair spoke of the benefits that this funding brought and was dismayed to hear that the funding would only be guaranteed to July, indeed some people had already been informed that the service would end on the last Friday in June. He referred to the elderly population particularly, many of whom were socially isolated and lonely and as Mayor he had been fortunate to have been able to visit those people and hear their views. He considered that the Department needed to know the value of the service and why it mattered so much to the community and attempt to preserve it for the future.

Councillor Douglas agreed wholeheartedly with the Alderman's comments and believed that there was nothing further to add.

Councillor Boyle reported that he had sat as a board member on a community transport organisation which operated across the Borough. In the Ards Peninsula particularly community transport played a powerful role in the lives of people in the Borough since much of the population was geographically isolated. It was a life saver to many people and offered opportunities for people to engage with the wider community and feel less isolated. It was insulting that the Department could make such a devastating decision.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman Adair, seconded by Councillor Douglas, that Council write to the Permanent Secretary of the Department for Infrastructure expressing concern at the lack of clarity on the future funding of Community Transport services beyond July 2023.

Council further highlight the benefits of the Community Transport and Dial a Lift Service for elderly disabled and socially isolated residents living in rural areas who depend on this service and request funding is allocated long term to deliver this vital transport service for our residents going forward.

13. LEISURE SERVICES Q4 PERFORMANCE

(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 that requirement the Council approved the Performance Management Policy and Handbook in October 2015. The Performance Management Handbook outlined the approach to Performance Planning and Management process as:

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years
- Corporate Plan – published every 4 years (Corporate Plan Towards 2024 in operation)
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually (for publication 30 September 2022)
- Service Plan – developed annually (approved April/May 2022)

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

Reporting approach

The Service Plans would be reported to relevant Committees on a quarterly basis as undernoted:

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
Quarter 1 (Q1)	April – June	September
Q2	July – September	December
Q3	October – December	March
Q4	January - March	June

The report for Quarter 4 2022-23 for leisure services was included as an appendix.

Key points to note:

- By the end of this year the Council saw an almost complete return to pre Covid usage levels across the service area.
- Significant success across the sector despite the increasingly difficult conditions for constituents was very pleasing but more difficult times lay ahead as the cost-of-living crisis would bring considerable challenges to consumer spend.
- The Council would be challenged on its high charges compared to other areas especially given the cost of living crisis and may consider a realignment of its commercial approach to leisure provision.

- 2022/23 year-end financial figures were not yet available but at month 11 the following summary table highlighted the very successful year for the inhouse leisure operations against budget. That highlighted a net underspend against budget of over £339,000 with only Comber, due to resurface of sports hall floor and delayed fitness suite refurbishment affecting income. Both those aspects would be resolved imminently.

- **Period 11**

Centre	Actual Net Exp	Budget Net Exp	Variance (-)/+	
ABMWLC	(15,515)	265,300	(280,815)	
CLC	176,190	165,500	+10,690	
LDP	119,908	165,700	(45,792)	
PSC	98,053	121,900	(23,847)	
Total	378,636	718,400	(339,764)	

- The above figures would help compensate for the increased cost against budget for the tariff risk for NCLT/Serco managed facilities as previously reported.

Key achievements:

- Total Hours booked in Community Centres was close to double its target which demonstrated a return to pre Covid-19 usage figures, with higher than pre Covid-19 usage in some facilities. The 2023/24 target for Total Hours Booked had been increased by 4,500.
- Footfall figures across leisure were significantly above target in most facilities.
- Sport Development programme was still expanding with particular success in number of grants awarded and attendees at sport development programmes.
- Significant net underspend via budget for the inhouse leisure team

Emerging issues:

- The requirement for a Transformation process within the Community Centres and Halls service (including amendments to staff structure, JD's, and Salaries) was now clearly apparent. Unfortunately, two recent incidents had further highlighted the requirement for an additional Supervisor, which if approved, would result in a Supervisor always being on shift during all opening hours across 21 sites. That was considered a Health and Safety risk in addition to an operational and commercialisation opportunity.
- Cost of living crisis would affect consumer spend and place a challenge on the Councils relatively high charges approach to leisure provision.
- Sickness levels across the workforce were at an all-time high. That potentially reflected the continual strain the staff were under impacting their health and wellbeing.

Action to be taken:

- New Gym fit out for Comber Leisure Centre was now planned for early Summer 2023.
- A detailed Business Case was currently being completed which would provide rationale for the Transformation within Community Centres and Halls. It was hoped that a quick decision would allow a planned recruitment process to replace one of the two supervisors who was leaving their post in mid-June in addition to recruiting an additional Supervisor, could be commenced as soon as possible at the appropriate salary scale and JD.
- The recommencement of Community Centres and Halls User Forums would begin from Q1 2023. Those Forums were paused during the Covid-19 pandemic, but it was now deemed appropriate to recommence those given a return to pre Covid-19 usage figures and the requirement to engage again with the community and other user groups formally.

RECOMMENDED that the Council note the report.

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

14. TREE AND WOODLAND STRATEGY (UP TO 2032) YEAR 2 UPDATE

(Appendix IX)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that the purpose of the report was to update Members on the recent progress of the Council's Tree & Woodland Strategy that was agreed in March 2021. The purpose of the Tree & Woodland Strategy was to recognise the importance of trees, the many benefits they afforded and the increasingly important role they could play in mitigating the effects of climate change. The strategy was required to ensure the Council's limited budget was focused on positive planting programmes and managing tree care and risks.

Residents were rightly proud of the greenness of the Borough, but it was something that was not static, and which could not be taken for granted. Trees played a significant role in improving environmental conditions and people's quality of life. Trees acted as carbon sinks and absorbed carbon dioxide (the main greenhouse gas) and produced oxygen. In addition, trees filtered, absorbed and reduce pollutants. Trees could make the Borough a healthier, more attractive and more comfortable place to live and work. Trees provided food and shelter for wildlife such as birds, squirrels and insects, as well as for people. Trees had been proven to increase property value and to help relax people by lowering heart rates and reducing stress.

The Council was committed to conserving and retaining existing trees and other features where it was considered that they had landscape or amenity value and would use its powers to protect trees where necessary. The Council was also committed to ensuring improved tree cover within the Borough, and to promote the importance of trees to ensure several Corporate and Community Plan objectives were met. The Council had a legal 'duty of care' and would provide appropriate levels of management arrangements to ensure that users and neighbours of its land were reasonably safe. The appointment of the Tree & Woodland Officer in December 2022 would ensure continued progress could be made regarding the implementation of the Tree & Woodland strategy actions and objectives.

Scheduled Tree Works Completed in 2022/2023 Season

Ards and North Down Borough Council used a proactive approach in the management of its tree stock. It engaged an expert consultant to periodically carry out full inspection surveys for each of its sites, to assess the risk of significant harm from a tree or branch fall. The inspection surveys recommended several trees to be felled and pruned. The Council's Parks Service and contractors understood that felling of trees was a sensitive area and was only completed when necessary. An explanation of where those steps may be taken was explained in the Frequently Asked Questions section on Councils website. Notice of scheduled tree work was also provided through the website and updated regularly.

The aim was to carry out all scheduled tree works between 1st September and 28th February, but this was not always possible. The presence of nesting birds protected under the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 could only delay, not prevent, the felling of trees, hedgerows and woodlands. Generally, 1st March to 31st August was accepted as the breeding season. Work to hedgerows, trees and woodlands could take place at any time, but the onus was on the person doing the work to avoid committing an offence under the Wildlife (NI) Order 1985.

Kerrs Wood, Bangor: Tree work commenced in Kerrs Wood, Bangor on Monday 21st November and finished Friday 20th January 2023. Tree surgeons completed 24 tree fells, 47 maintenance prunings and 14 monolith creations on trees which had been deemed 'High Risk' based on the tree survey report.

Ballymenoch Park, Holywood: Tree work commenced in Ballymenoch Park, Holywood on Monday 20th February and finished on Friday 10th March 2023. Tree surgeons felled 38 trees throughout Ballymenoch Park on trees which have been deemed 'High Risk' on the tree survey report.

Stricklands Glen, Bangor: Tree work commenced and finished in Stricklands Glen, Bangor on Friday 24th February 2023. Tree surgeons completed seven trees on trees which have been deemed 'High Risk' based on the tree survey report.

New Tree Plantings and Replacing Felled Trees

The Council undertook to replace trees in numbers in excess of those that needed to be felled and had an annual tree-planting programme which saw many trees of both native and interesting varieties planted over each Autumn/Winter season. For example, our **STAND4TREES** initiative aimed to plant a tree for every person in the Borough, that was approximately 160,000 trees. Through planting season 2022-2023 in excess of 15,000 new trees were planted in the Borough.

In general, trees planted would be native species such as oak, elder, hazel, hawthorn and birch, in line with Councils 'Local Biodiversity Action Plan', unless there was a specific ornamental scheme which required cultivated species. An example of that was Castle Park (Bangor) and Ballymenoch Park (Holywood) which were regarded as historic tree arboretums and would require rare and unusual trees as replacements. That was intended to ensure that there was a diverse collection of tree colonies across the Borough.

Planting of replacement trees at Ballymenoch Park had been scheduled for tree/hedgerow planting season, November 2023 – March 2024. Parks Officers had identified several unusual species of semi mature size to be installed when the season allowed, in addition to the new native hedgerow which would require 3,750 mixed native plants.

Since tree work finished at Kerrs Wood, 50 new trees had been planted throughout the area, a mix of *Fagus sylvatica* (Common Beech) and *Pinus sylvestris* (Scots Pine). Stricklands Glen had also seen *Pinus sylvestris* (Scots Pine) and *Alnus glutinosa* (Alder) trees replanted throughout the area.

Community Tree Planting Events

Multiple community tree planting days had been organised across the Borough during this tree planting season. Some examples included:

On Saturday 28th and Sunday 29th January, Parks Officers held a community tree planting weekend at Castle Park, Bangor which saw over 150 members of the public plant 1,500 whips in Castle Park.

On Friday 24th February, Parks Officers organised a tree planting event at Ann Street, Portaferry where Year 9 pupils from Strangford College and St. Columba's College, as well as members of Portaferry 'In Bloom' planted 800 native tree whips.

On Saturday 11th March, members of 'Love Ballyholme' community group planted 500 whips in Brice Park, Bangor. As well as community-based planting events, Parks staff had planted more than 11,500 trees at various locations across the Borough bringing the total number planted to 26,000 since the Tree and Woodland Strategy was launched.

New Tree Plantings and Hedgerow Plantings 2023/2024

A total of 15,000 tree whips (small trees) would be ordered this year for the up-and-coming tree and hedgerow planting season, which ran from November 2023 through February 2024. The locations of the new tree and hedgerow plantings were outlined below. For the majority of the sites, tree and hedgerow planting events would be held in partnership with local community groups and schools participating.

Valentine Pitches, Castle Park, Bangor
Trees Planting: 2,500 whips (3000m²)

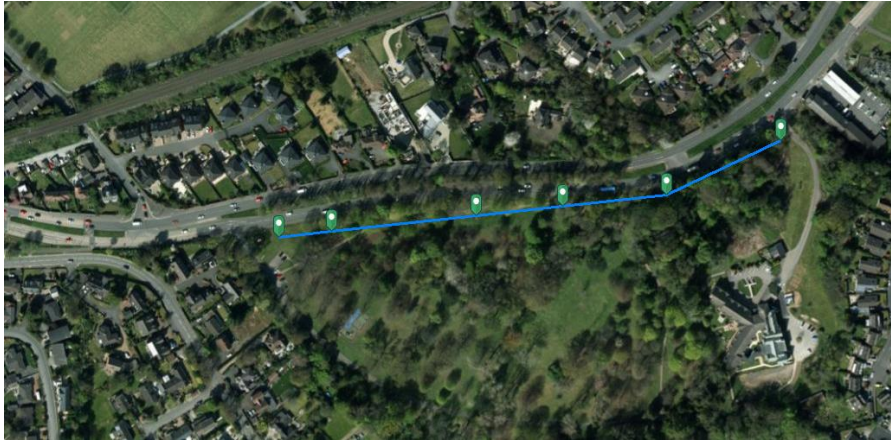


Skipperstone Community Centre to Bloomfield Road
Hedgerow Planting: 3,500 whips (700metres)



Ballymenoch Park, Hollywood, hedge 1: carriageway boundary.

Hedgerow Planting: 1,900 whips (750metres)



Ballymenoch Park, Hollywood hedge 2: carpark to top of the park.
Hedgerow Planting: 1,900 whips (750metres)



Londonderry Park, Newtownards, canal boundary.
Hedgerow Planting: 5,000 whips (1000metres)



Ballycran Play Area, Kircubbin
Trees Planting: 250 whips (370m2)



Community Orchard Plantings

As part of the Council’s commitment to successfully implement the Tree and Woodland Strategy, Park Officers identified potential sites on which community orchards could be planted. That had been carried out through a process of community engagement and internal site management. The aim was to achieve a target of three new Community Orchards each year.

Community orchards were an excellent place for people to come together, providing a space for celebrations and were a source of food. They could be used as educational resource for local schools, community groups and the wider public. Trees in general could reduce stress and illness by providing psychological refreshment and a sense of wellbeing, creating character and a sense of place and permanence.

Orchards encouraged healthy eating and outdoor activities improving wellbeing, as well as making our towns, villages and neighbourhoods more pleasant places to live. Tree plantations of any type could symbolize community focal points and offer aesthetic, amenity and historic value and could act as landmark features within settlements and open countryside.

Ards and North Down now had six new community orchards, each being planted by local community groups and schools, meeting the target for this stage of the Tree and Woodland Strategy. Planting season 2022-23 saw orchards planted at Brice Park, Bangor, Londonderry Park, Newtownards and Dickson Park, Ballygowan.

Ards and North Down Orchard Locations:

- Ann Street, Portaferry
- Lawson Gardens, Portavogie
- Village Hall, Greyabbey
- Brice Park, Bangor
- Londonderry Park, Newtownards
- Cottown Open Space, Six Roads Ends
- Dickson Park, Ballygowan

Proposed Schedule of Orchard Plantings 2023/2024

Town	Location	Size (M2)	Trees
Hollywood	Hollywood Nature Park	1000	50
Kircubbin	Kircubbin Pavilion, Kircubbin	550	30
Comber	Laurel Bank Lane	550	30

Hollywood

In May 2023, Parks Officers and members of Hollywood Shared Town, identified a location of approximately 1000 square meters of grassland within Hollywood Nature Park, suited to a community orchard. The orchard would contain up to 50 mixed fruit trees with consideration given to species most suited to the location.

The orchard site would remain open and freely accessible to the community and was located on Council-maintained land. Funding for trees and maintenance would be sourced by Parks Service. Hollywood Nature Park was well used by the residents of the entire Borough and the orchard would provide opportunity for community education and engagement. The proposed location was within a natural setting of the nature park which was primed for further development. Multiple schools were in close proximity. The area of Hollywood Nature Park was grassland under-utilised and regularly mown as part of Parks maintenance.



Kircubbin

Through an onsite meeting in June 2023, Parks Officers and representatives from the local community of Kircubbin, identified a location approximately 550 square meters of grassland within Kircubbin Pavilion, suited to a community orchard. The orchard would contain up to 30 mixed fruit trees with consideration given to species most suited to location. The new orchard would be located close to the offices of Peninsula Healthy Living and associated community garden. The community garden already provided a host of nutritious vegetables, and that provision would be strengthened by the addition of mixed fruits. The orchard site would remain open and freely accessible to the community, located within an existing community focal point.

The proposed planting would be used as an extension to the well-used park facility. Planting would be carried out in conjunction with local schools and the local community. The proposed location was within walking distance of main residential

areas and the local primary school. That proposed area was grassland under-utilised and regularly mown as part of Parks maintenance.



Comber

Comber Regeneration Community Partnership (CRCP) engaged with Parks Officers to discuss a potential community orchard to be planted on approximately 550 square metres of grassland located at Laurel Bank Lane, with a target completion date of planting season 2023/24. The orchard would contain up to 30 mixed fruit trees with consideration given to species most suited to the location. The orchard site would remain open and freely accessible to the community, located within an existing community focal point.

The proposed planting would be used as an extension to the well-used park facility. Planting would be carried out in conjunction with local schools and community groups. The proposed location was within walking distance of Comber town centre and main residential areas. A primary school and large secondary school were in close proximity. The proposed area was grassland under-utilised and regularly mown as part of Parks maintenance. Under 20% of the green space within the park would be required for planting, leaving the remainder for continued use as an amenity grassland.



Calendar of Events 2023/2024

A key aim of the Tree and Woodland Strategy was to actively engage and collaborate with the community and others in valuing trees as a vital community asset. Parks Service would continue to commit to a series of events and promotional initiatives that enhanced the profile of trees, provide educational opportunities, and encourage community participation. Those events and promotions would be in line with local and national campaigns, such as National Tree Week - the UK's largest annual tree celebration, Love Parks Week and Seed Gathering Season. Some themes and events for 2023-24 were outlined below.

May 2023	National Hedgerow Week Mental Health Awareness week
June 2023	Veteran and Champion Tree Tour of Bangor's Castle Park
July 2023	Love Parks Week
September 2023	Tree Care Month Tree Seed Gathering Season
October 2023	World Apple Day
November 2023	Orchard Planting Events Hedgerow Planting Events National Tree Week
December 2023	Orchard Planting Events
January 2024	Community Tree Planting Events

February 2024 Community Tree Planting Events
Orchard Planting Events

March 2024 Community Tree Planting Events
Orchard Planting Events

RECOMMENDED that the Council note the progress of the Tree and Woodland Strategy to date and continue to support future initiatives.

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

Alderman Adair commended officers on a very comprehensive report and was aware that hedgerows and orchards were a great benefit to communities and the environment. He praised the intergenerational aspect of the initiatives outlined and was pleased to note the progress being made in many areas of the Borough.

Councillor Chambers thought this was a wonderful strategy and asked officers to clarify news that he had been given from residents at Linear Park who had been informing local representatives that a community orchard was being planned for that area.

The Head of Parks and Cemeteries explained that officers had been in contact with a number of people in that area to get a feel for what residents there wished to see in relation to the Tree and Woodland Strategy. A mix of views was expressed and there was an intention to establish a 'Friends of' group in Linear Park which would be a vehicle to agree recommendations for the area.

Councillor Chambers was reassured that the local community would be involved and asked a further question relating to trees and where they were obstacles to paths or the public. It was explained that the Woodland Officer assessed those trees and elected Members along with the public could be in touch with the Council where problems were arising.

At this point the Chair noticed the report referred to work at Ballyholme and declared that his wife was involved in the Love Ballyholme Group.

Councillor Ashe welcomed the report and was particularly pleased to note the orchard planting in Comber and thought that was a testament to the hard work of residents in the town and she knew that it would be well supported by the local community.

Alderman Douglas was delighted to read the report and had enjoyed participating in some of the work. She mentioned the Tree and Woodland Officer particularly for the work that he had done in rolling out the programme. She encouraged Council officers to have clear communication with residents in the absence of Friends groups

and use social media to inform residents where possible. She asked the Head of Service when further Friends of groups would be established. The Committee was informed that would be progressed by the Engagement Officer who had started with the Council on 1 May 2023 and it was hoped that would be progressed quickly in the Autumn period using events to engage with local people. The Local Biodiversity Action Plan had been established recently and there was good engagement with the public.

Alderman Douglas also referred to feedback from Greenspaces that some trees could be transplanted where appropriate to alternative schemes and she urged officers to be environmentally minded to reflect the views of local communities.

Alderman Cummings appreciated the work at Comber on the orchard and referred to the Ballygowan playpark upgrade. The officer explained that that was detailed in the report and that discussions were ongoing with local groups. Parks also conferred with Good Relations to ensure that there were no cultural sensitivities that needed to be considered but the area was delighted with the placement of the orchard.

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

15. WILDLIFE REPORT (Appendix X)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that the Council received a consultation document entitled '*Wildfires in Northern Ireland - A Draft Strategic Way Forward*' from The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA).

The stakeholder consultation process for the paper would run until 20th June 2023. The Council was permitted to deliver a response beyond the closing date due to Council meeting dates.

Aim of the Consultation

The current wildfire problem in Northern Ireland was purely the result of human activity with wildfires being caused by accidental or by deliberate ignition. Wildfires in Northern Ireland impacted on large areas of landscape, particularly in heather or gorse dominated upland areas. Those fires destroyed biodiversity and affected air quality and water resources.

As a direct result of the 2011 wildfires an Interdepartmental Group was established in to develop recommendations to address the wildfire issue and a Northern Ireland Wildfire Stakeholder Group was subsequently established through which several recommended actions were delivered.

The aim of the consultation was to seek the views of key stakeholders on the proposed strategic goals and recommendation for actions. The way forward was driven by five Strategic Goals:

- To reduce the numbers of wildfires.
- To lessen the impact of wildfires on the environment, society and the economy.
- To have a framework for partnership working and shared resources for wildfire prevention, strategic planning and interagency response.
- To build resilience into those landscapes and habitats most susceptible to wildfire and reduce the risk and/or severity of wildfires.
- To have communities that are aware and prepared for wildfire events.

The Consultations recommended actions.

- Develop and implement a five-year 'Strategic Action Plan' that would deliver the Strategic Way forward.
- Strategic Wildfire Group to report annually on implementation of the above 'Strategic Action Plan'.
- A 'Strategic Wildfire Group' to undertake a 3-year review of the 'Strategic Way Forward' and the 'Strategic Action Plan'.

The completed consultation response document was attached and the template was included in an appendix.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approves the consultation response.

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

16. VICTORIA PRIMARY SCHOOL PLAY AREA LETTERS – RESPONSE TO NOTICE OF MOTION

(Appendices XI&XII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that Members would recall the update brought on Victoria Primary School Play Area in November 2022. As a result, the following recommendation was adopted by Council:

“To Ballyhalbert Sports Clubs no longer avail of facilities at Glastry College (due to facilities being closed to the public in winter months). Further that Council express concerns at lack of lighting and proper footway link connecting the village to Glastry College and write to the Department for Infrastructure requesting the upgrade of existing footway on Victoria Road to include widening curbing along with lighting to promote a safer route to school and connecting the village to Glastry College via a safe and assessable footway.

Furthermore, the possibility for a project fronting Victoria Primary Ballyhalbert could potentially be added to the list of projects being put forward for Peace Plus funding and considered by the Peace Plus Partnership and progressed through the process outlined above in the report. Consideration should also be given to the other sites identified in the Play Strategy for older children provision as part of the Peace Plus process that could be delivered on Council land.

Furthermore, that officers bring back a report to Council following the conclusion of the Peace Plus consultation advising members of any council applications going forward to deliver facilities for children and young people across the Borough”.

In relation to writing to the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) a letter was sent on 8th March 2023. A response was received 15th March 2023. A further letter for clarity was sent 24th May 2023. For Members information, as a result of a follow up query, DfI confirmed that an up-to-date assessment of the need was carried out in March 2023, and it remained of the opinion that unfortunately Victoria Road currently did not meet the criteria for street lighting as requested.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the above and the attached reply from the Permanent Secretary of the Department for Infrastructure.

Alderman Adair made an alternative proposal which was seconded by Alderman Cummings.

That Council write to the Department for Infrastructure requesting the upgrade of existing footway on Victoria Road, Ballyhalbert, to include widening curbing to promote access for all including disability connecting the village to Glastry College via a safe and assessable footway.

Alderman Adair referred to the ongoing matter of the footpath on Victoria Road, Ballyhalbert, and was hopeful that the Department for Infrastructure would address that. He had received complaints that it was not accessible to those who had a disability and stressed that the path was heavily used by children walking to school daily. He went on to say that the people of Ballyhalbert sometimes felt forgotten and urged the Department to have accessible paths for everyone.

Seconding that Alderman Cummings said it was an entirely reasonable request and hoped that the Department would deliver.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman Adair, seconded by Alderman Cummings, that the alternative proposal be adopted.

17. COMMEMORATIVE TREE PLANTING (Appendices XIII – XV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that Members would be aware that the Council had facilitated the planting of commemorative trees on Council land in conjunction with local groups and organisations.

Historically requests had been received on an ad hoc basis as a result of a written request from interested organisations or other groups. A policy on when and how to approve such requests was developed and approved by the Council, to ensure fairness, equity of treatment, ensure compliance with any statutory obligations, and provide satisfaction that approved requests were within the context of any other approved policies and plans. For example, the trees on open spaces which were accessible and visible to all, and so should reflect the areas community plan with regard to respectful and shared communities, and therefore be quality shared or neutral displays.

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.

The policy set out the following criteria:

1. A request would be approved if it met the following essential criteria:
 - a. The request was being made by a properly constituted organisation.
 - b. The request was submitted in writing in the approved form at least 8 weeks in advance of the requested planting date.
 - c. The tree would become the property of Council and maintained as such. The species and variety would be at the discretion of Council and align with the Council's Tree and Woodland Strategy.
 - d. Applications would be considered on a date received priority should there be a conflict in dates requested. (Officers would liaise with those making a request to accommodate where required).
 - e. Applications must include details of any commemorative plaque to be considered for approval.
 - f. The request was satisfactorily equality screened.
 - g. The request was deemed to be eligible (See Section 2)

2. Eligible requests would be as follows:
 - a. To raise awareness of charities nominated by the Mayor
 - b. To highlight events directly organised by the Council
 - c. To mark a significant sporting event in the Borough.
 - d. To commemorate a significant anniversary of, or an event organised by a charity or community organisation which had a significant connection to the Borough.

- e. To commemorate a major national event or anniversary.
3. In addition to failing to meet at least one of the above criteria, a request would be deemed ineligible if it fell into any of the following categories:
 - a. An application which in officers' opinions was only promoting a commercial interest
 - b. The promotion of an ethos, activity or organisation which was not deemed in the context of communities to be shared, neutral or promoting good relations.

A copy of the policy and application form were attached as appendices to the report.

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.

In recent weeks there had been one request for commemorative tree planting. Those had been received from: -

- Cloughey & District Community Association – Planting of 20 Quercus robur (English Oak) tree whips to commemorate 21 years of 'Making Cloughey Better'. Trees will be planted on the boundary of Cloughey football pitch by the local community.

Officers could confirm that this request complied with the criteria in the policy subject to the policy approval.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approved the Cloughey & District Community Association Commemorative Tree Planting request as outlined in the report.

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

Alderman Adair was delighted to read the report and congratulated Cloughey on its achievements and that the Community Association was excellent, and he wished it every success for the future. The trees would leave a lasting legacy for generations to come who would reap the benefits.

Councillor Boyle praised the vision of the Cloughey & District Community Association had in pursuing their goals. The area was being transformed with sensible ideas to make the area more attractive. Cloughey was a great place to visit and the community spirit was strong.

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

18. DISPLAY BED APPLICATIONS

(Appendix XVI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that Members would be aware that the Council agreed a policy on the February 2019 for the use of Display Beds in the Borough, the policy required Officers to report to Council any applications received by external organisations. The Council had received one application for use of the display beds, officers had assessed applications and had determined that all requests met the criteria in the policy and were recommended for approval. The applications were deemed by officers to not require equality screening.

The applications were as followed and the proposed design of the display was included in the attached appendix. The Parks team would endeavour to replicate the design as far as possible, however detailed design may alter to facilitate installation. If necessary, the Officer 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
ANDBC Democratic Service on behalf of UDR CGC Greenfinches	Adjacent to Bangor Post and Sorting Office	3 rd July 2023 to 14 th August 2023	UDR CGC Greenfinches Logo to highlight events directly organised by the Council

RECOMMENDED that the Council approves the above applications for display beds.

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

Councillor W Irvine thought this was a very worthy display bed dedicated to the UDR Greenfinches who had appreciated the gesture from the Council.

Alderman Cummings agreed stating that it would complement the rest of the programme which was being organised.

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

19. BRANCH OUT COMMUNITY GROUP SUPPORT

(Appendices XVII-IXX)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that the Council agreed the following Motion in February 2023.

This Council notes its previous sponsorship of the Community Asset Transfer request from Branch Out Community Group and welcomed the agreement from DfI to lease the woodland area to the group for 1 year. Officers would:

- Write to DfI to express the Council's support for the work of Branch Out on the DfI-owned site and how it complements The Big Plan for Ards and North Down.
- Write to the EA to express the Council's support for their work on the EA-owned site, adjacent to the woodland.
- Bring back a report, identifying what could be offered to support the work of Branch Out including, but not limited to, providing advice, support, equipment and finance.
- Engage directly with Branch Out to identify what support was needed.

Responses to the letter sent by the Council had been received and were included in the appendices to the report.

Officers report on support available from Council

In line with the Corporate Plan and Community (Big) Plan, the Council recognised the need to support local communities in reclaiming existing outdoor spaces and contribute towards Council wide Plans and Strategies, which included the following key documents:

- The Corporate Plan - Growing Better Together (2020 – 2024)
- The Big Plan (Community Plan)
- Roadmap to Sustainability (2021 – 2028)
- Local Biodiversity Action Plan (2023 - 2032)
- Let's Grow Together (Sustainable Food Growing Strategy - 2021 to 2032)
- Local Development Plan

The focus of the Corporate Plan was 'Growing Better Together' to realise a vision for Ards and North Down where it was a vibrant, connected, healthy, safe and prosperous Borough. Community gardens and growing space contributed to the overall vision of the Corporate Plan and aligned with the agreed priorities. The priorities were:

- Priority 1: Prosperity - Growing our local economy.
- Priority 2: Environment - Growing a cleaner, greener local and global environment.
- Priority 3: Opportunity - Growing the lifelong potential of our community.
- Priority 4: Pride - Growing empowerment, respect and safety of our community.
- Priority 5: Life - Growing the health and wellbeing of our residents.
- Priority 6: Excellence - Growing a high-performing Council.

Community gardens and growing space contribute towards all five outcomes of the Big Plan. The three outcomes of particular relevance were:

- Outcome 1: All people fulfil their lifelong potential.
- Outcome 2: All people enjoy good health and wellbeing.
- Outcome 5: All people feel pride as they have access to a well-managed sustainable environment.

Council's Parks and Cemeteries Service actively engaged with community groups, volunteer organisations and education providers from across the Borough, providing advice and support, with the objective of encouraging and assisting all stakeholders in the Ards and North Down area to increase their civic pride, by enhancing the natural resources of the Borough. Engagement with Branch Out Community Group had been ongoing since March 2021, when the draft business plan for land at Talbot Street was presented and advice sought. Recognising the opportunities for growth, through further community engagement and participation, a new post of Engagement Officer had been created to actively involve residents in the service.

Advice and guidance were provided by Parks and Cemeteries Officers with expertise in specific areas such as Ulster in Bloom, Biodiversity, Trees and Woodlands, Horticulture and Green Flag Awards. The Parks and Cemeteries Service also worked in partnership with Social Farms and Gardens, a UK wide charity supporting communities to farm, garden and grow together. Their mission was to improve the health and wellbeing of individuals, communities, and the environment through nature-based activities. Financial assistance was provided through the partnership by way of Participatory Budgeting. The initiative provided funding to groups who wanted to deliver projects that reduced carbon emissions, reduce food waste and address food poverty. In 2023 the initiative supported eight projects from across Ards and North Down, totalling £4,000.00. Branch Out Community Group had been made aware of the support available through Social Farms and Gardens.

Council's Community Development Team provided a range of different support and development services to assist local community and voluntary groups. Support included but was not exclusive to, setting up a new group, project assistance, training, developing relationships with other organisations and grant aid, including community development grants and community festivals grants from the Council and

externally from other organisations. The Council also supported and worked alongside the following local community networks:

- North Down Community Network
- Ards Community Development Bureau
- County Down Rural Community Network

Support for community projects provided by Parks and Cemeteries Service was in line with agreed strategies and initiatives, most notably:

Ards and North Down in Bloom

The Ards and North Down in Bloom initiative had been developed with three overlapping objectives which were: horticultural excellence, community participation and environmentally sustainable practices. To support communities, Parks and Cemeteries Service invited annual applications from village groups, community associations etc, within the Ards and North Down Borough, for funding to enable the purchase of bedding plants, shrub and tree material, for planting within local villages or towns. The allocation of funding was subject to Council budget approval and capped at £1,000k per application. Since 2019, the In Bloom Funding Scheme had awarded more than £72,000 supporting 85 projects. In 2023 Branch Out Community Group was assisted in the purchase of project materials.

Tree & Woodland Strategy

The purpose of the Tree & Woodland Strategy was to recognise the importance of trees, the many benefits they afforded and the increasingly important role they could play in mitigating the effects of climate change. The strategy objectives actively engaged officers with the community in valuing trees as a vital community asset.

Parks and Cemeteries Service continued to commit to a series of events and promotional initiatives that enhanced the profile of trees, provided educational opportunities, and encouraged community participation. The strategy also allowed for provision of trees to local groups to support tree planting projects such as a community orchard. The business plan provided by Branch Out Community Group included installation of a heritage orchard as well as planting of native trees.

Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP)

The recently agreed LBAP set out how the Council could work alongside several governmental and non-governmental partner organisations to develop and complete actions and fulfil targets which promoted and enhanced biodiversity within the Council area. The plan provided the opportunity for local people to decide on the priorities in their area and to have a say in the development and implementation of the plan. It provided the opportunity for everyone to be involved and contribute to the actions that had been agreed upon. Parks and Cemeteries Officers were committed to supporting communities to engage in the LBAP by providing a range of engagement and educational events. As detailed in the Business Plan, Branch Out

Community Group aimed to create a woodland to promote biodiversity and encourage wildlife.

Let's Grow Together

The strategy aimed to ensure residents had opportunities to improve their health and wellbeing through involvement in sustainable food growing activities within their local area. That could be achieved by:

- Developing new sites where suitable locations were identified and there was recognised local demand.
- Promoting the benefits of community food growing to improve quality of life outcomes for local residents.
- Supporting sustainable food growing that delivered a resource for improving biodiversity.
- Engaging the community in the development of food growing as an educational tool.
- Encouraging the development of the social economy in local areas and provide suitable training and skills development for employability.

The Parks and Cemeteries Service currently supported a number of community and food growing initiatives across the Borough, including, 32 allotment plots, eight self-sustaining community gardens and six community orchards. June 2023 also seen the launch of the Schools Growing Club initiative, providing practical advice and a support package to set-up or improve an existing gardening club within six schools each year. The initiative was designed to bring together schools and local communities in shared projects. Officers were committed to providing a range of educational and engagement events that supported local communities to achieve targets, set out in the Let's Grow Together Strategy. Branch Out Community Group included a number of food growing elements to their plan for the area at Talbot Street.

Community based projects were increasing in frequency across Ards and North Down and volunteers were participating in activities that benefited the Borough on a weekly basis. Recognising the need to support those activities, Parks and Cemeteries Service created a community tool station, where groups could borrow small equipment, litter pickers, shovels, brushes etc to complete projects and then return. The tool station was used regularly by community groups and schools with many projects attended by Parks and Cemeteries staff, who provided hands-on practical assistance.

Recent engagement between Branch Out members and Parks Officers indicated that current support requirements centred around their wish for Department for Infrastructure land to be made available for project activities, by way of Community Asset Transfer.

Community Asset Transfer was a process to allow community-based organisations, to take over publicly owned buildings or land, in a way that recognised the benefits to communities, the public sector and the third sector. That may be at a reduced lease rate, through grants or other supports, or the transfer of something the local authority did not plan to use or sell. Although there was no legislative framework to support asset transfer in Northern Ireland, the 'Community Asset Transfer' policy framework was developed in 2014 by the Department of Social Development (now Department for Communities), to enable an environment that supported Community Asset Transfer. The framework identifies what a successful asset transfer must achieve:

- Deliver community benefits
- Support development of social enterprise
- Contribute to social, economic, or environmental regeneration.
- Support the sustainability of community organisations.
- Improve social cohesion.

Community ownership and control of assets could bring benefits to both parties and to the wider community that the asset was used to serve. In developing the 'Community Asset Transfer' policy framework, a cross-departmental Steering Group on Community Asset Transfer identified a number of barriers which needed to be addressed to enable the practice to be used more extensively and more creatively. Barriers existed both within and between the public sector and the third sector and were described in **Appendix 1**, as well as a series of practical measures to address those barriers.

Appendix 2, Department for Infrastructure (DFI) response to Council letter of support for the work of Branch Out Community Group, indicated that DFI Lands team were in contact with Branch Out Community Group in relation to the disposal of Talbot Street Plot 2 via Community Asset Transfer. DFI indicated that the larger plot of DFI land, Talbot Street Plot 1, would soon become available on the open market. DFI advised, "In line with Government Disposal Procedures, Branch Out Community Group may bid for the surplus subject land, along with any other interested third parties."

Members should note **Appendix 3**, letter of support for the Branch out project from the Education Authority.

RECOMMENDED that the Council note the support services available to Branch Out and similar community groups, volunteer organisations and education providers within Ards and North Down. It is further recommended that members note that presently the main support requirement for Branch Out Community Group being assistance to secure the Community Asset Transfer of Talbot Street Plot 2.

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

Councillor Moore welcomed the report in response to a Notice of Motion she had brought with Alderman McDowell, and she had been encouraged at the time to have a great deal of support across the Council Chamber. This was a wonderful group and she praised the work of Pam Shaw particularly, and thought the initiative highlighted the support the Council could provide.

Alderman Douglas also rose to welcome the report and she too had been struck by the passion of Pam Shaw to protect and promote the area of green space. She hoped the initiative would continue to be progressed.

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

20. CEMETERY POST BOXES 'LETTERS TO HEAVEN'

(Appendix XX)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that the purpose of the report was to seek permission from Members to implement the 'Letters to Heaven' initiative within key Cemeteries.

Council Officers had been inspired by a recent story around the 'Letters to Heaven' memorial post box, an idea developed by a nine-year-old girl in Nottingham, who wanted to put her thoughts about her deceased grandparents into writing. At the request of the girl's mother, a post-box was installed in Gedling Crematorium before Christmas and over 100 letters had since been posted. These post-boxes had since been installed in several cemeteries across England and Northern Ireland to be used by families who wanted to express their thoughts in writing about their loved ones.

Children visiting the cemetery were invited to write a letter as if to loved ones they had lost, through the Postbox to Heaven. Children would be able to post letters and cards at any time of the year but particularly on birthdays, anniversaries, and Christmas when their loss was felt so much greater. Each post box would have a plaque explaining that the initiative was managed by the cemetery team.

Officers believed that was a great initiative to support grieving children throughout the Borough and would seek permission to install those within the Council's two main Cemeteries ie. Clandeboye and Movilla. Further support would be afforded to relatives with the promotion of the Here-2-Help App on the information accompanying the boxes. The Council had been actively promoting that App for some time as it was an invaluable source of both regional and local information covering a wide range of services including mental health support and child bereavement services.

Once the boxes were full, Council officers would take their contents to be recycled at recycling centres.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approves the installation of Cemetery Post boxes in Clandeboye and Movilla cemeteries.

Alderman Adair made an alternative proposal which was seconded by Councillor Hollywood.

That Council approves the installation of Cemetery Post boxes in Clandeboye and Movilla cemeteries. Further Council task officers to source funding for the installation of Letters to Heaven Post Boxes to all cemeteries across our Borough.

Councillor Adair retold the story of a nine year old girl from England who had touched the nation's heart with her story following the loss of her grandparents. He was pleased that the Council was bringing in the post boxes to some cemeteries of the Borough but encouraged it for all cemeteries. The process of grief was difficult generally and children felt it too acutely and what was being suggested was a practical way to support all those who grieved.

Councillor Hollywood was happy to second the proposal and echoed the sentiments of Alderman Adair. It was good to see the Council bringing comfort and solace to people at difficult times.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman Adair, seconded by Councillor Hollywood, that Council approves the installation of Cemetery Post boxes in Clandeboye and Movilla cemeteries. Further Council task officers to source funding for the installation of Letters to Heaven Post Boxes to all cemeteries across our Borough.

21. 'CYCLING FRIENDLY BOROUGH' – RESPONSE TO NOTICE OF MOTION

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that the following Motion was agreed by Council in February 2023:

"This Council acknowledges the environmental and health benefits associated with the recent increase in cycling and declares Ards & North Down a cycling friendly Borough. The Council also recognises that people who cycle are among the most vulnerable road users, and tasks officers with producing a report detailing ways in which we can help improve safety. The report should include possible sources of funding, potential partnerships, and ways in which we can promote good relations between users of different forms of transport."

This report detailed for Members the 5 elements that were currently in place, under development or planned, and progress made to date in the delivery of that decision and that would make a contribution towards ensuring that a 'Cycling Friendly Borough' status could be declared and sustained.

The six elements were as followed:

- A. The role of, and working with the Department of Infrastructure
- B. The proposed Ards and North Down Borough Council Cycling Masterplan
- C. Working with Sustrans, on its National Cycling Network and One Path Initiative
- D. The Councils Greenway network programme
- E. Cycle to Work Schemes

A. Department for Infrastructure (DFI)

Dfi was statutorily responsible promoting and improving road safety via education, licensing, and regulation of transportation. The Safe and Sustainable Travel Division aimed to promote improved road safety and deliver better regulation of the transport sector. The Division was responsible for coordinating the implementation of the Northern Ireland Road Safety Strategy. In addition, the Division had a role in promoting the use of alternative and sustainable modes of transport such as: walking, cycling, public transport and car sharing.

The Division had developed a draft Road Safety Strategy for Northern Ireland to 2030. That draft Strategy followed a consultation exercise and reflected the continuing commitment to working in partnership to reduce the number of deaths and serious injuries across the roads network and to the ongoing development of a safe and sustainable transport network that met the needs of all road users.

Following the consultation of the draft Strategy, which was founded on internationally recognised 'Safe Systems' principles, identified strategic priority areas which DFI could, within government, along with other road safety stakeholders, focus to deliver the strategic outcomes for Safe People, Safe Roads and Safe Vehicles.

As it had not yet been possible to secure Executive agreement for the draft Strategy, the Minister secured the support of Ministerial Colleagues for the publication of the draft. It would be presented to a future Executive for approval. Since the development of the Strategy, a number of research projects had been completed exploring issues affecting children, cyclists, motorcyclists, and older road user groups, and reviewing the Road Safety Education Service.

An annual programme of research and statistical investigations into road safety problems in Northern Ireland would continue to be developed and implemented in partnership with road safety partner organisations. Any recommendations made would be considered and proposals for new ways to address road safety problems in NI would be incorporated into the Strategy. The Department had, over the years, delivered several 'Road Safety' Campaigns such as:

- Being a safe pedestrian
- Cycling
- Protective clothing

- Road safety for children under seven
- Road safety for 7 to 11 year olds
- Teenage Road Safety
- Share the Road to Zero

It also produced a plethora of other safety awareness information, and in relation to cycling the information available was as followed:

- Cycle Journeys
- Cycle Parking and Security
- Cycle Safety for Children
- Cycling Safety
- Cycling – getting started
- Electric bikes (electrically-assisted pedal cycles)
- The Benefits of Cycling
- Using cycle lanes and other cycling facilities safely

The Cycling Proficiency Scheme that had been funded by DfI for over 50 years teaching children how to cycle safely as well as proposed Road Safety Campaigns was currently under threat due to Executive budgetary cuts in DfI's budget. Advocacy from Councillors to Ministers may be useful in reinstating those programmes.

Council Officers already meet representatives from this Division every two-months to ensure connectivity with proposed DfI cycle lanes, public transport links, and the Council's proposed Greenway Network. Council Officers had also been liaising with representatives from DfI and Atkins in relation to the development of the Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan which covered Bangor, Holywood, Newtownards and Comber with the aim to improve urban active travel infrastructure.

Also, it was through those meetings, that the Council was made aware of funding opportunities. Recently the Council had been awarded £4.6 million from DfI from their Green/Blue Fund towards the delivery of sections of the proposed Greenway Network in the Borough (Comber to Newtownards and Newtownards to Green Road Bangor), funding was also received from the UK Government Levelling Up Fund (£3.2 million). Those meetings would continue going forward.

The Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022, required DfI to act on the legislative requirement which would include increasing Active Travel provision. It set out a minimum spend on active travel from the overall transport budgets of 10% (which would equate to approx. £70 million per year, so DfI may deliver some of the Active Travel infrastructure directly or in partnership with Councils. If the latter was the case the Council would continue to be an active partner in that regard.

B. Ards and North Down Borough Council Cycling Masterplan

Council Officers were keen to pursue a 10-year cycling masterplan for the Borough and intended to submit a business case for its development as part of the 2024/5 Estimates Process. The Masterplan would be developed over 4 months and would provide the basis for a strategic approach to developing a network of key active travel routes.

Development of the plan would be done in the following stages:

Stage 1: Review of strategy policy documents and a review Audit of Active Travel initiatives, in the following way.

a) A review of Physical Measures

Desk-based audit of initiatives at national, regional and local level. Map and evaluate routes to make recommendations on which active travel initiatives should be considered for delivery in the Borough, identifying delivery partners, target audiences and potential funding sources.

b) A review of Soft Measures

Evaluation of the impact of the delivery of behavioural change and engagement projects.

Stage 2: Engagement with key council staff (E.g., Planning, Regeneration, Leisure and Recreation, Community Wellbeing and Environmental Health) and Dfl.

Further activity that would contribute to the development of a cycling friendly Borough would include engagement with cycling groups and clubs, community interest groups and the general public as part of the development of the strategy.

Stage 3: Drafting of the Active Travel Masterplan

Using the information gathered, the Masterplan could propose:

- A cycle and walking path typography of three categories of cycle and walking routes that linked to, expanded and improved the existing NCN and network of Greenways across the Borough: Segregated cycle routes (A routes), Quiet ways (B Routes), Off-Road Greenways (C Routes).
- A suite of other measures that would lead to transformative change across the district. Those would include major junction improvements; pedestrianised areas and Bus and Cycle only streets; low traffic neighbourhoods; school streets; speed reduction measures; pedestrian priority measures; outline cycle parking and storage strategy; outline parking removal strategy; measures to activate public space.

- The masterplan would map infrastructure proposals at three levels of detail: 1- ANDBC wide, 2- Urban areas: Bangor, Holywood, Newtownards, Comber and 3- an overview of Smaller Settlements.

Stage 4: Development of an Implementation Plan

Production of an implementation and delivery plan for the Masterplan would identify for delivery;

- Priority routes taking into account: cost, technical deliverability, such as landownership, political deliverability, connection to existing and proposed active travel initiatives, and anticipated benefit to the community.
- Indicative costings for projects, grouping those into short term 'quick wins', medium term projects, and longer term, more ambitious projects.

Additional analysis - not included in the budget: Community Co-Design: As part of the implementation plan, set out a delivery model that contained genuine engagement with residents of ANDBC. Inviting them to 'Discover' issues and barriers, 'Co-Design' solutions, and 'Test' proposed measures at consultation, or using on street trials.

The rationale for developing a Cycling Masterplan for the Borough was clear and many current government strategies including transport, health and urban regeneration identified that cycling as a form of active travel could bring significant outcomes to people. Locally within the Borough active travel had a significant role to play in contributing to the outcomes identified in 'The Big Plan' as part of the Motion. The development of a Cycling Masterplan would support the delivery of 'The Big Plan' and its vision to 'create positive outcomes for everyone' over the span of the plan and create a safer and more connected cycling and walking infrastructure for all which would encourage more people to use the network. Lack of a safe infrastructure was the main barrier to people engaging in active travel.

C. Working with Sustrans

a) National Cycle Network

Council regularly liaised with Sustrans, who were a charity that promoted walking and cycling. Sustrans consisted of engineers, educators and industry experts. It created the National Cycle Network, and as custodians, it was their role to care for it, improve it and champion a long-term vision for its future.

The National Cycle Network (NCN) in the UK was a network of walking and cycling routes covering the whole country. In Northern Ireland it ran through the two main cities, Belfast and Londonderry, and connected many towns with the countryside. The NCN had provided for nearly 30 million trips a year in Northern Ireland; two-thirds of which were cyclists. According to pre-pandemic data, across the UK,

leisure and tourist cyclists and walkers on the National Cycle Network spent an estimated £2.5 billion annually in local businesses.

Following a UK-wide assessment of the quality of the Network in 2018, it produced a report entitled 'Paths for Everyone' with a vision for traffic-free, accessible routes by 2040. It aligned with the Department for Infrastructure's own 'Strategic Plan for Greenways' which earmarked £150 million to create new traffic-free routes connecting communities across Northern Ireland. To meet that new vision, 80% of the NCN in Northern Ireland was reclassified and a further 6% removed in July 2020. In summary:

Where a route was removed from the Network but was of importance to local tourism and of a significant distance and scale, it would be reclassified as a named strategic route e.g., Strangford Lough Cycle Trail.

Reclassification of many of those routes would enable Sustrans to market them better and more honestly to the adults who normally cycled on roads. It also opened up the potential of a network for both leisure and tourism. It worked closely with the Department of Infrastructure to support that vision.

In the long-term, Sustrans' aim was to re-route on-road parts of the NCN to new traffic-free sections or create new protected infrastructure.

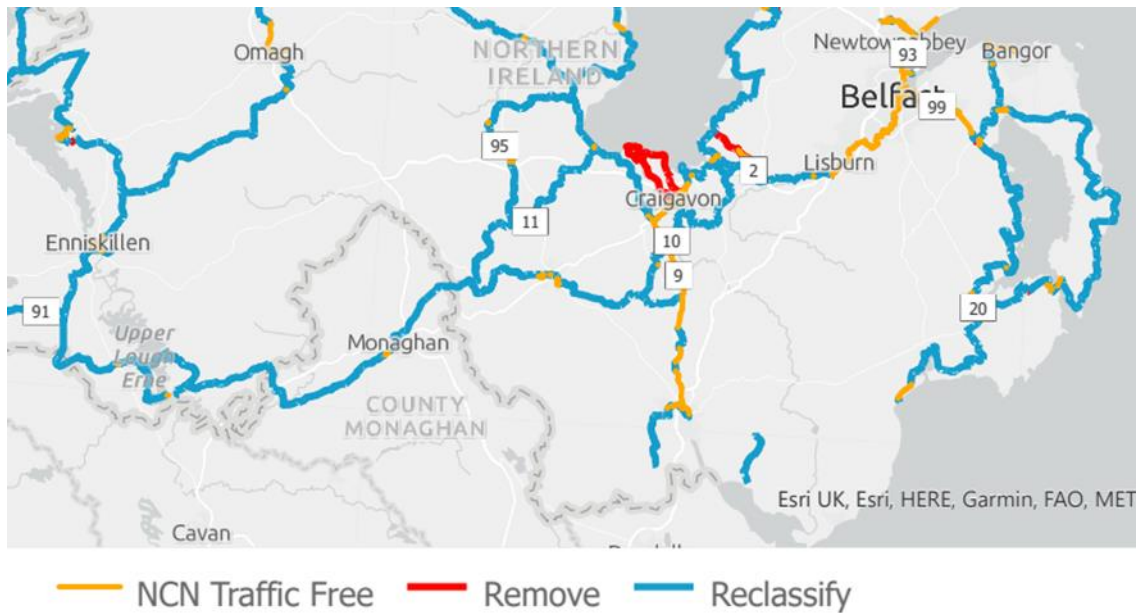
In Ards and North Down Borough Council no routes were removed but three NCN/RCN (Regional Cycle Network) routes were affected by the changes as follows:

- RCN Route 20, from Whiterock to Comber along Strangford Lough, now known as: Strangford Lough Cycle Trail.
- NCN Route 93, from Newtownards to Bangor (which includes the North Down Coastal Path, this section, as an off-road trail, will remain part of Route 93) the remaining sections will now be known as: North Down, Bangor to Newtownards.
- NCN Route 99, from Portaferry to Comber via Newtownards, now known as: Strangford Lough Cycle Trail.

(See map below)

As they were all largely on-road, those had all been reclassified and geared towards and adult audience and would be referred to as their local, familiar name.

It was the aim of Sustrans, following the Review, to re-invigorate the network in Northern Ireland and work with Councils and other partners to invest in a network that brought business to rural areas as well as giving people an opportunity to travel actively. Also, it would create a safer, more consistent user experience, manage user expectations and allow people to make an informed choice when using different routes on and off the Network.



Over time Sustrans anticipated that the Network would grow again as sections were brought up to standard and new off-road routes were added. However, for now, Sustrans wanted to honestly recognise that many long-distance routes were designed for, and were used by, an adult audience who were more experienced at sharing space with vehicles. Council would continue to work in partnership with Sustrans and add to the Network as further off-road routes came online in the Borough.

b) One Path Initiative

As the amount of people walking and cycling in public spaces and on multi use paths had increased over the years, so too had the interactions between those users and in some cases, those were negative. Sustrans had in recent years received a significant increase in contact from local councils, members of the public and community groups about concerns relating to the behaviour of some path users and requesting support and guidance about how to manage the issue. Most of the conflicts being reported were occurring between different types of users for example, dog walkers complaining about cyclists or cyclists complaining about joggers.

As managers of many public spaces and multi-use paths, it was incumbent on the Council to try to respond to those complaints. The danger was however that a response such as imposing speed limits, segregation of paths or adding signage outlining a list of rules impeded one group of users and left them feeling targeted causing further tensions between user groups.

It was also important to highlight that shared sections of the NCN passed through many of the local council areas across Northern Ireland, however from a path user perspective that may not be apparent. It was therefore important that agencies did

not promote inconsistent messages on shared routes which could result in even more conflicts and deter people from enjoying those important spaces.

The approach of 'The One Path initiative' was to discuss and understand the issues people faced when using shared paths and to collaboratively develop ways which helped people to better share the space. By participating in that process, people would feel more invested in their local space, understand other users' experiences, feel more connected to their community, and it would create a positive atmosphere. The ethos behind the One Path Initiative was 'Share, Respect, Enjoy'.

That would be a 2-year initiative, helping users of shared spaces understand and respect how other users enjoyed the space as follows.

Stage 1: An audit and analysis of issues

Stage 2: Development of a creative engagement programme

Stage 3: Embedding the One Path ethos, 'Share, Respect, Enjoy'.

In the first year the project provided for engagement with a variety of user groups through a series of focus group sessions e.g. with running groups, walking groups, cycling clubs, dog walker groups, local community groups, statutory bodies and so on. That was followed in the second year by on path animation events to engage users in conversations about messaging and how they and others could safely use the path together without the need for restrictive codes of conduct and lists of dos and don'ts – the initiative helped path users understand each other's perspectives and that the simple message of '**Share, Respect, Enjoy**' was applicable to all.

At the end of the two-year programme a One Path festival would be held along a shared space giving the various user group representatives opportunity to highlight their own work by running engagement events then and thereafter.

Given the progression of the Comber-Newtownards-Green Road Greenway project, it would be timely to deliver the One Path Initiative in 2024.

D. Greenways

In January 2023, Council scaled back its greenway plans for the Borough, but was still progressing with the following:

a) Comber to Floodgates Park, Newtownards

(Planning ref LA06/2019/0308/F Ongoing from 12/03/201).

Further to extensive engagement with DFI, that was awaiting a final DfI Roads consultation response.

b) Floodgates Park to Londonderry Park, Newtownards

(Planning ref LA06/2019/0544/F - Permission Granted 02/09/2021)

c) Belvedere Road, Newtownards to Somme Heritage Centre

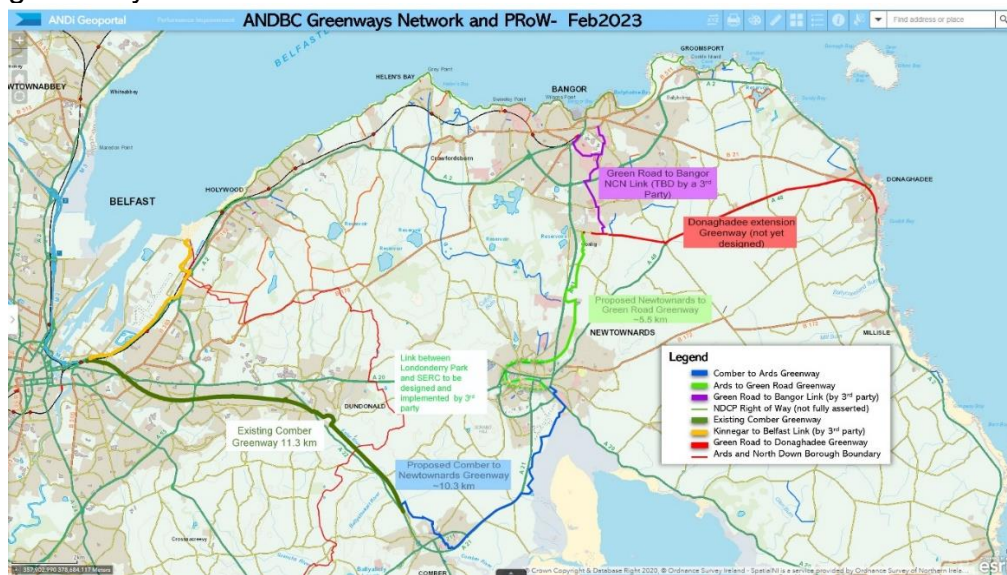
(Planning ref LA06/2020/0940/F - Permission Granted 01/09/2022)

d) Somme Heritage Centre to Green Road, Bangor

(Planning ref LA06/2021/0885/F - Ongoing from 05/07/2021) - Awaiting final NIEA Consultation response.

In relation to the Council’s alternative decision concerning the abandoned Kinnegar to Donaghadee route, a further report would be brought back after the summer on the establishment of a working group to explore issues of connectivity maintenance and accessibility concerning the North Down Coastal path.

The Borough already had a greenway route; the Comber Greenway, connecting Comber to the centre of Belfast, that was Northern Ireland’s first greenway, created in 2008. As stated above the funding was in place to deliver those new greenways and it was envisaged that construction work would begin in 2024. A map of the greenway routes was shown below.



All external and internal funding had been secured for those schemes, with Council responsible for approximately 15% of the overall capital costs.

E. Cycle to Work Scheme

Cycling was a “Be Active” step in the “Take 5 Steps to Wellbeing” health message supported by the Council through the Employee Health and Wellbeing Group and various Community Planning projects. Employees were therefore encouraged to

cycle and had been supported through the Council's Cycle to Work Scheme – one of the advertised employee benefits packages designed to attract and retain staff. The scheme allowed employees and Members to purchase a bike through a salary sacrifice scheme and as the costs were deducted before tax and National Insurance contribution, it represented a 12.5% saving on each purchase value for the Council and 32% - 42% saving for the purchaser depending on tax bracket. The scheme was temporarily closed over Covid, but activity was now underway which was considering its reintroduction.

Through the Cycle to Work scheme, staff and Members could purchase a bike. They had the opportunity to become fitter, healthier and more energetic and focused at work and would also save money in using a bicycle rather than car for journeys related to work and outside of work, and reduce carbon emissions.

RECOMMENDED that the Council:

1. Notes the above areas of activity and how they will contribute to the delivery and sustaining of a cycling friendly Borough.
2. Continues to meet and engage with Sustrans, the Safe and Sustainable Transport Division of DFI, and the Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan team to further promote safe cycling and active travel.
3. Notes that business cases will be submitted for the development of a 'Cycling Masterplan for the Borough' and the 'One Path Initiative'.
4. Recognises the value of continuing with its Cycle to Work scheme.
5. Seeks to advocate the Governments adoption of the Road Safety Strategy for Northern Ireland to 2030 and ensure there is sufficient budget is made available to continue to deliver the Cycling Proficiency Tests and the wider Safety Campaigns within the Northern Ireland Government.
6. Brings back a further progress report to include indicative timelines on when the status of a cycling friendly Borough can be declared.

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

Alderman Douglas rose to welcome the report which followed from a Notice of Motion brought forward from her former party colleague Alderman Wilson and which she had seconded.

The initiative was to encourage people to get on their bikes to reduce reliance on the private car while creating safe shared spaces for travel and recreation.

This was an extensive report and detailed the extent of the work that needed to be done with the Department for Infrastructure. There was evidence that children wanted to cycle to school but the infrastructure simply was not present to allow that to be done safely. There was also concern that with budget cuts progress could not be made sufficiently. It was hoped that travel routes could also be planned for rural areas and links to be made with the Greenway. The Member asked for reassurance

that the decision taken in the last Council term in respect of the North Down coastal path would be maintained.

The Director confirmed that the decision taken in the winter to shelve the Greenway plan in that area was being replaced by a different project and a working group would be set up with Terms of Reference for it established in the Autumn. The purpose was to look at concerns over accessibility in local areas. The group would consider local needs and assess what can be done to address matters of Accessibility, Connectivity and Maintenance in relation to the Coastal Path. The cycling strategy would not replace this.

The Head of Parks and Cemeteries stated rural proofing would be examined in the Masterplan which was a real opportunity to look at this and where the Council was headed.

Seconding the recommendation Councillor Ashe had no further comment.

Councillor W Irvine welcomed the report and hoped it would encourage cycling to be safe and with increasing numbers of people using the North Down Coastal Path there had been a bit of conflict between walkers and cyclists. He asked when the section of the path there had been designated as a National Cycle route. The Director explained that had been in place for 5 or 6 years.

The Chair was encouraged that the Council was promoting active transport in the Borough and it should be borne in mind there were some concerns and some of the routes discussed were shared and the Council needed to be sensitive on the way forward to find the right balance within the beautiful Ards and North Down Borough.

Councillor Boyle raised an issue which had been raised regarding desk-based audits. He went on to say that looking at a map was not the same as being on the ground, noting which roads were used during school drop-off and collection times, lorry deliveries, rush-hour traffic etc. He asked if there were plans to monitor traffic between schools and see how to improve or create cycling infrastructure between schools and homes since he believed some of those concerns had been raised and needed to be addressed as the plans were developed.

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

22. PARKS AND CEMETERIES Q4 PERFORMANCE

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

2015. The Performance Management Handbook outlined the approach to Performance Planning and Management process as:

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years
- Corporate Plan – published every 4 years (Corporate Plan Towards 2024 in operation)
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually (for publication 30 September 2022)
- Service Plan – developed annually (approved April/May 2022)

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

Reporting approach

The Service Plans would be reported to relevant Committees on a quarterly basis as undernoted:

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
Quarter 1 (Q1)	April – June	September
Q2	July – September	December
Q3	October – December	March
Q4 (attached)	January - March	June

Key achievements:

- Appointment of Bereavement Services Officer, Tree and Woodland Officer, Parks Supervisor & Cemetery Supervisor.
- A volunteer programme in Bangor Castle Walled Garden had attracted eleven volunteers and there was a waiting list to join the programme.
- 2022 Green Flag Awards retained for Castle Park, Londonderry Park, Kiltonga Nature Reserve, Linear Park and Ballymenoch Park. Plus Green Flag Pollinator award secured for Castle Park. That was the first year of the award.
- Donaghadee and Comber attaining 1st and 2nd place respectively in the Town category of Ulster in Bloom. Donaghadee nominated as a finalist for Britain in Bloom 2023.
- Planned programme of Winter Events including Tree Week and other **STAND4TREES** activities underway.
- New Play Parks in Castle Park (Portaferry), Tower Park (Conlig), Aurora (Bangor), Johnny the Jig (Holywood) & Upper Crescent (Comber) delivered.
- Floodgates Park Development Plan - Draft Masterplan completed.

Action to be taken:

- Completion of the Splash Pad at Groomsport.
- Preparation for extending the rewilding scheme is underway.

- Official opening of Play Parks will be organised over Spring and early Summer.
- Staff Task & Finish groups started to implement weed reduction policy.
- Mobile orchard for Holywood ordered and working with local group.
- Review of Community Trails is being finalised, report to follow.
- Launching Schools Growing Club initiative.

RECOMMENDED that the Council note the report.

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

Alderman Adair commended officers for the report and praised the work of the Head of Parks and Cemeteries stating that he had been a breath of fresh air to the Council and had delivered much while addressing long standing issues.

Alderman Cummings was in agreement highlighting the achievements at Donaghadee and Comber for awards in Ulster in Bloom. There was great enthusiasm in those communities particularly in Donaghadee as it moved forward to the Britain in Bloom awards.

Councillor W Irvine raised the Council decision in relation to Bloomfield and Clandeboye playparks and the pilot project to close those. He had been informed that the timings of the closures was a little ad hoc at times and asked if that could be monitored. At Bloomfield Park there was a large bonfire close by so a temporary closure over the period of the bonfire would be welcome and would protect the Council from potential damage coming from that. The Head of Parks and Cemeteries explained that work continued with the Good Relations team so that officers were aware of what was happening in relation to the building of bonfires and facilities would be closed if there was a threat of damage.

Alderman Douglas rose to welcome the report and praised the work which was ongoing by the section. The Council had made a significant investment in playparks, and she had received a number of complements by visitors to the Borough about the standard of the facilities in the area.

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

23 UPDATE ON PROJECTS ASSOCIATED WITH WHITESPOTS COUNTRY PARK

(Appendix XXI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that former Members of Council would be aware of the interrelated projects that were planned for the area around and within Whitespots Country Park and were at various stages of development. The report was to provide a brief update on each.

1. Whitespots Country Park

Council through the Regeneration, Development and Planning Directorate developed a vision for the existing Country Park and approved a Master Plan as part of an outline business case that allowed Members to consider options and approve various phases of development. See attached "Why Whitespots brochure" at Appendix 1. That was part of a bid for the Belfast Region City Deal investment in the area. Unfortunately, the opportunity did not come to fruition primarily as there was no appropriate sponsor department associated with City Deal.

With a developed OBC indicating good outcomes, the Council continued to investigate partnership funding and was offered a grant under the Complimentary Fund with a sponsor department confirmed as DEARA. Council was at an advance stage of receiving DEARA/DfE approval of the OBC which would lead to receiving the Letter of Offer. The procurement process to appoint a consultant design team was underway to develop the full masterplan, submit a planning application and construct the initial phase(s) of the plan in accordance with the level of funding secured.

2. Greenway Network

Newtownards to Green Road Bangor:

Planning permission had been secured for a portion of this route, Newtownards to the Somme Museum, with the second section Somme to Green Road (Bangor) at an advance stage with the planners. The Greenway had secured funding from both DfI and Levelling Up which resulted in Council providing 15% of the overall capital cost. Tender documentation was being prepared to appoint a contractor, with an anticipated start of site date set for Q1 2024 subject to planning and lands purchase being concluded.

3. Walking trails between Whitespots Country Park and Helens Bay.

Historical and well used trails along the former Ulster Way, allowed walkers to make their way from Whitespots through the Clandeboye estate, via Clandeboye Avenue to the beach at Helens Bay. The route had recently been adopted as part of the Columbian Way, and the Council had come to an in-principle agreement with the Clandeboye estate to upgrade pathways, promote and sustain it further for future generations. That assisted in traffic free connector routes to and from Whitespots.

4. Somme Museum

The Somme Museum at Whitespots was owned and operated by the Somme Association. The Council had been working with the Association, which was leading on an initiative to upgrade the facilities and consider the addition of more exhibits,

experiences for visitors and widen its remit. That had the potential to increase attraction to the Country Park. Presently, the Association was developing an Outline Business Case funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. Council officers were engaged with the Somme Museum regularly.

5. Gateway Project

In 2022, the Council approved the submission of a Concept note to Peace Plus measure 4.1 (Reimagining Communities) for a “Gateway Centre”. The Project would promote peace and reconciliation, learning from the better understanding of war, through the rejuvenation and re-imagining of the Somme Museum and the Country Park, increasing provision of transformative shared space and services and preserving shared heritage on the Island of Ireland. That would be delivered through a mutual understanding using commemoration and interpretation of the experiences of the men and women who lived, fought and died in modern international conflicts but in particular through the time of the Home Rule crisis, Easter Rising, WWI and the Civil War exploring the social history of the time and the learning from it. The concept note indicated the Somme Association would work further through that opportunity to help both the Council and the Association realise the vision that each had for military heritage development and commemoration at Whitespots, discussions were continuing.

The concept note was well received by SEUPB and meetings took place to discuss next steps and a funding application. The Council had been advised that the development of plans and an application which would include a business case would need to be carried out over the summer of 2023, and a planning application process be at least underway but preferably planning would be secured, by the time an application for funding was submitted in the Autumn of 2023. Having considered those timescale requirements, officers were of the view that neither the time, capacity, skills or finances existed in the current year to meet that deadline. Regrettably therefore it was not going to be possible to apply for the funding this year. However, there may be future funding opportunities available if the Council were to begin to develop a business case and plans now.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the above update and agrees to progress as outlined.

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

Councillor W Irvine welcomed the funding and projects that were associated with this project which would be a tremendous boost to tourism.

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

24. NOTICE OF MOTIONS

The Chair explained that neither the Mayor (Councillor Gilmour) nor Councillor Cathcart were available to speak on their Notice of Motion at the meeting and had asked him to represent them by presenting their Notice of Motion on their behalf.

The Director explained that Standing Orders allows for a temporary Chair to be appointed when the Chair could not conduct the debate as a result of moving a motion on notice, and committee's Deputy Chair was not present at the meeting to deputise.

It was proposed by Alderman Adair, seconded by Alderman Cummings that Councillor W Irvine take the role of Chair for this item only. There were no further nominations. Committee agreed to temporarily appoint Councillor W Irvine to the chair.

24.1. Notice of Motion submitted by Councillors Gilmour and Cathcart

That this Council explores the possibility of supporting the Bookstart Early Years Pilot across Ards and North Down. A report is brought back detailing information about the programme, how it could be supported across the Borough, including cost and potential delivery partners.

Proposed by Councillor Martin, seconded by Councillor Cochrane that the Notice of Motion be adopted.

Councillor Martin explained that the Motion was asking for an officers report and that no expenditure would be involved since this was simply an information gathering exercise. He said that there was a Bookstart Early Years Pilot in Ards and North Down and that was part of Book Trust which was a United Kingdom wider programme for children aged 1 to 4 years and who lived in areas of relative deprivation. The Book Trust worked with organisations such as Sure Start with the purpose that parents reading to their children at an early age helped both with attachment and the formation of good reading habits. Those in turn helped exponentially when the child started school. Children who were read to in the early years could be up to one year ahead educationally compared to their peers who had not had the same experience.

Seconding the Motion Councillor Cochrane was happy to endorse all that had been said.

Members were in agreement with the Motion and Councillor Martin thanked them for their support on behalf of his colleagues. Councillor W Irvine thanked Councillor Martin for presenting the Notice of Motion and was aware that tackling educational underachievement was a great passion of the Member.

AGREED, on the proposal of Councillor Martin, seconded by Councillor Cochrane, that the Notice of Motion be adopted.

Councillor Martin resumed his role as Chair.

25. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

a) Pitch Hire Rates at Londonderry Park, Newtownards

Councillor Moore had received from queries from residents asking for clarification on pitch hire rates at Londonderry Park, Newtownards particularly in relation to charges on Saturday mornings.

The Head of Leisure Services explained that part of the Council's pricing policy had been adopted in October/November last year and on 1 April this year a 4-5% increase in prices had been applied to leisure services across the board to meet the increasing cost of provision and that had been applied consistently.

Approximately 6 or 7 months ago it had come to light that one centre, two pitches were charging an off-peak rate on a Saturday morning. Under Section 75 legislation it is not permitted to charge different rates for different demographics for the same facilities. The decision to not charge consistently for peak/off peak had mostly impacted two main customers who were benefitting from a significantly reduced rate of off-peak prices, but it was felt that it was inappropriate to change prices mid-year. The Clubs continued to benefit from the off-peak rate being applied incorrectly for the remainder of the 2022/23 year. The Clubs had been informed that the price change would come in to affect in line with the annual increase from 1st April 2023 in a letter in January.

The impact of the change on each child would still result in the cost per child utilising the pitch still paying approximately £1 per child per hour on a Saturday morning when the small sided games matches were being held and affected only those using some of the facilities at Londonderry Park, Newtownards.

Members welcomed the explanation and thanked the officer.

NOTED.

(Having declared an Interest in Item 26 Councillor Chambers and Councillor W Irvine left the meeting at 9 pm).

(Councillor Cochrane left the meeting at 9 pm)

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

AGREED, on the proposal of Alderman Douglas, seconded by Alderman Cummings, that the public/press be excluded from the meeting.

**26. NORTHERN COMMUNITY LEISURE TRUST QUARTER 4
2022/2023**

(Appendix XXII)

****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 was presented for the Trust Quarter 4 January 2023 to March 2023 on performance. Those reports contained information pertaining to participation, key performance indicators, marketing and PR, sports development, health and safety, customer feedback and technical issues. The Trusts contracts Manager attended to answer questions raised.

The report recommended that council noted the report which included the performance for the quarter.

The recommendation was agreed.

(Councillors Chambers, Cochrane and W Irvine, returned to the meeting at 9.17 pm)

27. HOME SAFETY EQUIPMENT CONTRACT

****IN CONFIDENCE****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 6 – INFORMATION IN RELATION TO WHICH A CLAIM TO LEGAL PROFESSIONAL PRIVILEGE COULD BE MAINTAINED IN LEGAL PROCEEDINGS

A report was presented for extension of the current contract for the supply of Home Safety Equipment to allow officers to continue to carry out Home Safety Checks for those most at risk of a home accident.

The report recommended that council extend the current contract for a further year.

The recommendation was agreed.

Arising from Item 5 – Affordable Warmth Update

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 6 – INFORMATION RELATING TO AN INDIVIDUAL(S)

A report was presented earlier in the meeting Elected Members had asked officers for further clarification regarding impact on staffing. The Head of Service explained the impacts on individual members of staff and what the Council was doing to try to mitigate these impacts as much as was possible.

The additional information was noted.

The recommendation was agreed.

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 9.21 pm.

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

A hybrid meeting (in person and via Zoom) of the Planning Committee was held at the Council Chamber, Church Street, Newtownards on Thursday 22 June 2023 at 7.00pm.

PRESENT:

In the Chair: Alderman McIlveen

Aldermen: Graham
McDowell
Smith

Councillors: Cathcart
Kerr
McCracken
McKee (zoom)
McLaren

McRandal
Martin
Morgan (zoom)
Woods (zoom)
Wray

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

1. APOLOGIES

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

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Woods declared an interest in Item 4.1 - LA06/2021/0433/F – 15a Morningside, Bangor – Demolition of existing dwelling and replacement 2 storey dwelling with additional lower basement level.

Technical issues were experienced at this stage as a result of a power outage and the meeting went into a short recess.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES OF PLANNING COMMITTEE OF 4 APRIL 2023

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Cathcart, seconded by Councillor McRandal, that the minutes be noted.

4. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Having previously declared an interest in the undernoted item, Councillor Woods was removed from the meeting – via zoom.

4.1 LA06/2021/0433/F – 15a Morningside, Bangor – Demolition of existing dwelling and replacement 2 storey dwelling with additional lower basement level. (Appendix I)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report outlining the planning application.

DEA: Bangor Central

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

Proposal: Demolition of existing dwelling and replacement 2 storey dwelling with additional lower basement level

Site Location: 15a Morningside, Bangor

Recommendation: Approval

The Senior Professional and Technical Officer (A Todd) outlined the detail of the application which was an application seeking full planning permission for a replacement dwelling at 15a Morningside, Bangor. The application had been brought before Planning Committee as six or more individual objections contrary to the officer's recommendation to approve had been received. The site was located adjacent to the coast facing onto Ballyholme beach with 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 within the area.

In terms of the development plan and policy context, the site was located on the northern edge of the Bangor East ATC as proposed in draft BMAP. The draft plan outlined key features of the proposed ATC however the application site was not included within those. The SPPS and PPS6 Addendum: Areas of Townscape Character set out the policies for development proposals within ATC's. However, those policies all referred to designated ATCS with no reference made to proposed ATCs which did not have the same status or legal standing as a designated ATC, therefore the provisions of the APPS6 and the SPPS were not applicable. Notwithstanding that, the impact of the proposal on the overall appearance of the proposed ATC remained a material consideration and could be assessed.

As the site was located within an Established Residential Area, PPS7 Quality Residential Environments and PPS7 Addendum Safeguarding the Character of Established Residential Areas also applied. The main aim of policy QD1 was to ensure that development would not result in unacceptable damage to the local character, environmental quality or residential amenity of those areas along with a number of other criteria as shown on the slide.

The application site contained a large two storey detached dwelling with hipped roof and brick and render finish. It was accessed from Morningside and had a large, landscaped garden area to the north sloping down towards the Esplanade. The dwelling was visible from both the Esplanade and Morningside but was set back and smaller in height and scale than the large pair of semi-detached dwellings immediately adjacent at nos. 17-19.

Within designated ATCs there was a presumption against the demolition of any building which was considered to make a material contribution to the character of the area. While the proposed Bangor East ATC remained it was undesignated due to the draft status of BMAP, the impact of the demolition of the building and whether or not it made a material contribution to the area had still been considered. While the building sat comfortably within its context, respecting the established built form within the area in terms of its height, scale and hipped roof etc. it was not considered to have any particular remarkable features or architectural merit which made a material contribution to the attractiveness of the area. The dwelling was also not included within any of the key features listed for the proposed ATC which cited examples of fine Edwardian terraces and detached villas. The Council's Conservation Officer was consulted and advised that while the dwellings on Morningside were constructed during the 1930s, Nos. 15 and 15a were later additions in the 1950s. Their design was more contemporary than the other dwellings and the Conservation Officer advised that it did not exhibit any exceptional architectural features or historical background which would set it apart from any other suburban dwelling. On that basis, it was not considered that the demolition of the existing dwelling would cause any harm to the overall appearance of the area.

The proposal involved the siting of the replacement dwelling further forward on the site to bring it more in line with the established building line along the Esplanade but would still sit 1.5m back from the front of the closest dwelling at No. 17.

The design of the replacement dwelling had been significantly amended at the request of the Planning Department since the original submission due to concerns with regard to the design and scale and primarily its visual impact when viewed from the Esplanade. The Officer referred to slide which showed sections of the existing dwelling, original proposal and the final amended proposal. The dwelling had been reduced in height by approx. 1m removing a floor. The pitched roof had been replaced with a hipped roof and more traditional fenestration incorporated. While the basement level had been retained, the sloping topography of the site lent itself to this and the amended design had reintroduced the terrace landscaping to the front and side of the building which would largely conceal the basement level from the Esplanade and maintain the sloping garden down to the coast which characterised the existing dwellings.

The Officer displayed visuals showing the existing, original proposal and amended proposal contextual elevations. She outlined that those were very useful in helping to visualise how the proposal would sit within its surroundings and she felt that those demonstrated the significant improvements made to the design of the scheme since submission. The amended proposal blended sympathetically with the established built form with a similar height to the adjacent dwellings, similar chimney design, hipped roof and more traditional, sympathetic fenestration. The amended elevation

also showed the reintroduction of the terraced landscaping to the front of the dwelling which would conceal the basement level and ensure that the character of the sloping gardens along that stretch was maintained.

The Officer displayed Computer Generated images of the original and amended proposal which again demonstrated the significant improvements made and how the amended design would respect the established built form. The Officer also displayed visuals showing the broader context of the area along the Esplanade and the variety of house designs.

Again, referring to visuals, the Officer showed the proposed detailed landscaping scheme for the site which would maintain the terraced sloping effect of the garden to the front and side of the dwelling. That would involve the planting of coastal tolerant trees and shrubs within the terraces surrounding the dwelling and extensive grassed areas beyond that and she was of the understanding that the applicant's Landscape Architect was in attendance to answer any questions.

The Officer detailed that 11 letters of support had been received from third parties in relation to the proposal however a considerable number of objections had also been received. In total during the processing of the application, 70 objections from 44 separate addresses had been received. 20 of those were received following the submission of the final amended scheme. The full consideration of those objections was set out in the planning report. 4 additional objections had been received from the occupant of No, 17, the occupant's daughter and Alderman Douglas since the publication of the planning report however those did not raise any new material planning considerations. The full list of objections raised was set out in the planning report however the main concerns:

- The demolition of the building and adverse impact of the replacement dwelling on the character of the area.
- Impact on flooding
- Impact of construction on adjacent dwellings
- The potential loss of privacy and daylight to No. 17 Morningside.

The Officer had already discussed in detail the Planning Department's consideration of the impact of the development on the character of the area. With regard to potential impact on flooding, Rivers Agency had been consulted and was content with the proposal confirming that the built development lay outside of the floodplain associated with the adjacent watercourse. Objectors had raised concerns regarding the impact of excavation and piling during construction however that was not within the remit of planning and the onus was on the developer to ensure that works were carried out in accordance with all of the relevant standards. The applicant had appointed a structural engineer who had surveyed the site and designed solutions for the build and she understood he was also in attendance.

Strong objections had been received from the occupant of No. 17 Morningside which was to the immediate east of the site. The main concerns raised were in relation to the loss of light and privacy to the windows on the western elevation of the dwelling and the area of amenity space on that side. The potential impact had been considered in depth in the planning report.

Firstly, with regard to the impact on privacy, the existing side windows of No.17 consisted of a stair landing window, a glazed porch, a secondary side reception window, secondary living/dining room window, cloakroom/toilet window, secondary first floor bedroom window and Velux windows which served the ground floor kitchen area. At ground floor level, the existing hedgerow and shrubs would be retained and augmented to maintain screening between the two sites. The proposed dwelling would have a number of windows located on its eastern elevation facing No. 17. At first floor level those would consist of an ensuite, a dressing room, stairwell window and a bay window to the front for a bedroom. It had been recommended that all of those windows would be conditioned to have obscure glazing with the exception of the stairwell window which would be in a similar position to a bedroom window already on the existing dwelling.

With regard to loss of light, it was acknowledged that as it was proposed to position the dwelling further forward on the site, immediately opposite the western elevation windows of No. 17, that there would be an impact on the amount of daylight to those windows. When the 25 degree light test was applied to the ground floor porch and living/dining window, the proposed building would breach the angle. While the test was used as a tool in the assessment of impact on light, it was only one of the material considerations which must be considered. While not directly applicable to the application for a replacement dwelling, PPS7 Addendum Residential Extensions and Alterations provided useful detailed guidance on assessing loss of light. The guidance advised that loss of light to non-habitable rooms such as halls, landings, bathrooms and utility rooms would not be considered. In that instance, three of the affected windows - the landing window, cloakroom window and porch windows did not serve main habitable rooms. The guidance also advised that another material consideration was whether the affected room benefited from another source of light. In this case, the side reception room window, living/dining room window, side bedroom window and glazed porch all had alternative sources of light to the rooms they served.

The existing form and type of development in the area was also a material consideration and in this case the gable to gable relationship between dwellings was already prevalent in the area. Many existing dwellings had a similar relationship to that proposed with secondary windows or windows serving non habitable rooms positioned on the gables and benefiting from a lesser degree of daylight than the main windows situated on the front and rear elevations.

The occupant of No. 17 had also raised concerns that an area of amenity space along the side would also suffer from a loss of light. That was a very small area measuring between 2-2.9m in depth. While it was western facing and benefitted from the evening sun, guidance advised that overshadowing to a garden area would rarely constitute grounds to justify a refusal of planning permission. In that instance weight must also be afforded to the fact that No. 17 had a larger south facing area of private amenity space to the rear. Taking account all of those factors, it was considered that no unacceptable degree of dominance or overshadowing would occur which would warrant the refusal of planning permission.

In summary, the Officer stated that the proposal for a replacement dwelling was considered to be acceptable in the context of both the Development Plan and the

relevant regional planning policies. All the statutory consultees were content with the proposal and all representations had been carefully considered. On that basis it was recommended that full planning permission be granted subject to the conditions set out in the case officer's report.

The Chairman invited questions of clarification from Members of which there were none.

The Chairman then invited Muriel Ryan, Andrew Heasley, Emma Sutherland and Nadine Martin to come forward who were against the application.

Mr Heasley (Turley) outlined the concerns raised with regard to the proposed location of the dwelling due to its potential impact on the character of the area under Policy QD1 of PPS7 which had a consequential impact on the amenity of Mrs Ryan's home. The existing dwelling on the application site did not currently have a prominent relationship with the Esplanade. That afforded a generous and continuous row of open space around the existing dwelling, Mrs Ryan's home and her neighbours. It was a pleasing feature of the area. Moving the dwelling forward interrupted that space and detrimentally impacted on this characteristic feature of the local character. It also unacceptably impacted the established layout and relationship of dwellings to the surrounding area and whilst amendments had been made to the design, that had not been satisfactorily addressed and remained contrary to Policy QD1 of PPS7.

Mrs Ryan advised that she had lived and enjoyed her home for over 45 years and she wished to make it clear to Members that her sunporch which she had consistently made reference to was very much a space that she used and enjoyed, and should be considered a habitable room in planning terms. She highlighted that her porch was a warm, bright peaceful haven, where she read, wrote, did crosswords and sewed. It was her living space and an integral part of her home and had always been used in that way. It was sunny and warm because of the west facing windows that captured the sun and natural daylight from early afternoon through to evening. Mrs Ryan felt that the location of the proposed new dwelling would place it in the shade for a very significant part of the day and would unacceptably reduce the amount of amenity value of her home. A sunroom was nothing without the sun. To sit there in the shade would result in unacceptable damage to her living conditions and the current open aspect she experienced would be detrimentally changed. She believed that to be contrary to Policy QD1 of PPS7. As alluded to by the Planning Officer the proposed dwelling at 15a failed the 25 degree light test further supporting her case that the balance of the planning decision should not fall on the side of approval.

Mrs Ryan also wished to confirm with Members that her sea facing seating area was indeed space that she considered a private part of her amenity space, capturing the sun from early afternoon through to sunset. She felt that space was private due to its elevated nature and due to it being screened from the east by the lounge wall, from the west by shrubs and being a good distance back from the promenade at around 30m, that all give her a sense of privacy. That privacy would be lost by the bedroom window of the proposed dwelling.

The existing dwelling on the site and that proposed had a similarly situated patio area in exactly the same place for exactly the same reasons. She highlighted that her patio would become permanently overshadowed and she used that space as an outdoor space and considered it private for all those reasons. She felt comfortable using the space and considered it an important part of how she enjoyed her home. Mrs Ryan considered that as a material reason for the Committee to consider when making its decision. If Members were uncertain about those impacts, she urged them to come and visit her home and see for themselves the potential impact the dwelling would have on the enjoyment of her home.

Mrs Ryan concluded by saying that she accepted the principle of a redeveloped home on this site, she understood why the applicant may wish to improve on their own living environment. However, returning the proposed dwelling further back into the site would go some way to protecting her amenity and not unacceptably impact on her living conditions. In its current position she considered it would do that and do so in a way that was contrary to Policy QD1 of PPS7.

The Chairman invited questions from Members.

Councillor Cathcart noted that Mr Heasley had made reference to the property being moved forward, making it out of the character for the area and he questioned how that was the case when it sat with the rest of the line of properties. Mr Heasley highlighted the need to look at the property from two sides, the Esplanade side and the Morning side elevation. He referred to the change in alignment and explained that was where it was felt there was an impact on the character of the proposed ATC.

As there were no further questions the Chairman asked the representatives to return to the public gallery.

The Chairman then asked that Andy Stephens (Consultant), David Fletcher (OCSC Structural Engineer) and Emma Rayner (Landscape Architect) to be admitted to the meeting via zoom. He also invited David Wilson (Project Architect) to come forward.

Mr Stephens (Matrix Planning) outlined that the team in attendance were residents of Ballyholme and had worked tirelessly on the project, as witnessed by the significant amendments over the processing of the application to fully satisfy the professional officers. He thanked the Planning Officer (A Todd) and her team for their efforts. He highlighted that the Committee report before Members was one of the most comprehensive he had read in his 15 years of professional practice. He believed it was balanced, fair and provided an excellent chronology and process history of the case. The report confirmed the proposal was compliant with all aspects of the local development plan, draft plan, and regional planning policy and that all material considerations had been considered. 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 expert opinions, which remained material considerations. Whilst there had been interest in the application with comments received both for and against, he highlighted that the objections had substantially reduced (36 initially), as the scheme had undergone a total re-design and with the

final substantive alterations. It was noteworthy that elected Members who had previously objected to the initial scheme, had not objected to the subsequent revisions and the final version, which was being recommended for approval. In terms of demolition and design, it was accepted that the existing dwelling made no material contribution to the character of “the area” (Bangor East), with the Conservation Officer stating that “the existing dwelling did not exhibit any exceptional architectural features, nor historical background...” On that basis demolition of the existing dwelling was deemed to be permissible. The current position of the dwelling on the site was an anomaly in the existing built development. The revised position provided an improved visual and physical relationship, which strengthened the long established and uniform building line from Banks Lane to the Ballyholme Esplanade. It was noted that the proposed dwelling would sit marginally behind the established building line (1.5m – Nos.17 and 11m – Nos.65). The proposed dwelling had been moved forward due to the instability of the existing ground conditions as referenced in the Structural Engineering correspondence. The secant piled (non-driven) wall would restrain the ground to the south and east to remedy the existing instability and create a foundation base. The final design drew on key characteristics of the area and the original dwelling and would not detract from the character and appearance of “the area”.

The Officer’s report stated; “The amended proposal for the replacement dwelling is extremely sympathetic to the established built form by way of its height, scale, massing, and design. The main issue of the objector was the impact of the proposal from the west (sun path – certain times of day engaged) on existing windows and the porch area. The Building Research Establishment (BRE) guide ‘Site Layout Planning for Daylight and Sunlight a guide to good practice’ by P J Littlefair 2011, was material to applying the correct principles in analysing potential loss of light. It stated that windows to bathrooms, toilets, storerooms, circulation areas (stairs, landings, and corridors), and garages need not be considered. That removed several of the windows on the western elevation of Nos.17 (Stairwell, cloakroom/toilet) immediately from consideration. Several of the windows were also secondary light sources, so again were not a consideration as the primary light source remained. The daylight tests were not applied to non-habitable rooms. Usually where a main habitable room was less than 13sqm, no assessment was required. So, scale and degree were factors to be considered in the assessment. In this case the porch was 4m and was not classified as 1) a main room or 2) habitable room, as per the BRE approach. Notwithstanding that it had a northerly outlook to the sea. Whilst Mrs Ryan was inviting Members to attach weight to the porch and secondary windows in the western elevation in doing so she was asking Members to stray into setting a very dangerous precedent, if the established principles in BRE Guide 2011, were set to the side. That could be a significant stumbling block for all future developments in Ards and North Down in that any window would then have to be considered on any development irrespective of whether it was a secondary window to a non-habitable room. Such an approach would run contrary to the public interest and the consistent approach of officers. That would contravene Paragraph 1, Section 1 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, which required decisions to be taken consistently. Mr Stephens appreciated that change could be difficult to process and accept. However, the 42 page Committee Report before Members was comprehensive and robust. It engaged with all the relevant matters, considered them with balance and against the correct evidential context. Planning decisions could only be taken in an evidential

context and all the evidence would indicate that there was a lack of demonstrable harm, and that planning permission should be granted. Mr Stephens stated that the recommendation was supported and he asked the Committee to endorse the grant of planning permission for this high-quality residential development that respected the character of the surrounding area to provide a family home for the applicants.

The Chairman invited questions from Members.

Referring to his earlier question, Councillor Cathcart noted that Mr Stephens had mentioned that the house needed to be moved forward because the current location was structurally unsound and he requested clarity in that regard. Mr Stephens confirmed that when the ground conditions were examined part of them were found to be unstable. With that and the relationship to the building line the property was being moved forward.

Councillor Cathcart highlighted that the porch to Mrs Ryan's home was more than a place she put her shoes and asked Mr Stephens in his view was it not a habitable space. Mr Stephens stated that a porch was not classified as a habitable space although he appreciated the use expressed by Mrs Ryan. He further referred to the need to apply consistent policy/guidance and he had concerns regarding affording weight to a porch with an existing northerly elevation. Doing so was attaching weight to any similar applications in the future and in his opinion that would make planning decisions very difficult.

Councillor Martin noted that Mr Stephens referred to a uniformed building line from Banks Lane to the Esplanade and he sought confirmation that was correct. Referring to the aerial photos displayed by the Planning Officer, Mr Stephens confirmed that statement. Referring to the area, Councillor Martin disagreed and believed the lack of uniformity contributed to the historical context of the area within the ATC. Mr Stephens did not accept those comments. Uniformity allowed for some set back and in his professional experience he was content there was a strong building line.

Councillor Martin asked about the size of the footprints of the new and existing dwellings. Mr Wilson outlined that the proposed ground floor was 130sqm and the existing was 124 sqm, which was not a great difference. On the first floor the new size was 125 sqm, the previous house had a large conservatory to the west. Overall, the property would be 255 sqm which he believed was not an overly large house. He outlined that with the ground conditions, piling would occur with an element of cutting and filling at the base.

As there were no further questions for the representatives they were returned to the public galleries.

Councillor McRandal questioned what constituted a habitable room and what weight was given in that regard. The Planning Officer stated that the area was small at 4sqm and therefore due to the size she did not feel that constituted a habitable room and referred to the BRE standards as referenced by Mr Stephens. The room had been given consideration and she noted the porch had another outlook with oblique views towards the coast. Overall, she felt there was no unacceptable harm caused.

Councillor McRandal questioned if the room was to be considered habitable would the view of the Planning Officers have changed. The Planning Officer did not feel the position would have changed highlighting that the porch had another source of light.

Alderman Smith referred to the comments from Mr Stephens in respect of precedent and asked for the Planning Officer view in that regard. The Planning Officer stated that the light test was only one factor and there were other material planning considerations. In this case all of the affected windows had a secondary source of light or they were not serving habitable rooms. That was consistently the way the policy was applied in line with the guidance.

Councillor Martin referred to figure 6 within the case officers report and asked how much the house was moving forward from the existing point and if the Planning Officer viewed that as significant. The Planning Officer stated that the house was moving forward 7.6m and she did not view that as significant in terms of the context. The existing dwelling was more an anomaly due to the set back. The main test under PPS7 was the proposal going to cause unacceptable damage or harm and that was not the case as the building line was in keeping with what was there already.

Following further questions from Councillor Martin, the Planning Officer stated that the terrace garden would be reinstated.

In response to a question from Councillor Cathcart regarding the structural report, the Planning Officer stated that Planning Officers were not experts in the field and the ground conditions would not be given weight. She further outlined that the basement would be concealed.

Alderman Graham referred to the landscaping which he viewed as extensive and asked if that was assessed as part of the approval. The Planning Officer stated that landscaping was a very important part and was a contributing factor.

Alderman Graham appreciated that change was not always popular and there were concerns in that regard. However, bearing in mind the building line was behind the existing two houses beside the proposed dwelling considerable effort had been made to landscape and enhance the site.

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

Alderman Smith stated that he had every sympathy with the residents of No 17 and the impact the proposal would have. However, all the issues that had been raised had been carefully considered in line with policy and guidance.

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

Councillor Woods was re-admitted to the meeting (via zoom).

4.2 LA06/2022/0863/F – Site 78m east of 31 Ballygowan Road, Comber – Dwelling and Domestic Garage

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report outlining the planning application.

DEA: Comber

Committee Interest: A Local development application 'called-in' to Planning Committee from the delegated list by a member of that Committee.

Called in by Alderman McIlveen from delegated planning application list w/c 24 April'23: *"I would ask that application LA06/2022/0863/F is called in for the committee to determine whether it meets the criteria set out in CTY2a of PPS21 as a new dwelling in an existing cluster and that the Committee considers this application in light of what the PAC has held to be a cluster under Appeal reference 2019/A0024 which relates to development in this area."*

Proposal: Dwelling and domestic garage

Site Location: Site 78m east of 31 Ballygowan Road, Comber

Recommendation: Refusal

The Chairman advised that the application had been withdrawn from the schedule.

4.3 LA06/2020/0483/O – Land immediately adjacent to and NE of 9 Corrog Lane, Portaferry – 2 dwellings and detached garages.

(Appendix II)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report outlining the planning application.

DEA: Ards Peninsula

Committee Interest: A Local development application 'called-in' to Planning Committee from the delegated list by a member of that Committee.

Called in by Alderman McIlveen from delegated planning application list w/c 08 May'23 *"I would ask if the committee could consider whether this application meets with the criteria set out in Policy CTY 8 of PPS 21 and also for the committee to consider whether this site would be regarded as an important visual break, whether the proposed development would integrate appropriately in accordance with CTY 13, whether it meets the criteria contained in CTY 14 and whether it is sympathetic to the character of the AONB under policy NH6 of PPS 2."*

Proposal: 2 dwellings and detached garages

Site Location: Land immediately adjacent to and NE of 9 Corrog Lane, Portaferry

Recommendation: Refusal

The Head of Planning (G Kerr) outlined the detail of the application noting it was an outline application and it was therefore the principle of development which was being considered with further details to be submitted with any reserved matters application should members overturn the recommendation of refusal. None of the statutory consultees had any objection to the proposal. There was no planning history directly associated with the application site. The site was located in the countryside to the north of Portaferry. The site was also located within the Strangford and Lecale AONB.

The site was accessed via an access opening to the north-west corner onto Corrag Lane. The site was located over 400m east of Deer Park Road and over 390m south-east of the entrance to Corrag Lane itself. The land within the site was uneven and sloped upwards in a north-easterly direction with the site on slightly higher level than Corrag Lane.

To provide context, the Head of Planning took the Committee through pictures of the site and indicative site layout.

In respect of the policy consideration for the application, the Head of Planning stated that Policy CTY1 of PPS 21 identified a range of types of development which in principle were considered to be acceptable in the countryside and which would contribute to the aims of sustainable development. One such type of development was the development of a small gap site within an otherwise substantial and continuously built-up frontage in accordance with Policy CTY 8. The wording of which had been set out on the slide for the benefit of Members. Policy CTY8 related to the issue of ribbon development in the countryside. It stated that planning permission would be refused for a building which created or added to a ribbon of development.

The policy stated that an exception would be permitted for the development of a small gap site (sufficient only to accommodate up to a maximum of 2 houses) within an otherwise substantial and continuously built-up frontage, provided those respected the existing development pattern along the frontage in terms of size, scale, siting and plot size and met other planning and environmental requirements. For the purpose of the policy the definition of a substantial and built-up frontage included a line of 3 or more buildings along a road frontage without accompanying development to the rear. Members should note that it was the gap between buildings rather than the application site that should be considered.

Whilst referring to the visuals, the Head of Planning highlighted along the road frontage, were there were two dwellings, Nos. 7 and 9, each with detached garages located to the sides of the dwellings. The Head of Planning stated that she was satisfied that those dwellings and their garages had direct frontage to Corrag Lane. Despite the outbuilding not having a frontage to the road, the two dwellings at Nos. 7 and 9 and their associated garages still constituted 4 buildings with a frontage to the road fulfilling the policy requirement for a line of 3 or more buildings along the road frontage. Members should note that it was the gap between buildings rather than the application site that should be considered.

CTY 8 and Building on Tradition guidance stated that gap sites within a continuous built-up frontage exceeding the local average plot width may be considered to constitute an important visual break and could be seen from the aerial view of the site how that was the case. Many frontages in the countryside had gaps between houses that provided relief and visual breaks in the developed appearance of the locality that help maintained rural character. The infilling of those gaps would not be permitted except where it comprised the development of a small gap within an otherwise substantial and continuously built-up frontage.

In order to assess whether or not the site constituted an important visual break, a visual assessment from critical public viewpoints within the surrounding landscape must be carried out. The gap between the existing buildings was perceived from two main public viewpoints; from Corrog Lane itself and from the nearby Deerpark Road to the south. From Corrog Lane, it was considered that the gap formed an important visual break between the existing development at Nos. 7 and Nos. 9. The site had a mature road frontage hedge with large areas of gorse scrub within the site itself and those contributed to the visual relief between the two dwellings. The development of two dwellings on the site would mean the existing visual break would be removed.

With regards to vegetation the proposed development would require removal of most if not all of the hedge and scrub along the front of the application site. It was the professional planning opinion that the proposed development would create a continuous ribbon of development along that side of Corrog Lane. In addition, as the site was elevated above the lane, the dwellings would have a finished floor level approximately 2m above the lane and would therefore be highly visible with no real screening or means of integration.

When travelling along Deerpark Road, the site was visible in the landscape over a distance of approximately 520m from 5a Deerpark Road to the wastewater treatment works. The site occupied a prominent location in the landscape. The thick gorse on the site could be seen and the extent of the gap provided visual relief between the two existing dwellings from this view within the wider landscape setting. Two dwellings on the site would clearly result in skyline development and would be visible as a ribbon of development, intervisible with Nos. 7 and 9.

In conclusion, the Head of Planning stated that she considered that the site did represent an important visual break in development and the importance of that visual break was further reinforced given the prominent skyline location of the site within the AONB. Building on Tradition Guidance stated that gap sites within a continuous built-up frontage exceeding the local average plot width may be considered to constitute an important visual break and with regards to the application, given that exceeded the local average plot width, the application site was considered to be an important visual break.

It was considered that the proposal would result in a suburban style build-up of development when viewed with existing and proposed buildings.

The amplification text of CTY 8 stated that 'ribbon development is always detrimental to the rural character of an area as it contributed to a localised sense of build-up and fails to respect the traditional settlement pattern in the countryside'.

Policy NH6 of PPS 2 stated that planning permission for new development within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) would only be granted where it was of an appropriate design, size and scale for the locality and certain criteria were met relating to the special character and features of the AONB including local architecture and traditional boundary details.

While the indicative site layout plan and Design and Access Statement submitted with the application indicated that the proposed dwellings would be modest in size

and the design and finishes could be conditioned to be appropriate to the AONB setting, as previously referred to it was the proposed prominent siting of the dwellings, the lack of integration and the resulting suburban style of ribbon development that would be considered to harm the character and landscape setting of this particular part of the AONB.

In particular, the development would form a ribbon of development visible in the skyline from Deerpark Road over a significant distance of over 500m. The AONB in that area had managed to retain a predominantly dispersed pattern of settlement and it was considered that the formation of a visible ribbon of development on that prominent site would harm the rural character of the AONB. It was therefore considered that the proposal failed to meet the criteria of policy NH6 of PPS2.

With regard to material issues raised by objectors, those had been fully considered within the case officer report. Issues raised included the proposal being contrary to PPS21 in particular the need to protect the countryside from unnecessary or inappropriate development, policy CTY1 no overriding reasons why the proposal was essential and could not be located in a settlement, Contrary to CTY8 of PPS21 with regard to ribbon development, contrary to Policy CTY13 and CTY14 of PPS21 with regards to integration, the visual impact in particular from Corrog Lane and Deerpark Road (west), impact on rural character, prominence, suburban built-up of development and road safety and traffic impact in particular traffic along Corrog Lane itself. Contrary to Policy NH6 of PPS2 regarding the spaced-out existing development in the AONB and the impact the proposal would have with regard to its layout and overdevelopment.

In summary Members, by approving the proposal would not comply with the requirements set out in CTY 8 and would be considered to be over development and a suburban type of development in this part of the countryside which should seek to be protected. The recommendation was therefore to refuse outline planning permission.

The Chairman invited questions of clarity from Members.

Alderman Graham asked how the average width of a plot was established. The Head of Planning outlined the gaps between the buildings with the gap being exceeded by 13m.

Councillor Cathcart referred to page 11 of the case officer's report which stated that that 'while only outline planning permission is sought at this stage, an indicative layout had been submitted (see figure 6 above) which clearly showed how the dwellings would sit approximately 2m above the level of the lane occupying a prominent skyline position in the landscape, viewed from both Corrog Lane and Deerpark Rd which would be contrary to policies CTY13 and 14'. He noted that the application was still at outline stage and those issues could be addressed at a later stage rather than included that as part of the refusal. The Planning Officer stated that it was accepted that the application could be accepted to be a certain ridge height. The Planning Officer reiterated the reasons for refusal.

The Head of Planning responded to a number of questions from the Chairman and outlined;

- The site was prominent
- Corrog Lane was not an adopted road and lane was to remain unadopted
- There were concerns regarding road traffic however Roads Service had no objection to the proposal
- Each site was assessed within its own merits
- The proposal was within an AONB which added extra weight, there was a significant visual gap. Filling that gap with the proposal would break that important visual gap within the wider context of the AONB.

The Chairman noted that was a subjective view. The Head of Planning stated that the Committee was advised to take the professional advice of the Planning Officers. The plots exceeded the average plot size and approving such would set a precedent.

The Chairman then asked that Malcolm Quigley be admitted to the meeting (via zoom) who was speaking against the application.

Mr Quigley outlined that his representation was on behalf of several residents of Corrog Lane who all objected to the planning application. As the Case Officer's report clearly detailed reasons for refusal as it contravened CTY1, 8, 13 and 14 of Planning Policy Statement 21, and NH6 of the Planning Policy Statement 2, he did not wish to dwell on those issues but fully supported the conclusions. However, residents felt that the issue relating to the threat of overdevelopment of Corrog Lane and the risk to residents from increased traffic flow and overdevelopment had not been correctly addressed in that the Case Officer had considered it to be just the site for development and not the whole of the lane.

In DFI Roads' consultation to the Case Officer, it stated that "There should be a limit to the number of dwellings that this rural lane served". DFI Roads was concerned that the lane was becoming built up and the Private Streets Order should be applied. In order to do that would be extremely difficult, and it would not be possible to comply with the new Design Guide". The Case Officer then asked DFI Roads to clarify its response in which it said it had no objection to the application and that there were no plans to impose the Private Street Order on the lane. In a conversation with DFI Roads on 23 March 2021 it became apparent that DFI Roads' representations had been taken out of context. For clarification, Mr Quigley outlined that DFI Roads area of responsibility related to the 10 metres around the access to the proposed development from Corrog Lane and 10 metres around the access of Corrog Lane onto Deer Park Road. In relation to those areas DFI Roads had no objections. DFI Roads had a duty of care to bring to the attention of the Planning Office its concerns to the overdevelopment of Corrog Lane. The comments about the lane as a whole remained extant. He felt that the Case Officer had incorrectly applied that to just the site the application related to. DFI Roads stated that although it could bring it to the attention of the Planning Office, decisions over the implementation of the Private Street Order lay solely with the Planning Office and not DFI Roads.

Dfi Roads clarified that as there were more than 5 houses built on Corrog Lane, if a planning application had been submitted for the whole lot, under the new Design

Guide planning, the Planning Office would insist on the lane being upgraded and suitable for adoption as a public road.

The residents of Corrog Lane did not expect the Council to implement the Private Street Order as it would not represent value for taxpayers' money. The cost to bring the lane up to the new Design Guide would be prohibitive as parts of the lane were only 3 metres in width with high mature hedges on both sides and very limited fields of view whilst driving along it. However, the residents believed that, as confirmed by DFI Roads, the Council held a duty of care to protect the local residents from increased traffic flow and overdevelopment by stopping the application and any further development of new sites from being granted planning permission. If the Planning Office did not accept the Case Officer's recommendation for refusal, then the residents believed a condition should be added forcing the developer to bring the lane up to the new Design Guide at their expense before any new sites were granted planning permission for development.

As there were no questions for Mr Quigley he was returned to the virtual public gallery.

The Chairman then invited Michael Bailie to come forward who was speaking in support of the application.

Mr Bailie stated that the proposal was based on CTY 01 of PPS21, on the basis that it would comply with CTY 8, in that it was a small site with a substantial and continuously built-up frontage – an infill site. The Planning department considered that was not the case as it was not an infill site, did not comply under CTY 14 – Rural Character, did not comply under CTY 13 – Integration and Design and was 'unsympathetic' to AONB. In confirming the view that the site was unsuitable in terms of 'a small gap site sufficient only to accommodate a maximum of two houses, Planning had to resort to the guidance based on mathematical analysis in 'Building on Tradition.' Whilst helpful, Mr Bailie believed that to be flawed. That was 'guidance', not 'gospel'. The real impact of ribboning was to be measured by the senses – especially visual. No in-depth analysis of the possibilities of the site was undertaken. The outbuilding to the rear which was not considered to have a frontage, had a frontage of some 21m which was substantial. That must be included in the built-up frontage as the policy stated that 'buildings sited back, staggered or at angles with gaps between them could still represent ribbon if they had a common frontage or were visually linked' which was clearly the case. The proposed frontage then provided an average of 43.7m. In addition, there was no mention of the issues when he spoke with the Case Officer in September 2021, who informed him that the proposal was accepted in principle and would need to go before the Planning Committee due to the number of objections.

Returning to first principles, Mr Bailie stated that no real assessment of the possibilities of the site was undertaken. The site level was said to be 2m above road level (COR) and it rose significantly from roadside to rear hedge where it coincided with the 'skyline' – that offered ample scope for excavation and a well-designed low profile house of traditional or contemporary design without seriously prejudicing the skyline. Furthermore, it was expressly stated in the policy headnote that infill development should respect, 'the existing development pattern along the frontage in

terms of size, scale, siting and plot size. In that context the 'elephant in the room' was dwelling No 9 whose presence spoke for itself, and whose example was at best rejected. Mr Bailie felt that with good design the application and amendments to the levels that the proposal would not break the skyline with the higher ground to the rear providing the necessary backdrop. The above addressed policy issues raised by SPPS and PPS 21. The matter of siting within an AONB seemed only to arise when refusal was mooted. The proposal moderated as above should not conflict meaningfully with the principle aim of an AONB - that was, to protect the land to conserve and enhance its natural beauty for the enjoyment of the general public'.

The Chairman invited questions from Members.

Councillor Cathcart referred to the concerns raised regarding the road and asked for comment in relation to its upgrade. Mr Bailie advised that he had spoken with Roads during the processing of the application and it had no issues with the application with the standard of the road not having been mentioned.

Alderman Graham referred to the footprint of the two dwellings and the two garages which would form a screen part of the site. He wondered about the height of garages and if they could be relocated. Mr Bailie stated that it was only an outline application at this stage and the design was not tied.

The Chairman referred to the standard of the road being addressed and he asked if Mr Bailie would have expected that to be raised with him at this stage. Mr Bailie stated that would normally have been the case.

The Chairman referred to the shed that would be set back and Mr Bailie had stated that should be taken into consideration as part of the built-up frontage. Mr Bailie was of the understanding that Planning Officers did not consider that to be a frontage onto the lane where he considered that 21m to be generous frontage onto the lane. The policy stated that it was 3 buildings in a row therefore the shed should be taken into account.

In response to further questions from the Chairman, Mr Bailie stated that conditions could be put on the application to keep the ridge height at a maximum. The ground could be cut into and a design could be reached to suit the site.

The Chairman also referred to the ribboning and the concern regarding the adverse impact on the view that was contrary to policy. Mr Bailie stated that the excavation would not need to be substantial and the ground to the rear and could be used as a back drop.

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

The Chairman then invited further questions from Members.

Councillor McRandal referred to the views of Mr Bailie that the frontage and the agricultural shed should be taken into account. The Head of Planning stated that it was the opinion of Planning Officers that the outbuilding did not have a frontage to the lane as it was cut off by the access lane.

Alderman Graham questioned if the frontage at No 9 was much larger than the two proposed sites. The Head of Planning clarified that it was the gap between the buildings that was measured therefore it was the gap between the garage at No 9 and the garage at No 7 that was measured for the averages to be calculated. It did not matter how deep the frontage was.

The Chairman asked why there was not considered to be a visual link. The Head of Planning referred to the images and stated that it failed the test in terms of average width of plot size and was a visual break than having a frontage to the road.

Councillor Morgan referred to one of the refusal reasons and asked the planning officer to elaborate. The Head of Planning explained that when considering the AONB there were a number of factors to be taken into consideration. In this instance it was the prominence of the site and the important visual break within the context of the AONB. The proposal was considered to be overdevelopment of the site and would result in ribbon development and would create a sub urban form of development within an AONB in the countryside.

On proposing the recommendation, Alderman Smith stated that he had listened to the mitigations, he felt there was a visual break, was within an area of AONB, was a prominent location, led to ribbon development and would exceed the average plot size.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Smith, seconded by Councillor McRandal, that the recommendation be adopted and that planning permission be refused.

The Chairman and Alderman Graham wished to be recorded as abstaining.

4.4 LA06/2021/0630/F - Outbuildings at 129 Newtownards Road, Ballyrickard, Comber - Conversion of barn to dwelling to include raising the roof and single storey extension.
(Appendix III)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report outlining the planning application.

DEA: Comber

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

Proposal: Conversion of barn to dwelling to include raising the roof and single storey extension

Site Location: Outbuildings at 129 Newtownards Road, Ballyrickard, Comber

Recommendation: Approval

The Senior Professional and Technical Officer (A Todd) outlined the detail of the application. The Officer commenced by detailing the site and surroundings which was a site located in the countryside and within Strangford and Lecale AONB at the junction of Longlands Road and the main Newtownards Road carriageway, north-east of Comber. It occupied a roadside position with the main dwelling at 129 fronting the carriageway and the subject outbuilding to the rear positioned at a right

angle to the Longlands Road. There were two vehicular accesses into the site; one to the front of the main dwelling and one to the rear adjacent to the outbuilding.

As the proposal involved the conversion of a building in the countryside, the policies within the SPPS and Planning Policy Statement 21: Sustainable Development in the Countryside were all applicable along with the advice and guidance provided in the Building on Tradition Design Guide. Paragraph 1.12 of the SPPS addressed potential conflict arising between the SPPS and the retained policies, in that where the SPPS introduced a change of policy direction or provided policy clarification that would be in conflict with the retained policy, the SPPS should be afforded greater weight. For proposals for the conversion and re-use of existing buildings, paragraph 6.73 of the SPPS provided policy clarification with the requirement for the existing building to be a 'suitable locally important building of special character or interest' as opposed to just a 'suitable' building as stated under policy CTY4 of PPS21. The SPPS therefore took precedence in this regard with the remaining criteria of CTY4 applicable.

The main dwelling at 29 was an attractive two storey detached dwelling set within a generous plot. The outbuilding was located to the rear and was a 1 ½ storey traditional stone barn with render finish and slate roof. The outbuilding immediately abutted the access and yard of the adjacent agricultural enterprise, Sparky Pac. The barn predated 1850 as indicated on OS historical maps, and according to the agent was also previously occupied as a dwelling house on during the construction of the main dwelling at 129 and after by farm workers.

Whilst 'locally important' was not defined in the SPPS, paragraph 6.73 cited examples of what might constitute a locally important building including former schoolhouses, churches and older traditional barns and outbuildings. The policy supported the reuse of those buildings as single dwellings as that secured their upkeep and retention.

In terms of the suitability of the building proposed for conversion and re-use, while it was of a considerable age, the building was of permanent construction built in Scrabo Stone with timber trusses and Bangor Blue slates to the roof. A structural survey had been submitted to demonstrate that the building was structurally suitable for adaption.

In recent Appeal decisions, the Planning Appeals Commission had also considered that it required the building to be of some merit and importance to its local setting making it worthy of retention and to warrant it being of 'special character or interest'. Chapter 2 of Building on Tradition and Annex 2 of PPS21 both set out the characteristics of vernacular buildings which included:

- Simplicity of form
- Linear plan, usually a single room deep
- Use of local materials
- Location of openings predominantly on front and back walls
- Siting either fronting or gable end to the road
- Solid to void ratio represents smaller window openings which lack symmetry and regularity

The building displayed all of those characteristics with particular importance being attached to its construction in local Scrabo stone. While vernacular features in themselves were not determining in the consideration as to whether or not a building was locally important they were nevertheless a contributing factor along with other material considerations. The building was also clearly of significance in terms of local agrarian history and it occupied a highly visible roadside location. The past dual residential and agricultural use of the building by local people conferred the local historical significance on the building. This factor contributed to the building's local importance which would be further enhanced by its sympathetic renovation and extension.

The main house, 129 Newtownards Road, was also an attractive period property which framed the corner of the main Newtownards Road and Longlands Road. It was a prominent building of architectural and historical interest and the barn to be converted was an integral part of its composition contributing to its character and setting. This factor contributed to the building's local importance which would be further enhanced by its sympathetic renovation, design and finishes.

The Planning Department was satisfied that the proposal met all other planning policy requirements. Both the existing and proposed dwelling would have adequate parking and a safe means of vehicular access as confirmed through consultation with DfI Roads. A detailed report was prepared and submitted by an ecologist and NED had assessed that and was content that no Potential Bat Roost Features were found and no further survey work was required.

The dwelling would have adequate private amenity space located in an area to the immediate north west and new boundary fencing and carefully placed windows would ensure that there would be no adverse impact on the amenity of the existing or proposed dwellings by way of loss of privacy.

The proposed works to the building were considered to be sympathetic with the majority of original openings retained and only a small extension proposed to replace the existing shed to the front of the building.

However, a total of 13 objections from 6 separate addresses had been received. Those were mainly from local residents on Longlands Road with one from Jim Shannon MP on behalf of Mr McKee of 1 Longlands Road. The main concerns raised included:

- Detrimental impact on Mr McKee's farm and business
- Loss of privacy to Mr McKee's property
- Inadequate parking provision
- Impact on road safety due to increase in traffic
- Approval would set a precedent for similar conversions
- Existing adjacent agricultural business would adversely affect the amenity of the dwelling by way of noise and odour.
- The building should not be considered as locally important.

With regard to traffic and parking, DfI Roads had considered the proposal and had advised it had no objections. The level of traffic use to serve a small dwelling was

minimal compared to the traffic generation associated with the substantial farm enterprise buildings to the rear.

With regard to precedent, each application was considered on its own merits, and when considering applications for conversion, no two buildings were ever directly comparable. Therefore, the Planning Department was content that precedent was not a concern in this instance as the *policy requirements of the SPPS and PPS21* were satisfied.

With regard to potential noise and odour, a noise impact assessment had been carried out and considered by Environmental Health who had advised that they would have no objections subject to conditions. Mitigating measures were to be put in place including fencing and sound reduction glazing. There was no evidence to suggest that the dwelling would have any adverse impact on the existing adjacent farm business. While there were several windows at ground floor level which would face directly onto the adjacent farm yard, those were either high level, restricting views out or would be finished with obscure glazing, therefore the rooms which those windows served would be unaffected by the farm business.

The Planning Department was satisfied there would be no adverse impact on the privacy of 1 Longlands Road as the existing farm business was already located between No. 1 and the proposed dwelling.

In summary, it was considered that the proposal represented a sustainable development proposal compliant with the SPPS and Policy CTY4 of PPS21. The building was considered to be of sufficient architectural and historic merit to meet the locally important test. As outlined above, all other policy requirements were met and all statutory consultees were content subject to conditions. On that basis, it was that approval of full planning permission was recommended.

The Chairman invited questions from Members.

Councillor Cathcart referred to an objection in relation to a proposal for an air B&B. The Planning Officer explained that generally a single use home would not require permission however if that was to change a change of use application may be required. The Planning Department had to consider the application that was before them which was a single dwelling.

Alderman Graham asked if such matters as noise and odours featured into the planning considerations. He referred to the attractive archway and barn door and asked if those original features would be retained. The Planning Officer advised that Environmental Health was consulted in respect of noise and odours and conditions were recommended to mitigate those included glazing and fencing. The majority of the original openings would be retained.

Councillor Martin referred to the visuals and questioned if the character and the local slate would be retained. The Planning Officer advised that Bangor blue slate would be retained and rendered walls to match existing. Councillor Martin wished to ensure that it looked similar. The Planning Officer stated that was her understanding from

the plans but a condition could be included if the Committee was minded to include that.

Alderman Smith asked about the height of the fence.

RECESS

Due to further technical issues experienced, the meeting went into recess 9.00 pm – 9.16 pm.

(Councillor Woods left the meeting at this stage – 9.00 pm)

Continuing his questions, Alderman Smith also raised questions regarding the access. The Planning Officer stated that there were two fences, one fence would be between 129 and the outbuilding primarily to provide privacy and the second fence was to enclose the private amenity space and displayed its location on the visual. The existing access was between 129 and the outbuilding, Dfl was content there were adequate splays and parking.

Alderman Smith referred to the aerial view of the site and asked if there would be open access to the yard. The Planning Officer explained there would be no barrier.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Martin, seconded by Councillor Cathcart, that the recommendation be adopted and that planning permission be granted. Subject to a condition being attached that the building materials used are sympathetic to what is already there and that delegated authority be awarded to the Planning Officers to deal with that conditioning.

4.5 LA06/2021/1238/F - Lands 45m North-West of No 17 Abbacy Road, Portaferry - One agricultural building (retrospective) and erection of two agricultural buildings with dry storage below one of proposed buildings (Appendix IV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report outlining the planning application.

DEA: Ards Peninsula

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

Proposal: One agricultural building (retrospective) and erection of two agricultural buildings with dry storage below one of proposed buildings

Site Location: Lands 45m North-West of No 17 Abbacy Road, Portaferry

Recommendation: Approval

The Senior Professional and Technical Officer (C Rodgers) outlined the detail of the application. The site was located within the open countryside on lands North West of the applicant's dwelling at No.17 Abbacy Road, Mill Park, Portaferry, in an AONB and in an area associated with an established farm. The site location plan showed the position of agricultural buildings formerly within the site that had now been demolished. The buildings did not benefit from agricultural permitted development rights due to the proximity to a third party dwelling No.15b. The site layout plan

showed the position of the proposed new buildings. The building to the south east had already been constructed. The Planning Officer displayed a number of visuals including the proposed elevations and floorplan, photographs of the site, the farmyard with the retrospective shed and location of proposed sheds behind the metal fencing, the location of the proposed shed and retrospective shed when viewed from the top of the laneway towards the farmyard and finally a view of the site from the laneway showing the retrospective shed and the proposed sheds to be built in front of the larger rounded roof shed.

In accordance with Policy CTY12 of PPS21 planning permission would be granted for development on an active and established agricultural holding subject to complying with the criteria listed. The development must be necessary for the efficient use of the of the holding; appropriate in terms of character and scale; visually integrated, not have an adverse impact on the natural or built heritage or on residential amenity of third-party dwellings. In cases where a new building was proposed the applicant needed to demonstrate that additional criteria was satisfied;

- There were no suitable existing buildings on the holding or enterprise that could be used;
- The design and materials to be used are sympathetic to the locality
- The proposal is sited beside existing buildings on the holding.

As detailed in the report the farm business was long established – the business ID provided was allocated in 1996 and had remained active as confirmed by DAERA. In accordance with policy, the new buildings were located adjacent to the existing farm group.

Due to concerns regarding the risk of increased ammonia emissions, the proposal had been amended to provide storage and a general purpose shed. A planning condition would prevent the storage of animals and slurry in those buildings. Farm maps showed that the applicant's holding comprised of 26.42 ha and the most recent herd list showed 91 animals. As confirmed at the site visit, other established site buildings were in use. The applicant's supporting statement indicated that older dilapidated buildings had now been demolished and the larger modern agricultural buildings would be more efficient. A number of the buildings were very old and in a poor state of disrepair and it was reasonable to expect that some modernisation would be required. The proposed buildings would provide storage and protection for a significant amount of architectural machinery currently stored in the open yard.

In terms of character and scale the proposed sheds were appropriate to this rural location. The sheds would be low profile with ridge heights of 4.7m and given their location within an existing farmyard and over 165m from the public road they would easily integrate into the landscape.

Objections had been received from 6 addresses but all related to the potential impact on 15b Abbacy Road. The Planning Officer clarified that the dwelling was approximately 21m from the sheds at the closest point. All material planning considerations raised including the impact on residential amenity had been assessed in detail in the report.

No 15b was situated adjacent to a long-established farmyard and other farm buildings which stored cattle and slurry. The subject buildings would be located close to a third-party dwelling but they would not house livestock or store slurry and that could be controlled via planning condition. EH had provided no objection to the proposal in terms of noise and odour on that basis. DAERA and SES had also provided no objection to the proposal in terms of the potential impact on designated sites or other natural heritage interests.

The buildings were low lying and would cause no unacceptable adverse impact on the amenity of neighbouring dwellings in terms of loss of light or overshadowing. There was no right to a view, and that could not be treated as a material planning consideration.

The buildings would be accessed via the long-established farm laneway. The proposed building would provide accommodation for agricultural machinery/vehicles currently stored in the farmyard. DfI Roads was consulted in relation to traffic impacts and road safety and offered no objections to the proposal. Objectors had expressed concern regarding machinery and vehicles blocking the access to No. 15b – that was beyond the remit of planning and issues relating to private rights of way were civil matters to be dealt with via the relevant parties outside of the planning process. Alleged damage to third party property was also a civil matter to be dealt with outside of the planning process.

Objectors had highlighted that two further sheds had recently been erected on the farm holding and did not form part of the current application– those sheds were subject to a planning enforcement investigation. The enforcement officer had been advised of an intention to submit a further application seeking planning permission for those buildings. Any future planning application would be assessed on its own merits at the time of the application in the context of prevailing policy context and would be subject to consultation with appropriate bodies.

Having considered all material planning matters in relation to the current proposal it was recommended planning permission be granted subject to conditions to prevent use for livestock and slurry storage.

The Chairman invited questions of clarity from Members.

Councillor McRandal questioned if all 3 of the sheds were necessary. The Planning Officer said that the two sheds that were erected subsequent to the submission of the application did not form part of the current application. No weight could be given to those sheds in the consideration of the application as they were not lawful buildings. Those sheds would be dealt with through the planning enforcement. If there was to be a future planning application for those sheds they would be looked at on their own merits in the context of prevailing planning policy and subject to consultation with the relevant bodies.

Alderman Graham was of the understanding that some form of agricultural buildings could occur within a curtilage of a farm. The Planning Officer stated that could occur under part 7 of the permitted development order subject to criteria. However, that

could not be located within 75m of a dwelling that was not linked to the farm. Therefore, in this situation permitted development could not occur.

The Chairman invited Fiona Clarke to come forward who was speaking against the application.

Ms Clarke outlined that the reasons for her family's objection in key points as undernoted:

1. The Case Officers report stated that the distance between her families dwelling and this development was over 25m. They were actually less than 25m from 15b dwelling. From The Planning (General Permitted Development) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015, it recommended that a suitable separation distance was of at least 75m. The sheds were less than 25m from her dwelling.
2. This development was very severe, in terms of height and floor area, compared to the previous sheds (double the floor area), and all at close proximity to the dwelling. There was already an existing shed opposite her dwelling, the sheds were 50m long and at 5m high. That would certainly be prominent in the landscape, and prominent to 15b residents.
3. The application would adversely impact her family's private property and affect the residential amenity, changing it from a family orientated, rural dwelling to a busy, noisy, dusty vehicle hub. The front of their dwelling was the principle living space and the primary external recreational area, which now threatened by a frontal view of 5m high sheds over 50m in length.
4. Furthermore, the application statement stated that the visual aspect of the proposed buildings would be an improvement on the view. The Case Officers Report stated that no one had the right to a view, however, Ms Clarke believed it was not acceptable for a dwelling to lose its entire view and have it replaced by around 50m of sheds. That simply did not compare to the current landscape of the countryside within the AONB experienced by their dwelling. And due to its scale and location, natural light to our dwelling would be adversely impacted.
5. The UK Human Rights Act protected the right to enjoy our property peacefully. Quite simply, the proposed general-purpose store and vehicle store would negatively impact the welfare of her family and deny them the right to enjoy our property peacefully. Her parents were both pensioners who enjoyed looking after their grandchildren and gardening. These sheds would be intimidating and imposing on 15b dwelling and she raised privacy concerns, considering the applicant had CCTV recording on current sheds.
6. Whilst the applicant had changed the use of the calf house to a general-purpose store, that did not mean that all risks of pollution were nullified. There would be environmental impacts associated with this store and the vehicle store from noise, dust, smell pollution and air pollution from engine fumes. Animal feed, for example may be stored in this shed, or potent and harmful chicken litter, which the applicant regularly stored. Both those would attract vermin to the area which was less than 5m from 15b driveway/garden, and less than 25m from their dwelling.

7. Whilst the Case Officers Report did not scrutinise their health and safety concerns raised; they should not be dismissed. They had highlighted numerous instances where the property had been damaged by the applicant's farm machinery. If a vehicle shed was located here, then there would be an increase in risk of further damage to our property, as well as risks to her nieces and nephews whom played in the garden.
8. The Case Officers Report had also stated that their access concerns to 15b were a civil matter. As her parents both pensioners, unfortunately at their age they had numerous medical appointments to attend. She could be confident that they would be able to exit their premises to attend those appointments. They lived in a remote area of the Ards Peninsula and so, often had to travel as far as Belfast for work. If this proposal was approved, then there would be an increase in traffic and machinery affecting access to their driveway. Whilst DFI Roads offered no objections, the residents of 15b need to be considered. Their objections had highlighted the multiple obstructions to their driveway from various vehicles. That would increase if the general-purpose store and vehicle store were built at such close proximity to their driveway.
9. Further to the above, the general-purpose store plans to be located directly opposite their driveway, less than 5m away. The construction of the tank for this shed began in June 2021. They had experienced obstructions since that date. On one of many occasions the applicant refused to move, which left her sister and her children blocked-in from leaving 15b driveway for 1 hour. They had already experienced delays in their mail with Royal Mail delivery drivers writing on our letters *'could not deliver yesterday due to blocked entry'*.

Whilst the Case Officers Report stated that the concerns she had just raised were a civil matter, she felt planning needed to be practical. They had already seen an increase in obstructions and that was affecting our day to day life. To state that those were simply civil matters was a concern for her family and their welfare.

10. The Case Officers report had stated that the 2 large sheds that the applicant built in September 2022 did not form part of this application. With all these recent developments, our family and our dwelling were being disregarded, as well as disregarding our Council's planning procedures. The sheds were being used to store machinery and vehicles, and therefore, she deemed the proposed vehicle store and general-purpose store to be unnecessary.
11. In the 46 years that her family's dwelling had been present, there had never been entry to the laneway from the other side of the lane (across from our dwelling). The operations of the vehicle store and the general-purpose store would result in machinery driving into and reversing out off each shed. That would further increase the risk of obstructions, collisions, and damage to property as well as preventing access to/from the laneway and our driveway. In addition, the Case Officers Report had failed to show a blind corner in the laneway, a mere 5m from the proposed location of the vehicle store. That would also add to the risks of moving vehicles in the area.

In summary, Mrs Clarke objections had stated that her family had no issue with this applicant wishing to modernise. However, believed that this planning application was

not reasonable to her family and their welfare and she asked Members to give that consideration.

The Chairman invited questions from Members.

Alderman Smith questioned the location of her family's exit. Mrs Clarke stated that the general purpose store was directly opposite her family home with vehicles driving in and out which presented a safety concern.

Councillor McRandal sought clarity in respect of the separation distances. Mrs Clarke outlined the distance which was she viewed as under 25m.

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

The Chairman invited questions from the Planning Officer.

Councillor McRandal asked the Planning Officer to comment in relation to the distances. The Planning Officer stated at the closet point to dwelling the distance was 21.5m to the proposed machine store. 26m to the general purpose store and 35m to the retrospective shed.

Alderman Smith questioned the conditions in terms of the storage within the sheds. The conditions prevented slurry and livestock. Environmental Health had no objection in terms of noise and odour. There was an established agriculture business in the farmyard. There were substantial machinery and farm vehicles and the sheds were for storage of those.

The Chairman asked if chicken litter was to be stored would the application be looked at differently. The Planning Officer reiterated that Environmental Health had been consulted and the conditions outlined were the only ones that were to be posed.

In response to a question from Councillor Cathcart, the Planning Officer referred to the amount of agricultural machinery which currently sat out in the open-air highlighting that it was clear that there was a need for new and modern storage for the business. The conditions would prevent livestock and slurry storage with the risk of ammonia and pollution.

Alderman Graham noted that there were already sheds erected at which there was already an enforcement case and felt they had some relevance. The Planning Officer stated that planning permission had not been applied for those sheds and as stated that was subject to an enforcement. They were not relevant to the determination of the application.

Alderman Graham stated that the sheds did exist and questioned the footprint of the retrospective building and the two new buildings. The Planning Officer stated that that totalled 316 sqm. She referred to the site location plan and noted that there were previously buildings at the location of the proposal. Those had been demolished to accommodate the new modern buildings. The proposed sheds were low in height at 4.7m.

In terms of chicken litter, Alderman Graham highlighted that did cause an odour and he felt that should be a consideration.

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

Councillor Wray was satisfied that the application met the planning requirement being more modern and efficient.

Alderman Graham felt the storage of chicken litter needed to be safeguarded. Councillor McRandal shared those concerns and was not convinced the proposal was necessary.

The proposal was put to the meeting and was declared carried. A vote was undertaken which resulted as follows:

FOR (7) Aldermen McIlveen	AGAINST (4) Alderman Graham	ABSTAINED (2) Aldermen McDowell Smith	ABSENT (3)
Councillors Cathcart Kerr Martin McKee Morgan Wray	Councillors McCracken McLaren McRandal		Councillors Woods McCollum Creighton

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

- 4.6 **LA06/2022/0867/F - The Square, High Street, The Ropewalk, Church Street, Meetinghouse Street, Castle Street and Ferry Street including junctions with The Strand, Portaferry - Public realm improvement scheme comprising upgrading of existing paving and kerbing; installation of new street furniture, seating, streetlights, litter bins, planters and cycle stands; reconfiguration of existing car parking; relocation of existing bus shelter; and all associated works.**
(Appendix V)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report outlining the planning application.

DEA: Ards Peninsula

Committee Interest: Council application

Proposal: Public realm improvement scheme comprising upgrading of existing paving and kerbing; installation of new street furniture, seating, streetlights, litter bins, planters and cycle stands; reconfiguration of existing car parking; relocation of existing bus shelter; and all associated works.

Site Location: The Square, High Street, The Ropewalk, Church Street, Meetinghouse Street, Castle Street and Ferry Street including junctions with The Strand, Portaferry

Recommendation: Approval

The Head of Planning outlined the detail of the application which sought to conditions numbers 2, 8 and 9 of a previous approval LA06/2019/1267/F for public realm works for Portaferry.

That application was presented before members of the Planning Committee who unanimously agreed with the recommendation to grant planning permission and the permission was granted on 5 March 2021.

The conditions required to be amended to take account of different lighting now proposed to that originally granted.

The Head of Planning explained that the proposal sought to alter the positioning and style of the street lighting approved. The changes were barely perceptible but as the location of the site was within a Conservation Area where there were no Permitted Development rights an application was required.

As the application was made by the Council it was required to be presented before Members.

The relevant policy considerations remained as was for the previous approval, statutory consultees had no objections and no objections had been received from members of the public.

The recommendation was to grant planning permission.

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

5. UPDATE ON PLANNING APPEALS

(Appendix VI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from Director of Prosperity attaching Item 5a - PAC decision 2020/A0147. The report detailed

Appeal Decisions

The following appeal was dismissed on 03 April 2023

PAC Ref	2020/A0147
Application ref	LA06/2018/1176/O
Appellant	Nigel Kerr
Subject of Appeal	Refusal of planning permission for Dwelling and Garage
Location	Land adj. and to south of 200-202 Millisle Road, Donaghadee

The Council refused planning permission on the 22 October 2020 for the following reasons:

The proposal was contrary to The Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland and Policy CTY1 of Planning Policy Statement 21 Sustainable Development in the Countryside, in that there are no overriding reasons why this development was essential in this rural location and could not be located within a settlement.

The proposal was contrary to The Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland and Policy CTY2a of Planning Policy Statement 21, Sustainable Development in the Countryside, in that the identified cluster was not associated with a focal point or located at a cross-roads, the site does not provide a suitable degree of enclosure and is not bounded on at least two sides with other development in the cluster, development of the site would not be absorbed into the cluster and would visually intrude into the open countryside.

The proposal was contrary to the provisions contained in the Strategic Planning Policy Statement and Policy CTY8 and CTY14 of Planning Policy Statement 21, Sustainable Development in the Countryside, in that the proposal, if developed, would further erode the rural character of the area due to a build-up of development and the extension of a ribbon of development.

The proposal was contrary to The Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland and Policy CTY13 of Planning Policy Statement 21, Sustainable Development in the Countryside, in that the application site lacks long established natural boundaries at this exposed coastal location and would have to rely primarily on the use of new landscaping for integration.

The proposal was contrary to The Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland and Policy NH1 of Planning Policy Statement 2, Natural Heritage, in that insufficient information had been submitted to demonstrate that the development of this land would not have an adverse effect on the integrity of adjacent European Sites. The proposal was contrary to Paragraph 6.42 of the Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (SPPS) in that the building was located within an area of the coast known to be at risk from coastal erosion.

It was accepted that with regard to Policy CTY 2a of PPS21, three out of the six listed criteria were met including there being a cluster of development at this location, a visual entity in the local landscape and, (subject to good design) a dwelling on the appeal site would not impact adversely on residential amenity.

The dispute therefore between parties related to the third, fourth and fifth criteria of Policy CTY 2a. The fourth criterion of Policy CTY 2a requires two elements to be met, the site to provide a suitable degree of enclosure with this requirement being reiterated in criterion (b) of Policy CTY 13 of PPS 21, which states that a new building would be unacceptable where the site fails to provide a suitable degree of enclosure. The Commissioner was of the opinion that the appeal site would fail to provide a suitable degree of enclosure given its open, coastal location therefore

failing to meet the first element of the fourth criterion of Policy CTY 2a and Policy CTY 13 of PPS 21 with the Council sustaining its fourth reason for refusal.

The second element of the fourth criterion of Policy CTY 2a required a site to be bound on two sides by development within the cluster. The Commissioner agreed with the Council in that the appeal site was not bound on two sides and the appeal proposal failed to meet the two elements required by the fourth criterion of Policy CTY 2a.

The Council's third reason for refusal was sustained in relation to the fifth criterion of Policy CTY 2a. The Commissioner was of the opinion that the proposal would extend built development south, which would visually intrude into the undeveloped coastline. From Millisle Road, any dwelling on the appeal site, regardless of siting and size, would fail to be absorbed into the existing cluster and would cause a detrimental change to the existing open character of the coastal area. As such, the appeal proposal fails to meet the fifth requirement of Policy CTY 2a and it also followed that the proposal also failed to meet Policies CTY 8 and 14 of PPS 21.

As the appeal development failed to comply with the third, fourth and fifth criteria of Policy CTY 2a of PPS 21 the Commissioner was of the opinion that the Council sustained its second reason for refusal.

The Commissioner also sustained the Council's first reason for refusal based upon Policy CTY 1 of PPS 21 which refers that the development must be essential in a particular location.

The Commissioner was of the opinion that an adequate Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) would mitigate concerns regarding potential pollution during the construction and operational phases of the development and as such, the Council had failed to sustain its fifth reason for refusal based upon Policy NH 1 of PPS 2 – Natural Heritage.

The aim of the SPSS was to protect the undeveloped coast from inappropriate development and to support the sensitive enhancement and regeneration of the developed coast largely within coastal settlements. This area of coastline had been identified as an "area of high erosion risk". The Commission was of the opinion that it was appropriate to adopt a precautionary approach in the absence of a coastal erosion assessment from the Appellant, the high erosion risk, increasing number of storm events, predicted sea level rise, and the location of the appeal site located directly adjacent to the coast and sustained the Council's sixth reason for refusal based upon Paragraph 6.42 of the SPSS.

New Appeals Lodged

The following appeal was lodged on the 01 June 2023

PAC Ref	2023/A0018
Application ref	LA06/2019/0891/F
Appellant	Mrs. Mounce
Subject of Appeal	Refusal of planning permission for 1no. dwelling

Location	50m North of 43 Newtownards Road, Donaghadee
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The following appeal was lodged on 16 May 2023

PAC Ref	2023/E0011
Application ref	LA06/2020/0130/CA
Appellant	Lennie, Eddie
Subject of Appeal	Alleged (i) Unauthorised change of use of land and vehicle access to serve private golf range; (ii) Unauthorised erection of 5.5m high safety netting; (iii) Unauthorised erection of two floodlight columns; (iv) Unauthorised metal shed erected; (v) Unauthorised erection of polytunnel
Location	Lands north of 60 Ballyrogan Road, Newtownards

The following appeal was lodged on 01 May 2023.

PAC Ref	2023/E0006
Application ref	LA06/2021/0273/CA
Appellant	Marc Pedriel
Subject of Appeal	Alleged <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unauthorised formation of an access (including gate) and laneway; • Unauthorised material change of use of agricultural field to an area of stone hardstanding being used in conjunction with Oyster Farming; • Unauthorised parking of vehicles, siting of storage container and equipment associated with the Oyster farming use
Location	Land adjacent to entrance to private lane of 49, 51 & 53 Ringneill Road, Comber

The following appeal was lodged on 31 March 2023.

PAC Ref	2022/A0220
Application ref	LA06/2021/1141/F
Appellant	Newtownards Ltd, Castlebawn
Subject of Appeal	New car dealership including mobile structure for office use
Location	Site to rear of Tesco and adj to Translink Depot, A20 Relief Road, Newtownards

Appeals Withdrawn

The following appeal was withdrawn on 03 May 2023

PAC Ref	2023/L0003
Application ref	LA06/2022/0713/LDP
Appellant	Mr. & Mrs. Robie

Subject of Appeal	Proof of commencement of works of planning approval X/2007/0221/F for dwelling and detached garage
Location	16B Kilbright Road, Millisle

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

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this report.

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

6. DRAFT MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU) BETWEEN DEPARTMENTS REGARDING OFFSHORE AND MARINE RENEWABLE ENERGY DEVELOPMENT
(Appendices VII – IX)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Prosperity attaching DAERA DfI DfE Letter to Local Councils, Draft - MoU between DfE DfI and DAERA and Response from Council. The report was to advise Members of a draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) proposed regarding Offshore and Marine Renewable Energy Development.

DAERA Marine and Fisheries Division wrote to the Chief Executive, alongside other relevant councils, advising of the intention to formulate an MOU between the three central government departments of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA), Infrastructure (DfI) and Economy (DfE) in relation to the offshore and marine renewable energy development in Northern Ireland.

The NI Executive launched its Energy Strategy for Northern Ireland in December 2021, which established a renewable electricity consumption target of 70% by 2030 (increased to 80% by 2030 by the Climate Change (Northern Ireland) Act 2022). The Energy Strategy also established a commitment to diversify the renewables generation technology mix, with an initial focus on offshore wind and marine renewables.

DfE published its intention to develop an action plan to deliver 1GW of offshore wind in the Energy Strategy Action Plan 2022 (published 16 January 2022). To take this forward, DfE chairs a multi-agency steering group responsible for driving the development of the Offshore Renewable Energy Action Plan (OREAP) that takes account of the interests of all marine users while at the same time it was focussed on accelerating the processes that would enable offshore renewable energy deployment in Northern Ireland.

The three departments were participating members of that group. One of the key objectives of the OREAP Action Plan was to prioritise and streamline the process for licensing and consenting and that would be achieved partially by establishing this Memorandum of Understanding between DfI/DAERA/DfE to ensure that offshore

renewable energy projects were prioritised and where possible, departments coordinate and communicate to progress applications expeditiously.

Members would note at point 15 of Annex A (Item 6b) there was direct reference to council jurisdiction to consider onshore planning applications which are not projects of regional significance. Additionally, attention was also drawn to the section on “Services to be provided by Dfl (or Local District Council)” at page 8 of the same Annex.

A response was originally requested by 17 March, however, that date was extended to 25 May, after which the departments would finalise the draft and inform the respective Permanent Secretaries accordingly. Given the Council elections, retrospective approval was sought in relation to the response issued.

A copy of the response was attached to the report.

RECOMMENDED that Members note the content of this report and attachments.

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

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

7. PLANNING Q4 PERFORMANCE REPORT (Appendix X)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from Director of Prosperity attaching report for Q4. 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 outlined the approach to Performance Planning and Management process as:

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years
- Corporate Plan – published every 4 years (Corporate Plan Towards 2024 in operation)
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually (for publication 30 September 2022)
- Service Plan – developed annually (approved April/May 2022)

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

Reporting approach

The Service Plans would be reported to relevant Committees on a quarterly basis as undernoted:

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
Quarter 1 (Q1)	April – June	September
Q2	July – September	December
Q3	October – December	March
Q4	January - March	June

Key points to note:

- Due to ongoing issues with the MasterGov system (backend of replacement Planning Portal) officers were unable to update on performance of processing times for local, major and householder applications and enforcement cases. An update on statistics was expected from DFI Stats Branch in July with local monitoring being addressed through liaison with DFI and TerraQuest;
- Detail of monies received pertaining to planning application fees detail receipt of £211.4k in the last quarter of 2022/23.
- Statistics received from the Portal Team advises of the following from Go Live date (05/12/22) to 27 March 2023:
 - 412 cases received;
 - 263 of above cases received Online;
 - 298 decisions issued
- No meetings had taken place in Quarter 4 with DFI Roads due to senior staff changes within the Service but would be picked up in new financial year to address ongoing quality of consultation responses.
- Two appeal decisions against refusals of planning permission were received during Quarter 4 and both were dismissed by the Planning Appeals Commission.

RECOMMENDED that the report is noted.

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

In relation to how the information was presented, Councillor Cathcart felt it would be useful if the previous quarters information could be included to use as a comparative.

Councillor McRandal expressed concerns that key performance information was missing and questioned if there were other problems with the portal at the moment.

(Councillor Wray withdrew from the meeting – 10.08 pm)

The Head of Planning advised that Heads of Planning across the Councils had expressed their concerns and ongoing frustrations with the situation as it was not satisfactory that performance could not be monitored effectively. The Head of Planning advised that she been informed that improvements had been made to the system and consultees could view the required information. The series of glitches had reduced somewhat however Officers were keen to have the issue of the statistics resolved.

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

8. UPDATE ON TREE PRESERVATION ORDERS AND APPLICATIONS FOR CONSENT FOR WORKS

(Appendix XI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from Director of Prosperity attaching update on Tree Preservation Orders. The covering report detailed that that the report represented the quarterly update to Planning Committee regarding detail relating to Tree Preservation Orders served and applications for consent to carry out works to protected trees. This update provided information from 22 February 2023 (date of previous report) to 2 June 2023.

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

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the content of this report.

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

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

Councillor McRandal noted that a lot of the trees that had been felled had been found to be diseased and he sought clarity if consent to fell was required for trees that were diseased. The Director clarified that trees that were dead were excluded from applying for consent.

(Councillor Wray re-entered the meeting – 10.10 pm)

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

9. UPDATE ON METROPOLITAN SPATIAL AREA WORKING GROUP

(Appendices XIII – XV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Prosperity attaching Minutes Feb 2023, Agenda and Minutes April 2023 and copy of DAERA Presentation. The report that Belfast City Council convened a cross council working group 'Metropolitan Spatial Area Working Group' (MSAWG) to assist with shared interest items for councils in the former Belfast Metropolitan Plan area and Local Development Plan production. This group remained in place for Belfast City Council (BCC) and the other Councils in the group post Plan Strategy adoption by BCC. The hosting rotates among the councils.

The most recent MSAWG meeting was hosted by this Council at City Hall Bangor on 18 April 2023, in person and via virtual platform. A copy of the minutes from February's meeting hosted by Lisburn City and Castlereagh Council was attached to the report along with the agenda and draft minutes for April's meeting.

The topic-based discussion was in relation to Climate Action Plan and Department for Infrastructure (DFI) consultation on draft strategic planning policy for Renewable and Low Carbon Energy. A DAERA official gave a presentation to the group on the Climate Action Plan and that was attached at Item 9b. DFI officials gave a verbal update on the draft policy which was at public consultation. (Item 10 of agenda for June's Planning Committee meeting)

The next meeting date and topic-based discussion was due to be confirmed.

The group thanked outgoing Elected Members at the meeting. Thanks were expressed to Alderman Gibson for his attendance and contribution. A new member was requested to be nominated to represent this Council alongside Councillor McRandal.

RECOMMENDED that Members note the content of this report, the attachments and nominate another member to the group.

The Principal Planning and Technical Officer guided Members through the report.

Proposed by Councillor Cathcart that the Chairman (Alderman McIlveen) be nominated to the Metropolitan Spatial Area Working Group. The Chairman was unable to accept the nomination as he was unable to take up the position.

Councillor Martin suggested that the Vice-Chairman (Alderman McDowell) be nominated to the working group. Alderman McDowell advised that he had been on the group previously and he was unable to take up the position.

(Councillor Woods re-entered the meeting – 10.13 pm)

Councillor McCracken wished to raise a number of important issues that were contained within the minutes of the previous meetings of the group. He referred to the water regulation team and the information contained in that regard. That was a really important issue for the Borough and Northern Ireland. The Council wished to develop many areas of the Borough in particular making reference to the City Deal project. There were serious concerns about the water infrastructure. The Council was limited in what they could do given the decades of under investment in water but there were other measures that could be taken. He highlighted that the Council could have some impact in respect of demand issues, for example greater use of sustainable urban drainage which could be integrated into regeneration projects that the Council hoped to carry out in the future. He further suggested that the Council could carry out educational programmes on the use of water, being responsible citizens by not using water unnecessarily along with educating people not to put inappropriate products into the water system which caused blockages and floods. Councillor McCracken asked if officers could bring back a report on how the conversations could be developed, what actions the Council could take in the Borough to consider how the partnership could be enhanced with NI Water through demand reduction measures as well as the essential environment to support long term capital investment.

The Chairman did not allow the proposal in relation to the report as he felt it a standalone proposal and maybe more appropriate as a Notice of Motion.

Councillor Morgan endorsed the comments of Councillor McCracken.

The Director of advised that there were previous reports presented to Planning Committees in respect of the issue. The Council had highlighted that NI Water did not have the same borrowing powers as other public bodies did. The Chief Executive of NI Water had made a presentation and highlighting the critical stage it was experiencing in respect of its funding.

The Chairman advised that NI Water did present to Council annually outlining its capital project works.

The Principal Planning and Technical Officer advised that the LDP did meet on an annual basis and as and when required with statutory consultees. Those issues alluded to in respect of infrastructure requirements were pertinent in bringing forward the draft plan strategy.

(Alderman Smith withdrew from the meeting – 10.18 pm)

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor McRandal, seconded by Alderman Graham, that Members note the content of the report, the attachments and that Councillor McCracken be nominated to the Metropolitan Spatial Area Working Group.

10. DFI CONSULTATION ON DRAFT RENEWABLES POLICY

(Appendices XVI – XVII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Prosperity attaching an item on Renewable and Low Carbon Energy (DFI) and draft response from Ards and North Down Borough Council. The report detailed that the purpose of this report was to seek members' agreement on the draft response (Item 10b) to the Department for Infrastructure's (DFI) public consultation draft of the Revised Strategic Planning Policy (SPPS) on Renewable and Low Carbon Energy (Item 10a).

Members shall be aware that an Emerging Issues paper consultation was released by DFI in 2021. The Council responded to that consultation round (Item 12 January 22) and submitted to DFI raising particular concerns with some of the approach.

DFI intends to revise the strategic planning policy for renewable and low carbon energy to ensure that it remains fit for purpose, to inform decision making for development proposals of this type. DFI intended to inform the Local Development Plan process and for local authorities to bring forward appropriate policy approaches within the framework of the revised regional strategic policy and the context of wide-ranging responses to climate change.

The consultation draft introduces three new regional strategic objectives for renewable and low carbon energy which included to:

- ensure that sustainable renewable and low carbon energy development is facilitated at appropriate locations to maximise renewable energy that contributes to the transition to a low carbon economy;
- secure an appropriate mix of energy provision as indicated in the Energy Strategy and supporting documents, which maximises benefits to our economy and communities; and
- enable energy from offshore renewable and low carbon energy development proposals to be appropriately connected to onshore networks.

The consultation draft also introduced new aspects of the policy including references to the importance of an energy mix including offshore, solar, repowering and co-location, as well as catering for emerging technologies and associated infrastructure such as Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) and green hydrogen.

Particular concerns arise that the proposed regional policy is less prescriptive on certain important elements which may not be conducive to providing the required certainty and clarity to all those engaging in the planning system.

Members should note the key concern of Planning Service, that the proposed regional policy may leave new Local Development Plans at a perceived variance with the emphasis of new draft regional policy. The draft policy introduces a new requirement for each Council to identify the '*most appropriate areas for renewable energy development*' within their respective area as part of the Local Development Plan process. Planning officers did not agree that was the most appropriate approach and raised questions regarding this in the previous Issues paper consultation (in 2022). This approach was at odds with particulars of local areas that have clear landscape sensitivities and potential significant implications on cost and ability of councils to address. It was considered that it would have been more appropriate for DFI to resource, co-ordinate and ultimately develop a strategic spatial approach for renewables and low carbon energy planning on a regional scale to meet the ambitious targets for Northern Ireland.

Following the public consultation (and any amendments) a published update would take place to the SPPS 'Renewable and low carbon energy' regional policy, which the Council must then take account of in both plan-making and decision-taking.

RECOMMENDED that Members note the content of this report, consider and approve the draft response to the DFI consultation be issued to DFI before closing date of 30 June 2023.

(Alderman P Smith re-entered the meeting – 10.19 pm)

The Principal Planning and Technical Officer (L Maginn) spoke to the report.

(Councillor McLaren withdrew from the meeting – 10.20 pm)

Councillor McCracken highlighted the importance of the matter and the concerns that existing around climate change.

(Councillor Martin withdrew from the meeting 10.23 pm)

Unfortunately with little apparent action taking place. He noted there was information contained within the report about energy and the Council identifying renewable energy sites. Much energy generation was becoming smaller in scale.

(Councillor McLaren re-entered the meeting – 10.24 pm)

During a recent visit to Hamburg, Councillor McCracken advised that when housing estates were being developed they looked at energy generation for just a couple of thousand houses. In Belfast, many of the larger buildings were implementing solar panels on their roofs because it made total economic sense with the payback period being five years. He felt that the Council needed to give due consideration to how energy was changing, the small scale nature and the micro generation. Referring to the draft response, Councillor McCracken expressed concern regarding the tone of the response which he felt read that the Council was against energy development. The Council should be looking at small scale ways and making sure every major development considered energy.

The Principal Planning and Technical Officer highlighted that the report drew out the issue of concern regarding the local development plan.

(Councillor Martin re-entered the meeting – 10.25 pm)

She recognised there were other aspects and the Council had declared a climate emergency and planning had a role to play. The issue of emerging technologies was acknowledged and there was suggestion of that contained within with draft response.

Councillor McCracken was not against the response but was concerned with its tone which he felt was slightly defensive. He felt the Council should be encouraging the Borough to consider renewables and energy generation and be ambitious in its achievements. He acknowledged the comments as detailed in the report. He asked if consideration could be given to some of the points he had made and reflect those in the response.

The Chairman questioned if there was scope for softening the tone of the response. The Officer stated that there was opportunity to further bolster that and welcomed the opportunity. The response in question one welcomed the further work in that regard.

The Chairman noting the timing of the response.

Councillor McCracken reiterated that he was not against what the Council was trying to achieve. He was content to support and highlighted the need to take greater cognisance of how the area of renewables was changing.

Councillor Woods raised a question regarding offshore renewables and planning permission. The Head of Planning advised that offshore renewables would be deemed suitable to be more strategic applications. However, planning would be involved with the infrastructure and there was a need to have a more joint up approach in that regard. She also referred to Item 6 which provided an MOU in relation to offshore renewables.

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

11. UPDATE ON NIW COASTAL FENCE

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Prosperity providing an update to in respect of the fencing erected by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) around the Wastewater Pumping Station (WwPS) at Seacourt, on the North Down Coastal Path, sometime during 2019.

Members were advised at the Planning Committee meeting on 04 April 2023 of the submission of two separate Certificates of Lawfulness, one for a Certificate of Lawfulness of Existing Use of Development (CLEUD) and Certificate of Lawfulness of Proposed Use or Development (CLOPUD) for consideration by the Planning Service in respect of both the existing fence and gate as erected (subject of the refused planning application) and for an increase in height of fencing to the Seacourt WwPS (Report to April Planning Committee – Item [6] available on Decision Time).

This was following the submission of an appeal by NIW against the refusal of planning permission on 16 November 2022 – PAC reference 2022/A0145. The PAC was advised of the submission of the information and advised a date for any hearing would be provided in due course.

Since the date of the last Committee meeting, officers had considered the submitted information for the applications alongside legal advice from its Planning lawyers. The purpose of this paper was to advise the Committee of findings.

Certificates of Lawful Use or Development

The purpose of the submission in respect of the Certificate of Lawfulness of Existing Use of Development (CLEUD) was to confirm that the fence as erected meets the requirements of permitted development and, in respect of the Certificate of Lawfulness of Proposed Use or Development (CLOPUD), to confirm that the proposed increase in height of the fence also meets the requirements set out in permitted development.

Permitted Development Rights

Members were advised of The Schedule to the Planning (General Permitted Development) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 (“the GPDO”) which lists development that can be undertaken (under permitted development (PD) rights without the need to seek express planning consent and that any such proposal in the first instance must be assessed in accordance with Article 3(8) of the above Order, as to whether

or not the proposal amounts to EIA development (in accordance with The Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2017 to consider the likely environmental impacts of any development before acting upon such PD Rights.

Subject to a negative EIA screening, it was a condition of the PD Rights under Article 3(1) of the GPDO that one attains confirmation prior to commencement of development that the proposal would not adversely affect the integrity of any designated site under The Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995(a). Confirmation of such was normally via consultation by the Council with the Shared Environmental Service for confirmation of any findings in this respect, through the Certificate of Lawfulness application process, referred to above.

At the time of investigation of the fence, it was considered that the fence as erected fell under Part 3 (Minor Operations) Class A relating to '*The erection, construction, maintenance, improvement or alteration of a gate, fence, wall or other means of enclosure*'. It was a condition of that particular Class that development was not permitted if '*The height of any other gate, fence, wall or means of enclosure erected or constructed exceeds 2 metres above ground level*' and as such, the Planning Service considered that PD rights could not apply.

Members were advised that any planning advice given by officers, either verbally or in writing in the course of their duties, was offered in good faith and was based on the information and evidence provided. At that time NIW did not challenge this position and submitted the planning application, which was subsequently assessed and refused by Council.

Officers had assessed NIW's supporting information for the applications of the Certificates of Lawfulness detailing how the works were permitted development as the works should have been assessed against the rights available under the GPDO Part 14 – 'Development by Statutory and Other Undertakers', Class H – 'Water and sewerage undertakings' part (h) – 'Development by water or sewerage undertakers consisting any other development in, on, over or under operational land, other than the provision of a building but including the extension or alteration of a building'.

The Council sought clarification from the applicant in relation to 'operational land'. Article 2 of the Planning (General Development) Northern Ireland Order 2015 sets out the definitions relied on within the legislation. It comprised a definition of operational land which was different to that relied on in the Planning Act.

The applicant clarified that it (the land) was used for the purpose of carrying on its undertakings and the entire red line site was used for a sewage pumping station and that this area of land used for this purpose had not been extended or altered. It stated that it was an above ground structure erected on it to enclose it for safety purposes. The applicant also confirmed that the land was acquired by the Department on 01 October 1973 and placed in perpetuity for that use by successor companies i.e., NI Water Ltd. Subject to this clarification the Council was content that the existing fence was on land deemed as 'operational land'.

Article 3(1) of the GPDO and Regulations 55 and 56 of the Habitats Regulations was applicable to the consideration of applications due to the site being located within the Outer Ards Special Protection Area and Outer Ards Ramsar designations.

Regulation 56(1) states: *“Where it is intended to carry out development in reliance upon a permission granted by a general development order, application may be made in writing to the council for its approval for the commencement of the development.”*

During the processing of the retrospective planning application, the Shared Environmental Service (“SES”) confirmed there was no likelihood of a significant effect on a European designated site as a result of the existing fence. In the interests of best practice, SES was further consulted under the CLOPUD application given the proposal is to replace the existing fence with a new fence which is 0.1m higher than the fence in situ.

Information submitted for consideration in support of the CLEUD, the agent acting on behalf of NIW, stated that under Regulation 56, it is not mandatory to seek approval from the Council, due to the use of the word ‘*may*’ and also stated in its supporting statement that ‘*The Prohibition on commencing development under Regulations 55(1) only bites for development which is likely to have a significant effect on a European site*’.

The Council sought clarification from legal representatives on these points and it was confirmed that the agent’s opinion was correct and as such when there was no such effect on a European site, no consent was required before work commences, and it was not mandatory to seek approval from the Council.

In response to the CLOPUD, SES stated that ‘*Taking into account the nature and scale of the proposed fence (0.1m higher than previously assessed) and the proposed sequence of works, it is considered the proposal would have no conceivable effect on the selection features or conservation objectives of the adjacent European sites.*’

As both the CLOPUD and CLEUD satisfy the requirements of the GPDO and Regulations 55 and 56 of the Habitats Regulations and the aforementioned criteria set out in the Planning (General Permitted Development) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 - specifically that of Part 14: Class H (h), both applications have been certified to that effect.

Given the aforementioned certification, the Council had contacted the Planning Appeals Commission in respect of the lodged appeals advising of the Council’s determinations.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this report.

Councillor Cathcart expressed his disappointment on the matter which was contrary to the public views. He had concerns regarding the legislation which stated that it had no significant effect on a European site and he felt that was wrong for the protection of sites. He asked if the officer agreed that was concerning given that

there were such designated sites within the Borough and permitted development could be used to make an impact.

The Head of Planning appreciated the public interest in the matter. The designation showed that permitted development rights were there. There were HRA regulations to follow for significant effect. She recalled that consultation had previously taken place with SES and it had stated that the structure could have no conceivable effect on a designated site. Officers had gone back to SES with regards the CLOPUD and they had stated that 'taking into account the nature and scale of the proposed fence (0.1m higher than previously assessed) and the proposed sequence of works, it was considered the proposal would have no conceivable effect on the selection features or conservation objectives of the adjacent European sites.'

Councillor Cathcart stated that NI Water could not provide any evidence in respect of the reasoning for the fence around health and safety concerns. Quite often such water infrastructure was at a coastal location and was deeply concerned that the Council had no scope to do anything about that.

The Head of Planning highlighted the loopholes in such legislation and that the Council did raise such issues with the Department.

Proposed by Councillor Cathcart, seconded by Councillor Martin, that the Council notes the report and writes to NI Water reminding them that the fence at Seacourt did not enjoy the support of the general public and elected representatives. Furthermore, that NI Water was deliberately damaging the character of a designated site as well as damaging the reputation of their own organisation. That they should listen to the public and do the right thing and remove the fence.

The Chairman expressed concern regarding the accuracy of the language in the proposal.

The Director was concerned regarding the wording as it was difficult to justify that the fence damaged the character of a designated site through the RAMSAR, ASSI or the Special Protection Area.

Councillor Cathcart was content to revise his wording.

Councillor Martin was content with the revised wording to display with the views of residents.

The Chairman wondered if it would be useful to defer the aspect to Council to agree the wording.

Councillor McCracken supported the sentiment of the proposal and noted that the fence was not appropriate for the setting and was causing dismay for residents and users of the path. However, he expressed concern having unnecessary conflict with NI Water. He thought the matter could have been resolved by a meeting and felt that said something about the level of the relationship. He asked if it would be appropriate for the Council to consider alternative measures such as working with

Groundworks to do some gentle landscaping to mitigate the unsightly nature of the fence.

The Chairman stated that unfortunately was not a matter for this Committee.

Councillor McKee referred to the report and asked what information had been submitted by NI Water in respect of Class H. The Head of Planning advised that NI Water had submitted a supporting statement of how it felt the proposal filled the requirements of Part 14: Class H. Officers had gone back to seek further clarity and they had confirmed that they viewed the area as operational lands and they had acquired the works since 1973.

Councillor Woods asked the total height of the fence. The Head of Planning clarified that the current issue was to regularise the permitted development rights of the fence and the submission of the CLOPUD for any further proposed works. The Head of Planning outlined the detail of the application.

Alderman McDowell recalled the previous discussions regarding the matter. The fence had been erected due to health and safety, there was a large drop at the area and he outlined the risks of liability if someone was to be hurt. The Chairman reminded the Committee that legal advice had been sought in respect of the liability. The Committee had been generous to NI Water in affording them an opportunity to come up with alternative suggestions.

Alderman Graham shared the concerns of Councillor McCracken in respect of the relationship with NI Water.

Councillor Cathcart advised that the Council had engaged with NI Water on a number of occasions regarding the matter to find an alternative way forward.

The proposal was put to the meeting and declared carried with 7 voting For, 3 Against, 3 Abstentions and 3 Absent.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Cathcart, seconded by Councillor Martin, that this Council notes the report and writes to NI Water reminding them that the fence at Seacourt does not enjoy the support of the general public and elected representatives who believe that the fence is deliberately damaging the character of a designated site as well as damaging the reputation of their own organisation. That they should listen to the public, do the right thing and remove the fence.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

12. UPDATE ON ENFORCEMENT MATTERS

(Appendix XVIII)

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

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

Schedule 6 – Part 6 (a) – Information which reveals that the Council proposes – to give under the statutory provision a notice by virtue of which requirements are imposed on a person.

It was recommended that Members note the content of this report and the attached table.

Council was asked to note the report which provided an updated position on all live cases where an Enforcement Notice had been served. Members commented on some long running, as yet unresolved cases and clarification was sought on members being able to provide updates to constituents. Members were advised that in order not to prejudice future action they were unable to provide information but to refer constituents to the Enforcement section. The recommendation was AGREED.

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 11.07 pm.

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

A hybrid meeting (in person and via Zoom) of the Audit Committee was held at the Council Chamber, Church Street, Newtownards and via Zoom, Monday 26 June 2023 at 7.00pm.

PRESENT:-

In the Chair: Alderman Armstrong-Cotter

Alderman: McAlpine (Zoom 7.05pm)

Councillors: Ashe (Zoom 7.04pm) McKee
Cochrane Wray
Hollywood

Independent Member: Mr P Cummings (Zoom)

In Attendance: ASM (via Zoom) – Christine Hagan
Deloitte (via Zoom) – Camille McDermott
Deloitte (via Zoom) - Niamh Sammon
NIAO (via Zoom) – Peter O’Sullivan

Officers: Chief Executive (S Reid), Director of Corporate Services (M Steele), Head of Finance (S Grieve) and Democratic Services Officer (P Foster)

1. APOLOGIES

The Vice Chairman, Alderman Armstrong-Cotter, sought apologies at this stage and those were noted from the Chairman, Councillor McLaren, Councillor MacArthur and David Kinsella, Deloitte.

NOTED.

2. CHAIRMAN’S REMARKS

The Vice Chairman offered her best wishes to the Chairman, Councillor McLaren for a speedy recovery and similarly to Councillor MacArthur, following a recent stay in hospital.

Continuing the Vice Chairman welcomed all those new members to the Committee noting their enthusiasm and passion. She also welcomed the internal and external auditors to the Committee from the Northern Ireland Audit Office, ASM and Deloitte.

NOTED.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

NOTED.

(Councillor Ashe joined the meeting online at this stage – 7.04pm)

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

(a) Audit Committee Minutes from March 2023

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

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

(Councillor McAlpine joined the meeting online at this stage – 7.05pm)

(b) Follow-Up Actions from Previous Meetings (FILE AUDDO2) (Appendix I)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailing that in line with best practice, the purpose of the report was to make the Audit Committee aware of the status of outstanding recommendations or any outstanding actions from the previous Audit Committee meetings.

There was one item from the previous committee which had now been actioned.

RECOMMENDED that the Committee notes the report.

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

5. INTERNAL AUDIT

(a) Internal Audit Progress Report 2022/23 (Appendix II)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Audit Committee Progress Report for Ards and North Down Borough Council, from Deloitte.

RECOMMENDED that the report be noted.

At this stage the Director of Corporate Services provided members with a brief overview of activities which had taken place during the past three months. While he referred to a number of outstanding issues members were advised that progress had been made in a number of service areas with a number of Plans now well underway.

The Vice Chairman invited the internal auditor Ms McDermott (Deloitte) to speak to the report and highlight the findings and recommendations within in it.

Ms McDermott provided members with a brief synopsis of the report highlighting the significant points contained therein.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, that the recommendation be adopted.

(ai) Cyber Security Review (Appendix III)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Audit Committee Progress Report for Ards and North Down Borough Council from Deloitte detailing an assurance review to assess the status of implementation of recommendations made in the Advisory Cyber Security review in 2019/20.

RECOMMENDED that the report be noted.

The Vice Chairman invited the internal auditor Ms McDermott (Deloitte) to speak to the report and highlight the findings and recommendations within in it.

Ms McDermott provided members with an overview of the report highlighting the main points of interest within it. Following a review undertaken of Cyber Security in 2019 of the implementation of any recommendations made it was noted that most of those remained open or had not been started. As such she advised that a limited level of assurance was given by the Internal Auditors.

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

Councillor Hollywood noted the issue of cyber security and sought clarification on any associated costs.

In response the Director of Corporate Services commented that this area posed one of the greatest risks for the Council and that as a fast developing area it was difficult to put a cost on that. He reported that cyber security was being looked at with a procurement exercise currently underway to secure a partner to assist the Council with its digital strategy. He added that a Business Case in relation to this would be brought forward for members consideration in due course.

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

(b) Annual Audit Plan (Appendix IV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Annual Audit Plan for Ards and North Down Borough Council from Deloitte.

RECOMMENDED that the report be noted.

The Vice Chairman invited the internal auditor Ms McDermott (Deloitte) to speak to the report and highlight the findings and recommendations within in it.

Ms McDermott provided members a with a brief synopsis of the report highlighting the salient points within it.

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

(c) Annual Assurance Statement (Appendix V)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Annual Assurance Statement for Ards and North Down Borough Council from Deloitte.

RECOMMENDED that the report be noted.

The Vice Chairman invited the internal auditor Ms McDermott (Deloitte) to speak to the report and highlight the findings and recommendations within in it.

Ms McDermott commented that this report was the final version and as such was being presented to members for noting.

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

(d) Internal Audit Charter (Appendix VI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Internal Audit Charter for Ards and North Down Borough Council from Deloitte.

RECOMMENDED that the report be noted.

The Vice Chairman invited the internal auditor Ms McDermott (Deloitte) to speak to the report and highlight the findings and recommendations within in it.

Ms McDermott guided members through the report highlighting the salient points within it before seeking queries from members.

There being no comments from members the Vice Chairman acknowledged the amount of work which had gone into compiling the report before them.

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

The proposer, Councillor Wray expressed his thanks to officers for the in depth report before them adding that he appreciated their efforts to make it slightly easier to understand.

The seconder Councillor Cochrane indicated that he fully concurred with Councillor Wray's comments.

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

6. **CORPORATE GOVERNANCE**

(a) **Statement of Assurance - End of Year (FILE SOA1)**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services stating that in accordance with the Council's Risk Management Strategy Heads of Service were required to provide Statements of Assurance twice yearly. Assurance Statements comprised four main sections to be completed by each Head of Service following consultation with each of their Service Units. This report cover focused on changes reported for the second period of the 2022-23 year, 1 October 2022 - 31 March 2023.

General – Identification of Risk, Monitoring and Control Measures

Internal audit had highlighted a significant number of outstanding recommendations (detailed in separate report on this agenda). Aside from the audit recommendations all Services had confirmed that they were satisfied that any risks identified had appropriate internal controls and any further actions taken, or to be taken, to adequately mitigate or resolve the risk had been identified.

COVID 19 Pandemic Impacts

COVID 19 remained a risk but was now considered alongside other potentially impactful risks as part of the normal risk assessment process.

- **Environmental Health** continued to reprioritise service delivery due to the backlog of inspections and business interventions in addition to the continued implementation of the Food Standards Agency (FSA) recovery plan.
- **Leisure** service had highlighted the potential loss of income claims by Northern Community Leisure Trust (NCLT), in part due to COVID 19.
- **Parks and Cemeteries** reported post-COVID 19 stress, particularly within the Cemeteries team with interventions planned to assist staff in association with Cruse Bereavement Care and the Institute of Cemeteries and Cremation management.
- **Staff training** was undergoing a renewed focus to catch up on lost training during COVID 19.

Section 1 – Strategic and Operational Risk Management

Services reported appropriate controls were currently in place and had identified satisfactory actions to review, monitor, control, mitigate and resolve issues, where appropriate. The below summarised the current issues identified within each service area.

Risk Management training took place in March 2023 delivered by Deloitte to CLT/HoST/SUMs, with further improvement in the risk management framework proposed in the coming months. The first of two workshops would review the Corporate Risk Register. This would include a redesign of the template to

incorporate the identification of Risk Owners. The second workshop was for senior managers to define and develop the Council's risk appetite.

The **Administration** service had reported that a data sharing agreement database had been created and was being populated by all services to ensure that it was comprehensive. The CCTV policy had been approved and was reviewed in light of union concerns about body worn cameras.

Human Resources and Organisational Development service reported that the three-year assessment under Investors In People had been completed and the Council maintained its Silver level of accreditation. An action plan would be put in place based on the findings of this report. The service had also reported that there was a new draft appraisal scheme for the Council which was anticipated to be implemented in August 2023, with training for service unit managers on the new scheme.

The **Leisure** contract with NCLT had been extended for a further five years. Contract management procedures were still in place and being followed up by Assets and Property. Risk Management training was to be rolled out across the Leisure service. Leisure service reported that staffing levels were a concern and that the impact of this on staff welfare and service delivery was an ongoing issue.

Parks and Cemeteries service had reported that the proposed restructure of the service had been delayed due to staff concerns. A fortnightly management team meeting had been established to address concerns. The service continued to experience issues related to grave depths and associated media attention. A series of internal controls were being implemented to better inform cemetery customers.

Environmental Health Protection and Development service continued to work with funders and other Councils to understand the impact of changes to regulation in relation to EU exit and the NI protocol. The implications for service delivery remained unknown as guidance on the Windsor Agreement was still outstanding.

Regeneration service had reported that the Rural Development programme had finished and that all audits had been completed.

Economic Development had reported that funding had been withdrawn for the Labour Market Partnership.

Waste and Cleansing services had confirmed that the previously reported significant financial liability risk, if the bidding process for the Residual Waste Treatment project was collapsed by the client (arc21) remained. The Planning permission refused by the DFI Minister was now subject to judicial review. All this had significant implications for the future of arc21, in terms of delivering infrastructure for member councils. The matter was further complicated by one member Council seeking to withdraw from residual waste project and Strategic Review of NI Council Waste Management Arrangements

Section 2 – Internal Control

Internal audit had highlighted a significant number of outstanding recommendations (detailed in separate report on this agenda). Aside from the audit recommendations the below summarised the current controls identified within each service area.

Tourism service reported that all events in 2023/24 had alternative set up solutions devised with regard to climate mitigations. They also report that the TASTE Facebook group was identified as requiring governance and management improvements which would be addressed as a priority. Formal event debriefs would continue and actions would be undertaken as a result of the learnings from those.

Administration Service reported that the composition of the screening panels had been reviewed to ensure wide representation and would sign up to the Nolan Principles. The Council had also adopted the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO) Model Complaints Handling Procedure and it would be rolled out over the next six months.

Communications and Marketing reported that a community engagement framework was being developed to help address a perceived lack of trust with key stakeholder groups.

Planning service reported that the NI planning portal website had been reconfigured, and staff had been redirected to relevant publications on this on the Department for Infrastructure website.

Strategic Capital Development reported that templates had been produced for project briefs and the five step-model business case. In addition, the project risk registers had been updated.

Waste and Cleansing Services review was agreed as part of the rate setting process for 2023/24.

Regulatory Services reported interim structural changes in the service, implemented due to the absence of a Head of Service, with those duties being delivered by the relevant Service Unit Managers.

Parks and Cemeteries service had introduced new cemetery software.

Section 3 – Governance

The below summarised the current governance issues identified within each service area.

Finance Service reported two instances of suspected fraud discovered and acted upon.

Assets and Property Services had reported that there was an ongoing dispute over design and workmanship at Aurora which was expected to be a lengthy legal

process. In addition the service had also reported that the situation with a large contract existing for vehicle hire with a local company which had not been subject to procurement processes was ongoing.

Strategic Transformation and Performance service had reported that an anonymous whistleblowing allegation had been received relating to the procurement and management of a minor external works and hired plant contract which was being investigated.

Human Resources and Organisational Development had reported that a single tender action was undertaken to extend the Agency contract for a further six months until a competitive process could take place.

Waste and Cleansing reported that a noise complaint had been lodged regarding operations at the North Road Depot, following the removal of trees and an earth bund by a developer. The service was awaiting the outcome of Environmental Health monitoring reports to identify if mitigation was required. The service had also reported that whilst quotations were sought for the provision of refuse services at Council HRCs only one suitable quotation was received.

Communications and Marketing service reported that they deviated from procurement processes for the provision of a borough-wide Support Local campaign with the Spectator Newspaper as they were the sole provider. In addition the contract for web hosting for service specific websites with a local provider had been extended for a further year after discussion with the services concerned who were very satisfied with the service provided. During the 2023/24 financial year work would be progressed on a new .gov website which would allow for further consideration of this contract.

Economic Development service reported that a locomotive was purchased for use in the Pickie Amusements, the purchase was made without a competitive process as there was only one supplier in the UK due to the size of the gauge. In addition, the LMP had procured a single award contract with SERC for training and education services.

Regeneration service reported two purchases of street furniture directly after unsuccessful quotation and tender exercises.

Planning had reported that the introduction of the new planning portal replacement resulted in downtime and inability to accept planning applications which had an impact on fee income and targets, this had been addressed since the introduction of the new portal.

Community and Culture service reported a single tender action for willow beacons as there was a single supplier. The previously reported COVID grant claim error had potentially been resolved and the service was awaiting the processing of the final claims. The service had also reported that irregularities in the timekeeping of employees had been discovered which was being investigated.

Regulatory Services reported a risk of significant reduction in building control

income due to the current economic uncertainty. In addition there was the possibility of changes in how this service was delivered depending on the outcomes of the Grenfell Report and Building Safety Review.

Leisure service reported that the preferred operating model for Community Centres and Halls needed to be determined and planning put in place to ensure continuity of service provision.

Section 4 – Miscellaneous

Leisure service had highlighted the need for a decision on future operating models was required as soon as possible to provide certainty for staff. The budget setting process had meant that a number of service issues needed to be considered such as reduced opening hours and withdrawal of services not funded.

RECOMMENDED that the report is noted.

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

(b) Governance Statement (FILE FIN75) (Appendix VII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services advising that the Council was required to prepare an Annual Governance Statement, in accordance with the principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework: Delivering Good Governance in Local Government (2016). This statement explained how the Council met the requirements of Regulation 4 of the above regulations. The Statement formed part of the Financial Statements.

The statement set out the arrangements the Council had in place for

1. reviewing the Council's vision
2. identifying and communicating the Council's vision
3. measuring the quality of services
4. defining and documenting the roles and responsibilities
5. developing, communicating and embedding codes of conduct,
6. reviewing the effectiveness of the decision-making framework
7. reviewing the effectiveness of the framework for identifying and managing risks
8. ensuring effective accountability
9. ensuring effective counter-fraud and anti-corruption arrangements
10. ensuring effective management of change and transformation
11. ensuring compliance of financial management arrangements conform the CIPFA guidance
12. ensuring compliance with relevant laws and regulations, internal policies and procedures, and that expenditure is lawful
13. ensuring assurance processes conform with the governance requirements of the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Head of Internal Audit (2010)
14. undertaking the core functions of an Audit Committee
15. whistleblowing and for receiving and investigating complaints from the public

16. identifying the development needs of members and senior officers
17. establishing clear channels of communication with all sections of the community and other stakeholders,
18. enhancing the accountability for service delivery and effectiveness of other public service providers
19. reviewing and updating standing orders, standing financial instructions, a scheme of delegation and supporting procedure notes/manuals, and
20. respect of partnerships and other joint working as identified by the Audit Commission's report on the governance of partnerships.

The statement then detailed how the Council had determined the effectiveness of its internal controls (including use of internal audit, statements of assurance, risk register and fraud, data protection and whistleblowing reporting) and concluded with that there were no significant governance issues.

RECOMMENDED that Council approves the draft Governance Statement 2022/23.

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

(c) **Terms of Reference Review** (Appendix VIII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services outlining that in line with good practice the Audit Committee should review it terms of reference annually and make recommendations to Council to ensure that it kept up to date with developments within legislation, guidance and regional and national issues.

The last review was carried out in June 2022.

The review had been carried out by the Head of Finance and there was only one minor change (highlighted in the appendix), in respect of updating the officers expected to attend in the light of the recent restructuring at Corporate Leadership Team level at the beginning of the calendar year.

RECOMMENDED that the Committee approves the report.

AGREED, on the proposal of Councillor Hollywood, seconded by Councillor Cochrane, that the recommendation be adopted.

7. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

The Vice Chairman advised that there were no items of Any Other Notified Business.

NOTED.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Cochrane, seconded by Councillor Hollywood, that the public/press be excluded during the discussion of the undernoted items of confidential business.

8. SINGLE TENDER ACTIONS UPDATE (FILE 231329)

****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 was provided from the Director of Corporate Services detailing the Single Tender Actions awarded since the last Audit Committee meeting.

It was recommended to note the report.

The recommendation was AGREED.

9. DRAFT FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (FIN65)

(Appendix IX)

****IN CONFIDENCE****

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

A report was provided from the Director of Corporate Services advising that the draft Financial Statements for 2022/23 were attached for the Committee's information and to note, before submission to the Department for Communities, Local Government & Housing Regulation Division and the commencement of the external audit in September.

It was recommended that the Council notes the draft Financial Statements for 2022/23.

The recommendation was AGREED.

10. FRAUD, WHISTLEBLOWING AND DATA-PROTECTION MATTERS

****IN CONFIDENCE****

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

The Chief Executive updated the Committee on new, live and closed cases of Fraud, Whistleblowing and Data Breaches.

It was recommended that this information be noted.

The recommendation was AGREED.

11. MEETING WITH NI AUDIT OFFICE AND INTERNAL AUDIT SERVICE IN THE ABSENCE OF MANAGEMENT

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

The Chief Executive, Director of Corporate Services, Head of Finance and Democratic Services Officer all withdrew from the meeting during the discussion of the item (8.00pm).

NOTED.

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

AGREED, that the public/press be readmitted to the meeting.

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 8.04 pm.

ITEM 10**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Council/Committee	Corporate Services Committee
Date of Meeting	20 June 2023
Responsible Director	Director of Corporate Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Finance
Date of Report	02 June 2023
File Reference	FIN58
Legislation	Section 1 Local Government Finance Act (NI) 2011
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Charging and Income Policy
Attachments	Draft policy

Background

Since its inception over eight years ago, the Council has been operating under a range of legacy Finance policies.

Since last September the Finance Service has been working on a range of policies to formalise and review these practices and also to address a significant number of outstanding internal audit recommendations:

Ref	Policy	Status
284	Anti-fraud etc	Reviewed policy effective April 2023
286	Asset Management	Effective April 2023
287	Charging and Income	Council 5 th July 2023
289	Reserves	Awaiting ratification at 5 th July Council
303	Electric Car	For consultation
-	Budgeting	Policy development paper to be issued 30 th June

Ref	Policy	Status
-	Travel and Expenses	Policy development paper to be considered by CLT 27 th June.
-	Employee Payments	Policy development paper to be considered by CLT 27 th June.
-	Supplier Payments	Policy development paper to be issued in due course

Charging and Income Policy

This specific policy is required to formalise and revise the governance framework brought forward from legacy organisations with respect to charging, income management and credit control. This addresses a number of outstanding Internal Audit recommendations.

The policy has been developed in line with the Council's policy development process and Corporate Leadership Team, Heads of Service and Service Unit Managers have all been consulted. When the version 1.0 of the policy was considered at the last Corporate Services Committee meeting a number of concerns were raised. Version 1.1 has taken on board Members concerns and a number of amendments made (these highlighted in red in the attached copy for Members' convenience).

The objectives of the policy are:

1. Establishment of charging arrangements within the context of Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and Scheme of delegation, whilst retaining Council oversight;
2. Establishment of income hierarchy to assist with service delivery planning;
3. Formalisation of credit terms;
4. Formalisation of effective, timely and customer focussed credit control;
5. Establishment of a collaborative approach, establishment of controls, allocation of responsibilities, income recording, invoicing and records management;
6. Minimisation of potential for income loss;
7. Establishment of a debt write-off framework; and
8. Establishment of a consistent approach to internal charging.

The key points to note are:

- Pg 4 – it is the Service Unit Managers' responsibility to ensure that proper Service Unit procedures are in place.
- Pg 6 – charges should be increased by inflation.
- Pg 6 – bin sales and delivery should be at cost recovery.
- Pg 7 – Approval for charges will now be delegated to Heads of Service provided the policy is followed. Minor exceptions will require a director's approval and

substantial deviation will require Council approval. All charging schemes will be reported to Council for noting as part of the Estimates process.

- Pg 15 – Formal credit control procedure including the suspension of service or access where there is non-payment after the third reminder.
- Pg 17 – formal write off thresholds are set.
- Pg 18 – record keeping improvements for legal actions, to allow better income management.
- Pg 19 – Establishing a grants inward register, to improve corporate knowledge with the requirement for all claims to be reviewed by Finance.

If approved the Finance Service will conduct a number of briefing sessions across the organisation in order to raise awareness, in addition to publication on ANDi, the Council intranet.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council approves the attached Charging and Income Policy and amends the Scheme of Delegation to comply with the new arrangements.

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

POLICY COVER SHEET

Policy Title	Charging and Income Policy
Policy/File Reference	FIN58 Ref: 287
Version	1.1
Policy Summary	The purpose is to allow Council to design services balancing effective and efficient customer experience while both maximising income receivable and minimising the risk of loss.
Responsible Officer(s)	Head of Finance
Date of Equality Screening	26 May 2023
Date of consultation with Consultative Panel	-
Date of consultation with Unions	-
Date of Council approval	Target July Council
Implementation date	Target 1 August 2023
Appendices attached	
Next review date	August 2025

Revision History:

Version	Changes made by	Date	Reason for change
0.1	Head of Finance	24/3/2023	Draft for Finance consultation
0.2	Head of Finance	18/4/2023	Draft for HoST and SUM consultation
0.3	Head of Finance	18/4/2023	Consultation responses and amendments
0.4	Head of Finance	12/05/2023	Draft for CLT
1.0	Head of Finance	02/06/2023	CLT comments
1.1	Head of Finance	20/06/2023	CSC Comments

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

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ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

Chapter 1 Policy Statement

Introduction The Council has a legal obligation to “make arrangements for the proper administration of its financial affairs.”

This Policy and associated procedures **set** out the framework in which the Council should manage the income aspect of that obligation and has been written in line with best practice on internal control and takes account of Local Government and Internal Audit recommendations.

Policy Scope All income is within scope of this policy and associated procedures with the exception of district rate income and associated general grants, which are managed by the Finance Service.

Chapter 1 is a policy subject to Council approval, the remaining chapters are procedures and subject to periodic management review.

Policy Objectives

The objective of the policy is to ensure:

1. Establishment of charging arrangements within the context of Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and Scheme of delegation, **whilst retaining Council oversight**;
 2. Establishment of income hierarchy to assist with service delivery planning;
 3. Formalisation of credit terms;
 4. Formalisation of effective, timely and customer focussed credit control;
 5. Establishment of a collaborative approach, establishment of controls, allocation of responsibilities, income recording, invoicing and records management;
 6. Minimisation of potential for income loss;
 7. Establishment of a debt write-off framework; and
 8. Establishment of a consistent approach to internal charging.
-

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ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

Chapter 1 Policy Statement, Continued

Policy Statement

Council will design services balancing effective and efficient customer experience while both maximising income receivable and minimising the risk of income loss.

Charges should be set considering the following principles:

- Legislative competence;
- Cost of service delivery; and
- Minimising barriers to accessing the service.

Each Service, which levies charges, will develop a charging schedule which should be **noted by Council and** appropriately publicised. Charges should be set in accordance with the principles in Chapter 2 and are subject to approval as set out in Chapter 2.

Each Service Unit Manager is responsible for ensuring that appropriate procedures are in place within their unit.

All income not received in advance should be invoiced either:

- within 7 days of the goods or service being sold; or
- for recurring services (such as bookings) no later than the end of the month in which the series of bookings falls.

All invoices must have credit terms of 30 days from the date of issue.

Any debts outstanding after this limit should be subject to standard credit control procedures, involving at least 3 stages before legal action.

Service Unit Managers have authority to discount items in order to clear slow moving stock, where this is appropriate.

Income Hierarchy

The following hierarchy should be used when designing service delivery:

Priority	Payment Method
1	Card or cash at point of sale or submission of application
2	Direct debit
3	Invoiced

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ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

Chapter 1 Policy Statement, Continued

Associated Policies

The following policies are associated with this policy:

Ref	Policy
	Digital by Default
	Retention and Disposal Schedule
	Medium Term Financial Strategy
	Scheme of Delegation
	Data Protection Policy
	Land and Property Policy

DRAFT

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

Chapter 2 Charging

Introduction It is the responsibility of each Head of Service providing chargeable services to ensure an appropriate charging structure is put in place to comply with this policy and support the Corporate Plan.

Charging Schedules A charging schedule should be put in place that ~~it~~ is compliant with the following principles:

1.	Charges within the control of Council should be increased by the higher of inflation or cost of running the service unit .
2.	Retail goods should normally be charged at cost plus a mark-up of at least 60% for goods (plus VAT) and at least 30% for printed material. Variations for particular products are acceptable provided overall the appropriate mark-up is being achieved across all goods in that category.
3.	Bins (where charged) and delivery should be at cost recovery.
4.	Room hire should be at commercial rates, with an appropriate discount applied for non-commercial use.
5.	Hired equipment should be at commercial rates, with an appropriate discount applied for non-commercial use.
6.	Charges should be appropriately rounded.
7.	Indication of whether charges include VAT or not.

Charges for use of land are set out in the Land and Property Policy.

Definitions Retail Goods – goods (excluding printed materials) sold as ancillary to the service being provided (e.g. swimming goggles, gifts).

Printed Materials – books, pamphlets, booklets etc.

Inflation – is regarded as the Consumer Price Index (CPI) as published by the Office for National Statistics.

Land use charges – exclude block bookings which fall within the normal service delivery.

Continued on next page

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

Chapter 2 Charging, Continued

Approval

The following approval thresholds apply:

1.	Charges in line with policy agreed by Head of Service
2.	Charges varying from policy by less than 5% to be agreed with Director, provided it involves less than 20% of the charges listed.
3.	Charges varying from policy by more than 5% or more than 20% of the charges listed should be referred to Council for approval.
4.	Charges varied mid-year, outside the Estimates process should all be reported to Council for approval.

The following information should be provided to the approver:

a)	List of all charges for the incoming year along with the current charges;
b)	Rationale explaining why the charges have been varied;
c)	The likely increase in income arising from the increased charges (This will be needed for the Estimates process.)

Council Oversight

All charging schedules should be reported to the Corporate Services Committee as part of the Estimates process for noting, unless for departing from this policy is required.

Review

A review of charges should be carried out at least once annually, as part of the Estimates and budget setting process, to ensure an appropriate charge is being levied and should not be simply a case of adding an inflationary increase to the previous year's prices. When prices are reviewed, all the factors set out above should be taken into account in order that an informed decision can be made.

The review of charges should not be restricted to the current services provided but should also consider the opportunity of potential new income.

VAT

Charges should be set inclusive of VAT when chargeable and should be appropriately rounded (e.g. small fees to nearest 10p (£2.86 should be £2.90) and large fees to the nearest pound (£20.60 should be £21.00).

VAT advice is available from the Corporate Accountant.

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

Chapter 3 Security of Cash

Security of Cash

Service Unit income procedures should address the following principles:

1.	<p>All Service Units that handle cash must have access to a safe either in their own Service Unit or in a Service Unit close to them.</p> <p>An appropriate assessment should be carried out in conjunction with Risk Management Service Unit and the Income Collection Team to determine the appropriate safe limits.</p>
2.	<p>Managers should ensure that cash is securely held at all times.</p>
3.	<p>There should be a controlled number of safe keys per safe. These should be kept with the nominated persons at all times or securely stored, at the close of business, in a "key safe." If appropriate, measures must be taken to secure the key to any "key safe."</p>
4.	<p>Certain employees should be nominated to hold the safe keys and there should be arrangements to cover holidays, shift working etc.</p>
5.	<p>Safes should be locked at all times, except for access.</p>
6.	<p>Staff should be aware of the limits permitted by the Council insurers for holding cash overnight in their safe and ensure these are not exceeded.</p> <p>Update thresholds may be obtained from the Risk Service Unit.</p>
7.	<p>For their own protection, employees should not be left alone with cash, where possible. It is the Manager's responsibility to ensure that tea breaks and lunches are appropriately covered to allow this. Appropriate risk assessment should be carried out for lone workers as appropriate.</p>
8.	<p>Cash should never be left in desks or filing cabinets (even if locked) but should always be locked in the safe if the office is unattended for any length of time.</p>

Continued on next page

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

Chapter 3 Security of Cash, Continued

Security of Cash,
continued

9	Tills must not be left unlocked or unattended and access to the till should be limited to certain staff who have individual passcodes for sign on and sign off.
10	Managers should have procedures in place regarding till floats, i.e.. ensuring they are locked away when not in use, signing in/out register for shared floats.

DRAFT

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

Chapter 4 Cash Management

General Controls

1.	Duties should be segregated among staff, to ensure that no one individual is in control of all stages of the income process from receipt to banking or invoicing to credit control.
2.	All staff involved in receiving income should be appropriately trained to ensure they are fully aware of the procedures and responsibilities.

Till Procedures

Managers should ensure the till procedures address the following controls:

1.	Till receipts should show the date, the operator, a receipt reference, the till number, VAT registration number, facility / Council name. Where possible, till records should identify the payment method i.e.. cash, cheque, credit cards or other.
2.	Till records should analyse the type of income being processed, and if possible, allocate an allocation code.
3.	Any discrepancies between the till analysis and the cash held should be drawn to the Supervisor's attention for appropriate action.
4.	Till float checks should be recorded and signed at the start and end of each day.
5.	The 'no sale' access to tills should not be used.

Cash Procedures

Managers should ensure that cash procedures address the following controls:

1.	Cash should be receipted on the day it is received.
2.	Income received is to be lodged in full as income. It must not be used for cash purchases or for cashing personal cheques
3.	In the event of issuing a refund, cashiers should have the authorisation of their supervisor and the refund to the customer should be made in the same manner in which it was received;
4.	Refunds for payments by cheque should only be carried out after verifying with the Income Collection team that the cheque has been cleared. No automatic refunds will be made for amounts of less than £5.00 due to administrative costs.

Continued on next page

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

Chapter 4 Cash Management, Continued

Cash Procedures, continued

5.	The use of cheque registers is optional, but can be useful should cheques not get receipted and lodged.
6.	Arrangements for making up lodgements and transportation of these to be banked.

Income Recording Procedures

Managers should ensure that income procedures address the following controls:

1.	All income received is recorded promptly, detailing when the cash was received, from whom, for what purpose and in what form, i.e.. cheque, cash, card, or BACS, as appropriate.
2.	When income is received in the post, more than one employee should be present when the post is opened, where possible, before being passed for income processing. Risk assessment should be carried out in lone worker situations to determine if this is a material risk.
3.	Receipts from vending machines, coin boxes etc. should be emptied on a regular basis and ideally not left until they are full. They are to be emptied in the presence of two nominated employees – both should sign a cash declaration sheet to verify the cash amount taken.
4.	All income received should be receipted as soon as possible. The receipt system used should have sequential numbering and appropriate controls over issuing these;
5.	Managers should obtain official receipt books from the Income Collection Team if there is no access to a computerized till system.
6.	A receipt should always be offered to customers for face to face or online transactions; Receipts should include, Council or facility name, date, amount paid, description of what the payment is for and Council VAT number.

Continued on next page

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

Chapter 4 Cash Management, Continued

**Income
Recording
Procedures,**
continued

7.	The records held for cash receipts (both manual and electronic) should be held securely for the current year plus six previous years in line with the Council's Retention and Disposal Schedule and should be recorded in a sequential order i.e.. date order and/or receipt number order. .
8.	Each manual receipt should have an appropriate cashbook transaction code or, in the case of miscellaneous items, an appropriate allocation code for processing on the Council's financial system either in summary or by individual receipt. If this is done in summary form and passed to another Service for processing, an independent individual should check it.
9.	All income should at the time of processing should have the appropriate VAT analysis included.
10.	Cash over and Cash under amounts should be recorded at cashing up and the amount lodged should be equal to the total in the till less card payments, less float. There should be a process for monitoring overs and unders to ensure that they remain at immaterial levels.
11.	Cash handling and payment processing needs to be considered in business continuity plans, particularly if service delivery is expected to continue.

Continued on next page

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

Chapter 4 Cash Management, Continued

Procedures for Lodgements and Banking

1.	<p>Managers should ensure lodgements are made with appropriate frequency, bearing in mind safe limits, and taken directly to the bank or another Service for lodging.</p> <p>At the end of each month, lodgements should be made on the first banking day of the next month, irrespective of the normal scheduling.</p>
2.	<p>The lodgement should be made up in the following way:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Notes should be together in their denominations; - Coins should be bagged in the bank's moneybags (if available) according to denomination and amount noted on the bag. Any mixed coin bags should be clearly identified; - All cheques should be listed manually on the back of the bank's paying-in slip, or an add-listing from a calculator/spreadsheet attached; - The paying-in slip should be completed, showing the amount of notes, coins, and cheques, signed and dated; - The records of receipts should be matched against the bank lodgement slips; - The lodgement should be checked by an independent person and the cashbook, receipts, or till records signed on the day the lodgement is made-up to verify agreement with what is being banked; - Any overs or unders in the lodgement beyond a de-minimus should be noted and reported to the line manager.
3.	<p>Where possible, Managers should ensure lodgements are done at different times in the day and the staff member varied that goes to the bank</p>
4.	<p>If the cash is over the insured limit (check with Risk Service Unit) more than one staff member should take the lodgement to the bank or other Service.</p>
5.	<p>Before Bank Holidays and weekends, Managers should ensure banking is carried out as late as possible to avoid large amounts of cash being held on the premises during holiday times or over weekends.</p>

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

Chapter 5 Invoicing and Credit Control

Introduction On occasions it is necessary to invoice customers for services received. This would usually occur only where formal agreements are in place that would allow Council to have legal recourse in the case of non-payment.

All invoices should be issued centrally in order to maintain consistency of approach with regard to credit terms and credit control procedures.

Currently the only exceptions to this are within the Leisure Service which use s the leisure management system for this purpose and the Waste and Cleansing Service, which maintain s the Trade Waste module within the financial system.

**Invoice
Format and
Content**

All invoice templates must be agreed with the Invoice Collection team in advance of being used and should include the following information:

- The Council name, address and VAT registration number;
 - Name of Council contact, with telephone number and/or email address to which queries can be directed;
 - Payment terms and conditions;
 - Name and address of the customer and the customer reference number;
 - Date of the Invoice;
 - Invoice number;
 - Detail of the goods or services supplied;
 - The gross, net and VAT amounts due for the supply;
 - Rate of VAT charged.
-

Agreements Agreements with customers that allow for the invoicing of goods and/or services should seek payment by direct debit in the first instance, as this ensures timely payment, before agreeing to card, BACS, bank transfer, cheque or cash payments.

Continued on next page

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

Chapter 5 Invoicing and Credit Control, Continued

Invoice Processing

The following process should be used:

Step	Action
1	Complete Invoice Request Form which is available on ANDi here .
2	Requests made on the back of output from another Council computerised system (e.g. Tascomi) do not require authorisation. Manual requests require approval in line with the authorisation limits used for expenditure, available on ANDi here . All credit note requests must be authorised at the next level of seniority.
3	Upload completed forms to Submitted forms folder Submitted Forms - Income Collection - All Documents (sharepoint.com) .
4	Trade Waste, Leisure and Community Halls will document their internal processes for raising invoices.
5	Leisure and Community Halls Service Units will provide the Income Collection team with a monthly report to allow income to be attributed to the month in which the invoice is raised, rather than the month in which it is paid.

Internal Charges

See chapter 8.

Credit Control Process

The following standard credit control process should be followed by all Service Units in connection with invoices raised:

Step	Action
1	First reminder issued after 30 days.
2	If payment has not been received within 14 days a second reminder should be issued, stating date payment required to avoid service suspension (where applicable) ¹ and/or commencement of legal proceedings.
3	If payment not received within 7 days, the debtor should, where possible, also be contacted by telephone.

Continued on next page

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

Chapter 5 Invoicing and Credit Control, Continued

Credit Control Process, continued	Step	Action
	4	If payment not received with a further 7 days, a third reminder should be issued informing the debtor that a Small Claims Court application is to be made, making them aware of the costs that will be incurred by them if the debt is not paid by the application date.
	5	Suspend service – the Income Collection team will notify the appropriate Service Unit of non-payment and request service suspension.
	6	Court proceedings should only be issued if: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The court fees are less than 50% of the amount owed; and2. There is a reasonable chance of obtaining payment. All debts owed to Council from every service must be pursued at the same time. Court orders cannot be obtained for partial debts.
	7	If 3 weeks after obtaining the Court Award the debtor has still not paid, a letter will be sent giving the debtor a further 7 days to pay before an application will be made to the Enforcement of Judgements Office for enforcement of the Court Award.
	8	If payment has still not been received, details should be referred to the Head of Finance for a decision on whether the application should be made to the Enforcement of Judgements Office taking into consideration the costs involved and whether the matter should be referred to Council.
	9	For debts above the Small Claims Court limit, pursuance of the debt will be referred to the Council's legal advisors who will advise of the appropriate course of action to take. These matters will then be referred to Council for decisions to be taken on further action.

Continued on next page

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

Chapter 5 Invoicing and Credit Control, Continued

Write-off Thresholds

It is inevitable in all businesses that an allowance has to be made for some debts, which prove to be irrecoverable. When all of the above debt collection procedures have been exhausted without success, consideration should be given to formally writing the debt off. This may occur when the debt is statute barred, debtor becomes bankrupt, goes into administration, correspondence is returned “gone away” and tracing the person proves fruitless or the debt is too small to pursue through court action. The Council’s policy relating to bad debt write-offs is:

Total Debts	Authorised Signatory
<£1,000	Financial Operations Accountant
<£3,000	Head of Finance
<£10,000	Director of Corporate Services
>£10,000	Council

A write off exercise should be carried out every quarter and a register kept of all amounts discharged in this way.

Service Unit Managers will be responsible to make appropriate accounting adjustments in their own systems following write-off.

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

Chapter 6 Penalty Charge Notices, Fines and Court Costs

Introduction It is important that in order to maintain integrity of appropriate legislative framework Council recovers the income due to it and that these legal processes are appropriately managed to maximise the income due.

Penalty Charge Notice Process Individual Service Units should follow the following principles when putting in place their individual processes:

- Legislative competence
- Proportionality
- Register of penalty charge notices issued
 - Council reference
 - Reason
 - Date of issue
 - Amount
 - Payment received and date-
- Monitoring of recovery rates

Court Action Process Individual Service Units should follow the following principles when putting in place their individual processes:

- Legislative competence
- Proportionality
- Register of legal action taken
 - Council reference
 - Court reference
 - Solicitor
 - Reason
 - Hearing date
 - Outcome
 - Payment received and date-
- Monitoring of recovery rates

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

Chapter 7 Grants Inward

Introduction Accounting for grants that the Council is due to receive (sometimes called grants receivable) is dependent on the conditions within the letter of offer. This chapter therefore sets out procedures to ensure there is appropriate corporate knowledge to allow the Council to meet its financial obligations.

Grants Register The Finance Service will maintain and publish a corporate grants inward register. This will detail the following:

- Scheme, project or programme name
- Funder
- Funder reference
- Service – key contact
- Finance – key contact
- Last claim submitted date

Letters of Offer Letters of offer, contracts, agreements, etc. should be signed by a duly authorised officer in accordance with authorised levels. These are available on ANDi [here](#).

Process

Step	Action
1	Upload letter of offer (LoO) to Accounting folder in Submitted forms portal for review Submitted Forms - Income Collection - All Documents (sharepoint.com) .
2	Accountant will update register and provide feedback on LoO conditions, allocate a dedicated officer within Finance to act as point of contact and a grant reference in the form GI1234.-
3	Expenditure to be incurred following the stricter of Council procedures or conditions of letter of offer
4	Prepare grant claim ensuring that a unique claim number is allocated (e.g. GI1234-01)
5	Submit draft grant claim to Finance contact for reconciliation to the Council's financial system and will attribute the income to correct accounting period even before the funds are received.
6	Submit grant, requesting funder to use the unique claim reference on any payment advice.
7	When funds received the Income Collection team will be able to attribute to the correct accounting code.

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

Chapter 8 Internal Charging

Introduction In order to properly reflect work carried out for other Council Services it is appropriate that a consistent internal charging process is established.

Principles Charges should be levied for the following services:

1. Where internal users displace external users and that would adversely affect the service or goods provider's income targets;
2. Publicly available memberships or recurring charges;
3. Applications for services that are available to the public.

Examples

1. Room bookings at Community Centres,
VIC goods for civic events
2. Leisure memberships
Trade waste charges
3. Building control or Planning application fees
Entertainments licence fees

**Process for
'Invoiced'
charges**

Step	Task
1	'Selling' Service Unit will issue a notification to the purchasing Service Unit This could be an invoice from the leisure management system or an email, giving all the relevant details
2	The purchasing Service Unit will process a journal request using the normal process (form available on ANDi here).
3	The purchasing Service Unit will advise the selling Service Unit that they have processed a journal posting.
4	Finance will review, authorise and post the journal to the financial system. This will normally take 2 working days before it is processed.

Continued on next page

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

Chapter 8 Internal Charging, Continued

Process for 'Recurring' charges

Step	Task
1	'Selling' Service Unit will issue a notification to the purchasing Service Unit on an annual or quarterly basis. This could be a Schedule shared on SharePoint or an email, giving all the relevant details.
2	The purchasing Service Unit will raise any queries with the selling Service unit, prior to journal being processed.
3	The selling Service Unit will resolve any billing queries.
4	The selling Service Unit will process a journal request using the normal process (form available on ANDi here).
5	Finance will review, authorise and post the journal to the financial system. This will normally take 2 working days before it is processed.

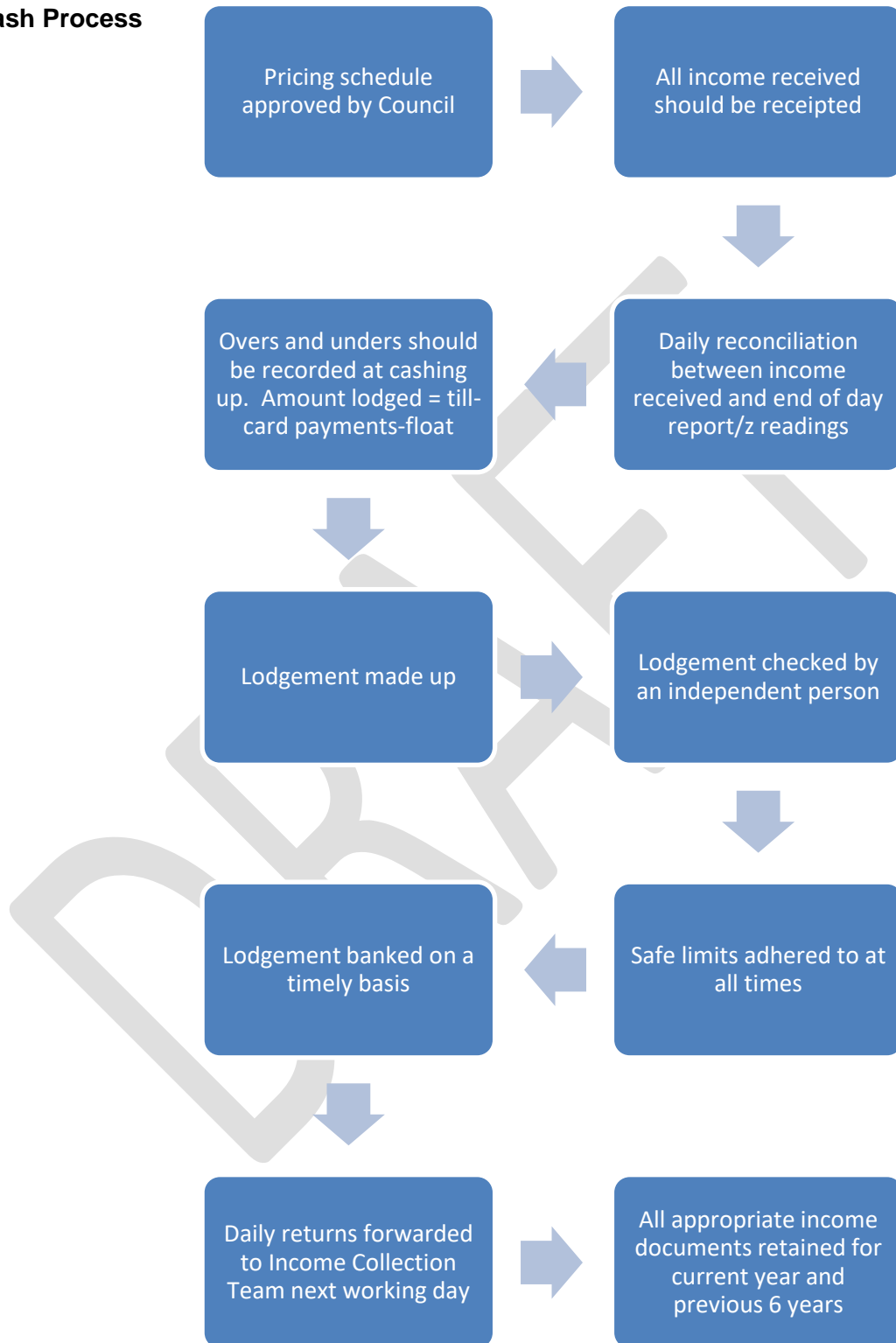
Process for 'Application' fees

Step	Task
1	'Applying' Service Unit will process a journal request prior to submitting an application. If they have any queries regarding the correct fee payable they should liaise with the service provider in advance of preparing the application form.
2	Finance will review and authorise the journal request, advising the applicant of the journal reference.
3	The applicant may then submit the application form with the journal reference included as the 'payment'.
4	Finance will then post the journal to the financial system. This will normally take 2 working days before it is processed.
5	The service provider can then process the application in the formal way.

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

Appendix 1 Cash Process Flow Diagram

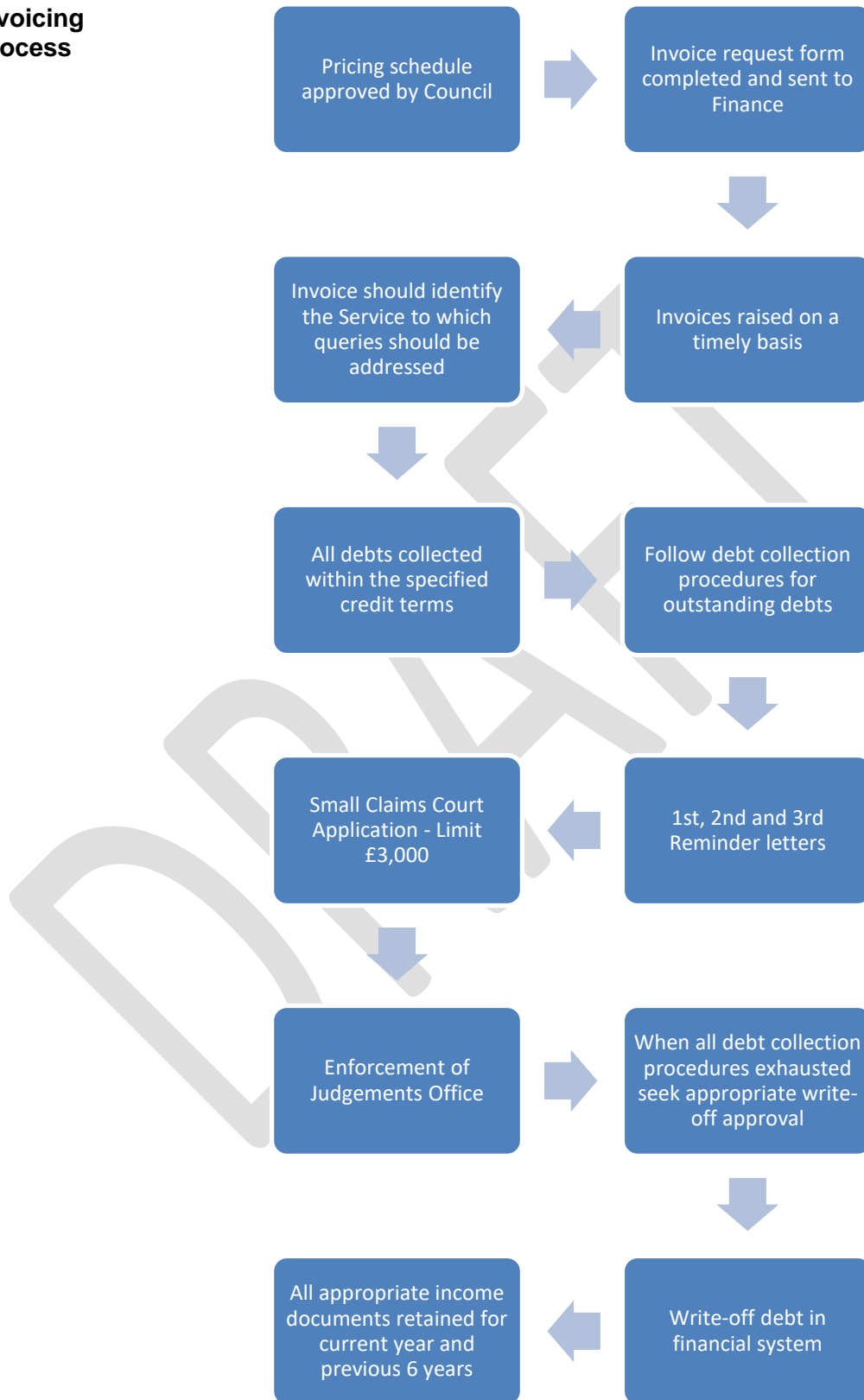
Cash Process



ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

Appendix 2 Invoicing Process Flow Diagram

Invoicing Process



ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

Appendix 3 Safe Limits

Location	Make/Model	Maximum Cash Value
Signal	Chubb "Black Box"	£50
City Hall, Main Office	Kardox	£500
City Hall, Finance	Prive-Safe PT3	£500
McKee Clock Toilets	Dudley	£1,000
Waste Transfer Station	Essex E22401101	£4,000
Bangor Recycling Plant	Leigh Essex Euro E2 Grade 0	£6,000
Bangor Recycling Centre	Charvat SRO – Neuton Star	£6,000
Bangor Recycling Centre	Burg Wachter – C4	£4,000
Hollywood Depot	City Floor Safe	£4,000
North Down Museum	Esselte Wall Safe	£100
North Down Museum	Phoenix Centurion 1220	£1,000
Tower House	Chubb TYE 2013T68005	£1,000
George Green Community Centre	Phoenix Centurion 1220	£200
Skipperstone Community Centre	Phoenix Centurion 1220	£150
Kilcooley Community Centre	Sentry	£200
Redburn Community Centre	Sentry	£200
Ards Blair Mayne Wellbeing & Leisure Centre	Barrington Security, Charvat NS6/11, Grade 2 safe, Model No 18000509 Size 6, Weight 517 kg	£17,500 Cash Cover & £175,000 Jewellery Cover
Londonderry Pavilion	Yale YFM/520/FG2 - X-Large Fire Safe	Not rated? See specification below
Leisure Services Office, 2 Church Street	Burton Fire Brand MK 11 Size 3	£1,000
2 Church Street, Ards	G Brady & Co Ltd Strongroom	£2,000
2 Church Street, Ards	James E Ball Strongroom	£1,500
Comber Leisure Centre	Levey Consort 609	£3,000
St Columba's College	Rochford Leigh II safe	£5,000
Arts Centre	Thomas Perry & Sons	£1,000
City Hall, Bangor Basement of the Registrar's Office	Vault by Phillips & Son, Birmingham	£2,500
City Hall, Bangor Castle	Phoenix	£1000 cash or £10,000 in valuables
Ard Visitor Information Centre	Essex by Leigh Safes	£4,000

ITEM 11**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Council/Committee	Council Meeting
Date of Meeting	05 July 2023
Responsible Director	Director of Corporate Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Finance
Date of Report	13 June 2023
File Reference	FIN45
Legislation	Section 5 Local Government Finance Act (NI) 2011
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Budgetary Control Report - May 2023
Attachments	

This Budgetary Control Report covers the 2-month period 1 April 2023 to 31 May 2023.

The Revenue Budgetary Control Report by Directorate is set out in Report 1 on page 3 and shows an overall surplus of £144k.

Explanation of Variance

The Council's budget performance is further analysed on pages 4-6 into 3 key areas:

Report	Type	Variance	Page
Report 2	Payroll	£240k favourable	4
Report 3	Goods & Services	£75k adverse	5
Report 4	Income	£21k adverse	6
	Total	£144k favourable	

Explanation of Variance

The Council's overall variance can be summarised by the following table (variances over £25k):

Type	Variance £'000	Comment
Payroll Expenditure	(240)	Vacancies (£265k) Vacancy Control has been introduced to help mitigate the pay agreement cost pressures.
Goods & Services Expenditure		
Community & Culture	29	Advice Services and Guitar Festival. Both offset by additional income – see below.
Parks & Cemeteries	33	Parks & Cemeteries operating costs- £24k Outdoor Recreation – £12k
Waste & Cleansing	(37)	Waste disposal costs. Tonnages slightly down on budget – Landfill down 105T. Blue bin waste down 51T. Garden waste up 27T. Food waste down 112T.
Assets & Property	(32)	Electricity – (£15k) Gas – (£1k) Vehicle fuel – (£36k)
Regeneration	25	Rural Development – covid small settlements consultancy. Offset by grant income.
Non-Service	54	Notional interest to EMF
Income – Services		
Community & Culture	(33)	Additional income for Advice Services and Guitar Festival – offsets additional spend (see above).
Regulatory Services	55	Car Park income £35k. NET – fine income £17k.
Planning	70	Planning application income.
Finance	(28)	Investment income.
Income – Non-Service		
District Rates	-	

Unclassified

Report 1					
BUDGETARY CONTROL REPORT					
Period 2 - May 2023					
	Year to Date Actual	Year to Date Budget	Variance	Annual Budget	Variance
	£	£	£	£	%
Community & Wellbeing					
100 Community & Wellbeing HQ	35,404	35,700	(296)	213,400	0.8
110 Environmental Health	347,533	390,200	(42,667)	2,336,900	10.9
120 Community and Culture	334,202	379,100	(44,898)	2,490,900	11.8
140 Parks and Cemeteries	574,898	636,600	(61,702)	4,472,300	9.7
150 Leisure	338,502	388,700	(50,198)	2,690,100	12.9
Totals	1,630,538	1,830,300	(199,762)	12,203,600	10.9
Environment					
200 Environment HQ	33,972	34,000	(28)	204,600	0.1
210 Waste and Cleansing Services	2,890,138	2,945,400	(55,262)	16,716,000	1.9
220 Assets and Property Services	1,337,811	1,434,400	(96,589)	10,936,600	6.7
230 Regulatory Services	71,983	51,400	20,583	297,100	40.0
Totals	4,333,904	4,465,200	(131,296)	28,154,300	2.9
Prosperity					
700 Prosperity HQ	24,226	21,900	2,326	131,800	10.6
720 Economic Development	214,547	238,500	(23,953)	1,345,500	10.0
730 Planning	255,631	224,500	31,131	1,508,100	13.9
740 Tourism	148,265	157,200	(8,935)	1,563,200	5.7
Totals	642,668	642,100	568	4,548,600	0.1
Place					
800 Place HQ	28,436	28,400	36	266,200	0.1
810 Regeneration	109,863	115,100	(5,237)	1,112,000	4.5
820 Strategic Capital Development	57,925	60,400	(2,475)	365,100	4.1
Totals	196,223	203,900	(7,677)	1,743,300	3.8
Corporate Services					
1000 Corporate Services HQ	26,415	25,700	715	155,000	2.8
1010 Internal Audit	13,868	13,900	(32)	100,000	0.2
1020 Finance	84,462	124,300	(39,838)	876,600	32.1
1030 Strategic Transformation and Performance	335,923	348,900	(12,977)	2,024,600	3.7
1040 Human Resources & Organisation Developn	194,006	205,700	(11,694)	1,119,500	5.7
1050 Administration	565,714	542,400	23,314	3,706,500	4.3
Totals	1,220,389	1,260,900	(40,511)	7,982,200	3.2
Chief Executive					
600 Chief Executive	62,136	60,300	1,836	918,400	3.0
610 Community Planning	31,424	31,500	(76)	192,300	0.2
630 Communications and Marketing	101,318	107,300	(5,982)	848,700	5.6
Totals	194,878	199,100	(4,222)	1,959,400	2.1
9010 Payroll Savings Budget	-	(183,400)	183,400	(1,100,000)	-
Total	-	(183,400)	183,400	(1,100,000)	-
NET COST OF SERVICES	8,218,601	8,418,100	(199,499)	55,491,400	2.4
Non Service Income and Expenditure					
Non Service Income and Expenditure	(8,362,362)	(8,418,100)	55,739	(55,491,400)	0.7
Grand Totals	(143,761)	-	(143,761)	-	-

Unclassified

Report 2					
PAYROLL REPORT					
Period 2 - May 2023					
	Year to Date Actual	Year to Date Budget	Variance	Annual Budget	Variance
	£	£	£	£	%
Community & Wellbeing					
100 Community & Wellbeing HQ	28,084	28,200	(116)	168,400	0.4
110 Environmental Health	409,490	443,600	(34,110)	2,679,100	7.7
120 Community and Culture	243,537	283,300	(39,763)	1,768,300	14.0
140 Parks and Cemeteries	532,208	619,300	(87,092)	3,863,100	14.1
150 Leisure	663,896	706,900	(43,004)	4,569,200	6.1
Totals	1,877,214	2,081,300	(204,086)	13,048,100	9.8
Environment					
200 Environment HQ	28,084	28,100	(16)	168,400	0.1
210 Waste and Cleansing Services	1,462,284	1,470,200	(7,916)	8,817,800	0.5
220 Assets and Property Services	333,080	382,700	(49,620)	2,308,700	13.0
230 Regulatory Services	336,070	365,200	(29,130)	2,202,600	8.0
Totals	2,159,519	2,246,200	(86,681)	13,497,500	3.9
Prosperity					
700 Prosperity HQ	22,365	20,300	2,065	121,800	10.2
720 Economic Development	117,069	147,700	(30,631)	903,500	20.7
730 Planning	357,180	391,600	(34,420)	2,349,600	8.8
740 Tourism	149,500	157,800	(8,300)	967,200	5.3
Totals	646,114	717,400	(71,286)	4,342,100	9.9
Place					
800 Place HQ	27,998	28,000	(2)	167,200	0.0
810 Regeneration	96,603	108,300	(11,697)	651,700	10.8
820 Strategic Capital Development	57,591	59,800	(2,209)	358,900	3.7
Totals	182,192	196,100	(13,908)	1,177,800	7.1
Corporate Services					
1000 Corporate Services HQ	24,788	23,900	888	143,500	3.7
1010 Internal Audit	-	-	-	-	-
1020 Finance	153,438	162,600	(9,162)	976,200	5.6
1030 Strategic Transformation and Performance	117,496	137,700	(20,204)	826,600	14.7
1040 Human Resources & Organisation Development	129,037	145,000	(15,963)	869,200	11.0
1050 Administration	329,605	329,500	105	2,005,600	0.0
Totals	754,364	798,700	(44,336)	4,821,100	5.6
Chief Executive					
600 Chief Executive	49,192	46,300	2,892	382,600	6.2
610 Community Planning	30,697	30,600	97	183,900	0.3
630 Communications and Marketing	93,166	99,000	(5,834)	602,000	5.9
Totals	173,055	175,900	(2,845)	1,168,500	1.6
9010 Payroll Savings Budget	-	(183,400)	183,400	(1,100,000)	-
Total	-	(183,400)	183,400	(1,100,000)	-
NET COST OF SERVICES	5,792,458	6,032,200	(239,742)	36,955,100	4.0
Non Service Income and Expenditure					
Non Service Income and Expenditure	7,182	7,100	82	77,000	-
Grand Totals	5,799,641	6,039,300	(239,659)	37,032,100	4.0

Unclassified

Report 3					
GOODS AND SERVICES REPORT					
Period 2 - May 2023					
	Year to Date Actual	Year to Date Budget	Variance	Annual Budget	Variance
	£	£	£	£	%
Community & Wellbeing					
100 Community & Wellbeing HQ	7,319	7,500	(181)	46,600	2.4
110 Environmental Health	28,569	30,000	(1,431)	265,200	4.8
120 Community and Culture	216,146	188,100	28,046	1,721,700	14.9
140 Parks and Cemeteries	123,291	90,300	32,991	1,068,200	36.5
150 Leisure	145,880	160,700	(14,820)	1,325,000	9.2
Totals	521,204	476,600	44,604	4,426,700	9.4
Environment					
200 Environment HQ	5,887	5,900	(13)	36,200	0.2
210 Waste and Cleansing Services	1,668,451	1,706,100	(37,649)	9,364,000	2.2
220 Assets and Property Services	1,090,586	1,122,200	(31,614)	8,881,800	2.8
230 Regulatory Services	100,691	106,300	(5,609)	606,300	5.3
Totals	2,865,616	2,940,500	(74,884)	18,888,300	2.5
Prosperity					
700 Prosperity HQ	1,861	1,600	261	10,000	16.3
720 Economic Development	136,395	136,600	(205)	936,500	0.1
730 Planning	20,476	24,500	(4,024)	308,100	16.4
740 Tourism	52,276	50,700	1,576	683,400	3.1
Totals	211,008	213,400	(2,392)	1,938,000	1.1
Place					
800 Place HQ	437	400	37	99,000	9.3
810 Regeneration	32,052	6,800	25,252	460,300	371.4
820 Strategic Capital Development	334	600	(266)	6,200	44.3
Totals	32,824	7,800	25,024	565,500	320.8
Corporate Services					
1000 Corporate Services HQ	1,637	1,800	(163)	11,500	9.0
1010 Internal Audit	13,868	13,900	(32)	100,000	0.2
1020 Finance	2,053	4,500	(2,447)	157,700	54.4
1030 Strategic Transformation and Performance	218,428	211,200	7,228	1,198,000	3.4
1040 Human Resources & Organisation Developr	66,020	60,700	5,320	255,600	8.8
1050 Administration	311,934	291,800	20,134	2,099,600	6.9
Totals	613,940	583,900	30,040	3,822,400	5.1
Chief Executive					
600 Chief Executive	12,943	14,000	(1,057)	535,800	7.5
610 Community Planning	728	900	(172)	8,400	19.1
630 Communications and Marketing	8,152	8,300	(148)	246,700	1.8
Totals	21,823	23,200	(1,377)	790,900	5.9
9010 Payroll Savings Budget	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	-	-	-	-
NET COST OF SERVICES	4,266,414	4,245,400	21,014	30,431,800	0.5
Non Service Income and Expenditure					
Non Service Income and Expenditure	1,391,200	1,337,400	53,800	7,866,800	4.0
Grand Totals	5,657,614	5,582,800	74,814	38,298,600	1.3

Unclassified

Report 4					
INCOME REPORT					
Period 2 - May 2023					
	Year to Date Actual	Year to Date Budget	Variance	Annual Budget	Variance
	£	£	£	£	%
Community & Wellbeing					
100 Community & Wellbeing HQ	-	-	-	(1,600)	
110 Environmental Health	(90,526)	(83,400)	(7,126)	(607,400)	(8.5)
120 Community and Culture	(125,481)	(92,300)	(33,181)	(999,100)	(35.9)
140 Parks and Cemeteries	(80,601)	(73,000)	(7,601)	(459,000)	(10.4)
150 Leisure	(471,273)	(478,900)	7,627	(3,204,100)	(1.6)
Totals	(767,880)	(727,600)	(40,280)	(5,271,200)	(5.5)
Environment					
200 Environment HQ	-	-	-	-	
210 Waste and Cleansing Services	(240,597)	(230,900)	(9,697)	(1,465,800)	(4.2)
220 Assets and Property Services	(85,855)	(70,500)	(15,355)	(253,900)	(21.8)
230 Regulatory Services	(364,779)	(420,100)	55,321	(2,511,800)	(13.2)
Totals	(691,231)	(721,500)	30,269	(4,231,500)	(4.2)
Prosperity					
700 Prosperity HQ	-	-	-	-	
720 Economic Development	(38,918)	(45,800)	6,882	(494,500)	(15.0)
730 Planning	(122,025)	(191,600)	69,576	(1,149,600)	(36.3)
740 Tourism	(53,512)	(51,300)	(2,212)	(87,400)	(4.3)
Totals	(214,454)	(288,700)	74,246	(1,731,500)	(25.7)
Place					
800 Place HQ	-	-	-	-	
810 Regeneration	(18,792)	-	(18,792)	-	
820 Strategic Capital Development	-	-	-	-	
Totals	(18,792)	-	(18,792)	-	
Corporate Services					
1000 Corporate Services HQ	(10)	-	(10)	-	
1010 Internal Audit	-	-	-	-	
1020 Finance	(71,030)	(42,800)	(28,230)	(257,300)	(66.0)
1030 Strategic Transformation and Performance	-	-	-	-	
1040 Human Resources & Organisation Developme	(1,050)	-	(1,050)	(5,300)	
1050 Administration	(75,825)	(78,900)	3,075	(398,700)	(3.9)
1060 Data Protection & Compliance Officer	-	-	-	-	
Totals	(147,915)	(121,700)	(26,215)	(661,300)	(21.5)
Chief Executive					
600 Chief Executive	-	-	-	-	
610 Community Planning	-	-	-	-	
630 Communications and Marketing	-	-	-	-	
Totals	-	-	-	-	
9010 Payroll Savings Budget	-	-	-	-	
Total	-	-	-	-	-
NET COST OF SERVICES	(1,840,272)	(1,859,500)	19,228	(11,895,500)	(1.0)
Non Service Income and Expenditure					
Non Service Income and Expenditure	(9,760,744)	(9,762,600)	1,856	(63,435,200)	(0.0)
Grand Totals	(11,601,016)	(11,622,100)	21,084	(75,330,700)	(0.2)

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council notes this report.

ITEM 12**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Council/Committee	Council Meeting
Date of Meeting	05 July 2023
Responsible Director	Director of Community and Wellbeing
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Leisure Services
Date of Report	08 June 2023
File Reference	SD149
Legislation	Recreation and Youth services Order (1986)
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Ards and North Down Sports Forum Grants (WG June 2023)
Attachments	Appendix 1 Successful Anniversary Report for Approval Appendix 2 Successful Coaching Report for Approval Appendix 3 Successful Equipment Report for Approval Appendix 4 Successful Event Report for Approval Appendix 5 Successful Goldcard Report for Noting Appendix 6 Successful Travel & Accommodation Report for Noting Appendix 7 Unsuccessful Report

Members will be aware that in August 2015 Council delegated authority to the Ards and North Down Sports Forum, in order to allow it to administer sports grants funding on behalf of the Council. £45,000 had been allocated within the 2023/2024 revenue budget for this purpose.

Unclassified

The Council further authorised the Forum under delegated powers to award grants of up to £250. Grants above £250 still require Council approval. In addition, the Council requested that regular updates are reported to members.

During June 2023, the Forum received a total of 32 applications: 23 Individual Travel/Accommodation, 2 Goldcard, 1 Coaching, 3 Equipment, 2 Event and 1 Anniversary). A summary of the **25** successful applications are detailed in the attached Successful Anniversary, Successful Coaching, Successful Equipment, Successful Event, Successful Goldcard and Successful Travel & Accommodation Appendices.

For information, the annual budget and spend to date on grant categories is as follows:

	Annual Budget	Funding Awarded May 2023	Remaining Budget
Anniversary	£1,000	*£750	£250
Coaching	£3,000	*£296.25	£2,103.75
Equipment	£14,000	*£1,598.96	£12,401.04
Events	£6,000	*£1,000	£3,400
Seeding	£500	£0	£500
Travel and Accommodation	£14,500	*£2,450	£5,385.30
Discretionary	£1,000	£0	£1,000
Schools/Sports Club Pathway	£5,000	£0	£4,500
*Goldcards proposed during the period May 2023 is 2 (7 Goldcards in total during 2023/24).			

* The proposed remaining budget for Anniversary of **£250** is based on a proposed award of **£750.00** – for Approval. *The proposed remaining budget for Coaching of **£2,103.75** is based on a proposed award of **£296.25** – for Approval. *The proposed remaining budget for Equipment of **£12,401.04** is based on a proposed award of **£1,598.96** – for Approval. *The proposed remaining budget for Events of **£3,400** is based on a proposed award of **£1,000.00** – for Approval. * The proposed remaining budget for Travel and Accommodation of **£5,385.30** is based on a proposed award of **£2,450** – for Noting and Reclaimed costs of £60.23.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council approves the attached applications for financial assistance for sporting purposes valued at above £250, and that the applications approved by the Forum (valued at below £250) are noted.

APPENDIX 1 - SUCCESSFUL ANNIVERSARY REPORT FOR APPROVAL

NAME	SPORT	EVENT	EVENT OUTLINE	DATES	REQUESTED	PROPOSED	NOTES
Portaferry Sailing Club	Sailing	Ruffian 23 - 50th Anniversary	Parade of Sail up Lough - Friday, Regatta - Saturday & Prize Giving, Celebrations, Music & Food - Sunday. 300 participants expected 2000 spectators plus community spectators.	15th - 18th June 2023	£750	£750	Requested £750 towards food for participants / volunteers, and room hire. Recommend funding of £750, 'subject to' a valid Insurance Schedule.
TOTALS						£750	

APPENDIX 2 - SUCCESSFUL COACHING REPORT FOR APPROVAL

NAME	COURSE	BENEFITS	FACILITATOR	DATES	REQUESTED	PROPOSED	NOTES
Newtownards Sailing Club	RYA Wing Foil Instructor	NSC want to move with the times and teach Foiling - the most accessible and up & coming type being Wing Foiling. This is an up and coming sport that is very accessible and the way things are going. The club has a great location to teach people and keep with the times.	RYA	22-25 May 2023	£296.25	£296.25	All documentation provided. Current guidelines state up to 75% of costs for Governing Body Sports Coach Qualifications. Propose £296.25 (75% of £395).
TOTALS					£296	£296.25	

APPENDIX 3 - SUCCESSFUL EQUIPMENT REPORT FOR APPROVAL

NAME	TYPE	EQUIPMENT NEED	BENEFIT	COSTS	REQUESTED	PROPOSED	NOTES
North Down Softball Club	Support the development of new sections	NDSC has seen exceptional growth in the last 2 years with 2 league teams (Bucs & Cudas) and a development team planned for 2023. As a result there has been increased use, and wear and tear, on the existing ball stock through training & matches.	Consistent match day performance experience, from the flight of a batted ball to the tactile catching and throwing feedback to the player. This more consistent training will enhance player experience, development/competiveness	2 x Dozen Worth ASA 12" balls @ £62.49+VAT, 2 x Dozen Worth ASA 11" balls @ £62.49+VAT. Total = £249.96+VAT (£299.96)	£299.96	£299.96	Propose funding of £299.96 towards fundamental equipment, 'subject to' confirmation that the Club have permission to 'securely store' the equipment at Ward Park.
North Down Cricket Club	Enhance physical literacy for Junior sections	We are establishing and focusing on girls only cricket coaching in 2023 as replicated by our girls only schools programme.	We will deliver x4 weekly girls only cricket sessions with Friday evening minis for p1-p4 Girls introducing the game. This is a new initiative and supports our older coaching programmes feeding youths into our junior youth section/ teams etc	Cricket balls (100 assorted) - £250, 5 Cricket sets (bats/stumps) £750. Total = £1000	£1,000	£300	Cricket balls and cricket sets fundamental equipment. Propose maximum funding of £300 towards fundamental equipment.

Ards Football Club	High Performance Equipment	The VEO Camera will provide in-depth analysis of individuals & team performance during match play & training for coaches of Senior, Under 20, 18, 16, Disability & Women's squads	All squads affiliated to Ards FC will use this equipment. Players & coaches will benefit from accurate information supplied enabling coaches to tailor sessions & instruction in a time efficient manner. This will improve performance of teams & individuals	VEO Camera £999, Tripod £359, VEO Cam Travel case £79. Total £1437	£999	£999	Propose £999 for VEO camera, "subject to" an Equity Policy and Valid Insurance certificate.
TOTALS						£1,598.96	

APPENDIX 4 - SUCCESSFUL EVENT REPORT FOR APPROVAL

NAME	SPORT	EVENT	EVENT OUTLINE	DATES	REQUESTED	PROPOSED	NOTES
North Down Cricket Club	Cricket	2023 NCU Challenge Cup Final	NCU Cup Final - showpiece for the NCU. NDCC again have been asked to facilitate owing to our fantastic failities; 30 playing staff, 10 admin staff, 500 spectators (Covid allowing).	4th August 2023	£1,000	£0	Club requested application be "Withdrawn" (Venue moved to outside the Borough)
Portaferry Sailing Club	Sailing	2023 The Narrows Regatta Series	4 Days competitive sailing & Bar Buoy Race. Prize giving, music, food, entertainment, boat trips & water activities. 500 participants & 1200 spectators from Borough and 300 participants & 800 spectators from outside. Strangford Sailing Club/ Strangford Lough Regatta Association; Additional Safety & Rescue Boats/Volunteers; Other Sailing clubs & local businesses; local marina berths; community decorating the village	14-17 July 2023	£1,000	£1,000	All documentation provided. Club have requested £1,000 funding. Recommend funding of £1,000 ' subject to' a valid Insurance Schedule.
TOTALS					£2,000	£1,000	

APPENDIX 5 - SUCCESSFUL GOLDCARD REPORT FOR NOTING

APPLICANT	REPRESENTING	SPORT	EVENT	DATES	GYM	PROPOSED	NOTES
Rhys McClenaghan	Northern Ireland & Ireland	Gymnastics	2023 Commonwealth Games, Trinidad & Tobago & 2024 Olympics, Paris	4 - 11 August 2023 and 26 July - 11 August 2024	ABMW&LC and LP	YES	Rhys has a letter from Gymnastics Ireland advising he has been selected for the National Squad January-December 2023. Management have approved Goldcard as Rhys is in receipt of Tier 3 Sport Ireland funding. Goldcard proposed until 31 March 2024.
Aimee Robinson	Northern Ireland	Trampolining	2023 Loule Cup, Portugal	12-14 October 2023	ABMW&LC and Portaferry SC	YES	Propose Goldcard until 1 December 2023 (minimum 6 months), "subject to" an NGB letter/email confirming Aimee is representing Northern Ireland at the events listed on her application.
TOTALS						2	

APPENDIX 6 -SUCCESSFUL TRAVEL/ACCOMMODATION REPORT FOR NOTING

APPLICANT	SPORT	EVENT	REPRESENTING	LOCATION	DATES	REQUESTED	PROPOSED	NOTES
Kayleigh Holmes	Gymnastics	NDP National Finals	N.Ireland	Stoke on Trent, England	13-14th May 2023	£503	£150	Letter from Gymnastics NI confirms Kayleigh has qualified to represent N.Ireland at the NDP National Finals in Stoke-on-Trent, 13-14th May 2023. Recommend funding of £150
Ruby Hall	Acrobatic Gymnastics	2023 Inter-Regional Championships	N.Ireland	Southampton Gymnastics Centre	29-30th April	£279.69	£150	Letter from Gymnastics NI confirms Ruby has qualified to represent N.Ireland at the Inter-Regional Championships in Southampton 29th & 30th April 2023. Recommend funding of £150.
Eden Johnston	Acrobatic Gymnastics	2023 NDP National Finals	N.Ireland	Fenton Manor Sports Complex, Stoke-on-Trent	13-14th May 2023	£538.96	£150	Letter from Gymnastics NI confirms Eden has qualified to represent N.Ireland at the NDP National Finals in Stoke-on-Trent, 13-14th May 2023. Recommend funding of £150.
Aimee Jordan	Acrobatic Gymnastics	2023 Inter-Regional Championships	N.Ireland	Southampton Gymnastics Centre	29-30th April	£150.00	£150	Letter from Gymnastics NI confirms Aimee has qualified to represent N.Ireland at the Inter-Regional Championships in Southampton 29th & 30th April 2023. Recommend funding of £150

Evie-Rose Marshall	Gymnastics	2023 Inter-Regional Championships	N.Ireland	Southampton Gymnastics Centre	29-30th April	£156.34	£150	Letter from Gymnastics NI confirms Evie-Rose has qualified to represent N.Ireland at the Inter-Regional Championships in Southampton 29th & 30th April 2023. Recommend funding of £150
Hollie Aiken	Gymnastics	2023 National NDP Finals	N.Ireland	Fenton Manor, Stoke-on-Trent	13-14th May 2023	£150.00	£150	Letter from Gymnastics NI confirms Hollie has qualified to represent N.Ireland at the NDP National Finals in Stoke-on-Trent, 13-14th May 2023. Recommend funding of £150
Nicole Simpson	Gymnastics	2023 National NDP Finals	N.Ireland	Fenton Manor, Stoke-on-Trent	13-14th May 2023	£150.00	£150	Letter from Gymnastics NI confirms Nicole has qualified to represent N.Ireland at the NDP National Finals in Stoke-on-Trent, 13-14th May 2023. Recommend funding of £150
Daniel Black	Gymnastics	2023 National NDP Finals	N.Ireland	Fenton Manor, Stoke-on-Trent	13-14th May 2023	£150.00	£150	Letter from Gymnastics NI confirms Daniel has qualified to represent N.Ireland at the NDP National Finals in Stoke-on-Trent, 13-14th May 2023. Recommend funding of £150

Claire McLarnon	Weightlifting	2023 European Masters Championships	Ireland	SETU Arena, Carriganore, Co. Waterford	16th May	£100.00	£100	Claire has provided a Weightlifting Ireland email confirming she is representing Ireland at the 2023 European Masters Championships, 16 May 2023, in Co. Waterford. Recommend funding of £100.
Charlotte Sweeney	Gymnastics	2023 British Gymnastics National Finals	N.Ireland	Stoke On Trent	13-14th May 2023	£207.50	£150	Recommend funding of £150, 'subject to' a letter/email from Gymnastics NI confirming Charlotte is representing Northern Ireland at the NDP Finals.
Sara Murray	Gymnastics	2023 Acrobatic Gymnastics NDP Finals	N.Ireland	Fenton Manor, Stoke-on-Trent	13-14th May 2023	£207.50	£150	Recommend funding of £150, 'subject to' a letter/email from Gymnastics NI confirming Sara is representing Northern Ireland at the NDP Finals.
Toby Hughes	Sailing	2023 Irish Nationals 29er	Ireland	Dun Laoghaire, Dublin	30 June - 2 July	£100	£100	Selection Letter received from RYA NI, says Toby has been selected for the Irish Nationals 29er. Recommend funding of £100.
Rudi Murphy	Gymnastics	2023 NDP National Finals	N.Ireland	Stoke-on-Trent	13-14th May 2023	£430.94	£150	Letter from Gymnastics NI confirms Rudi has qualified to represent N.Ireland at the NDP National Finals in Stoke-on-Trent, 13-14th May 2023. Recommend funding of £150

APPENDIX 7 - UNSUCCESSFUL APPLICATIONS REPORT

APPLICANT	APPLICATION	REQUEST	EVIDENCE REQUIRED	EXPLANATION
Annabel Ridout	Travel & Accommodation	£100 funding to compete at the 2023 RS Feva Irish Easterns in Dun Laoghaire, Dublin, 6-7 May 2023	Our guidelines state, applicants must be “Qualified and selected to represent their province/country”. Based on the guidelines, the Forum have not funded this competition due to the level of competition.	RYA Letter does not confirm selection for this event. Funding not recommended due to level of event. The Forum have agreed to award funding for travel to the RS Feva World Championships, Italy and the RS Feva UK National Championships, Wales.
Emily Ridout	Travel & Accommodation	£100 funding to compete at the 2023 RS Feva Irish Easterns in Dun Laoghaire, Dublin, 6-7 May 2023	Our guidelines state, applicants must be “Qualified and selected to represent their province/country”. Based on the guidelines, the Forum have not funded this competition due to the level of competition.	RYA Letter does not confirm selection for this event. Funding not recommended due to level of event. The Forum have agreed to award funding for travel to the RS Feva World Championships, Italy and the RS Feva UK National Championships, Wales.
Matt Ridout	Travel & Accommodation	£100 funding to compete at the 2023 RS Feva Irish Easterns in Dun Laoghaire, Dublin, 6-7 May 2023	Our guidelines state, applicants must be “Qualified and selected to represent their province/country”. Based on the guidelines, the Forum have not funded this competition due to the level of competition.	RYA Letter does not confirm selection for this event. Funding not recommended due to level of event. The Forum have agreed to award funding for travel to the RS Feva World Championships, Italy and the RS Feva UK National Championships, Wales.

Peter Ridout	Travel & Accommodation	£100 funding to compete at the 2023 RS Feva Irish Easterns in Dun Laoghaire, Dublin, 6-7 May 2023	Our guidelines state, applicants must be “Qualified and selected to represent their province/country”. Based on the guidelines, the Forum have not funded this competition due to the level of competition.	RYA Letter does not confirm selection for this event. Funding not recommended due to level of event. The Forum have agreed to award funding for travel to the RS Feva World Championships, Italy and the RS Feva UK National Championships, Wales.
Charlie Belch	Travel & Accommodation	£150 funding for the Inter-Regional Championships in Southampton, 29 - 30 April 2023	The grant must be submitted prior to the event commencing.	Application received on 5 May, event was 29 - 30 April 2023. Retrospective funding.
Emille Carr	Travel & Accommodation	£150 funding for the Inter-Regional Championships in Southampton, 29 - 30 April 2023	The grant must be submitted prior to the event commencing.	Application received on 10 May, event was 29 - 30 April 2023. Retrospective funding.

ITEM 13

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Council/Committee	Council
Date of Meeting	05 July 2023
Responsible Director	Chief Executive
Responsible Head of Service	N/A
Date of Report	26 June 2023
File Reference	
Legislation	Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Council Members Representation to the Reserve Forces and Cadet Association
Attachments	

A letter has been received from Mr Michael Murdock MBE, Chief Executive of RFCA Northern Ireland with regard to Council Members representation to the RFCA (NI). He advised that traditionally each Council was asked to nominate one Member. This was done at the Annual Meeting, where Alderman Cummings was nominated as the Veterans Champion.

However, the letter asks that given additional funding from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust more activities have been forthcoming, making the role busier. Mr Murdoch has asked the Council to consider nominating a Deputy Veterans Champion to support the work in the area.

Alderman Cummings has indicated that he is receiving good levels of support from an additional member of staff appointed by RFCA recently. Any approval to nominate a Deputy Veterans Champion would not be a Position of Responsibility.

Unclassified

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council considers the request from RFCA (NI) to nominate a Deputy Veterans Champion for the Council.

ITEM 14**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Council/Committee	Council
Date of Meeting	05 July 2023
Responsible Director	Chief Executive
Responsible Head of Service	N/A
Date of Report	26 June 2023
File Reference	
Legislation	Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Appointment of Diversity Ambassadors
Attachments	Diversity Ambassador Letter and Role Specification

A letter has been received from the Chair of the Equality and Diversity Steering Group, Jacqui Dixon MBE, asking for the Council to nominate one Member and one Officer to act as Diversity Ambassadors for the Council on the steering group.

A copy of the letter and the Role Specification is attached as an appendix. At the Annual Meeting of the Council on 7 June 2023 the Council nominated 3 Members (Cllrs Irwin, Hollywood and McKimm) as Diversity Champions for general representation. It would seem appropriate that one of these 3 Members be selected to represent the Council as the Diversity Ambassador on the Local Government Equality and Diversity Group.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council nominates a Member as its Diversity Ambassador on the Local Government Equality and Diversity Group and delegates the Corporate Leadership Team to select the Officer to also take on this role.



Equality & Diversity
in Local Councils

Mr Stephen Reid
Chief Executive
Ards & North Down District Council

31 May 2023

Dear Stephen

Equality and Diversity in Local Councils
Appointment / Reappointment of Diversity Ambassadors

The Local Government Equality and Diversity Group (the Steering Group) prioritises and influences equality, good relations, diversity and inclusion initiatives across local government in Northern Ireland. The Steering Group attempts to bring together best practice across the sector and in so doing, seeks to integrate the priorities of the Steering Group with the ongoing work of individual Councils.

A major implementation element identified by the Steering Group was the creation of a network of Diversity Ambassadors to actively promote the equality and diversity agenda in Councils. A Diversity Ambassador Role Specification is enclosed for consideration.

The Steering Group seeks to renew the collective endorsement of the Equality and Diversity in Local Councils initiative and so I would ask you to confirm which elected members(s) and officer(s) will act as Diversity Ambassadors for your Council. We are planning a programme of events for Diversity Ambassadors so I would be grateful if you would advise paula.hamilton@lgsc.org.uk of the names (and contact details) of your nominations by Friday 30 June 2023 so we can invite them to these events.

If you have any queries or require further information, please do not hesitate to contact Paula Hamilton by telephone on 028 9031 3200 or via email on paula.hamilton@lgsc.org.uk.

Yours sincerely

Jacqui Dixon MBE
Chair, Equality and Diversity Steering Group

Enc.

Secretariat:
The Local Government Staff Commission for NI, 3rd Floor, St Anne's House, 15 Church Street, Belfast BT1 1ER
Telephone: 028 9031 3200 Email: paula.hamilton@lgsc.org.uk



Equality & Diversity in Local Councils

Diversity Ambassador Role Specification (Elected Member and Officer)

May 2023

Purpose of the Diversity Ambassador Role

The Diversity Ambassadors will work within their Council and community to support delivery of the regional Equality Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan and help to drive behavioural and cultural change across the local government sector.

The role of the Diversity Ambassador is important because they will work at all levels helping to create a fair, accepting, inclusive culture which in turn will help to reduce the chances and any occurrence of discrimination allowing everyone to feel welcome, cared for, safe and valued.

Diversity Ambassadors Role Description

The Diversity Ambassador will:

1. Champion equality, diversity and inclusion across the Council.
2. Challenge other elected members and senior staff to promote the values of equality diversity and inclusion.
3. Act as a focus in the Council for:
 - engaging with stakeholders
 - sharing best practice on equality diversity and inclusion
 - driving positive actions
 - developing networks
 - participating in the promotion and development of equality, diversity and inclusion events held by the Council
4. Attend development events organised for Diversity Ambassadors to:
 - help mentor new Diversity Ambassadors
 - share good practice
 - develop case studies of good practice as appropriate.
5. Understand and effectively represent priorities for the local government sector in terms of equality diversity and inclusion.

6. Participate in task and finish groups that may be required to address any emerging equality, diversity and inclusion issues.

Training and Support Provided to Diversity Ambassadors

Diversity Ambassadors will receive regular training and support from the Equality Diversity and Inclusion Group Secretariat and will include:

- A guided review of the Equality Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan
- Information on equality reports such as the Equality Baseline and Impact Study
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Training and updates
- Cultural awareness and a positive attitude towards the provision of equitable services

ITEM 15**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Council/Committee	Council Meeting
Date of Meeting	05 July 2023
Responsible Director	Director of Place
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Regeneration
Date of Report	20 June 2023
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	Urban Regeneration Projects
Attachments	None

Members will be aware that the Regeneration Unit received a budget to work up projects to planning/procurement stage so as to be ready to apply for and deliver the projects should capital funding become available in the future.

The Urban Regeneration Team is currently reviewing the masterplans, including Donaghadee Commons masterplan and it is anticipated that a report will be presented to the Place and Prosperity Committee in September recommending the projects to be advanced.

As well as developing Council led projects, there is an opportunity for Council to work in partnership with external bodies to develop initiatives that would greatly enhance a town/city centre area, drive footfall and help the overall regeneration of that town/city centre. Reviewing the current opportunities one key partnership area that could be considered would be the Heritage and Culture sector.

At present many of these types of organisations are not for profit trusts or companies that have charitable status and provide a unique experience to a town /city centre as well as providing a retail offering and employment, many of whom are bringing old heritage and disused buildings back to life.

Currently there are grants available for the Heritage and Arts Sector to apply for, including funding to help with the capital development works needed to improve these facilities to make them more sustainable and to provide a better overall offering and outcomes. The issue is that many of them do not have the required funding available to work up the projects to develop an Outline Business Case which would be needed by funders and obtain planning permission. It is believed that if the Council was to work in partnership with such organisations and provide some match funding this may be the catalyst to enable that organisation to develop plans to be ready to access funding opportunities as they materialise. Which in turn will ultimately help with the regeneration of our city and towns.

The Plan:

1. The Council issues an Expression of Interest to NPOs or Charitable companies that wish to develop a heritage/cultural led regeneration project in a town/city centre.
2. The Council will offer up to £15,000 to work up a project. This must be at least matched by the recipient and Memorandum of Understanding agreed.
3. The Council will assess applications looking at:
 - 3.1. The type and nature of the regeneration project.
 - 3.2. The costs of developing the project and if the applicant has sufficient funds to proceed if the grant is received.
 - 3.3. The area of the town/city centre where the project is to be developed and how it will enhance the regeneration including driving footfall/evening economy/employment.
 - 3.4. Funding opportunities that may be available to provide the capital funds to deliver the project.
 - 3.5. Any displacement.
4. The Council will fund one project in this financial year but will review the expressions of interest should further funding become available.

It is believed that partnership working of this kind can help develop regeneration projects in a sector that may currently have limited resources, but that have projects that once realised can greatly enhance the offering within a town/city.

If the Council agrees to proceed with this project the funding can be met from existing budgets.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council approves the report and proceeds to invite expressions of interest as outlined.

ITEM 16**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Council/Committee	Environment Committee
Date of Meeting	05 July 2023
Responsible Director	Director of Environment
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Regulatory Services
Date of Report	27 June 2023
File Reference	LR 100
Legislation	The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (NI) Order 1985
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Grant of Entertainment Licence
Attachments	

An application has been received for the grant of entertainment licence as follows:

Newtownards Orange Hall, Mary Street, Newtownards BT23 4DG

Applicant: David Lowry, William Street, Newtownards

Days and Hours:

Thursday and Friday between the hours of 18.00 and 23.00 hrs

Saturday between the hours of 14.00 and 23.00 hrs

Type of entertainment: Theatrical performances, indoor dancing, singing and music or any other entertainment of a like kind; equipment for playing snooker or similar games.

The PSNI and NIFRS have been consulted and there are no objections.

Environmental Health has recommended that to reduce noise disturbance to neighbouring premises the windows and doors should be maintained closed during entertainment.

RECOMMENDATION

That the application is granted with the additional condition of licence that:

.
All windows and doors should be maintained closed during entertainment.

ITEM 17**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Council/Committee	Council
Date of Meeting	05 July 2023
Responsible Director	Chief Executive
Responsible Head of Service	N/A
Date of Report	28 June 2023
File Reference	
Legislation	Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014
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
Attachments	Appendix 1: Letter from Council to NAC Appendix 2 Letter from NAC to Council

The Council responded to the consultation from the National Association of Councillors (NAC) with regard to their draft constitution (appendix 1).

A response has been received from the Regional Secretary of the NAC (appendix 2) advising that the recommended changes to the Constitution have not been accepted.

RECOMMENDATION

It is Recommended that the response from the NAC with regard to its Constitution is noted.

From: Reid, Stephen <Stephen.Reid@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk>

Sent: Friday, May 5, 2023 10:11 AM

To: NAC NI <office@nac-ni.org>

Subject: FW: NAC NI Region Constitution

Dear Councillor Boyle,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft NAC constitution. Please find below the comment from Ards and North Down Borough Council in relation to the draft constitution (Revised 15 March 2023) as agreed at Council meeting on the 26th April 2023.

The Council agreed that Item 3 - Membership be amended to “Membership shall be open to individual Councillors in Northern Ireland as individual membership. Delegates to NAC Members meetings shall be appointed by Councillors who hold membership. All delegates shall have voting rights.”

The Council looks forward to the consideration of this response in due course and feedback from it.

Regards,
Stephen

Stephen Reid
Chief Executive
Ards and North Down Borough Council
Town Hall, The Castle
Bangor
BT20 4BT



National Association of Councillors
Northern Ireland Region

Mr Stephen Reid - Chief Executive
Ards and North Down Borough Council
Town Hall The Castle
Bangor BT20 4BT

By email to: Stephen.Reid@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

5 June 2023

Dear Stephen

Re: National Association of Councillors Draft Constitution

I am writing on behalf of the National Association of Councillors' (NAC) with feedback to correspondence received from Ards and North Down Borough Council that was agreed at a Council meeting on the 26 April 2023 in relation to the NAC draft constitution (revised 15 March 2023).

"The Council agreed that Item 3 - Membership be amended to "Membership shall be open to individual Councillors in Northern Ireland as individual membership. Delegates to NAC Members meetings shall be appointed by Councillors who hold membership. All delegates shall have voting rights."

This was discussed by the NAC's Executive Committee (EC) at a meeting today – Monday 5 June 2023 and it was unanimously agreed by all parties present, DUP, UUP, SDLP, ALLIANCE that uniformity surrounding membership across the 11 Councils incorporating 462 elected members would be best implemented for the effective management of the NAC as an organisation.

Membership of the NAC (NI Region) is therefore only available from within Councils as a Corporate Membership for their serving Councillors and NI Councils have been operating on this basis since the formation of this organisation over 30 years ago in line with the then equivalent departments and currently the Department for Communities (DFC).

The NAC (NI Region) is the only organisation that represents the wellbeing of 462 Councillors in N Ireland and enjoys the support of political parties and independents.

I trust that this response is helpful to your Council.

Yours sincerely

Councillor Joe Boyle
Regional Secretary National Association of Councillors

ITEM 20**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Council/Committee	Council Meeting
Date of Meeting	05 July 2023
Responsible Director	Chief Executive
Responsible Head of Service	
Date of Report	26 June 2023
File Reference	CG 12172
Legislation	Local Government Act (NI) 2014
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Notice of Motion
Attachments	Notice of Motion Status Report

Please find attached a Status Report in respect of Notices of Motion.

This is a standing item on the Council agenda each month and its aim is to keep Members updated on the outcome of motions. Please note that as each motion is dealt with it will be removed from the report.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council notes the report.

NOM REF	DATE RECEIVED	NOTICE	SUBMITTED BY	COUNCIL MEETING DATE	COMMITTEE REFERRED TO	COMMITTEE REFERRED TO	OUTCOME OF COMMITTEE WHERE NOM DEBATED	MONTH IT WILL BE REPORTED BACK TO COMMITTEE	OTHER ACTION TO BE TAKEN
	31/05/15	Permanent recognition of Rory McIlroy in Holywood	Councillor Muir	Jun-15	Corporate Services Committee – October 2015	Corporate Services	Agreed	TBC	Further Report to follow during 2023.
	21/01/19	Shelter at slipway in Donaghadee	Councillor Brooks & Cllr Smith	Jan-19	Environment Committee	Environment	Agreed	TBC	Officers awaiting feedback from potential funder
	25/09/19	Report on feasibility of holding annual remembrance service for those lost to suicide	Councillor Martin	Oct-19	Corporate Services – November 2019	Corporate Services	Agreed	TBC	Further Report to follow during 2023.
NOM118	16/01/20	Closing of a public right of way at Andrew Shorefield, Groomsport	Alderman Keery	Jan-20	Corporate Committee – February 2020	Corporate Services	Agreed	TBC	Further Report to follow during 2023.
	20.10.20	“I would like to task officers to produce a report to consider what could be a more environmentally friendly and benefit the wellbeing of the community for the use of the disused putting green on the Commons and play park at Hunts park in Donaghadee . Following the success of the Dog park in Bangor and the demand for a Dementia garden, both should be considered as options in the report. The process should involve consultation with the local community.”	Councillor Brooks	Oct-20	Community & Wellbeing Committee – December 2020	Community & Wellbeing	Agreed	TBC	Officers to liaise with Regeneration and consideration of Masterplan and also take into account play strategy local consultation when it takes place in Donaghadee and bring back a report thereafter.
	10/05/21	That officers are tasked to bring back a Report on how the Council might approach a Climate Change Action Plan and perhaps including - but not limited to - a review of all Council long-term investment, a Borough-wide engagement via an Innovation Lab, a Conference of Ideas, and values-based recommendations for next steps.	Councillors Walker & Egan	Jun-21	Environment Committee – October 2021 (deferred from September Committee)	Environment	Agreed	TBC	Various strands of work taking place across different departments on development of Council Climate Action Plan - led within Corporate Services Directorate.
	20.10.2021	That officers bring back a report to consider the option of transferring responsibility for bins which are currently the responsibility of the Parks Section into the Environment Directorate.	Alderman McIlveen & Councillor Cathcart	Nov-21	Community & Wellbeing December 2021	Community & Wellbeing	Agreed	Report to October 2022 C&WC	Cross departmental officer meeting took place on 14th June to progress further. Update report to September 2023 C&W Committee

	3.11.2021	That this Council, in liaison with the Department for Infrastructure, will seek permission for and explore a source of funding in order to make an artistic feature of the steps which lead from Princetown Road to Queen's Parade at Bangor seafront as part of Bangor Town regeneration, and brings back a report to Council addressing how this can be achieved as a pilot for the Borough.	Councillor Douglas & Alderman Wilson	Nov-21	Regeneration & Development December 2021	Regeneration & Development	Agreed	Sept P&P Committee	Urban Team worked up a design and met with DfI - awaiting response
	31.12.21	Coastal and Storm Damage to Ballywalter Harbour, repair costs and reinstatement costs	Councillors Adair and Edmund	Jan-22	Environment February 2022	Environment	Agreed	TBC	Report to be brought back.
	13.04.22	Environmental damage caused by modern day packaging	Councillors McRandal and Douglas	Apr-22	Environment Committee – June 2022	Environment	Agreed		Report to be brought back - TBC.
	17.05.22	2028 Centenary of the internationally renowned Ards TT races. Asking Council how best to commemorate this important sporting anniversary.	Alderman McIlveen and Councillor Kennedy	May- 22	Community and Wellbeing June 2022	Community and Wellbeing	Agreed	TBC	Officers considering report to be brought back to September C&W Committee
	19.05.2022	Business case for redesign of the parallel sports pitches and facilities at Park Way, Comber	Councillors Cummings and Johnson	Jun-22	Community and Wellbeing Committee – September	Community and Wellbeing		TBC	Officers considering report to be brought back to future Committee
NOM164	20.06.2022	Review of health and safety process re community groups	Councillors MacArthur, Brooks, T Smith and Kennedy	Jun-22	Corporate Services Committee - deferred to October 2022	Corporate Services	Agreed	Report to CS 20.6.2023	Further report to be brought back after the Autumn workshop
NOM165	20.06.2022	Report exploring the possibility of introducing a policy that shows commitment to supporting the wellbeing of our workforce by ensuring appropriate support is available to anyone undergoing IVF.	Councillor Greer and Councillor McKee	Jun-22	Corporate Services Committee – deferred to October 2022	Corporate Services	Agreed	Ratified at October Council	Further report to follow in 2023.
	21.06.2022	Engagement with relevant community stakeholders to ascertain community need and desires in respect of the Queen's Leisure Complex	Councillors Kendall, McRandal and McClean	Jun-22	Community and Wellbeing Committee – September 2022 – deferred to October 2022	Community and Wellbeing		TBC	Officers considering report to be brought back to future Committee
	5.07.2022	That this Council changes the name of Queen's Parade to Queen's Platinum Jubilee Parade in honour and recognition of the 70th anniversary of the Queen's accession to the throne. *** Amendment Received from Councillor Cathcart - That this Council, in recognition of Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee and her conferment of City Status upon Bangor, agrees to name an appropriate place or building within Bangor in her honour and that future Council Bangor entrance signs make reference to Bangor being a Platinum Jubilee City.	Alderman Irvine & Keery	Jul-22	Environment Committee - September 2022	Environment	Amended and agreed		Sept 2022 - Recommendation to Council that item is referred to Corporate Services Committee and report to be brought to a future meeting - TBC

	19.07.2022	This Council notes with concern that a number of planted trees in urban settings along roads which have died or have been removed but not replaced; Notes the importance of environmental and social benefits of such trees in the built environment; Notes that DfI Roads formerly had a partnership arrangement with Belfast parks for the replacement of trees but that this partnership ended some time ago; That Council officers are tasked with opening discussions with DfI Roads and DAERA with a view to exploring the possibility of a partnership which will involve the supply and replacement of lost trees in the Borough and then providing a report to Council for further consideration.	Alderman McIlveen & Councillor Cathcart	Jul-22	Community and Wellbeing Committee – September 2022 Deferred to October 2022	Community and Wellbeing		TBC	Meeting with DfI Roads and DAERA to be organised. Officers will bring back a report to September C&W Committee
NOM167	24.08.2022	That this council withdraws all funding to any sporting organisations with any political objectives or named references to terrorism in their constitution, club names, stadiums or competitions, and tasks officers to bring back a report outlining the specific relevant council policy.	Cllrs Cooper, T Smith and Councillor Irvine	Aug-22	Corporate Committee – deferred to October 2022	Corporate Services	Amended and agreed	TBC	C&W Officers considering report to be brought to future Committee
	22.08.22	Street Clutter Audit for the Borough	Councillor Dunlop and Councillor Douglas	Sep-22	Environment Committee – October 2022	Environment	Agreed	Reported to October 2022 EC Committee	Report to be brought back
	19.09.22	Establishment of an Animal Abuse Register for the Borough and write to the DAERA Minister to ask for the introduction of Lucy's Law and Reggie's Law for Northern Ireland.	Councillor T Smith and Councillor Cooper Amendment received from Councillor Woods	Sep-22	Environment Committee October 2022	Environment	Agreed	Reported to October 2022 EC Committee	Report to be brought back – June 2023
	21.09.22	Humane control of Pigeons in Conway Square, Newtownards	Alderman McIlveen and Councillor Adams	Sep-22	Environment Committee 2022	Environment	Agreed	Reported to October 2022 EC Committee	Signage has been erected in Conway Square
	9.11.22	That Council task officers to work with The National Trust to source external funding to develop and regenerate the Car Park at both Glastry Clay Pits & Knockinelder Bay for the benefit of residents and tourists alike in seeking to deliver the Councils Tourism Strategy for the Ards Peninsula	Councillors Adair & Thompson	Nov-22	Environment Committee - December 2022 Heard at R&D Dec 2022	Regeneration & Development	Agreed	Sept P&P Committee	
	16.11.22	That Council officers open discussions with Historic Environment Division regarding the return of the 13th century 'Movilla Stones' to the Borough and the provision of a suitable site for these to be located. Officers are also tasked with promoting these extremely important archaeological artefacts in the local community and local schools when the stones have been returned.	Alderman McIlveen & Councillor Cummings	Nov-22	Community & Wellbeing - December 2022	Community and Wellbeing	Agreed	TBC	Reported to March Committee Officers to discuss future location of stones with HED and further report to June C&W Committee
	24.11.22	That Council task officers to bring forward a report on options and potential funding opportunities to enhance and improve Council Football Pitches at Abbey Road Millisle to ensure they can be used and enjoyed by the local sporting clubs and community of Millisle.	Councillors Thompson & Adair	Dec-22	Community & Wellbeing Committee – January 2023	Community and Wellbeing	Agreed	TBC	Officers investigating funding opportunities and considering report to be brought back to future Committee
	09.12.22	That this Council adopts the White Ribbon Pledge to ' <i>Never commit, condone or remain silent about violence against women and girls</i> ', agrees to sign the Pledge, and tasks Officers to bring back a report outlining how we can amalgamate existing relevant policies, undertake the Listen, Learn, Lead programme within the Council, and identify effective routes to encourage other agencies and organisations in our Borough to engage with the White Ribbon Project.	Councillors Douglas & Walker	Dec-22	Corporate Services Committee – January 2023 Community and Wellbeing Committee - TBC	Community and Wellbeing	Agreed	Community and Wellbeing - TBC	14/3 it has been agreed that this NOM will transfer to PCSP/C&W. Report to September C&W Committee

	13.12.22	That this Council expresses concern with the number of residential and commercial bins left on public footways in the Borough long after the bin collection date. Bins left on public footways are not only unsightly, they can lead to hygiene and contamination issues, as well as safety concerns, forcing pedestrians onto the road due to the blocking of a footway. This Council notes its own lack of enforcement powers to tackle this issue and expresses concern at the Department for Infrastructure's reluctance to use its own enforcement powers. Accordingly, this Council agrees to write to the Department for Infrastructure asking the Department to engage with Councils with the aim of creating appropriate enforcement powers to tackle this issue. Council Officers, will in the meantime, bring back a report to the appropriate committee detailing action that the Council can take under current powers to try address the issue of bins left on public footways.	Councillors Cathcart and MacArthur	Dec-22	Environment Committee – January 2023	Environment	Agreed	June Committee	Alternative proposal agreed at June Committee. Update report to be brought to a future meeting.
	08.12.22	This Council acknowledges the environmental and health benefits associated with the recent increase in cycling and declares Ards & North Down a cycling friendly borough. The Council also recognises that people who cycle are among the most vulnerable road users, and tasks officers with producing a report detailing ways in which we can help improve safety. The report should include possible sources of funding, potential partnerships, and ways in which we can promote good relations between users of different forms of transport	Alderman Wilson & Councillor Douglas (Postponed from Dec Council to Jan Council)	Jan-23	Community and Wellbeing Committee – February 2023	Community and Wellbeing			Officers considering progress report to be brought back to June C&W Committee
		Building on the practice of other council areas, that this council tasks officers to liaise with DfI Roads as a matter of urgency to offer its assistance in providing self-service grit piles for residents and to post locations of such grit piles on the council website	Alderman McIlveen & Councillor Cathcart	Jan-23	Environment Committee – February 2023	Environment	Agreed	TBC	The Council has contacted the DfI and a report will be brought back to Council in due course
NOM174	24.11.22	That this Council notes its declaration of a climate emergency in 2018 and the passage of the Climate Change Act 2022; agrees the need to reduce emissions to ensure happy and healthy communities and engages with community and government partners with the aim of piloting 'car free' days in our City, towns and villages.	Councillors Woods & Dunlop (Resubmitted from December Council meeting)	Jan-23	Corporate Services Committee – February 2023	Corporate Services		Update at Sept 2023 committee planned	Further Report planned in 2023.
	08.01.2023	That this Council writes to the Permanent Secretary of the Department for Infrastructure expressing concern that the provision of a footpath at Shore Road Ballyhalbert is currently not considered a priority by the Department following the completion of a feasibility study which demonstrated need. That the Council highlights the road safety concerns raised by residents for pedestrians using the Shore Road from the village to the residential developments including Park Homes and St Andrew's. That Council requests that the Department for Infrastructure makes the installation of a footpath a priority and commits to deliver the scheme as a matter of urgency.	Councillors Adair & Edmund	Jan-23	Place & Prosperity – February 2023	Place & Prosperity	Ltr issued to DfI and response reported to June P&P	TBC	Further agreed at June P&P that Council writes to DfI expressing disappointment in the response...and tasks officers to work with land owners and the caravan park to explore options to develop a safe pedestrian walkway at the location as a potential village renewal project
NOM175	17.01.2023	This Council supports local residents who have started a petition which calls for a pedestrian crossing on Moat Street, Donaghadee, near to the Spar store. This road can be extremely busy and residents have real safety concerns when trying to cross it. Not only do many people use this area to cross to shop at the Spar store, others need to cross the road to get children to and from the local schools. This Council will write to the Department of Infrastructure and call on them to listen to local residents, take on board their concerns and take the necessary steps to install a pedestrian crossing in this vicinity.	Councillors T Smith and Brooks	Jan-23	Corporate Services Committee – February 2023	Corporate Services		Report to CS 20.6.2023	Query on whether the DfI 'assessment' of the road has happened has been sent to the DfI 21/6. Remove from tracker after ratification by Council

	17.01.2023	This Council notes its previous sponsorship of the Community Asset Transfer request from Branch Out Community Group and welcomes the agreement from DfI to lease the woodland area to the group for 1 year. Officers will: • Write to DfI to express council's support for the work of Branch Out on the DfI-owned site and how it complements The Big Plan for Ards and North Down. • Write to the EA to express council's support for their work on the EA-owned site, adjacent to the woodland. • Bring back a report, identifying what can be offered to support the work of Branch Out including, but not limited to, providing advice, support, equipment and finance. • Engage directly with Branch Out to identify what support is needed.	Councillor Moore and Alderman McDowell	Jan-23	Community and Wellbeing Committee – February 2023	Community and Wellbeing			Officers considering report to June C&W Committee
NOM177	12.01.2023	This Council honours the 50th Anniversary of the UDR CGC Greenfinches following the introduction of the Ulster Defence Regiment Bill in July 1973, which permitted the recruitment of women into the regiment, recognising those who joined within the Borough, and brings back a report to outline how the Corporate Services Committee can work with local UDR Associations along with other relevant bodies to support anniversary events in the Borough.	Councillor Cummings and Alderman Armstrong-Cotter	Jan-23	Corporate Services Committee – February 2023	Corporate Services		Report to Council 26.4.23	Remove from tracker as events planned for 2023.
	18.01.2023	The prolonged cold weather spells just before Christmas and last week resulted in icy, slippery, and dangerous footpaths and car parks in the Borough's City and town centres. It is not acceptable that in such circumstances the Council does not have a plan or the resources or facilities to grit these areas to enable residents to walk safely to and from the main shopping areas or fall when they step out of their cars onto ice. It is proposed that officers bring back a report with costs to outline what steps can be taken to ensure that Council car parks and footpaths in the City and town centres are gritted when the weather is forecast to have heavy snowfall or prolonged freezing weather conditions.	Councillors Morgan and McRandal	Jan-23	Environment Committee – February 2023	Environment	Agreed	TBC	A report will be brought to a future meeting
	18.01.2023	That Council, subject to consultation with addressees on the road, considers changing the name of that stretch of the A21 in Newtownards which runs from Portaferry Road to the junction with upper Greenwell Street, Newtownards currently named New Road to Viscount Castlereagh Avenue as a mark of the life and legacy of Robert Stewart, 2 nd Marquess of Londonderry, who was known by the courtesy title of Viscount Castlereagh during most of his life, in the 200 th year of his passing.	Alderman McIlveen and Alderman Armstrong-Cotter	Feb-23	Environment Committee March 2023	Environment	Agreed	TBC	Report to be brought to future meeting
	08.02.2023	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. football. A report to be brought back to Council following said discussions.	Alderman Irvine and Alderman Keery	Feb-23	Community and Wellbeing Committee March 2023	Community and Wellbeing	Agreed		Officers considering report to be brought back to future Committee
NOM178	09.02.2023	That this Council is concerned that recent data shows that the Ards and North Down Borough Council area has the highest level of potholes in Northern Ireland and calls on DfI Roads Service to produce an action plan to improve the quality of roads in the Borough.	Councillor P Smith and Councillor Smart	Feb-23	Corporate Services Committee March 2023	Corporate Services		Report to CS 20.6.2023	Remove from tracker after ratification by Council

NOM179	10.02.2023	That Council writes to the South Eastern Trust rejecting their proposals to close the Bangor and Newtownards Minor Injury Units. We believe that this will lead to a detrimental impact on patient care particularly at an already overstretched Ulster Hospital. This Council calls on the Trust to not only retain the minor injury unit in Ards but also to reopen the Bangor Minor Injury Unit. We see this as a better way to treat more people locally and ease the pressure on the Ulster. We urge the South Eastern Trust to listen to the real concerns from the public and we hope that this consultation exercise is a genuine one and not a cover for something that is already a done deal.	Councillor T Smith and Councillor Kennedy, also Councillor S Irvine, Councillor McKimm, Councillor Boyle and Councillor Cathcart	Feb-23	Corporate Services Committee March 2023	Corporate Services			Response to consultation to be taken at 26 April 2023 Council. Response submitted to HSE.
NOM180	14.02.2023	This Council rename the square at Portavogie War Memorial Queen Elizabeth Square in memory of our late Sovereign Queen Elizabeth II.	Councillor Adair and Councillor Edmund	Feb-23	Corporate Services March 2023	Corporate Services			Officers considering next steps for further report to be brought back.
		That this Council rescind the decision taken at the meeting of the Council on 26 th October 2022 that Council notes the report and expressing concern with the report of anti-social behaviour that is ongoing in and around Playparks. Furthermore, that Council agrees to carry out local consultation before taking a decision on the locking up of the 7 playparks identified in the Northern Down area, and instead proposes that Council notes the concerns raised with the decision taken to not lock the MUGA and playpark at Clandeboye and the playpark at Bloomfield; agrees to re-lock premises at Clandeboye and Bloomfield, as soon as possible, for a trial period of 6 months, subject to review, to monitor concerns and carries out local consultation at parks effected by changes in the locking up schedule in the Borough.	Councillor McKee, Councillor Gilmour, Councillor Irwin, Alderman Wilson, Alderman Smith and Councillor Woods	Feb-23	Heard at Council February 2023	Council	Agreed		Quotes obtained from security contractors – above tender threshold limit. Tender being prepared with assistance from Procurement Department for locking of 2 sites for 6 months trial and consultation ongoing for other 7 sites. Wording of motion amended by Council in April 2023 to change “as soon as possible” to “immediately in the meantime using Council staff” and to draw any necessary funding from reserves. Locking commenced 4th May.

	6.3.2023	<p>In acknowledging the many negative impacts of long term commercial and residential dereliction, Officers are tasked with reviewing current powers and how Council could best effect positive change. As part of this review officers would investigate using part or all of Newtownards town centre as a pilot scheme to tackle dereliction, which could then be broadened across the Borough if successful. The review may form a working group which would consider what incentives could be provided through, DFC whom hold regeneration powers, the Planning system, Building Control, or by other means, to encourage the re-use or redevelopment of local derelict buildings to provide new business opportunities or homes. Consideration would also be given to what limitations can be placed on public and private property owners who are not willing to work in partnership for regeneration and the public good. "In acknowledging the many negative impacts of long term commercial and residential dereliction, 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>	Councillors Smart & Irvine	Mar-23	Place & Prosperity June 2023	Place & Prosperity	Agreed - subject to ratification by June Council	TBC	
	20.3.2023	That this Council explores the possibility of supporting the Bookstart Early Years Pilot across Ards and North Down. A report is brought back detailing information about the programme, how it could be supported across the Borough, including cost and potential delivery partners.	Councillors Gilmour & Cathcart	Mar-23	Community & Wellbeing Committee 21/06/2023	Community and Wellbeing	Agreed - subject to ratification by June Council	TBC	
TBC	20.3.2023	That this Council recognises the issues and concerns detailed in the letter sent to the Chief Executive by The Kircubbin Harbour Action Group and agrees to write to the Permanent Secretaries of the Departments of Infrastructure and Communities, asking them to provide details of the responsibility they have in ensuring the public safety of the harbour and listing any details of dealings their departments have had with the owner.	Councillors Thompson & Adair	Mar-23	Place and Prosperity Committee June 2023	Place & Prosperity	Agreed - subject to ratification by June Council	TBC	Ltr to be issued to Perm Secretaries of DfI and DfC
TBC	18.04.23	That Council writes to the Permanent Secretary of the Department for Infrastructure highlighting the benefits of Community Transport and the Dial a Lift Service for elderly, disabled and socially isolated residents living in rural areas who depend on this service. Further request that funding is allocated on a longer term basis to continue this vital transport service for our residents going forward.	Councillor Adair and Councillor Edmund	Council April 2023	Heard and AGREED				
TBC	18.04.23	That this Council brings back a report that looks at the restoration of much missed events namely the Bangor Easter activities (including the Easter parade), Donaghadee Lights Up and Groomspoint Music Festival. As part of this report, officers should engage and consult with local communities and business to gauge not only their support for the return of these events but also ask, if they do return, what could be done to improve these events to allow for more community involvement and also to maximize footfall and trade for local businesses.	Councillor T Smith and McKimm	Council April 2023		Place & Prosperity	Agreed - subject to ratification by June Council	TBC	