

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

24 March 2022

Dear Sir/Madam

You are hereby invited to attend a meeting of Ards and North Down Borough Council which will be held remotely via Zoom on **Wednesday, 30 March 2022 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 March (Copy to follow)
6. Minutes of Council meeting dated 23 February 2022 (Copy attached)
7. Minutes of Committees (Copies attached)
 - 7.1 Minutes of Planning Committee dated 1 March 2022
 - 7.2 Minutes of Environment Committee dated 2 March 2022
 - 7.3 Minutes of Regeneration and Development Committee dated 3 March 2022
 - 7.4 Minutes of Corporate Committee dated 8 March 2022
 - 7.4.1 Arising from Item 6 (a) - Education Authority Strategic Area Plan Consultation 2022-2027 (Report attached)
 - 7.5 Minutes of Community and Wellbeing dated 9 March 2022
 - 7.6 Minutes of Audit Committee dated 21 March 2022

8. Consultations

- 8.1 Consultation on Minimum Unit Pricing for Alcohol in NI (full consultation document and link to the online response questionnaire can be found on the DoH website at: www.health-ni.gov.uk/MUP-consultation). Closing date 17 May 2022 (correspondence attached)
- 8.2 Consultation on the temporary changes to Urgent and Emergency Care services at Lagan Valley Hospital, Lisburn (Details including the consultation document and questionnaire can be found on the Trust's website at: www.setrust.hscni.net/getinvolved/consultations) . Closing date 22 April 2022 (correspondence attached)
- 8.3 Consultation On Proposals to Raise The Eligibility Ceilings for the Debt Relief Scheme. The consultation document is available to view or download at <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/consultations/proposed-increases-monetary-eligibility-limits-debt-relief-orders-northern-ireland>. Closing date is 28 April 2022 (correspondence attached)
- 8.4 Consultation on Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking. Consultation document can be found at <https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/news/modern-slavery-and-human-trafficking-long-launches-consultation>. Open from 11 March 2022 for 12 weeks. (Correspondence attached)
- 8.5 Consultation on Hub and Spoke Dispensing. Consultation document can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/hub-and-spoke-dispensing/hub-and-spoke-dispensing>. The consultation will close on 8 June 2022 (Correspondence attached).
- 8.6 Consultation on the Introduction of Statutory Regulation of Pharmacy Technicians in NI. Documents available at <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/consultations/introduction-statutory-regulation-pharmacy-technician-workforce-northern-ireland> Closing date is 16 May 2022. (Correspondence attached)
- 8.7 Consultation on the Review of Urgent and Emergency Care in Northern Ireland. Documents available at <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/consultations>. Closing date for responses is 15 June 2022. (Correspondence attached)

9. Courses and Conferences

- 9.1 National Association of Councillors Conference, Leisure & Tourism, The Royal Hotel, Scarborough, 8th-10th April 2022 (Report attached)

10. Request for Deputation from NI Housing Executive - Housing Investment Plan (Report attached)

11. Resolutions

- 11.1 Free School Meals (Correspondence from Fermanagh & Omagh District Council attached)
- 12. Request from Upper Ards Orange District No.11 to use Crommelin Park, Donaghadee (Report attached)
- 13. Annual Somme Pilgrimage 2022 (Report attached)
- 14. Infrastructure 2050 – Draft Investment Strategy for NI Consultation (Report attached)
- 15. Portavogie Harbour EIS Tender Award (Report attached)
- 16. Request to Light up Council Buildings for World Parkinson's Day (Report attached)
- 17. Sealing Documents
- 18. Transfer of Rights of Burial
- 19. Notice of Motion Status Report (Report attached)
- 20. Notices of Motion
- 20.1 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Adair

To mark the 400th anniversary of the building of Kirkistown Castle, Council tasks officers to work with the Department of Communities (Historic Monuments Division), local community groups and schools, to deliver a community programme of events to mark this important milestone in the history of the village of Cloughey.

- 20.2 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillors Greer, Johnson, Kendall and McRandal

That Council writes to the Department for Infrastructure calling for the prioritisation of the resurfacing of Bridge Road South, Helen's Bay due to the appalling state of the current road surface and the recent injury of a child.

- 20.3 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Walker and Alderman McDowell

That this Council - recognising the potential difference we could make to the lives of residents and businesses throughout our Borough if we were to have full responsibility for a Regeneration budget as envisaged in the Review of Public Administration - does agree to write to the Minister for Communities requesting that they undertake to devolve such powers to Local Councils within the period of the new Assembly Mandate. And further, that Officers are tasked to bring back a report outlining a programme of engagement with other Councils, SOLACE, and NILGA to present a united campaign to secure the Minister's support.

20.4 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillors MacArthur, Armstrong-Cotter, Dunlop, McClean and Egan

That this Council expresses its solidarity with the people of Ukraine in light of Russian aggression and congratulates the residents of our Borough on their unprecedented support for charities which are assisting those affected by this terrible war.

Further, that officers are tasked with putting together a report which outlines how this Council could assist in the resettlement of Ukrainian refugees in our Borough, including how they may receive wrap around support from a range of statutory and voluntary agencies.

20.5 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Boyle and Alderman Carson

That officers bring back a report with reference to the provision of flood lighting and creation of a running track around the Council owned facility and home venue to Cloughey FC, located at Calhame Park, Cloughey.

Circulated for Information:

- (a) NI Housing Council minutes and Members Bulletin March 2022 (Copies attached)
- (b) Northern Ireland Housing Executive Cavity Wall Insulation Action Plan 2022 (Copy and Correspondence attached)
- (c) Community Development and Health Network Strategic Plan 2021-24 (Copy and correspondence attached)
- (d) Independent Review of Northern Ireland's Children's Social Care Services, Newsletter March 2022 (Copy attached)

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

- 21. Proposed Change to Existing Flags Policy (Report attached)
- 22. Plant and Machinery Tender (Report attached)
- 23. Tender for the supply of Home Safety Equipment (Report attached)
- 24. Land adjacent to the Maxol Filling Station, Holywood (Report attached)
- 25. Invitation from Irish Guards to Colours Ceremony (Report attached)
- 26. Notification of Grant of Liquor Licence - Copelands Distillery (Report attached)

MEMBERSHIP OF ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

Alderman Carson	Councillor S Dunlop
Alderman Gibson	Councillor Edmund
Alderman Girvan	Councillor Egan
Alderman Irvine	Councillor Gilmour
Alderman Keery	Councillor Greer
Alderman McDowell	Councillor Johnson
Alderman McIlveen	Councillor Kendall
Alderman Menagh	Councillor Kennedy
Alderman Smith	Councillor Mathison
Alderman Wilson	Councillor McAlpine
Councillor Adair (Deputy Mayor)	Councillor McArthur
Councillor Armstrong-Cotter	Councillor McClean
Councillor Blaney	Councillor McKee
Councillor Boyle	Councillor McKimm
Councillor Brooks (Mayor)	Councillor McRandal
Councillor Cathcart	Councillor Smart
Councillor Chambers	Councillor P Smith
Councillor Cooper	Councillor T Smith
Councillor Cummings	Councillor Thompson
Councillor Douglas	Councillor Walker

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

A meeting of the Ards and North Down Borough Council was held remotely using Zoom on Wednesday, 23 February 2022 commencing at 7.00pm.

In the Chair:	The Mayor (Councillor Brooks)	
Aldermen:	Gibson Irvine Keery McDowell	Mcllveen Menagh Smith Wilson
Councillors:	Armstrong-Cotter Adair Blaney Boyle Cathcart Chambers Cooper Cummings Douglas Dunlop Edmund Egan Gilmour Greer Johnson	Kendall Kennedy (7.23 pm) MacArthur Mathison McAlpine McClellan (7.29 pm) McKee McKimm (7.46 pm) McRandal Smart P Smith T Smith Thompson (7.45 pm) Walker

Officers: Chief Executive (S Reid), Director of Organisational Development and Administration (W Swanston), Director of Finance and Performance (S Christie), Director of Regeneration, Development and Planning (S McCullough), Director of Environment (D Lindsay), Director of Community and Wellbeing (G Bannister), Corporate Communications Manager (C Jackson), Business Technology Officer (B Robson), Democratic Services Manager (J Wilson) and Democratic Services Officer (J Glasgow)

1. PRAYER

The Mayor (Councillor Brooks) welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked the Chief Executive to read the Council prayer.

NOTED.

2. APOLOGIES

An apology for inability to attend was received from Alderman Carson. Councillor Boyle advised that Alderman Carson and his wife were unwell with Covid and sent them well wishes.

An apology for lateness was received from Councillor McKimm.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Alderman Irvine, Councillor Blaney and Councillor Gilmour declared an interest in Item 10 – Leisure Insourcing during the course of the meeting.

4. MAYOR'S BUSINESS

The Mayor expressed condolences to Alderman Keery on the passing of his sister.

The Mayor referred to the recent sudden passing of Christopher Stalford MLA and he expressed his sympathy on behalf of Council to Mr Stalford's wife Laura, his children and the wider family circle. Members then held a minute's silence as a mark of respect.

The Mayor highlighted that Her Majesty the Queen had commenced her Jubilee Year marking 70 years on the throne of the United Kingdom. This was an incredible period of service and the Council wished her well in the year of celebration. He advised that he would be sending a letter of congratulations to the Queen on behalf of the Council and the Borough on this remarkable occasion.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Irvine, seconded by Councillor Smart, that the information be noted.

5. MAYOR AND DEPUTY MAYOR ENGAGEMENTS FOR THE MONTH OF FEBRUARY 2022

(Appendix I)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor Engagements for the month of February 2022.

The Mayor referred Members to his List of Engagements undertaken for the month of February 2022 and thanked the Deputy Mayor for his contribution over the month.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Douglas, seconded by Councillor Boyle, that the information be noted.

6. MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING DATED 26 JANUARY 2022

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Copy of the above minutes.

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

Councillor T Smith referred to page 4 and a query that had arose from a Member if an amendment was negativizing a proposal within the minutes. He sought clarity in that regard and asked when the minutes of Committees were being discussed could

a Member bring forward an amendment that would be negative to the proposal within the minutes. The Chief Executive confirmed that was correct he explained that would be considered as an amendment to a proposal and that was allowable but not a fresh proposal.

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

7. MINUTES OF SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING DATED 14 FEBRUARY 2022

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Copy of the above minutes.

Proposed by Alderman Irvine, seconded by Alderman Smith, that the minutes be adopted.

Councillor T Smith referred to the information that he had asked for at the Special Corporate Services Committee and advised that he had since received some of that information. He felt Members would be interested in the mileage costs, last year the Council spent £78k on mileage and in the current year it was expected to spend £144k. As Council emerged from Covid he felt that figure would increase. He noted 3 years ago he had requested a report to look at reducing the Council's mileage rate to that of the HMRC rate. Councillor T Smith advised that had that been implemented at that time the Council could have saved in the region of £70k. Councillor T Smith asked when that report would be expected to be brought to Committee. In response the Director of Finance and Performance advised that it was on the work programme for the next financial year and the delay had been due to the impact of Covid.

Councillor Greer noted that during Covid a reduction in mileage had been seen. She asked what the plan would be going forward noting that other organisations had planned to keep those rates low and she wondered if the Council would be encouraging staff to attend virtual meetings. In response the Chief Executive advised that the Council were yet to reach a final decision in respect of hybrid working and a working from home policy. The matter had the attention of Corporate Leadership Team however they were not at the stage as yet to bring forward a proposal.

Councillor Walker referred to remarks that had been made by Councillor T Smith regarding Council closing play parks and as the public and press were in attendance in the public gallery he asked if Officers could confirm that there were no plans to close any play parks across the Borough.

The Director of Community and Wellbeing advised that the Play Strategy that was adopted referred to some potential closures, enhancements and new facilities. The plan going forward was that if there were to be closures and new facilities then the Council would consult locally with the people in the affected towns/villages. No decisions had been taken at this stage.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Irvine, seconded by Alderman Smith, that the minutes be adopted.

8. MINUTES OF COMMITTEES

8.1 Minutes of Planning Committee dated 1 February 2022

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Copy of the above minutes.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Cathcart, seconded by Councillor McKee, that the minutes be adopted.

8.2 Minutes of Environment Committee dated 2 February 2022

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Copy of the above minutes.

Proposed by Councillor MacArthur, seconded by Councillor Johnson, that the minutes be adopted.

In respect of Item 8 – Notice of Motion regarding Ballywalter Harbour: Following storm damage, Councillor Adair asked if there was any update on when the work would commence on Ballywalter Harbour. In response the Director of Environment advised that he had no specific information on the timetable but he knew the Head of Service and his team were working on the matter. He reassured Members that the matter was progressing as indicated at the Environment Committee and he would report back as soon more information was available.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor MacArthur, seconded by Councillor Johnson, that the minutes be adopted.

8.3 Minutes of Regeneration and Development Committee dated 3 February 2022

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Copy of the above minutes.

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

In respect of Item 9 – Queen's Parade Update: Councillor Gilmour noted part of the item had been taken out of Committee as some of the information related to the proposed media strategy. She felt that some of the questions which the Head of Planning responded to would be useful to have in the public domain and she asked if that could be made available.

The Director of Regeneration, Development and Planning advised that the FAQ's had been updated on the Council's website providing the information that had been discussed. She stated that she would double check the content of the minutes and release the information.

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

8.4 Minutes of Corporate Committee dated 8 February 2022

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Copy of the above minutes.

Proposed by Councillor Egan, seconded by Alderman McIlveen, that the minutes be adopted.

In respect of Item 10 (a) – Notice of Motion regarding Park and Ride; Councillor Boyle added his support to the motion and stated that he would be interested in the response from DfI.

Services had been cut by Translink over the years due to the lack of use and therefore there was not the same frequency available for those who wished to use public transport. The location of the park and ride would be an important aspect. He recalled that there had been a private coach company who had tried to provide a service from Belfast to the villages along the Ards Peninsula in the evenings and the uptake of that service had been poor.

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

8.5 Minutes of Community and Wellbeing dated 9 February 2022

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Copy of the above minutes.

Proposed by Councillor T Smith, seconded by Alderman Irvine, that the minutes be adopted.

In respect of Item 12 – Greenways Network Consultation; Councillor Egan explained that she had been contacted by an interest group regarding visible/legible boards at appropriate intervals along the Coastal Path with the designs and plans detailed. She asked the Director to confirm that those boards were to be part of the consultation process.

(Councillor Kennedy entered the meeting – 7.23 pm)

The Director of Community and Wellbeing advised that was discussed as an option and the detail and costing of those had to be explored.

Councillor Egan asked if the detail of the boards would be brought to Committee or could she be advised in that regard. The Director stated that he was happy to make contact with Councillor Egan. It was the intention to bring to the Committee a more detailed plan for the consultation and the boards detail could be included within that report.

Proposed by Councillor Boyle, seconded by Alderman Menagh, as an amendment, that Officers bring back a report with further details on the appropriateness of, and any possibility for further public consultation in relation to the Comber to Newtownards Greenway scheme, with particular reference to the route to be followed by that Greenway.

Councillor Boyle detailed that within the report presented to the Community and Wellbeing Committee it had stated that it may not be appropriate to further consult on the Comber to Newtownards Greenway Scheme and his amendment was asking for the detail of that appropriateness.

Alderman Menagh was in agreement with Councillor Boyle and noted that Members were aware that he was not in favour of the proposed route.

Councillor P Smith understood where Councillor Boyle and Alderman Menagh were coming from in terms of consistency. He noted that the Comber to Newtownards scheme was the most advanced element of the Greenways network and asked if the amendment would cause any undue delay in the process. As alluded to by Alderman Menagh, the route around Island Hill would have been the preferred direction however noted at the moment it was proposed to mirror the carriageway due to the land issues.

The Director of Community and Wellbeing was of the view that the request was for more detail on a statement made and he did not feel that would cause a delay to the scheme.

Councillor Mathison advised that when he had heard the amendment he was initially concerned about the delay however if the amendment was just seeking clarity he was content.

Councillor Cooper asked if the report came back with there being scope to amend the scheme further was that possible. The Director of Community and Wellbeing stated that given the Council had approved the business case with the route as per the planning application there was a real risk that any changes would cause delay and could potentially put the scheme into jeopardy.

Councillor Cooper questioned if the scheme was going ahead as a complete scheme or was it to be approved and funded in parts. The Director explained that the letter of offer for funding from levelling up was for Newtownards to Comber and Newtownards to Bangor. There were five separate planning applications and the Project Team approach was that there were two schemes; Comber to Newtownards and Newtownards to Bangor. The delivery would be phased and funding was being sought from DfI on the basis of two schemes.

(Councillor McClean entered the meeting – 7.29 pm)

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Boyle, seconded by Alderman Menagh, as an amendment, that Officers bring back a report with further details on the appropriateness of, and any possibility for further public consultation in relation to the Comber to Newtownards Greenway scheme, with particular reference to the route to be followed by that Greenway.

(Councillor Armstrong-Cotter left the meeting at this stage – 7.30pm)

In respect of Item 13.1 – Notice of Motion regarding Play Strategy; Proposed by Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Councillor P Smith, as an amendment, that the matter be referred back to Committee.

At this stage, the Mayor vacated the position of Chair and the Deputy Mayor chaired the meeting for the item.

Alderman McIlveen felt there were consequences and issues that would flow from the decision that was made at the Committee. He noted there were also a number of Members absent from the meeting at the time the decision was made. Given the impact and the cost of £170k per year there were consequences to current plans due to be delivered and the matter needed further explored.

Councillor P Smith appreciated there were local issues and specific concerns around individual proposals. The matter was about the strategy and looking at the requirements for play across the Borough. He agreed that the matter merited further consideration before any major decisions were made.

Councillor Mathison was happy to support the amendment and felt there were potential consequences from the decision taken at the Community and Wellbeing Committee and it merited more discussion and detail in particular around the costs. He wished to hear more discussion around the proposed process of consultation should any play park at any stage be earmarked for closure. He felt that consultation was key as it would provide members of the public that were affected the opportunity to have their voices heard and furthermore would afford Members an opportunity to debate those specific individual decisions as they arose and within the financial context at that time. He noted that the Play Strategy was a 10-year strategy. He fully appreciated that there were issues within the DEA's and the desire for local representatives to fight the corner for their community. Councillor Mathison stated that there seemed to be a narrative emerging that if this decision was not passed there would be play parks that would close and he did not feel that was the case.

(Councillor Armstrong-Cotter re-entered the meeting – 7.40pm)

Councillor Boyle agreed there was a need to have a further discussion around the matter. There was an hysteria that existed that there were to be closures and he stated that was incorrect. Councillor Boyle referred to a consultation that had occurred regarding the movement of a play park in Portaferry. Overwhelming support had been received from the local community in Portaferry to retain that play park in its existing location. The views from that consultation were listened to and the play park was retained within its current boundary. Councillor Boyle highlighted that as example of what could occur with consultation. He reassured the public that the matter was about improving facilities and they would have their say when it was time for that consultation process to occur.

Councillor T Smith highlighted that within the play strategy it stated that in terms of the play parks in Donaghadee; Hunts Park, Pinks Green and Beechfield were surplus to requirements.

(Councillor Thompson entered the meeting – 7.45 pm)

Continuing, Councillor T Smith highlighted the petition that had been submitted with 1700 signatures in opposition to the closure of those play parks. In terms of costs, he outlined other items of expenditure which Members had passed which could have resulting in savings. The motion that came before the Committee was very clear – let's not close play parks, they must be saved. He felt the Members were delaying to the matter until after the election.

(Councillor McKimm entered the meeting – 7.46 pm)

Councillor T Smith requested a recorded vote. The amendment was put to the meeting and declared CARRIED with 28 voting FOR, 9 AGAINST, 1 ABSTENTION and 2 ABSENT.

FOR (28)	AGAINST (9)	ABSTAINED (1)	ABSENT (2)
Aldermen	Aldermen	Councillor	Aldermen
Gibson	Keery	McKimm	Carson
Irvine	Smith, M		Girvan
McDowell			
McIlveen	Councillors		
Menagh	Brooks		
Wilson	Cooper		
Councillors	Chambers		
Armstrong-Cotter	Dunlop		
Adair	Kennedy		
Boyle	McKee		
Blaney	Smith, T		
Cathcart			
Cummings			
Douglas			
Edmund			
Egan			
Gilmour			
Greer			
Johnson			
Mathison			
McRandal			
MacArthur			
McAlpine			
McClellan			
McRandal			
Smart			
Smith, P			
Thompson			
Walker			

Proposed by Councillor T Smith, seconded by Councillor Brooks, as an amendment, that in order to better inform members regarding the views of local residents, this Council begins within the next month to engage with the residents of Donaghadee and Groomsport in a public consultation to hear their views as to whether the play

parks at Pinks Green, Beechfield and Springwell should be retained or removed as per the play strategy.

Councillor T Smith noted that there much talk about consultation and therefore he was proposing to have a consultation to hear what the residents and users had to say.

Councillor Brooks stated that there was a perception particularly in Donaghadee that play parks were going to close. There was dissatisfaction and bewilderment amongst the community. A consultation had already taken place with a petition having been presented to himself with over 1700 signatures. For Beechfield that was an area of deprivation and economic decline. He was asking Council to consider the perception that existed that play parks were closing.

Alderman McIlveen did not support the amendment, he wished to see consultation however noted that should be imbedded with any action to flow from the strategy. There was opportunity to make improvements from the strategy as a whole rather than in a piece meal fashion. He wished to point out that the petition was not a consultation, it was a message of dissatisfaction and he viewed that as a result of miscommunication.

Councillor Boyle highlighted the need for the Council to wait for the strategy to progress before consultation takes places.

Councillor P Smith viewed the amendment as unnecessary, he appreciated there were concerns at a local level however there was a need to look at the matter Borough wide. He highlighted that the strategy was in fact a multi-million pound investment package for play areas across the Borough. The strategy was prepared by an independent third party who looked at the matter with a scientific approach and assessed demand and need. The possibility of enhancing the provision for older children and teenagers was an example of a great outworking of the strategy. Referring to the play strategy, Councillor P Smith referred in particular to undernoted;

- Donaghadee - 6.9k residents - It was proposed to have 2 x Tier 1, 2 x Tier 2 and 2 Muga's.
- Comber - 9k residents – It was proposed to have 1 x Tier 1, 1 x Tier 2 and a skatepark.
- Hollywood - 11k residents – It was proposed to have 2 x Tier 1, 2 x Tier 2 and 1 x Muga.

Looking at that on a comparative basis he suggested that the strategy was correct in the level of provision that was proposed across the Borough.

Councillor Mathison emphasised and reiterated that the Play Strategy was a 10-year strategy. The idea to pick one area from the strategy and commence consultation was not a strategic approach. Again, he emphasised that the local consultation needed to be meaningful, comprehensive and be taken cognisant of at the right time. He hoped by referring the matter back to the Committee, that Members could come to an agreement providing a balanced reasonable and positive outcome on the matter.

Councillor Walker did not support the amendment. The strategy provided the Council with the opportunity to empower its communities and shape the play strategy for their area at a time that was meaningful.

Councillor MacArthur expressed her disappointment regarding the substantive misinformation that had been shared in the public domain. She was supportive of play however that did not mean solely providing a swing and a slide. There was a 10-year play strategy which provided the opportunity to make a difference to facilities. The strategy included the appointment of a Play Officer who would have a tremendous opportunity in speaking with children to see what they would like to see in their facilities.

Councillor T Smith reiterated what it stated in the play strategy regarding those play parks that were surplus to requirements and therefore had already been identified for closure.

The amendment was put the meeting and was declared LOST with, 8 FOR, 29 AGAINST, 0 ABSTENTIONS and 3 ABSENT.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Councillor P Smith, as an amendment, that the matter be referred back to Committee.

Councillor T Smith and Councillor Brooks wished to be recorded as against.

The Mayor resumed the Chair.

In respect of Item 11 – Ards Peninsula 3G Multi-Use Pitch; Councillor P Smith asked if comparative data could be provided on usage figures for Portavogie and the existing facilities within Bangor, Holywood and Newtownards to see how those figures compare and provide context.

The Director of Community and Wellbeing advised that in relation to Portavogie that level of detail could be provided for the new scheme. For Bangor, Holywood and Newtownards he noted there were a number of pitches within those areas and asked if it was for the 3G pitches.

Councillor P Smith confirmed it was for 3G pitches. The Director of Community and Wellbeing confirmed that providing that information could be looked into.

Councillor Adair welcomed progress to date in relation to the Portavogie 3G Pitch, finance was now available to deliver that project this financial year and planning permission was awaited. He sought an update in that regard.

The Director of Community and Wellbeing stated that there was one issue with the planning permission that was being dealt with that had arose from NI Water in terms of the capacity of the drainage system within the village. A report would be brought to the Committee when further information was available.

Councillor Adair noted that the application had been in the planning system for over a year and he was disappointed with the progress in that regard.

Councillor T Smith asked when the 3G pitches came online what the pricing structure would be. The Director of Community and Wellbeing advised that the existing 3G pricing structures would be used.

Councillor Edmund stated that he did not understand the issue from NI Water regarding the planning application. There was already a pavilion on site and the new facility would introduce new and improved facilities. The project was shovel ready and it would be used by a number of sports clubs within the Ards Peninsula.

NOTED.

RESOLVED, that the minutes, as amended, be adopted.

9. MATTER ARISING FROM MINUTES OF CORPORATE SERVICES COMMITTEE DATED 20 JANUARY 2022– SOLACE ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Chief Executive detailing that a report was to the Corporate Services Committee of 11 January 2022 setting out a proposal from SOLACE NI to reorganise and enhance its professional support in order to increase its effectiveness in representing the professional side of the Local Government sector. This would see an increase in contribution by each of the 11 Councils by £5,000pa over each of the next three years as part of a pilot project and subject to the increased partnership funding as set out in this report.

The Committee agreed to defer a decision on this item to the full Council meeting. The report was set out below and included additional information to assist the Council in its consideration.

The Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE NI) was the professional body for local authority Chief Executives and Directors and was part of a national body, SOLACE UK.

The aim of SOLACE NI was to act as the voice of the professional side of Local Government. Working together with the Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA) as the elected member voice, together they represent the broad local government sector in Northern Ireland.

Membership of SOLACE NI was made up of the 11 Council Chief Executives and Directors from across all of the Councils in Northern Ireland. The average annual contribution per Council was currently £1,100. The Chief Executives Group of SOLACE NI met monthly and also held a number of workshops, briefings and seminars throughout the year. It had built a strong professional network across the 11 Councils.

SOLACE NI had a number of designated roles including Chair (changes annually), Vice Chair (changes annually) Secretary and Treasurer. It had become normal practice for the Chief Executive taking on the role of Chair to provide policy and administrative support for the year; usually a person was seconded from within their

own organisation. The cost of this role was met via a mixture of funding that came from SOLACE UK, the Local Government Training Group and Corporate Sponsorship. The officer was funded to a salary level of a max salary of PO2.

SOLACE NI had been reviewing its effectiveness and discussed this with its partners to understand how it could free up more time of the Chief Executives from the administration of the operations and more effectively and better lead the professional sector. This review had considered how the current role could be strengthened to better benefit Local Government and to complement the work of NILGA rather than duplicate it.

This had led to the conclusion that to strengthen Local Government SOLACE NI would focus on the following:

- **Lead:** *To be a collective voice for the professional side of local government. Seeking out opportunities to strengthen the sector and articulating our challenges.*
- **Connect:** *To place local government as an integral part of the public sector providing a vital connection between local communities and decision making. To seek out opportunities for collaboration with central government and other sector/ bodies. To identify opportunities for learning and collaboration within the sector.*
- **Shape:** *To shape 21st century local government ensuring the sector has a strong role in shaping regional policy, strategy, and legislation.*
- **Learn:** *Horizon scanning globally and locally. Learning from ourselves and others to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the sector and the services which we provide. Helping keep the sector relevant, efficient, and forward thinking.*
- **Do:** *Commission and carry out research and pilots on topics of interest to the sector in general. Having a planned and focused approach to engaging in consultations and influencing regional policy.*
- **Sustain:** *To undertaken work as needed to improve talent identification and development, custodianship and policy to ensure the ongoing relevance and vitality of the sector.*

Some examples of the current work and role of SOLACE NI were as follows:

- COVID19 Response: regular meetings with the Chief Medical Officer, Chief Scientific Officer and other senior DoH staff to coordinate response to the pandemic.
- Chairing the NI Emergency Planning Group
- Civil Contingencies Group (NI)
- Strategic Waste Management Group
- Chair of the Local Government Training Group
- EU Exit Task and Finish Group
- Economic Recovery Taskforce
- NICS Permanent Secretaries Group Engagement Forum
- SOLACE UK Regional Leads Group interfacing with UK Government
- High Street Taskforce membership

SOLACE NI would respond to consultations, advise on and carry out research on policy reviews / development, support the statutory Partnership Panel and work in the interest of Local Government with a variety of bodies including all of the NI Executive Departments. It had worked with the DfC Officials on the Local Government Finance Group to ensure equitable funding outcomes. It would present evidence to NI Assembly Committees and coordinate cross Council work where appropriate and develop strong networks throughout the public sector. The work of SOLACE NI also brought corporate benefits to the Council as it worked in the interest of all service areas, not just those specifically relevant to the Chief Executive or Directors, for example, SOLACE NI would deal with matters raised by groups such as Building Control NI, the Chief Leisure Officers Association (CLOA) and Environmental Health NI.

As would be expected, the role and demands on Chief Executives and SOLACE NI had changed and increased since the impact of the reorganisation of Local Government, BREXIT preparations, COVID response and recovery. Increasingly SOLACE NI had been seen as the "go to" professional body by central government Departments and outside bodies over the last number of years.

This growing demand had put a strain on the support needs of SOLACE NI and the time to be given by Chief Executives. There was a growing need for the Policy / Executive Officer to be at a more senior level enabling them to confidently and independently support the work of the group and to make it more effective by releasing Chief Executives from some of this role.

Issues of business continuity had also arisen with the current model which sees the support officer change every year resulting in a continual loss of skills, knowledge and processes.

This challenge had been discussed with partners and it had been concluded that to develop and enhance their role, providing a professional voice to lobby and advocate for the sector, SOLACE NI had reviewed the options and believe it was necessary to reorganise and instead of employing a full time Policy / Administrative Officer (PO 2) replace this with a dedicated Policy / Executive Officer (PO 10) and part time Administrative support (Scale 6) rather than the current full time administrative officer role. The new roles would be recruited on a three-year trial / pilot basis with the option to extend, thereby improving business continuity. A business case had been prepared to support this proposal.

A new funding model had been developed to finance this new proposal. It comprised of increased annual contributions from:

- Each of the 11 member Councils
- SOLACE UK
- Local Government Training Group
- Department for Communities (new funding)
- Business Sponsorship.

SOLACE NI were therefore seeking an additional annual contribution of £5,000 per annum per Council towards funding these resources which would leverage a total of

£130,000 per annum. This contribution can be met from reassigning some existing training, development and other budgets so would be at no additional cost to the Council.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the reassignment of £5,000 from existing budgets to an increased membership contribution to SOLACE NI for the next 3 financial years as a pilot project and subject to partner funding being in place.

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

Councillor Mathison was content with the information contained within the report that there was value added by SOLACE that would justify the expenditure which could be found from existing budgets. He asked once the trial period elapsed would the matter be reviewed before any further changes agreed.

The Chief Executive explained that since the time of the writing the report it had been thought that the arrangement would be for 3 years as the Department for Communities were to make a commitment of £30k for each of those years. The Department, however, had subsequently advised that they could only provide a commitment for one year at this stage. The Chief Executive confirmed that the arrangements would be reviewed after one year.

Councillor T Smith referred to the recommendation which was for noting and he asked why the matter had progressed before the Council had agreed. The Chief Executive advised that most of the other Council's had dealt with the matter under delegated authority and therefore did not require Council's approval. The Chief Executive felt, however, that it was important in terms of transparency that the report be presented to Council.

Councillor T Smith did not see the benefit in the expenditure and noted that he would not be supporting the recommendation.

Alderman McIlveen sought clarity that the recommendation would reflect one financial year after which there would be a review. He also noted that the matter was subject to partner funding being in place and he asked if the other Council's had approved the expenditure.

In response the Chief Executive clarified that the funding was for one year. Nine Councils had approved the funding at this stage. The critical partner was the DfC and if funding was not provided from them then the project could not proceed.

Alderman McIlveen sought assurances for any potential staff that would be employed stating that he would not like to see a situation where staff were employed for a year and then lost their job. The Chief Executive advised that the position would be a secondment opportunity.

Councillor Boyle supported the proposal and felt the project would assist the Council and bring benefit.

Councillor Edmund felt the reassurance had been obtained and was content to support the proposal.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Edmund, seconded by Councillor Mathison, that Council notes the reassignment of £5,000 from existing budgets to an increased membership contribution to SOLACE NI for 1 financial year as a pilot project and subject to partner funding being in place.

(Alderman Irvine, Councillor Blaney and Councillor Gilmour declared an interest in the undernoted item and were removed from the meeting – 8.40pm)

10. LEISURE INSOURCING (CW148)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that as indicated in the leisure contract extension report to Council in July 2021, because of the decision to insource leisure services currently contracted to the Northern Community Leisure Trust, there was a need to properly increase the resource to facilitate the transition, which would double the size of the in-house managed leisure portfolio across the full range of indoor and outdoor leisure services.

In October 2021, Council agreed to the appointment of a fixed term leisure insourcing project resource for a period of up to 2 years to support this transition.

It was envisaged that this would be best served by appointing a dedicated project officer who would be supported by an amount of specialist advice through a leisure consultancy which had experience of insourcing services and merging them with others.

The appointment of a dedicated project officer was to be trawled throughout the 11 Councils in NI. An invitation to tender for a leisure consultancy with insourcing experience was issued on 31st January 2022. Responses to the tender were expected early March. In order to expedite the appointment of the consultancy as soon as possible thereafter, officers would recommend that the Community and Wellbeing Committee on 9th March was given delegated authority to award that contract and begin to engage with the successful tenderer.

RECOMMENDED that Council grants authority to the Community and Wellbeing Committee to award the tender for specialist leisure consultancy to support the insourcing of leisure services.

Councillor T Smith stated that he would not be supporting the recommendation as he had stated previously he did not support bringing the leisure facilities in-house. He expressed concern regarding the future financial support that would be required.

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

(Alderman Irvine, Councillor Blaney and Councillor Gilmour were re-admitted to the meeting).

11. RURAL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT GRANT SCHEME (RDP19)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Regeneration, Development and Planning detailing that the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) had approached the Council to assist with delivering the fourth Rural Business Development Grant Scheme 2022/2023. The Scheme would be funded under DAERA's Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation Programme (TRPSI), which aimed to assist in tackling poverty and social isolation within deprived rural areas.

The former Schemes had been delivered across all Council areas and in the previous Rural Business Development Grant Scheme, within this area, 25 applications were issued a Letter of Offer to the cumulative value of c£60,976.

It was anticipated that as in previous schemes, all Councils would use the same templates, forms and process as agreed by the Department. It was recommended that the Council continued to administer the Rural Business Development Grant Scheme using the current Rural Development structures and additional staff resources sourced, on a temporary basis, if required.

A Contract for Funding would be prepared by the Department, which it was anticipated would follow the same terms and conditions as previous contracts, and it was again envisaged that the administration allocation would be capped at 10% of the value of the Letters of Offer issued. The contract was expected to include a maximum grant of up to £6,200 to the Council to administer the Rural Business Development Grant Scheme.

The allocation to Ards and North Down Borough Council area in capital grants was expected to be in the region of £62,000 (tbc). This could potentially mean between 13-19 micro rural business capital grants of between £500 to £4,999 being awarded. It was envisaged that funding would be towards equipment only and would exclude businesses that had successfully received funding in the previous year of the scheme i.e. 2021/2022. The actual business grant would be funded directly from DAERA to the applicant once Council officers had vouched and authorised the payment.

Officers were proceeding to have everything in place so that a call for applications can happen as early as 1 May 2022, in order to assist micro businesses during these difficult and changing times.

RECOMMENDED:

1. That Council agrees to join the fourth Rural Business Development Grant Scheme, using the same administration structures as used in previous schemes.
2. To meet the proposed deadline, it is further recommended that officers are given delegated authority to accept the Contract for Funding and to issue

Letters of Offer based on the Scheme criteria. A further update on the Scheme will be provided to the Council in due course.

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

Councillor Adair welcomed the further investment for rural businesses and commended the Director of Regeneration, Development and Planning, Head of Regeneration and their team who had been instrumental in getting funding out to businesses. He had been contacted by a number of businesses who had appreciated the funding.

Councillor Edmund concurred with Councillor Adair and highlighted the need to develop rural businesses in a more extensive way.

Councillor McKimm wished to put on record his thanks to the team for the work they had done during exceptional staffing circumstances during the pandemic.

Councillor Boyle wished to put on record his thanks to the Director of Regeneration, Development and Planning, Head of Regeneration and their team and the DAERA Officials for their valuable input.

Councillor MacArthur welcomed the grants for rural businesses. She noted that the terms and conditions for the next grant scheme would be the same and asked to what extent it was felt there was a sufficient number of businesses within the rural community that could seek application. In response the Director of Regeneration, Development and Planning advised that the schemes had been well subscribed within the past couple of years and Officers did not see that diluting. Officers would do their best to ensure as many businesses as possible heard about the scheme. As alluded to in the report those businesses that had been successful the previous year could not apply. It was felt there was a need and Officers were delighted to receive funding for delivery of the scheme.

Councillor Thompson concurred and welcomed the scheme. He asked for the timeline when an update would be brought to Committee. The Director advised that she expected that update to occur within the next number of months and delegated authority had been sought to issue the contracts.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Adair, seconded by Councillor Edmund, that the recommendations be adopted.

12. COUNCIL RESPONSE TO DFI PLANNING APPLICATIONS – CONDITIONS LETTER (FILE 160051)

(Appendices II, III)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Regeneration, Development and Planning attaching letter from DfI of 07.02.2022 and draft letter of response to DfI. The report detailed that a letter of 7 February 2022 had been received from the Department of Infrastructure Strategic Planning Directorate, requesting comments by 7 March 2022 from Councils in relation to the best

approach to take in order to bring consistency to imposing conditions on planning approvals.

As summarised in the letter, the Department suggests the implementation of a broad approach whereby once the Department had granted permission for a development, it would generally not continue to be responsible for discharging or monitoring conditions. With that approach, the Department would generally impose conditions that require the consent or approval of the Council rather than the Department. The Department would, however, retain a discretion to discharge conditions pertaining to regionally significant applications (section 26 of The Planning Act (NI) 2011).

The Head of Planning had examined the suggested approach and provided the following comments:

Section 26 Applications

Section 26 of The Planning Act (NI) 2011 sets out the Department's jurisdiction in relation to developments of regional significance. The Department proposes that in determining approvals of such applications the Council should be responsible for 'operational conditions'. Given the proposal was deemed to be of regional significance it was not considered appropriate that the relevant Council would be responsible for such conditions, as suggested.

Outline and Reserved Matters

Where the Department had granted Outline approval, it suggests that any subsequent reserved matters be dealt with by the relevant Council. Such applications attract a planning fee, therefore, there would be no objection; however, where the Department calls in an application and determines it itself, it was not considered appropriate that the Council should be responsible for discharge of, monitoring or enforcement of conditions which the Department had imposed, given the right to determine the application was removed from the Council using section 29 (call in). The only manner in which conditions attached in this respect could be challenged was by way of a public local inquiry requested by either the Council or the applicant, and thus it was not considered appropriate that the Council should have to seek a hearing in order to question proposed conditions that it was then expected to monitor or enforce.

Discharge of, monitoring of and enforcement of conditions

An approach as advocated, whereby the Council was made responsible for conditions imposed by the Department, was considered inappropriate. Such action would place significant additional resource burden on the Council in respect of having to discharge planning conditions (where additional information was required to be submitted, assessed, and approved in writing) which do not attract a planning fee. The majority of such conditions require additional consultation to be carried out with statutory bodies, and a report written and agreed, and a letter issued to confirm partial/full discharge of the relevant condition.

A further note of concern relates to the Department transferring the responsibility for monitoring/enforcement of any such conditions onto the Council when the Council had not been party to agreeing the conditions or the rationale for their inclusion.

Reference was made within the DFI letter to the approach taken by the Planning Appeals Commission; however, the Commission was dealing with appeals against refusal, or appeals against non-determination of applications by the Council, therefore, it was considered appropriate that any necessary conditions were discharged or enforced by the Council.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the comments detailed above in response to the Department for Infrastructure's letter of 7 February 2022 regarding Planning Applications – Conditions; and agrees to the Head of Planning's proposed response to DFI in this regard.

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

Councillor Cathcart expressed his frustration with the Department of Infrastructure and if it was responsible for imposing the conditions it too should be responsible for enforcing them. He supported the response from the Head of Planning.

(Councillor Johnson withdrew from the meeting – 8.51 pm)

Councillor McKee concurred and viewed the response from the Head of Planning as appropriate.

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

Alderman McIlveen agreed with Members and the Head of Planning in the response.

(Councillor Armstrong-Cotter withdrew from the meeting – 8.53 pm)

He expressed his disappointment with the approach from the Department on a range of matters and their dysfunctionality.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Cathcart, seconded by Councillor McKee, that the recommendation be adopted.

13. REQUESTS TO LIGHT UP COUNCIL BUILDINGS

13.1 Request to light up Council buildings to mark Fairtrade Fortnight (LP37)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Organisational Development and Administration detailing that the Council had received a request from the Fairtrade Steering Group to light up Council buildings in Fairtrade colours during Fairtrade Fortnight (21st February to 6th March 2022) and annually thereafter. This year, the date had been agreed as Sunday 6th March 2022, which marked the end of the fortnight. The light up date during the fortnight would be agreed each year in advance. The request was in addition to the annual request to light up Council buildings on World Fairtrade Day, officially marked on the 2nd Saturday of May (14th May 2022), which was ratified by Council in April 2021.

Ards and North Down Borough Council attained Fairtrade status in 2017 and have retained their status on every subsequent cycle.

The current lighting up policy stated that requests for the lighting up of Council buildings were deemed eligible if they: -

- Charitable, community or other non-profit making organisations based in or with a significant connection to the Borough and which are celebrating a significant anniversary or occasion.

RECOMMENDED that the Council accedes to the request and lights up Council buildings in Fairtrade colours on the date requested and that this is added to the annual lighting up schedule.

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

As a member of the Fairtrade Working Group, Councillor Egan welcomed the request not only to promote fair trade products but also to highlight that we were a Fairtrade Borough.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Douglas, seconded by Councillor Egan, that the recommendation be adopted.

13.2 Request to light up Council buildings to mark Rare Disease Day (LP37)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Organisational Development and Administration detailing that the Council had received a request from a member of the public to light up Council buildings purple for Rare Disease Day on 28th February 2022 and annually thereafter. Rare Disease Day was the globally coordinated movement on rare diseases, working towards equity in social opportunity, healthcare, and access to diagnosis and therapies for people living with a rare disease. The requestor had advised that she suffers from a rare disease and, as a borough resident, would be very grateful for the support of Council in lighting up Council buildings and raising awareness locally.

Since its creation in 2008, Rare Disease Day had played a critical part in building an international rare disease community that was multi-disease, global, and diverse—but united in purpose. Rare Disease Day raises awareness for the 300 million people living with rare disease around the world and their families and carers.

Rare Disease Day was a great example of how progress continued to be made, with events being held worldwide each year. Beginning in 2008, when events took place in just 18 countries, Rare Disease Day had taken place every year since, with events being held in over 100 countries in 2019.

Requests for lighting up buildings for the following purposes would be deemed as eligible: -

- a. To raise awareness of charities nominated by the Mayor
- b. To mark events directly organised or financially supported by the Council

- c. To mark events not directly organised by the Council but which may be held wholly or in part in the Borough and be regarded as of significant benefit to the Borough from a tourism or promotional perspective (e.g., Giro d'Italia)
- d. Charitable, community or other non-profit making organisations based in or with a significant connection to the Borough and which are celebrating a significant anniversary or occasion.
- e. Recognised sporting teams or organisations with a specific connection to the Borough which have achieved a significant accolade (e.g., winning a national or international competition).

Any requests which were not covered by the criteria outlined above or were considered to be of a political or potentially controversial nature, would require the consideration and approval of the Council.

RECOMMENDED that as this request does not meet the specific criteria above, it is recommended that the Council considers the request to light up Council buildings purple on 28th February 2022 for Rare Disease Day and annually thereafter.

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

Councillor Adair advised that the proposal was from a constituent, Daryl Cupples who had campaigned tirelessly for those living with a rare disease.

(Councillor Armstrong-Cotter re-entered the meeting – 8.57 pm)

He noted that one of the leading doctors/specialists in the field of rare disease, Dr Amy-Jane McKnight lived in the Borough and during his year as Mayor he had been privileged to hold a NI wide event in the Borough on Rare Disease Day. There were many people within the Borough living with a rare disease and he felt it was appropriate for this Council to light up the buildings to send a message to those who were suffering, raise awareness and support the ongoing research.

Councillor McKimm stated that it was accepted that amongst many things to happen when a person was ill was that they found themselves at the edge of society feeling unable to engage. Therefore, to take an opportunity to include and engage those people that were not only ill but those that were living with a rare disease was a vital matter. He had spoken to Mrs Cupples and he was moved by the inclusion that she felt with the lighting up of the buildings.

Councillor MacArthur welcomed the recommendation and advised that she suffered from a rare condition. There was a lot of people within the community that suffered from conditions that were unseen and unheard of. There were many people who had no voice and had no one to turn to for support about their disease. Councillor MacArthur asked if some individual stories could be shared as part of rare disease day.

Councillor McAlpine added her support noting that she suffered from a rare illness. She felt it was important to raise awareness and noted that employers often did not understand the needs of an employee suffering from a rare disease.

Councillor Adair was happy to include Councillor MacArthur's suggestion and felt it would be beneficial to share individual stories on social media. Mrs Cupples was honoured that the Council was considering the request and he spoke highly of her campaigning. He asked Members to wear purple on International Rare Disease Day in support of the worthwhile cause.

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

RECESS

The meeting went into recess at 9.04 pm and resumed at 9.17 pm.

14. CONSULTATIONS

14.1 The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs - draft Joint Fisheries Statement.

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy correspondence in connection with the above consultation. Document available at <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/consultations/consultation-draft-joint-fisheries-statement>. Closing date for responses 12 April 2022

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Adair, seconded by Councillor Mathison, that the consultation document be noted.

14.2 Department of Health - The Reform of Adult Social Care.

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy correspondence on connection with the above consultation. Document available at www.HaveyoursayNI.co.uk. Closing date for responses 18 May 2022.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Irvine, seconded by Councillor McKimm, that the consultation document be noted.

(Councillor Boyle withdrew from the meeting – 9.19 pm)

14.3 Advance Notice of Listing by Department for Communities (DfC) Historic Environment Division (HED) (FILE 165001) (Appendices IV - VII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Regeneration, Development and Committee attaching HED Letter to Council, Owner Notification, HED Consultation Report, Map of site and HED Criteria for the Scheduling of Historic Monuments and the Listing of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest, with associated procedures document (May 2019). The report detailed that the Department for Communities (DfC) Historic Environment Division (HED) wrote to Council on 11 February 2022 advising that it was considering listing the Lime Kilns

adjacent to 8 Springvale Road, Ballywalter, within the Borough, under Section 80(1) of The Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.

The HED document attached to the report 'Criteria for the Scheduling of Historic Monuments and the Listing of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest, with associated procedures' (May 2019) sets out its criteria for listing. A building could be listed for either architectural or historic interest, but in most cases it would have both.

The responsibility for listing of buildings of special architectural or historic interest lay with Department for Communities and it was this Department that would make the final decision on the proposed listing.

Members would be aware that the Council undertook restoration work to the lime kilns in 2020/21. This was a minor public realm scheme which included the creation of new paths, seating, planting and emergency repairs to the Kilns structure. In relation to HED's comments about the render to the rear walls, that was somewhat confusing as the Council's agent (Aecom) discussed the proposals for the works to the Lime Kilns with HED officials and obtained confirmation that the proposed works were acceptable.

The District Council Consultation Report provided information in relation to the kilns, and notes that they enjoy a prominent setting in a mini-public park overlooking the beach and were of local interest.

The advance notice consultation process was for a period of six weeks, and it was understood that any objections raised in reference to the criteria were assessed against the criteria for listing at a further evaluation meeting. After expiry of this period a final prelisting inspection visit was made to the building to check there have been no changes, then within two weeks of this visit there was a final meeting to discuss the building with the director of HED who had final sign off. Once listing papers had been signed, that was the date from which the limekilns were listed.

The Council welcomed the identification of features of the historic environment that were of special architectural or historic interest and their protection via listing. This practice was consistent with the regional strategic objective for the historic environment, contained with the Regional Development Strategy and the Strategic Planning Policy Statement for NI, which was to 'secure the protection, conservation and, where possible, the enhancement of our built and archaeological heritage'.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this report and its attachments and agrees to the proposed listing of the Lime Kilns.

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

Welcoming the recommendation, Councillor Adair noted that Ballywalter Lime Kilns was a unique attraction and was part of the story of the village and the wider Ards Peninsula. The Council had recently restored the Lime Kilns and breathtaking views could be viewed from the site. The listing would complement that restoration and

protect that for further regenerations. He made a special mention to local historian, Billy Carlisle for his work. Councillor Adair encouraged all Members to visit the Lime Kilns.

Councillor Thompson added his support for the recommendation. He noted that there would be a consultation but believed the listing would be welcomed in the area. The site had been in danger of being lost due to the erosion and work had been required to make improvements.

Councillor Edmund concurred with the comments and welcomed the proposed listing.

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

15. COURSES AND CONFERENCES

15.1 NILGA Conference – The Future of Regeneration, Tuesday 15th March, Craigavon Civic Centre, 10am-3pm

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Chief Executive detailing that ahead of the Northern Ireland Assembly Election, the Northern Ireland Local Government Association was hosting a full-day conference on the Future of Regeneration. The conference, which was a free event, was being held on Tuesday 15th March, 10 am – 3 pm in the Craigavon Civic Centre.

The conference aimed to highlight the pressing need for Northern Ireland's 11 councils to be transferred regeneration powers, reflecting on the experiences of local government across the rest of the UK and Ireland, and making the economic and social case for giving our councils these powers.

Speakers were expected to include representatives from the main political parties in Northern Ireland; the Northern Ireland Civil Service; the business community; local government; and expert speakers from across the rest of the UK, reflecting on the role of regeneration in other jurisdictions.

RECOMMENDED that Council considers whether it wishes to nominate a Member(s) to attend the NILGA Conference.

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

Councillor McKimm advised that he had recent information regarding the event and had already enrolled to attend the event via Zoom. He sought clarity regarding the nomination process. The Chief Executive highlighted that the conference was free although there was mileage allowance for attendance. It was normal process that such Conferences were reported to Council to seek nominations, however, attending by zoom had no cost to Council

Proposed by Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Councillor Edmund, that Councillor Thompson attends the Conference.

Proposed by Councillor McKee, seconded by Councillor Kendall, that Councillor Dunlop attends the Conference.

RESOLVED, that Councillor Thompson and Councillor Dunlop attend the Conference.

16. REQUEST FOR DEPUTATIONS

16.1 From Brookland Property – Flagship Centre

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Chief Executive detailing that a request to make a deputation to the Regeneration and Development Committee on 3 March 2022 had been received from Ricky McLarnon of Brookland Property, the current owner of the Flagship Centre, Bangor.

Brookland Property wish to discuss the long-term plans for the regeneration of the Flagship Centre and car park with the Committee. Any such discussion would be held in confidence given commercial sensitivities.

RECOMMENDED that Council agrees to the deputation request from Brookland Property and refers this to the Regeneration and Development Committee on 3 March 2022.

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

Councillor McKimm welcomed Mr McLarnon presenting to the Committee and hearing the plans for the Flagship Centre.

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

17. RESOLUTIONS

17.1 From Fermanagh and Omagh District Council - Public Inquiry into Northern Ireland's handling of care home residents

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy letter dated 9 January 2022 regarding the above.

Proposed by Councillor P Smith, seconded by Alderman Keery, that the resolution be noted.

Councillor P Smith stated that this Council received a number of resolutions particularly from Fermanagh and Omagh District Council. This particular resolution requested a public inquiry for Northern Ireland and noted that there was a public inquiry about to embark for the whole of the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland

would be an integral part of that. He recognised that it was a major issue although he felt the resolution was premature.

Councillor Kendall wished to put forward an amendment that the Council responds to support the resolution. She viewed the Commissioners words as poignant and the way in which various Care Homes were treated deserved extra scrutiny.

The Mayor was of the view that the amendment was a direct negative and sought guidance from the Chief Executive in that regard.

The Chief Executive confirmed that the amendment was a direct negative and suggested Councillor Kendall spoke against the proposal and if that was defeated she would be able to put forward the amendment at that stage.

Following the advice, Councillor Kendall stated that she was against the proposal. The call for the public inquiry in Northern Ireland was based on the Commissioners views and the way in which residents in Care Homes were treated during the pandemic was awful and she felt it would be better to have a public inquiry for Northern Ireland.

Councillor T Smith echoed the words of Councillor Kendall. Through the pandemic Northern Ireland had followed its own path, made its own decisions and he could not see the reasoning why Northern Ireland would not have its own enquiry. People had been sent to Care Homes who should never have been in a Care Home and it needed to be investigated why such decisions were made and the impact of those.

Councillor P Smith understood it was a crucially important issue that needed to be investigated. There were undoubtedly issues that needed fully scrutinised. The difficulty he had was if there was already a public enquiry underway at a national level there was a danger of duplication of effort. He was aware that the national enquiry had engaged with government Ministers on how to progress the matter. Councillor P Smith felt it would be best to await the outcome of the national inquiry and if it was felt further investigation was required that could be taken forward at that stage.

The proposal was put to the meeting and FELL with 6 voting FOR, 28 AGAINST, 3 ABSTAINED and 3 ABSENT.

Proposed by Councillor Kendall, seconded by Alderman McIlveen, that the Council supports the resolution.

Alderman McIlveen noted the comments of Councillor P Smith however the UK public inquiry had a huge scope covering a large area and he felt there was lessons to be learnt on the handling of the situation. There were families that needed answers and he felt that those answers would come in a quicker and more focused way if there was public inquiry for Northern Ireland.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Kendall, seconded by Alderman McIlveen, that the Council supports the resolution.

18. SEALING DOCUMENTS

RESOLVED: -

On the proposal of Councillor Cummings,
seconded by Councillor Adair,

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

- (a) Amendment Agreement dated 12 November 2021 relating to a loan instrument originally dated 21 January 2008 between ANDBC and Barclays Bank UK PLC.
- (b) Transfer of land at the rear of 1 Main Street, Kircubbin – Fitzgerald to ANDBC
- (c) Assignment of land at the rear of 1 Main Street, Kircubbin – ANDBC to Fitzgerald.
- (d) Lease from the Representative Church Body to Ards and North Down BC in relation to land at Bangor Abbey.
- (e) Redburn Site Acquisition between ANDBC and The Education Authority.
- (f) Regulating lease of foreshore lying between MHW and MLMN at Ballywalter Harbour – Crown Estate and ANDBC
- (g) Ice Cream Licence for Banks Lane, Ballyholme between Ards and North Down Borough Council and John Gibson, trading as "John Gibson & Sons Ice Cream".
- (h) Ice Cream Licence for Luke's Point, Ballyholme between Ards and North Down Borough Council and David Sloan, trading as "Swift Outside Foods Ltd".
- (i) Ice Cream Licence for Harbour Road, Groomsport between Ards and North Down Borough Council and David Sloan, trading as "Swift Outside Foods Ltd".
- (j) Ice Cream Licence for Seapark, Holywood between Ards and North Down Borough Council and Robert Neill, trading as "Carousel Ice Cream".

- (k) Ice Cream Licence for Millisle Beach Park between Ards and North Down Borough Council and David Sloan, trading as "Swift Outside Foods Ltd".
- (l) Hot Drinks Licence for Luke's Point, Ballyholme between Ards and North Down Borough Council and Peter Bonnar, trading as "Strawbox Coffee".
- (m) Hot Drinks Licence for Banks Lane, Ballyholme between Ards and North Down Borough Council and Aiden McLarnon, trading as "Coffee to Go".
- (n) Hot Drinks Licence for Seapark, Holywood between Ards and North Down Borough Council and Karen McMinnis, trading as "Off the Grid Coffee".
- (o) Hot Drinks Licence for Millisle Beach Park to David Sloan between Ards and North Down Borough Council and David Sloan, trading as "Swift Outside Foods Ltd".
- (p) Hot Drinks Licence for Cairn Wood, Craigantlet between Ards and North Down Borough Council Rachel McFarlane trading as "Batch".
- (q) Hot Drinks Licence for Kiltonga, Newtownards between Ards and North Down Borough Council and Neil Sinclair, trading as "Beanbox".
- (r) ROB's No's 14130-14150

19. TRANSFER OF RIGHTS OF BURIAL

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

THAT the following transfers be approved:-

Comber Cemetery Section 6 Grave 203 Bryce to Bryce
 Comber Cemetery Section 22 Grave 244 McClurg to Boal
 Comber Cemetery Section 23 Grave 37 Gamble to Patterson

20. NOTICE OF MOTION STATUS REPORT (CG12172) (Appendix VIII)

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

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the report.

Proposed by Councillor Thompson, seconded by Councillor Kendall, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor Thompson referred to a Notice of Motion that had previously been presented in relation to the village signage and sought an update in that regard. The Director of Regeneration, Development and Planning advised that planning permission had been obtained for each of the village signs and funding was awaited.

In response to the question from Councillor Thompson, Councillor Adair wished to clarify that the village signage was not a Notice of Motion and was instead a proposal that came from the Council Officers. The reason for the delay and funding having been lost was due to a number of village groups taken too long to agree to the signage.

Councillor Greer referred to a Notice of Motion that the former Alderman Muir had brought forward in respect of establishing greater links with the Army Barracks in Hollywood. She had recently attended a meeting with the representatives in Kinnegar and they were keen to try and re-establish links with the Council. Councillor Greer asked if that motion could be added back into the tracker for the next Council meeting.

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

21. NOTICES OF MOTION

21.1 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Cooper and Alderman Menagh

"That this council recognises the remarkable reign of Her Majesty the Queen and Her devotion and dedication to the people of the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth and will write to the Secretary of State and all ministers in the N.I Executive to urge adequate funding to be available to all eleven councils in N.I. for celebrating Her Platinum Jubilee in a manner befitting such a memorable and historic achievement; and furthermore, tasks officers to investigate all possible external revenue streams to identify financial sources to enable our council to hold a programme of events in our borough to honour this unique and inspiring occasion."

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

21.2 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Kendall and Councillor McKee

This Council will, for transparency in response to growing public interest in, and concern about, the protection of the trees in our Borough, and in light of the recent

commitment this Council has made to "Stand4Trees", make a monthly or bi-monthly report to the Planning Committee detailing: -The number of applications received for Tree Protection Orders, granted and/or refused including the basis for those decisions and, - The number of applications received for Works to Trees protected by virtue of being in Conservation Areas and/or protected by Tree Protection Orders considered by the Council, granted and or refused including the basis for those decisions. This Council, in line with the principles set out in the Aarhus Convention in respect of citizens' right of access to environmental information, will also upload details of Tree Protection Order applications and applications for Works to Trees to the planning portal or the Council website, to ensure the public can access these documents without the need to submit an Expression of Interest and/or Freedom of Information Request."

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Kendall, seconded by Councillor McKee, that the Notice of Motion be referred to the Planning Committee.

21.3 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Chambers and Alderman Smith

"We ask this Council to engage with Translink to establish the possibility of using part of the car park at Bangor Sportsplex as a park and ride. This is to, hopefully, find a way to mitigate the parking issues residents and commuters are facing daily, in Bangor West. A bus service departing from here to Belfast or/and the train station using a booking system could potentially offer a solution to the ongoing problems"

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

(Councillor McClean left the meeting at this stage – 9.53pm)

21.4 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Adair and Councillor Edmund

That this Council tasks officers to bring back a report on Enhancement and Regeneration of Kircubbin Promenade as a potential village renewal scheme for the benefit of residents and tourists alike in seeking to deliver the Kircubbin village plan.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Adair, seconded by Councillor Edmund, that the Notice of Motion be referred to Regeneration and Development Committee.

21.5 Notice of Motion submitted by Alderman McIlveen and Alderman Gibson

That Council in recognition of Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee year names the park on the Comber Road in Ballygowan "Platinum Jubilee Park".

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Alderman Gibson, that the Notice of Motion be referred to the Community and Wellbeing Committee.

21.6 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillors Cathcart, Douglas, Blaney, Dunlop, McKimm and Alderman Irvine

That this Council reiterates its support for the regeneration of Queen's Parade and outlines its disappointment at the unacceptable decision of the Department for Infrastructure to hold up the Bangor Marine Ltd. planning application (LA06/2020/0097/F) which was granted approval by the Council over a year ago. This Council therefore requests the attendance of the Infrastructure Minister, Chief Planner and the Director of Regional Planning before Council to explain the Department actions and to hear elected members' concerns about the impact of this delay and the need for the application to be returned to Council for determination as soon as possible.

Councillor Cathcart proposed that the Notice of Motion be heard as if it was referred to Committee by the time it was ratified by Council that would be when Purdah began within the NI Assembly and therefore the Council would be unable to invite the Minister at that stage.

Councillor Dunlop seconded that proposal.

The Mayor was content for the motion to be heard.

(Councillor MacArthur withdrew from the meeting – 10.07pm following by Alderman Smith at 10.08pm)

Councillor Cathcart stated that Members were well aware of the background to the Notice of Motion and he had no doubt that Members had been following the excellent joint campaign by the Bangor Central Councillors to urge the Minister to let the Council issue its planning permission in respect of the Queen's Parade application. Investment in the Queen's Parade area of Bangor town centre was critical to local regeneration. The site had been derelict for decades and had been voted Northern Ireland's worst eyesore. The site was identified as a key opportunity in the DfI's Regional Development Strategy and the Department for Communities had spent in excess of £9M-10M assembling the site.

In May 2019, the Department for Communities and the Council signed a Development Agreement for the site with Bangor Marine Ltd. The developer then submitted a planning application in January 2020. It proposed a new hotel, retail units, food and beverage outlets, offices, 137 residential units, under-croft car park, public realm spaces, play areas, events spaces, kiosks and pavilions. It was to be a £50 million private investment which was approved by Ards and North Down Borough Council's Planning Committee in January 2021.

As Members were aware, as part of the planning process the Council consulted with DfI Rivers in respect of drainage and flooding implications. DfI Rivers' Flood Inundation Maps indicated that the site was in an area of inundation emanating from Clondeboye Lake. In the absence of sufficient assurance regarding reservoir safety, an assessment of flood risk was carried out and DfI Rivers considered that the overall hazard rating at the application site was considered high. This was therefore considered by DfI Rivers to be an unacceptable combination of depth and velocity for

this particular development proposal. Councillor Cathcart stated that it was important to note that this modelling was based on a catastrophic failure of Clandeboye Lake, and not based on any assessment of probability. Due to this objection to this major development proposal from DFI Rivers, the Council could not proceed to issue its decision. DFI Rivers was unable to get an assurance regarding the maintenance of the reservoir because its own Department, the Department for Infrastructure, had yet to enact the provisions of the 2015 Reservoirs Act, now seven years after it passed. Members would be aware of a recent consultation on proposals to progress Orders and Regulations in this regard. Further to challenge by the applicant, DFI Rivers conceded to undertake a review of its model and determined that the potential impact on the proposed Queens' Parade development site was significantly reduced; however, its position in relation to its objection under the relevant flooding planning policy remained.

In assessing the proposal, the Council's Planning Department exercised its judgement and considered many issues.

For the reasons set out in the extensive case officer report, it was considered that:

- The proposal meets the policy provisions of the extant Local Development Plan, draft BMAP and the Bangor Town Centre Plan;
- No material considerations were put forward that outweigh the social and economic benefits that were presented within this development proposal;
- The concerns raised by Rivers Agency in relation to the reservoir inundation area, were considered to be outweighed by the positive benefits of this redevelopment scheme which would represent significant regeneration benefits to an area long neglected and awaiting positive intervention;
- This proposal represented an important opportunity to influence change in Bangor Town Centre and promote regeneration of the site to act as a catalyst to further sustainable development in the town, in line with the regional objectives.

The Case Officer Report also highlighted the fact that the site was a 'brownfield' site (previously developed) and many of the existing buildings could be refurbished/extended at any time. Additionally, given the phasing of the Bangor Marine project and the time to complete the development, it was considered that the outstanding matters relating to the introduction of subordinate legislation to give effect to the Reservoirs Act could be resolved to require compliance by the owner of Clandeboye Lake and thus provide the condition assurance.

The proposal represented an important opportunity to influence change in Bangor Town Centre, promote regeneration and was in line regional strategy. It was considered that no material considerations were presented that outweighed the presumption in favour of development the Planning Committee agreed and the application proposal was unanimously approved on 26 January 2021. However, there was a piece of legislation entitled The Planning (Notification of Applications) Direction 2017. Where the Council proposes to grant planning permission for a major development proposal where there was 'significant objection' from a statutory consultee, this Direction prevented the Council from issuing its decision before the expiry of 28 days, beginning with the date the Council notified the Department. The Head of Planning issued that notification to the Department, alongside the exceptionally comprehensive case officer report, and an equally detailed Justification Report on 27 January 2021. On 17 February 2021 the Department issued a notice

under other planning legislation to the Council directing that it could not issue the planning decision for Queen's Parade until further advised. It stated that the Department had decided to issue this direction to allow it time to consider whether or not the proposed development raises issues that require the application to be referred to it (i.e. 'called-in') for further consideration and determination. It further stated that it was the Department intention to finalise its consideration of this notification as soon as practicably possible.

The Department's own Practice Note regarding Notification and Call-In stated that call-in by the Department would be by exception only. Ridiculously other subordinate planning legislation permitted the Department to restrict the granting of planning permission indefinitely. Therefore, Councillor Cathcart explained that there was no time limit on how long the Department could hold the Council's intention to issue planning approval in limbo, while it decided whether it should deal with it and if the Department were too call-in the application to determine it itself there was no time limit on how long it could determine the application for. Councillor Cathcart noted it had been 393 days since the planning application was approved by the Planning Committee.

In its response to the review of the implementation of the 2011 planning act, the Council stated the following regarding the aforementioned Notification Direction:

"The Council considers that this referral scheme is unreasonable, as being a major application, it has inevitably been in the system for a particular period of time and this adds yet more time to projects which can be regenerative and positive in terms of place shaping. The Council can approve any number of local applications contrary to statutory consultee advices (regardless of cumulative impact), and additionally the Planning Appeals Commission can approve major schemes contrary to statutory consultee advices with no such requirement to notify the Department of its intention. In this respect, the Council considers this Direction to be perverse. If the Department is concerned with proposals, it should call them in in the first instance rather than rely on a Notification at the end of the process, adding uncertainty and delay to major projects, which is a deterrent to investors."

Councillor Cathcart completely agreed with this response as ratified by full Council, and felt it was more than perverse when it came to Queens Parade. If this application were refused and appealed to the Planning Appeals Commission, an unelected appellate body could approve major schemes contrary to statutory consultee advice with no such requirement to notify the Department of its intention. Yet this Council could not make the same determination. He felt that undermined the goal of giving planning decisions more democratic accountability by transferring planning powers to the newly formed Councils, a move that was most welcomed in respect of regaining the balance of power, after a number of decades, in respect of building positive spaces for the benefit of our residents and communities by having local representatives make crucial planning determinations in their own area. Secondly, in Queens Parade, drainage and flooding issues were identified in the pre-application discussions in 2019, the Department was fully aware and if concerned with the proposals the Department should have called in the application in the first instance rather than rely on a Notification at the end of the process and then sit on

the application for over a year when the Department had been aware of the issue since 2019.

Councillor Cathcart suggested that MLAs who approved this piece of legislation, never foresaw this being used beyond the 28 days. To hold up an application for over a year was abuse of this legislation by the Department and the Minister. Additionally, and crucially, what message did it send to other potential developers and investors for Northern Ireland. How could we hope to attract Foreign Direct Investment into our country if we could not provide certainty regarding planning decisions by locally elected representatives?

In a letter to Bangor central councillors last week the Minister farcically said "I would like to assure you, however, that I am mindful of the importance of reaching a decision in relation to the notification for Queen's Parade as soon as possible in order to avoid any unnecessary delays."

Councillor Cathcart referred to the various pieces of correspondence from the Department since January 2021 after the Council made its decision on the application. On 5 May 2021 the Department advised that it was still considering the notification with DFI Rivers, and it was hoped that a response would issue within a few days and there had been a number of letters since then and there had also been various assembly questions referring to the fact that the matter was under consideration. The Minister had referred to "In order to avoid any unnecessary delays" and Councillor Cathcart questioned what the Ministers definition was of an unnecessary delay. The Council had failed to receive an explanation of the 'complex issues' that were taxing the Department in taking 393 days to decide whether to call in the application for determination itself a delay of this long was unacceptable.

In conclusion, Councillor Cathcart stated that Bangor and had enough of waiting and there was a £50 million private investment ready to begin and a decision needed to be reached with accountability for this delay. Councillor Cathcart hoped all Members could support the motion.

Councillor Douglas advised that she was seconding the motion. She explained that the thrust of this motion was about inviting the Minister for Infrastructure, Chief Planner and the Director of Regional Planning to attend Council. Firstly, to explain the Department's actions, and account for the significant delay there had been in determining the planning application. Secondly, so they could hear the collective voice from this Council as to the significance of this application in the regeneration of Bangor, and the wider Borough. In addition, to urge the Department to return the planning application to Council, for the matter to be progressed and without any further undue delay. Councillor Douglas stated that the people of Bangor deserved better and were calling for action.

Councillor Douglas stated that it was self-evident to anyone who passed by the derelict site along the seafront that the redevelopment of Queen's Parade, with its £50million private investment, was critical to the regeneration of the town. She felt it was highly remarkable to think the Department for Communities had already invested over £9 million in acquiring the site, only for the Department for Infrastructure to hold up progress.

As detailed by Councillor Cathcart, Councillor Douglas noted that the Planning Committee approved Bangor Marine's planning application on 26th January 2021. An application which enjoyed widespread support from the people in Bangor and indeed, across the Borough and beyond. A year on, the Department for Infrastructure had not yet made a determination which was hugely frustrating for all. The community engagement with the Bangor Marine proposal to regenerate Bangor had re-energised the town and wider Borough; offering hope of a town centre revival. To say there was growing concern and despondency amongst residents and business owners alike about this delay, was a gross understatement. Further delay by the Department placed the current inward investment into Bangor at risk, as well as future projects. The Department needed to do the right thing and act now, before this deal was scuppered by the further delay.

Councillor Douglas wished for the Council, as a collective voice to send a strong and clear message to the Department for Infrastructure, to support Bangor, act now by returning the application to Council so the project could commence and the regeneration the town could begin. Until then she looked forward to greeting the Minister, Chief Planner and the Director of Regional Planning at Council to progress this matter.

Councillor Dunlop spoke in support of the motion in which he described as intense frustration and anger at the lack of progress on one of the most important building blocks in Bangor's regeneration. Bangor town centre was undergoing structural change that was of generational significance and long overdue. It was on the cusp of becoming the smartest seaside town in Northern Ireland with a mixture of heritage and modern, a social and cultural quarter welcoming all. Councillor Dunlop stated that there was £50m of private investment waiting for its green form allowing it to start. An estimated £10m of public funds had been expended preparing the site. Very significant further public funds would be committed to dovetailing new public space around the seafront through the Belfast City Regional Deal. Open House Festival had secured nearly £2m to refurbish the old Court House. Owners of the Royal Hotel would be investing an estimated £3m generating new essential homes bringing a new generation to a living breathing town centre. Councillor Dunlop stated that those who loved Bangor and were committed to seeing it rise now asked the simple question – was government working for the benefit of the people or was it so tied up in managing process and policy that it had lost its way. Councillor Dunlop was proud of the Bangor central councillors who could unite in this call to the Minister to come to Bangor and explain this departmental barrier to Bangor's regeneration.

Councillor McKimm spoke in support of the motion and urged Members to support the request to invite the Minister and her Officers to address the Council on the unacceptable delay on a decision on the planning application for Queens Parade. He paid tribute to the speech made by Councillor Cathcart and felt his skills and experience on these matters were a great asset to this community. Councillor McKimm stated that the matter was a Borough wide issue highlighting the benefits for the whole Borough. The unacceptable delay was having a deleterious impact on the regeneration of this Borough, the relationship between the community and the Council and the perception of the community for delay had a negative impact on the employees. Constituents had written letters to the Minister and had not received a

reply. As had been highlighted, over £9m had been spent on acquiring the land and pulling together these plans. Councillor McKimm highlighted that the matter of was an issue of accountability, the officials were public servants were therefore accountable to the community and the reason for the delay must be explained.

Alderman Irvine stated that the regeneration of Bangor town centre was crucial and the Queens Parade planning application was central to that. The people of the Borough were fed up with the situation and wanted to see development started. Over the years there had been a number of setbacks for numerous reasons. The current scheme had broad public support and a developer who was ready to deliver. One of the main reasons why planning was delegated to local Councils was to empower local politicians to make decisions that would benefit their own area. Alderman Irvine expressed frustration that one of the most important applications to come before the Council had been held up and noted that the Clandeboye Lake had not caused an issue in the past.

Councillor Blaney stated that 'enough was enough' and that was the message which the Council wished to send out loud and clear. He noted that redevelopment of Queen's Parade had been ongoing for too many years. The Council had got closer with the current development plan than it had ever done before. Councillor Blaney was determined to see the Bangor Marine development as the Council had endorsed to progress as soon as possible. He asked Members to unanimously support the call for the Infrastructure Minister, Chief Planner and the Director of Regional Planning to come before the Council to explain their current action and ultimately return this application to the Council for determination as soon as possible. Time was of the essence and the people of Bangor had waited far too long for action to be taken. Councillors, Officers and developers had already put in far too much time, money and effort to have the dreams of a redeveloped site dashed at this late stage. The Council deserved the meeting with the Minister and he hoped that she would accept the invitation.

Councillor Egan added her support to the motion. Bangor Town had so much potential, people in Bangor were crying out for this long overdue regeneration. She expressed frustration with the promises which had led to nothing, let down time and time again by various government agencies. It had already been noted how dysfunctional the Department for Infrastructure were and here Council was again on another issue, asking the Department to please see sense. It had been seen this week the anger felt by Bangor Chamber of Commerce in local media. Developers were frustrated and keen to start work on the site, £50million of investment on hold. Quite simply people were not buying the excuses from the Department. Council had played their role in progressing the matter, approving the planning application 13 months ago. Councillor Egan stated that the Council must now do everything in its power to put pressure on the Department to stop its dithering, delay and excuses and give Bangor a fair chance at regeneration.

Councillor Gilmour welcomed the motion and noted the issue had been ongoing for too long. The Planning Committee had made an informed decision and viewed the latest delay as an abuse of power from the DfI. The legislation allowed the Department 28 days after it called in an application yet the delay was now 13 months and she viewed that as unacceptable. If the Clandeboye Lake was such a serious

issue, she questioned why Kilcooley Estate or Kilcooley Primary School had not been evacuated. Councillor Gilmour welcomed the call for the Minister and her officials to meet with Council and she was content for a special Council meeting to be called anytime to accommodate the Minister's diary and she wished for that to occur expediently as possible.

Councillor T Smith felt that to have a prosperous and lively Bangor was good for the entire Borough. He expressed his annoyance with the Minister and which he viewed as a disastrous department.

Councillor Smart congratulated Bangor Central Members and their shared campaign. He recalled that he had signed the Bangor Marine development agreement on behalf of Council in 2018 and highlighted the developer's passion for the Borough to see the area improved and the project delivered. Councillor Smart noted that it was a win for all to see this planning application approved - residents would see the long-standing issue resolved, Council would see the regeneration in the Borough and for Stormont there was private sector investment. He viewed it as incredibly sad that the win for all would be lost if the bureaucracy was allowed to stagnate it.

In summing up, Councillor Cathcart thanked all Members for their support. He reiterated that Bangor had enough of waiting, the site had been derelict for decades with a £50 million investment waiting with only so long a developer being willing to wait. The Council needed a decision and accountability for the delay. The Council would welcome the Minister to come before Council but would rather that she returned this application to Council for issuance of the planning approval so that the project could commence the regeneration of Bangor could begin

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Cathcart, seconded by Councillor Douglas, that the Notice of Motion be adopted.

(Councillors Egan, Cooper and McKee withdrew from the meeting – 10.34 pm)

21.7 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor P Smith and Councillor Smart

That this Council writes to the Minister for Communities Deirdre Hargey calling on her to deliver the sub-regional football stadium funding that would enable Ards FC to fulfil their strategy and develop a new community stadium in Newtownards.

Councillor P Smith asked that the motion be heard the issue around a sub-regional football stadium had an acute timeline which affects Ards FC and its ambition to relocate to their own ground in Newtownards. That was reliant on funding and if the Minister did not make a decision before the end of this mandate there was danger that the project could be lost.

Proposed by Councillor P Smith, seconded by Councillor Smart, that the Notice of Motion be heard.

The Mayor was content for the motion be heard.

In light of the ruling made by the Mayor, Alderman McIlveen referred to Standing Order 29.1 and proposed that Council suspends Standing Orders under Standing Orders 17.1 12 (b) thereby permitting an amendment to the motion to be allowed to be considered.

Councillor Gilmour seconded that proposal.

The Chief Executive clarified that required an 80% qualified majority vote but if all Members were in agreement then a vote would not be required to be undertaken.

Councillor Mathison was not in agreement.

Given the time and rather than go to a vote, Councillor T Smith asked if the Mayor would consider to accept the amendment at this stage. The Mayor advised that he would not.

Speaking to his proposal, Alderman McIlveen noted that Members were only made aware that day that there was a request to be made for the Notice of Motion to be heard this evening and thereby no one was afforded the opportunity to submit an amendment. He outlined the principal for his proposal, he felt it would be hugely justifiable for the smooth running of this Council and to not allow that would be totally inappropriate.

In concurrence, Councillor Gilmour noted on this occasion Members did not have the ability to submit an amendment 24 hours in advance of the meeting and she felt it was only right that Members should be able to bring forward an amendment.

The Mayor asked Councillor Gilmour to detail the amendment.

Councillor Gilmour detailed that the amendment that she wished to bring forward was – “That this Council writes to the Minister for Communities Deirdre Hargey calling on her to deliver the sub-regional Stadium funding that would enable clubs in the Borough to apply for improvements - such as Ards FC to fulfil their strategy and develop a new community Stadium in Newtownards and Bangor FC to fulfil its aspirations for a new modern grandstand and Community Hub at Clondeboye Park and improvements for other eligible clubs in the Borough”.

Given the clarity, Councillor Mathison was content for the standing orders to be suspended.

(Councillor Chambers withdrew from the meeting – 10.42 pm)

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Councillor Gilmour, that Standing Orders be suspended.

Turning to the Notice of Motion, Councillor P Smith outlined that the motion followed the Minister for Communities recent decision not to progress the £36 Million funding package for local football stadia due to the absence of a functioning Executive. He urged the Council to call on Minister Deirdre Hargey to reverse her decision and make the funding available before the Assembly was dissolved for the election.

Councillor P Smith was aware that many Clubs were hoping to access funding to improve their grounds and facilities however he stated that he made no apologies for focusing his element of the motion on Ards FC.

Ards FC had recently launched a five-year strategic plan with the primary objective of developing a new community stadium in Newtownards. Access to this long overdue Executive funding was crucial to the project's development. The Council was working in partnership with Ards to agree a lease for the Floodgates as a site for the new stadium but obviously funding was needed to take it forward.

Minister Hargey had stated that she needed Executive approval to progress the funding but yet her Sinn Fein colleague Finance Minister Conor Murphy was content to progress the £100 million Casement Park redevelopment. Councillor P Smith expressed concern that there was an inconsistency in that regard. It was his understanding was that there was four component parts to the stadium's flagship project agreed in 2015: the redevelopment of Windsor Park, Ravenhill, Casement Park and the sub regional soccer stadia. Two of those projects had been completed and the Ministers now wanted to progress Casement project as well. Councillor P Smith wondered grassroots football who had patiently waited for this funding for over a decade.

Good community-based clubs like Ards deserved clarity on how funding would be delivered. Uniquely Ards are without their own ground and there was rightly great demand within the town for the club to return home. Ards had developed an excellent and ambitious strategy to transform the club and build a genuine community facility in Newtownards which deserved support. The Council was trying to do its bit but the Minister needs to step up and provide clarity and release the funding. This funding was well overdue and if it did not come forward before this current Assembly rises there was much uncertainty regarding the future timeline. The Finance Minister appeared to be able to fund Casement and therefore the Communities Minister must do the same for local football and Councillor P Smith called on her to change her mind and to make the correct decision.

If the Minister was adamant that the issue was strategic and cross cutting and therefore requires Executive approval he wondered could she not seek letters from each Executive colleague giving their support. Councillor P Smith welcomed in recent days, following a meeting with the IFA, Minister Hargey seemed to have moved her position on the issue and the League were meeting with its clubs to scope out their exact requirements. He hoped that was a positive sign and that progress could now take place before the election. The Minister was even talking about increasing the funding envelope to account for the inflationary increase in costs since the original proposals were developed 11 years ago.

In conclusion, Councillor P Smith outlined that Ards FC had big plans, this Council was doing its bit to help secure a site for a new ground but clarity on funding for the stadium was needed.

Following clarity requested by the Mayor, Councillor P Smith was content to accept the amendment from Councillor Gilmour including Bangor FC and the junior Clubs into the motion as ultimately his motion was about developing community football.

The seconder, Councillor Smart was also content. He outlined that Ards FC had recently published their 5-year plan which was entitled 'The Journey Home'. He expressed his gratitude to Council Officers for the guidance that had been provided to help Ards FC to secure the site on the Portaferry Road. For Ards FC to truly deliver on its ambitions they needed the financial support, that support would not only help the Club but the town with local economic spend. The Club had worked hard to raise funds however it would be almost impossible to build the entire facility without other sources of financial support. The Club had also worked hard to ensure that it was in the best position to avail of the funding. Councillor Smart stated that in August 2021 and September 2021, Minister Hargey had indicated that she anticipated to approve the funding shortly however sadly she failed to deliver.

In response to a question from Councillor Gilmour, the Mayor advised that Councillor P Smith was happy to incorporate the wording of Councillor Gilmour's amendment into his motion and he therefore was not going to consider that as an amendment.

Councillor Gilmour explained that she felt her amendment was necessary on two grounds, firstly she had added that it would enable clubs to apply- as it was not a foregone conclusion that even when the scheme was rolled out that all clubs would get exactly what they want. And secondly, whilst she welcomed potential investment and the creation or improvement of facilities across the Borough the Council must be mindful that it was not only Ards FC in the Borough who were hoping to benefit from the sub regional stadia funding but also Bangor FC were hopeful they would be able to avail of the funding to bring improvements to Clandeboyne Park. As the Bangor FC Chairman, Graham Bailie recently outlined in the Spectator "A new modern Grandstand and community hub are an essential step in the evolution of our plans to bring premiership football back to Bangor FC. Our ambition is to continue making progress on the pitch and supporting the local community off it". This was not just a matter of funding for football stadia but one of improving our communities. She highlighted that the programme had been sitting on the Minister's desk for two years. Under questioning from her party colleague Stephen Dunne MLA last September the Minister had replied that the programme would be brought forward "a short time ahead and in this mandate." Councillor Gilmour viewed the inaction as unacceptable, Clubs had spent thousands of pounds working up designs and plans. It was a costly business and clubs did not have infinite resources to throw down on working up schemes without movement on delivery of the programme from the Minister. Additionally, many of the schemes would also need private sector funding to be able to deliver the entire projects. It was unfair for clubs and potential funders to be left hanging in limbo.

She advised that her Party Colleague Peter Weir MLA had been working with Ards FC to try and help them realise their dream for a new home in Newtownards. He had pushed the Communities Minister who had tried to claim that she needed Executive approval for the programme. Executive approval had already been given for the scheme. Indeed, Peter Weir MLA wrote to the Minister of Finance and had received a response stating "I can confirm both the Regional and Sub Regional stadia Programme are agreed Executive Flagship projects which will be the recipient of ring-fenced funding." Councillor Gilmour stated that there had been enough

delay, Minister Hargey needed to step up to the plate and deliver the sub regional stadia programme.

Alderman McIlveen felt local Clubs had been badly let down and noted that Jim Shannon MP had met with the Minister some two years ago when he had been advised that funding would be realised imminently. He paid tribute to Ards FC and their Chairman for the work they had undertaken. The funding was vital for Ards FC and he outlined that there had been a long campaign to bring Ards FC home and there were deserving of the funding.

As a keen local football supporter, Alderman Irvine added his support to the motion and recognised the importance of the stadium for the people of Newtownards. Local stadium and Clubs played a large role in the social and sporting fabric of a town. He welcomed the inclusion of Clondeboy Park, Bangor in the motion and referred to their ambitious and exiting plans. He noted that match funding would be required and he hoped Council would be able to step up to the mark in that regard when that time came. Alderman Irvine highlighted the need to get investment from the Minister first and foremost and urged for no further delays

(Councillors McAlpine and Thompson left the meeting – 11.03pm)

Councillor Mathison was happy to support to the motion and believed it was vital for grassroots football for the funding to be released. Further delay was so disheartening for the local Clubs, and he hoped that the Minister would be moving on the issue. It was important that this Council communicated clearly that the Council would like to see funding brought forward in this mandate. Ards FC's plan was a far reaching however a new stadium was central to it. Councillor Mathison wished to note the background as to the current position, he felt it had to be acknowledged that if the DUP had not collapsed the Executive this debate would not have needed to occur. He viewed the assertion from the Minister that executive approval was required was questionable. If a first Minister had been in place he was confident that this funding would have been released and some parties needed to take responsibility for the impact that was having in a range of interventions. In finishing, Councillor Mathison hoped that a united voice from the Council would assist.

Councillor Cummings spoke in support of the motion, as the IFA's own strategy stated football facilities were a critical component part of the development of sport and for that reason he felt it was crucial that the Council pressed the Minister for the financial package and support Ards FC in their endeavours. There was an important element within Ards FC's strategy that developing sustainability was key for moving forward and was required for the development of local football. Councillor Cummings hoped with the funding package that would see the return of premiership football to the Borough.

Councillor Cathcart understood the concerns of Ards FC and felt it was bad for local football to have such difficulties for local clubs in recent years.

(Councillor Dunlop withdrew from the meeting – 11.10 pm)

Continuing, Councillor Cathcart stated that there were two good local Clubs and he wanted them to be great rivals. He looked forward to the funding to be delivered and see the growth of the local teams.

Councillor Johnson echoed the comments and voiced his support for the motion. Football was an important part of communities and he highlighted the work of volunteers to develop the game. Funding was long overdue and it was shameful and highly regrettable that local Clubs had not had the support and the Council needed to keep pressure on.

Councillor Edmund added his support to the motion and referred to the local Clubs and the investment they had made. In reference to Councillor Mathison comments, blaming the DUP he stated that the Alliance party support of Sinn Fein was regrettable. Sports had always been a major contribution to health and wellbeing within the Borough.

Councillor P Smith thanked Members for their input and hoped the Minister would be make a decision as soon as possible. The need for improved facilities had never been greater and he hoped the Minister would listen and take action.

Alderman Menagh spoke in support of the motion and for Ards FC to have their stadium in their hometown would be great to see. He felt it was important that the Council supported the call together.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED, that this Council writes to the Minister for Communities Deirdre Hargey calling on her to deliver the sub-regional Stadium funding that would enable clubs in the Borough to apply for improvements- such as Ards FC to fulfil their strategy and develop a new community Stadium in Newtownards and Bangor FC to fulfil its aspirations for a new modern grandstand and Community Hub at Clandeboye Park and improvements for other eligible clubs in the Borough.

FURTHER RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Gilmour, seconded by Alderman McIlveen, that Standing Orders be reinstated.

Circulated for Information:

- (a) NILGA - NILGA Policy & Communication Guidance Note Pre-election period of heightened political sensitivity
- (b) Irish League of Credit Unions – Irish League of Credit Unions Policy Manifesto
Boundary Commission - Boundary Commission Commences Secondary Consultation Period
- (c) Housing Council – February Bulletin and January Housing Council Minutes

NOTED.

(Alderman Gibson and Councillor T Smith withdrew from the meeting – 11.22 pm)

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

22. TENDERS FOR THE PROVISION OF BUILDING REPAIR WORK AT ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL PROPERTIES (FILE 77001)

*****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)

23. TENDER FOR THE PROVISION OF OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE HEALTH CARE SERVICES

*****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 Director of Organisational Development and Administration withdrew from the meeting – 11.25 pm)

24. TENDER FOR THE PROVISION OF NEW AND REPLACEMENT PLAY AREAS WITHIN THE BOROUGH OF ARDS AND NORTH DOWN

*****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)

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

Referring to Item 21.7 and amendment which had been brought forward, Councillor Edmund sought clarity that the correct process had been followed and an amendment could be accepted.

The Chief Executive clarified that Standing Orders had been suspended to allow an amendment to be put forward to the Notice of Motion. The original proposer of the

C.23.02.22 PM

49

Notice of Motion (Councillor P Smith) had been content to accept the amendment brought forward by Councillor Gilmour into his proposal.

Councillor Edmund was content to abide by the ruling of the Mayor and the advice of the Chief Executive and wished to seek clarity if the matter was to arise again in the future.

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

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 11.30 pm.

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

A meeting of the Planning Committee was held virtually on Tuesday, 1 March 2022 at 7.00 pm via Zoom.

PRESENT:

In the Chair: Councillor Cathcart

Aldermen: Gibson McDowell (7.02pm)
Keery (7.01pm) McIlveen

Councillors: Adair McKee
Brooks McRandal
Cooper (8.03pm) Smith P
McAlpine Thompson (7.01pm)
McClean (7.01pm)

Officers: Director of Regeneration, Development and Planning (S McCullough), Head of Planning (A McCullough), Senior Professional and Technical Officer (P Kerr), and Democratic Services Officers (M McElveen and P Foster)

WELCOME

The Chairman (Councillor Cathcart) welcomed everyone to the meeting.

NOTED.

(Alderman Keery and Councillors McClean & Thompson joined the meeting at this stage – 7.01pm)

1. APOLOGIES

The Chairman sought apologies at this stage.

An apology had been received from Councillor Walker and also apologies for lateness from Councillor Cooper.

NOTED.

(Alderman McDowell joined the meeting at this stage – 7.02pm)

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

NOTED.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES OF PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING OF 1 FEBRUARY 2022

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor McKee, seconded by Councillor Adair, that the minutes be noted.

(Councillor Adair left the meeting at this stage – 7.03pm)

4. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

4.1 LA06/2020/0955/F– Change of use from existing 2-storey barn to a residential dwelling at existing stone barn building located between 6 Maxwell Lane and 8-8a Maxwell Lane, Bangor (Appendix I)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer's Report.

DEA: Bangor West

Committee Interest: A Local development application attracting six or more separate individual objections which are contrary to the officer's recommendation

Proposal: Change of use from existing 2-storey barn to a residential dwelling

Site Location: Existing stone barn building located between 6 Maxwell Lane and 8-8a Maxwell Lane, Bangor

Recommendation: Approval

The Planning Officer (P Kerr) advised that the application was being presented to committee as it had attracted 17 letters of objection from nine separate addresses. The main planning issues raised by third party objections were:- loss of residential amenity, intensification of site usage, additional traffic on laneway, car parking, impact of construction works, out of character for the ATC, lack of amenity space for the dwelling, additional bins on lane, impact on sewage system, bats. Those had been addressed in the case officer report and she would endeavour to further address a number of those as she went through her presentation.

With regard to consultations DFI roads DAERA natural environment division and NI water were all consulted on the proposal and raised no objections

The site consisted of a small plot of land on which there was a stone barn building and a greenhouse. The barn was traditional in architectural style finished in stone and render with irregular window openings and an arched barn door. There was a small garden in the northwest corner of the plot. The barn appeared to be used as storage. There was a converted barn directly opposite the barn that was the subject of this application and access to the site was via Maxwell lane which was a private lane way off Maxwell drive

Recent relevant planning history around the site included the barn opposite the barn that was the subject of this application and also an adjacent dwelling.

W/2006/0034/F: 8A Maxwell Lane, Bangor

Conversion of a barn to a residential dwelling house - Permission Granted: 19/05/21

LA06/2017/0681/RM: Lands 40m to the north-east of 8 Maxwell Lane, Bangor
Detached dwelling with garage and associated landscaping works - Permission
Granted 14/11/17

Turning to the development plan. The site lay within the development limit in both Draft Belfast metropolitan area plan and the North Down and Ards area plan. The site also lay within the proposed Bangor West Area of Townscape Character within draft BMAP. The proposal was in compliance with the Development Plans.

Turning to regional policy considerations. The relevant policies for this proposal were the SPPS, PPS2 Natural Heritage, PPS3 Access Movement and Parking, APPS7 Safeguarding the Character of Established Residential Areas, PPS7 Quality Residential Environments and PPS12 Housing in Settlements. With regard to the SPPS paragraph 6.137 stated that the use of greenfield land for housing should be reduced and more urban housing accommodated through the recycling of land and buildings and the encouragement of compact town and village forms. As this proposal was within the settlement limit and was converting an existing building it was consistent with the aims of the SPPS and was in fact the type of development that the SPPS encouraged.

With regard to natural heritage, an extensive biodiversity checklist was submitted by Ayre Environmental consulting. DAERA HED were consulted and responded with no objections subject to conditions and there was no impact on natural heritage therefore PPS2 was met.

With regard to the addendum to PPS6 in relation to ATC's it was important to note that this proposal would breathe life into a currently dis-used building. The existing building on site exhibited a level of disrepair and therefore this proposal would result in the enhancement of the Area of Townscape Character. The proposed design of the conversion was appropriate for both the host building and for the character of the area. The original features of the barn would be retained and enhanced as part of the conversion. PPS6 Addendum and therefore the SPPS were met.

Addendum to PPS7 Safeguarding the Character of residential areas talked about the proposed density not being significantly higher than that found within the Established Residential Area. The density of the proposed development would be 33 dwellings per hectare. Although there were densities which were lower than this in the ERA it was important to bear in mind that this was for the conversion of a building that already existed on the site and therefore in this case density became less of an issue.

Turning to PPS7 and Quality Residential Developments, the development respected the surrounding context and the host building and would have a positive impact on the character of the area and drew upon best local traditions. There would be enough private amenity space for perspective residents which amounted to just over 40 square metres to include the proposed first floor terrace. This was deemed acceptable within the guidance Creating Places.

With regard to impact of residential amenity for neighbouring dwellings there would be no significant impact. There were angled windows and obscured glazing in appropriate locations to ensure that there was no overlooking or loss of privacy. The proposed terrace facing No.6 Maxwell Lane was not only screened but if the screening did not exist would look largely into front amenity space. The gable end of the barn facing Maxwell Lane would have one first floor window serving a living area. An oriel projection window had been incorporated to ensure that any views were looking down the laneway rather than into the rear gardens and windows of the properties at 2C and 2D which were also afforded appropriate separation distances. The other end of the barn would feature a large picture vista window which would serve a kitchen living area, given the separation distance of 22 metres and angle at which this window was to be situated in relation to the dwelling at No.8 Maxwell Lane, there would be no unacceptable overlooking caused. This same window had the possibility to slightly overlook 6 Maxwell Lane in the rear portion of the garden and in accordance with PPS 7 it stated that overlooking of gardens may be unacceptable where it would result in an intrusive direct an uninterrupted view from a main room to the most private area of the garden which was often the main sitting out area adjacent to the property. This is not the case in this instance and no significant overlooking would be suffered by No.6

All upper floor windows facing 8A were to be obscured and the ground floor windows which were bedrooms would not have direct views into 8A due to existing boundary wall and fence. Dominance was not an issue as the building already existed.

With regards to PPS3 and in relation to Roads and parking issues, there was enough parking for the proposal as there would be three spaces where the greenhouse currently stood and the proposal would use an existing access. It was important to note that DFI roads had no objections to this application and officers were content that DFI roads as a statutory consultee were satisfied. The building as it currently existed could be used as a barn or storage and had the capacity to attract traffic as it stood.

In summary this proposal was acceptable in terms of the development plan and regional planning policy and would bring an existing building into use which would positively contribute to the urban environment in which it resided. A proposal of this type would be considered as planning gain and was in line with the principles of the SPPS which advocated the re use of buildings in an appropriate manner. The proposal was within the settlement limit and so there was a presumption in favour of development. Considering a structure already existed on the site and the design of the proposal was appropriate for the locality and would not harm any landscape features or residential amenity approval was recommended.

RECOMMENDED to grant planning permission.

The Chair invited questions from members.

Councillor McAlpine noted the roof of the adjacent barn conversion was slate and asked what materials would be used to roof the barn before them. Continuing she also sought clarification on what height the proposed terrace would be.

In response, the Planning Officer confirmed the proposed terrace would be at first floor level and surrounded by high level screening.

Councillor McAlpine expressed some concerns in respect of consistency in matters such as this particularly as other similar applications had been refused.

The Planning Officer stated that ample screening would be in place on the terrace which she added only overlooked a tarmac area and as such there would be no significant loss of private amenity. In respect of the materials to be used for the roof of the barn, she confirmed that it was proposed to re-roof it in slate.

Councillor P Smith proposed, seconded by Councillor McRandal, that the recommendation be adopted.

The proposer, Councillor P Smith, acknowledged that the Council encouraged applications of this nature to be brought forward in order to increase density in areas of urban environment such as this.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY, on the proposal of Councillor P Smith, seconded by Councillor McRandal, that officer's recommendation be adopted and planning permission is granted.

5. PLANNING APPEALS (Appendix II)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Regeneration, Development and Planning detailing that the following appeal was DISMISSED on 7 February 2022.

Appeal reference:	2020/A0129
Application Reference:	LA06/2017/0869/O
Appeal by:	Mrs Jean Caughey
Subject of Appeal:	Refusal of planning permission for a 'Replacement Dwelling'
Location:	10 Balligan Road, Kircubbin

The Council refused this application on 09 October 2020 for the following reason:

- The proposal is contrary to the SPPS and PPS 2: Natural Heritage (Policy NH 2) in that it has not been demonstrated that the development would not harm statutorily protected species.

The application was submitted in July 2017 and given the nature of the proposal the agent was requested to complete a Biodiversity Checklist. This was submitted a year later in August 2018. Further to consultation with NED a full bat survey was requested to be submitted but given how close it was to the end of the survey season an extension was granted. A year later the information had still not been submitted. A member of Planning Committee then requested a further delay of a year for submission given family circumstances, despite the application having been in the system since 2017. In 2020 in light of continuing non-submission of the required information the application was refused. A number of elected

representatives contacted the Case Officer querying the requirement for the information.

Planning Policy NH 2 within PPS 2 stated that planning permission would only be granted for a development proposal that was not likely to harm a European protected species. The presence of species protected by legislation was a material consideration when a planning authority was considering a development proposal that if carried out, would be likely to result in harm to the species or its habitats.

If there was evidence to suggest that a protected species was present on site or may be affected by a proposed development, steps must be taken to establish whether it was present, the requirements of the species must be factored into the planning and design of the development, and any likely impact on the species must be fully considered prior to any determination. The Commissioner considered that "any determination" would include determination of an application for outline planning permission, such as this.

The Council in its Statement of Case referred to two pieces of case law concerning the consideration that must be given to European protected species in the planning process. Both *R (on the application of Woolley) v Cheshire East Borough Council* [2009] EWHC 1227(Admin) and *Morge v Hampshire County Council* [2011] UKSC 2 related to the impact of development on bats, and they highlight the duties of planning authorities under the Habitats Directive (to "have regard" to the impact of development on European protected species). The Commissioner agreed that they supported the Council's position that a bat survey of the appeal site was required before outline planning permission could be granted.

The Commissioner referred to the Council as having '*exercised patience in delaying their determination for several years to enable the submission of a survey*'.

It was to be highlighted to the Planning Committee that in line with Guide to the Planning Application Process and its accompanying checklists, published in January 2020, the Planning Department would not in future entertain such delays rather, where the requisite information was not submitted, the application would either be returned as invalid or determined as a refusal on the basis of PPS 2, Policy NH 2, or other relevant policies.

Further to support requested and agreed by Committee in October 2019 (reference minutes at Item 7 of that meeting), Planning staff would continue to highlight on the delegated list and Committee schedules those applications whereby straight refusal was recommended on basis of avoiding convoluted negotiation on non-policy compliant applications, or those which did not have the requisite information submitted despite, often repeated, requests by the Planning Department.

New Appeals Lodged

The following appeal was lodged on 28 January 2022 in respect of an Enforcement Notice.

Appeal reference:	2021/E0067
Application Reference:	LA06/2016/0326/CA
Appeal by:	Mr Robert Busby
Subject of Appeal:	The alleged unauthorised change of use from: 1. farm building to commercial butchers' unit; 2. farm building to a retail farm shop and 3. use of area of hardstanding as a car park.
Location:	Land at 40 Comber Road, Balloo

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

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this report.

The Head of Planning guided members through the report, highlighting the salient points within it.

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

6. NI AUDIT OFFICE REPORT AND DFI REVIEW OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLANNING ACT

(Appendix III)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Regeneration, Development and Planning detailing that the report related to two separate reviews of the NI planning system, or aspects of it, as follows:

- a) Publication of the Northern Ireland Audit Office's report on its review of the wider NI planning system; and
- b) the Department for Infrastructure's report on its review of the implementation of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.

This report provided a summary of the findings of those two reports with an officer analysis of the issues raised and sets out next steps for dealing with the issues identified by the two reports. The report also took the opportunity to set out some of the current significant impacts that issues raised by the reports, alongside other factors, were having on the Council's operation of its Planning Service.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the report and the various attachments.

The Head of Planning guided members through the report and its attachments, highlighting the salient points within them.

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

The proposer, Councillor McKee acknowledged the points had been well made throughout the report and agreed that currently the Planning system was not working

well and he hoped this report would provide a much needed wake up call. He referred to Section 26 of the report which considered 'Charges for Pre Application Discussions (PADS)' and sought comment from officers on that.

The Head of Planning confirmed that currently Belfast City Council was the only planning authority which had those charges in place. She added that other authorities were not in a position to do so due to financial and staff constraints. Members were advised that PADS would put further onus upon Council officers when there was no statutory requirement to do so. She added that they could provide much needed additional funding but continuing she alluded to the lack of legislative provision and the fact that currently many applicants often went against any advice offered to them.

Commenting as seconder, Alderman McIlveen noted the report was reflective of current frustrations, adding that currently the system had not operated as smoothly as hoped since the powers had been transferred. He gave credit to the Council's Planning section for how quickly it had been set up and became operational despite the many challenges. Continuing he acknowledged there were some very difficult and major decisions to be taken adding that he would have some concerns with PADS and their input into the planning process. In summing up he stated that the content of the report had not come as a surprise but he was hopeful it would provide an opportunity to address many of the ongoing issues.

Councillor McRandal expressed disappointment on reading the report and sought guidance from officers on where the Council could go from here.

In response the Head of Planning stated that she would meet with representatives of the Department to put forward the Council's concerns with the various issues it had come across. She added that a closer working relationship needed to be established given the current loss of investment, particularly direct foreign investment. The Head of Planning suggested that the Council too needed to make improvements as did the Rivers and Roads sections within the Department.

Councillor P Smith referred to the cost element of the current system and how financially viable it was and also suggested that consideration needed to be taken of the overall purpose of the planning system, adding that some of the outturn rates were bizarre. Continuing he asked if there could be benefits to shared services and suggested reform should take place.

The Head of Planning reminded members that planning fees had not seen any proper increase since the transfer of powers and she felt that was not reflective of the amount of work involved in processing applications. She suggested that the Planning department needed to adopt a tougher approach to applications by either refusing them outright or giving them one opportunity to amend. Indeed she commented that she was aware many developers would be willing to pay more in order to get more timely decisions. Continuing the Head of Planning referred to the extreme amount of work carried out by officers which they were not paid for. She stated that the 11 Councils did not operate as one single planning body but instead all operated individually. She also believed there were a number of issues for which there was much uncertainty and which could require changes to legislation.

Councillor P Smith referred to the benchmarks set by the English and Welsh planners and their decision times which appeared to be significantly quicker than the Council's. In response the Head of Planning agreed that was another issue and a reason why officers were so keen to see the introduction of a Statutory Validation Checklist. She added that following the transfer of functions a review of the planning system was to have been undertaken.

At this stage the Chairman, Councillor Cathcart, commented that the report before them was a reflection of where the planning system currently was, and suggested that it was now time to reconsider what the purpose of it was. By way of example he referred to the ongoing delays with the Queens Parade development which were the result of an unelected body calling in the application, a key regeneration project. He recalled the setup of the LDP's and the request by the Department for them to be in place within what were ridiculous timescales. Continuing Councillor Cathcart stated that he was encouraged on reading the report to see that they too had raised serious concerns and he hoped the Department would take notice. Referring to PADs he expressed the view that they could be useful when dealing with larger applications.

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

7. DFI UPDATE ON PLANNING FORUM ACTIONS (Appendix IV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Regeneration, Development and Planning detailing that the Department's Chief Planner wrote to Chief Executives on 14 February 2022 to provide an update on the progress of the Planning Forum, which was established following a review into the effectiveness and efficiency of the planning system, focussing particularly on the role of statutory consultees in the process.

The cross governmental forum worked collaboratively between central and local government, with a particular focus on improving timeframes for processing major and economically significant planning applications. Local government was represented by Heads of Planning from three of the councils.

The attached table provided detail of the actions – in respect of those completed, those reliant on other processes and decisions, and those to be completed.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this report and the attached table detailing the Planning Forum Actions to date.

Following on from discussion of the previous item, the Head of Planning made mention of the John Irvine Report which related to the planning system and specifically the efficiency and effectiveness of the statutory consultees. She explained that the Planning Forum was a high level group represented by three local authority members as well as a cross party of representatives comprised from Central Government Departments. They had provided this update of actions embarked upon since its establishment in December 2019.

Proposed by Councillor P Smith, seconded by Alderman Gibson that the recommendation be adopted.

Also referring to item 6, Councillor P Smith drew attention to the frustration in connection with this highly operational report. There were over 30 recommendations and two thirds were completed so based on that interpretation we must have had a revamped and improved planning system. He regretted the Committee's acceptance that that was not the case, which thereby reinforced the requirement for a more strategic review of the system rather than continuing to apply plasters.

Alderman Gibson believed that meetings of the Forum had been useful as they highlighted that everyone was approaching tasks in different ways. Although it was not the fault of a particular grouping, coming together helped to discover what worked and what did not. It had undoubtedly been a long drawn out process through the LDPs and he trusted there had been some benefit acquired. He sought the view of the Head of Planning in that regard.

The Head of Planning clarified that all 11 Heads of Planning were asked to compile a list of the top 10 issues that would make a significant difference. They were somewhat disappointed to learn that those had not been prioritised by the Department. Legislative change was still needed together with funding for the statutory consultees and the Minister acting on some of those recommendations for the Planning Act. She echoed the comments of Councillor P Smith in terms of the level of frustration felt. The Public Accounts Committee had also asked the Local Government representatives if they considered they were an equal party on the Planning Forum. Their response was that they did not necessarily deem that they were, given the smaller number of those representatives allowed to attend meetings. They reasoned that the Forum should include members of the public, developers and representatives of the planning industry and she anticipated that that matter would be addressed in the PAC report.

At this point, the Chairman brought attention to the 19 completed actions regarding statutory consultees since 2019 and he wondered if Officers had seen a noticeable improvement.

The Head of Planning verified that Officers had not witnessed much improvement outlining that NI Water and the Rivers Agency were the two slowest Departments to respond. She further explained that that was a result of the voluntary exit scheme creating numerous vacant posts and subsequent problems with recruitment. The vacancies in DfI Roads were being occupied but a 40% deficit remained within the Rivers Agency in sourcing staff with relevant skills. Furthermore, DfI Roads encompassed several different sections and sometimes a planning application necessitated passing through many of those. At present it took the Transport Section six weeks to release a Transport Assessment. Officers had voiced consternation with DfI Roads regarding a major housing application, having engaged with them on a PAD process and content of an Environmental Statement. Officers were still waiting six months after a consultation had been requested. She underlined that that was six months when Officers were expected to reach a decision on an application within 30 weeks. There were certainly fundamental problems and she

was aware that DAERA was making standard advice available to reduce the number of consultations they had to manage. Even so, if that information was not put forward at the start of the process, time was still wasted by Planning Officers on reconsulting.

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

8. CORRESPONDENCE RELATING TO STANDING ORDERS

(Appendix V)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Regeneration, Development and Planning detailing that on 24 November 2021 Council noted a legal judgment ('Hartlands') with its associated implications for Planning Committees in respect of Standing Orders.

It was agreed to write to the Department for Communities and Department for Infrastructure to raise the issue seeking urgent address. The attached letters from DFI's Permanent Secretary, dated 14 February, and the Infrastructure Minister's Private Office, dated 17 February 2022, detail the current position.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this report and the attached correspondence.

The Head of Planning described the recent legal judgement that had imposed a change to the Standing Orders and protocol of all 11 Councils. Attached correspondence from the Minister underscored that it was an ongoing issue and that the DfC had received legal advice to urgently address this.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor McKee, seconded by Councillor P Smith, that the recommendation be adopted.

9. QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT (FILE 160127)

(Appendix VI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Regeneration, Development and Planning detailing that 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 2021)
- Service Plan – developed annually (approved April/May 2021)

The Council's 17 Service Plans outlined how each respective Service would contribute to the achievement of the Corporate objectives including, but not limited to, any relevant actions identified in the PIP.

The report for Quarter 3 2021-22 was attached.

Key points to note:

- Two applications in the major category of development were determined within the period.
 - LA06/2019/0603/F for 108 no. dwellings within the bawn wall in Newtownards was valid in June 2019 however went through a substantive number of amendments to address both consultee and planning concerns.
 - LA06/2020/0682/F concerned a change of house type for 11 dwellings within the already approved development – 'Rivenwood' – only recorded as 'major' due to the red line linking to the Movilla Road.
- Decisions on 292 applications in the local category of development were issued within the quarter, with an average processing time of 24.1 weeks. Staff absence and vacancies and consultee response times contributed to an increase in the quarterly average target processing time.
- Enforcement received 84 new complaints of alleged breaches of planning control, whilst concluding 81 cases.
- The Householder Team issued 40 decisions, of which 20 were determined within 8 weeks, 19 within the 15 week target for locals, with one remaining decision issued at 15.6 weeks.

Emerging issues:

- Processing times for applications continue to raise concern. Those had been affected due to COVID, other staff absences, quality of applications and external factors such as consultee response times.

Action to be taken:

- The Planning Service continued to work with the Planning Forum (DFI, Local Government and statutory consultees) to identify issues and address better procedures and standing advice where possible. Senior management within Planning continue to meet regularly with consultees to raise issues for resolution.

RECOMMENDED that the report is noted.

Referring Members to the content of the report, the Head of Planning confirmed that it was based on the Service Unit Plan. Processing times had been lengthier due to staff working from home and on a rota for attending the workplace with adherence to social distancing measures. Also, there had been difficulties utilising the public access system since mid January as Officers were unable to upload representations and plans or generate decision notices. They would continue to work with the Planning Forum and ascertain how that timeliness might be enhanced.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Keery, seconded by Councillor McKee, that the recommendation be adopted.

10. NOTICE OF MOTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLORS KENDALL AND MCKEE

Councillor Kendall proposed, seconded by Councillor McKee that this Council will, for transparency in response to growing public interest in, and concern about, the protection of the trees in our Borough, and in light of the recent commitment this Council has made to "Stand4Trees", make a monthly or bi-monthly report to the Planning Committee detailing: The number of applications received for Tree Protection Orders, granted and/or refused including the basis for those decisions and, The number of applications received for Works to Trees protected by virtue of being in Conservation Areas and/or protected by Tree Protection Orders considered by the Council, granted and or refused including the basis for those decisions. Subject to a report, this Council, in line with the principles set out in the Aarhus Convention in respect of citizens' right of access to environmental information, will also upload details of Tree Protection Order applications and applications for Works to Trees to the planning portal or the Council website, to ensure the public can access these documents without the need to submit an Expression of Interest and/or Freedom of Information Request.

(At this stage, the Chairman asked that Councillor Kendall be admitted to the meeting – 7.57 pm)

Ahead of asking Councillor Kendall to speak to her Motion, the Chairman sought an assurance that Members were content with the minor amendment of the decision being subject to a report.

Speaking to her Motion, Councillor Kendall explained that there were two aspects to this motion, providing information in relation to Tree Protection Orders to firstly Members here at the Planning Committee, and then secondly providing information to our residents.

There had been a wave of public outcry in relation to the felling of trees. To note three recent examples, tree works by the Department of Infrastructure at Seahill, the felling of trees in Stranmillis and recent tree felling at Stormont. All had caused significant public concern. Regardless of the reasons behind the felling, a significant cause of outcry had been the absolute lack of information shared with people about works that would be done and the reasons for the those works. People looked out of the window, suddenly walked past, and the trees were gone, decimated without explanation.

Whilst those were not the actions of our Council, she drew Members' attention to them because they were examples where transparency, community engagement and collaboration had fallen short. This Council had a Tree and Woodland Strategy, which reflected the views of our residents in recognising the importance of trees, the many benefits they afforded us and the important role trees play in mitigating some of the effects of climate breakdown. Members would be aware that the aims of this strategy included:

Aim 1 - Community engagement and collaboration in valuing trees as a vital community asset, tree planting to ensure a healthy balanced tree population and, tree management, ensuring trees are managed in the interests of safety and prevention of disease.

Although communities and residents may not always agree with decisions in relation to trees, it was the view of Councillor Kendall, that it was only through transparent communication and community involvement in our decision-making as far as possible, that we gained, retained and upheld public trust in what we did. Where we could find easy means of sharing information, we should take steps to improve. In public office, both elected Members and Council Officers were bound by Codes of Conduct – accountability and openness were shared principles which we all agreed to uphold and, as she mentioned when she last spoke at this Committee, under the Aarhus Convention, members of the public had a right to environmental information.

Currently elected Members and residents had limited means to find out about TPO applications or applications for Works to TPO'd trees in the Borough. At present, that was done predominantly via Freedom of Information requests. Anyone could raise a freedom of information request to find out about TPO applications or Works to TPO trees applications in the local area; one must either:

1. know about a TPO application/or Works to TPO'd trees application via some source – you needed the benefit of telepathy, or have been lucky to have observed work to trees, in order to prompt you to raise the FOI, or
2. regularly raise FOIs periodically to ensure that should a TPO application or should Works to TPO trees application be made by someone, you were made aware of it

Councillor Kendall insisted that neither way was easy nor fully transparent, nor was it efficient or an effective way to provide that information. Both methods led to unnecessary FOI requests and time spent by Officers to provide the answers to each individual case. Councillor Kendall went on to outline that their motion sought to respect residents' rights to environmental information and their efforts to protect their trees where possible, by being open and transparent with regards to information and decision-making in terms of TPOs and Works to protected trees, by making it readily available to members via planning committee and residents via the Council website.

Lastly, she commented that this Council had the opportunity to be a leader in sustainability and environmental protection, to continue to hold the respect of residents in the Borough through its commitment to the environmental information, by supporting greater transparency and engagement with residents of the Borough, and she hoped that Members would therefore support this Motion.

As seconder, Councillor McKee contended that it did not take a person to be a tree hugger or an environmentalist to see the value in trees. They played such a significant importance in our world and the fabric of this Borough. Despite that importance and the value people placed in trees, currently the lack of freely available information could leave the public disempowered when trees were felled.

He maintained that the trees natural capital was grossly undervalued under current planning legislation, with their status appearing disposable or easily replaced, meaning works to or removal of trees protected by Tree Preservation Orders or in Conservation Areas were never shared openly with the public. As elected representatives we would have engaged with members of the public, who had little or no faith in the tree protection processes of the planning system because it all appeared to be behind closed doors and untransparent. That mistrust of the processes and the public's perception of being shut out of decision-making shone a light on just one of the many flaws of the current planning legislation.

He indicated that this Council of course did not have the power to right the wrongs of the planning legislation, but it did have the opportunity to improve the transparency of this small part of the planning process and he hoped the outcomes of this NOM could improve the public perception of tree protection in this Borough.

Councillor McKee asserted that the importance of trees to the public and in particular mature trees was only going to increase as our Borough grew and as we mitigated and adapted to the challenges of climate breakdown. We had the chance to demonstrate that transparency was important to us, and we respected the public's right to engage in the processes of Tree Protection. We could demonstrate that the community engagement and collaboration in valuing trees was a vital community asset as detailed in the Tree and Woodlands Strategy and was something we really stood for, not just words in a strategy.

Alderman McIlveen was pleased that Councillor McKee had alluded to the aspect of legislation as he was mindful that we were still working within policy and legislation. He detailed that he had received emails on the matter and there appeared to be a degree of misconception amongst the public that this Notice of Motion would change everything. Having said that, he was very happy to offer his support as we had to guarantee there was transparency around the planning process. Undeniably there was gossip about how the Council reached decisions and therefore it was vital to ensure as much pertinent information as possible was accessible in the public domain. It was clear that the public held a keen interest in trees, particularly those covered by Tree Protection Orders and situated in conservation areas and he regretted that one gap persisted in respect of illegal works and investigations around those. There were of course significant concerns in those instances and perhaps the report could further examine such occurrences. He reiterated that the Motion was not a major game changer that the public anticipated. As Councillor McKee had ably said, we were dealing with the same legislation and policy and working within those confines but he hoped it better informed the public on how we reached decisions in terms of the Planning Department.

Also grateful for the explanations and amendment for the inclusion of a report, Councillor McClean stressed the importance of that as initially the Motion was demanding certain actions that the Council may or may not be able to undertake. In fact, it may not be a game changer as correctly identified by Alderman McIlveen. The opening remarks of Councillor McKee outlined that you did not need to be a tree hugger to understand the importance of trees. He assumed that it was likely that most elected Members in Northern Ireland recognised the fundamental value of trees, given their environmental effects whilst understating their social attributes in

keeping places cool and beautiful during hot weather. In a similar vein, he had received numerous emails from the public so on this subject he felt everyone was on the same page. However, he said he would depart from the opinions of Councillors Kendall and McKee by advising that rather than worrying about the lack of consultation, many people were more concerned about trees being felled and the resultant environmental impact. We all wanted to plant more trees and preserve native hedging and mature trees.

Continuing, Councillor McClean emphasised that the emails he had received related to two distinct issues; some agreed with the wording of the Motion but others asked him to understand the importance of trees and we had to be very careful to distinguish between those two viewpoints. Councillor McKee had indicated that a lack of information could lead the public to feel disempowered when the trees were felled. He did not accept that the public's main concern was not receiving due information. They acknowledged that they had no legal power and were upset because the trees were cut down. Councillor McKee had intimated that if legislation was insufficient to provide protection for trees and repair the damage caused after centuries of felling trees on this island, then that had to be looked at separately. Taking account of public perception and receipt of the report, we had to be wary that we did not give the false impression that every tree thereafter would gain complete protection. Those circumstances would not transpire and inevitably would exacerbate the level of public frustration with the current process. He was content to support the Motion and await the Officers' report as it was essential to have transparency for the public. Ultimately, even with the report it could continue to be Officers who made the calls about which trees came down subject to TPOs, unless the appropriate legislation was changed. It may be counterproductive by agreeing the Motion tonight and being viewed that we would be in a better position to protect trees. Additional information would not empower the public to have any impact on saving particular trees and thus he again commented on the need to tread carefully on how the message was heard by the public.

Following on, Councillor McRandal articulated that he endorsed the sentiments of Councillors Kendall and McKee although acknowledging that the Motion did not change the relevant legislation and rights. He fully supported transparency but also the elevation of ecological and environmental considerations within the planning function and the amendment was crucial. He understood that there was no easy way for implementation and in effect a database would be set up for public access. The report provided an opportunity to scrutinise and reassure ourselves that what we wanted and needed could be delivered and he thanked the Councillors for bringing the Motion forward.

Looking ahead to the report, Councillor P Smith underlined the significance of conversation and how we presented information to the public. He was certain Members were aware of an interactive map which displayed the position of TPOs, the plans and details of the Order. The information was readily available for the public to view albeit not in chronological order or showing works to trees. He supposed we should look at how we could make certain those details were delivered timely and more accessible fashion. He urged those Members who had not viewed the system to have a look to understand where the gaps were and he welcomed the report in due course.

Extending his support for the Motion, Alderman McDowell wished to concur and highlight the concerns of previous speakers. Having been a Councillor for 30 years he had witnessed abuses involving some developers. As an example, he recalled how on occasion it was suggested on the application that only two or three trees would be felled but in reality that could result in over 20 trees being lost. An array of excuses was often proffered that the trees were diseased or dead but there was always a suspicion that diesel had been poured around the roots to kill them or diggers had purposely damaged them. It was his viewpoint that preventing such future occurrences was the predominant issue given that there was currently no legislation in place to do so. Transparency was vital but so too was strict legislation and more trees must be planted. He appreciated that in some development sites a few trees may have to come down but new replacement trees should be planted. There seemed to be no protection or consultation as trees could suddenly be felled in the middle of the night when it was too late to preserve them. Given the obvious lack of safeguards, he stated that if we were serious about protecting trees, stronger legislation was key to prevent trees from being felled without permission. In his opinion, it should be an offence to remove trees without going through a due process.

With no additional comments from Members, the Chairman invited Councillor Kendall to summarise.

Concluding, Councillor Kendall thanked Members for their support and took on board the concerns many had raised. She added that without doubt, the current planning legislation was notably lacking and if they had the powers to make changes she would do so. Alongside her colleague Councillor McKee, she was confident that the Notice of Motion represented a tangible means to increase awareness and demonstrate our commitment to providing relevant information to residents. The interactive map showing the TPOs seemed to be a great means to do so but she was sure that Officers could suggest some options. She argued against some remarks made by Councillor McClean as she thought residents were aware of both the concerns and powers of the Council. Where decisions had to be taken to fell trees for safety or disease, she said people would understand that rationale if the appropriate information was available. She conveyed to Members that difficulties arose when they could not easily access those facts and it led to rumours and growing frustration. Concurring with Alderman McIlveen, she believed greater enforcement action would be beneficial but we were reliant upon planning legislation for those powers. In closing, Councillor Kendall again thanked Members for their input which would back up how Council Officers undertook excellent decisions based on applicable information. It would also allow a proper review of the tree safety issues and assist the community to better understand those decisions.

Thanking Councillor Kendall, the Chair asked that she be placed in the virtual public gallery.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Kendall, seconded by Councillor McKee, that this Council will, for transparency in response to growing public interest in, and concern about, the protection of the trees in our Borough, and in light of the recent commitment this Council has made to "Stand4Trees", make a monthly or bi-monthly report to the Planning Committee detailing: The

number of applications received for Tree Protection Orders, granted and/or refused including the basis for those decisions and, The number of applications received for Works to Trees protected by virtue of being in Conservation Areas and/or protected by Tree Protection Orders considered by the Council, granted and or refused including the basis for those decisions. Subject to a report, this Council, in line with the principles set out in the Aarhus Convention in respect of citizens' right of access to environmental information, will also upload details of Tree Protection Order applications and applications for Works to Trees to the planning portal or the Council website, to ensure the public can access these documents without the need to submit an Expression of Interest and/or Freedom of Information Request.

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 8.21 pm.

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

A meeting of the Environment Committee was held remotely via Zoom on Wednesday, 2 March 2022 at 7.00 pm.

PRESENT:

In the Chair: Councillor MacArthur

Alderman: Wilson

Councillors:	Armstrong-Cotter	Greer
	Boyle	Johnson
	Cathcart	Kendall
	Cummings	McAlpine
	Douglas	McKee
	Edmund	Smart

Officers:- Director of Environment (D Lindsay), Head of Waste and Cleansing Services (N Martin), Head of Assets and Property Services (P Caldwell) and Democratic Services Officer (H Loebnau)

UKRAINE

The Chair, like all Members and officers, had been horrified to witness the unfolding scenes within the country of Ukraine following the invasion by Russia. The Ards and North Down community had been deeply affected by the reporting and she asked for a moment of silent prayer or reflection to remember the Ukrainian people and the ongoing situation in that country.

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for inability to attend were received from Alderman M Smith and Alderman Carson who was unwell. The Chair sent best wishes to Alderman Carson in wishing him a speedy recovery.

NOTED.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chair asked for Declarations of Interest and none were made.

NOTED.

3. ENVIRONMENT DIRECTORATE ANNUAL SERVICE PLANS 2021 – 2022

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report dated 9 February 2022 from the Director of Environment stating that since 2017/18 Service Plans were produced by each Service in accordance with the Council's Performance Management policy.

Plans were intended to:

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

Draft Service Plans for 2022/23 year were attached for the following areas:

- Waste and Cleansing Services
- Asset and Property Services
- Regulatory Services

The plans had been developed to align with outcomes of the Big Plan for Ards and North Down and with the PEOPLE priorities of the Corporate Plan Towards 2024.

The Service Plans highlighted where the services contributed to the Council KPIs as set out in the Corporate Plan Towards 2024 and, where that was the case, set out the objectives of the service for the 2022/23 year. It further identified the performance measures used to illustrate the level of achievement of each objective, and the targets that the Service would try to attain along with key actions required to do so.

The Service Plans also identified key risks to the services along with analysis of those and necessary actions to mitigate/manage risks. Key risks impacting the services were mapped to the Corporate Risk Register.

The plans were based on the agreed budget for 2022/23. It should be noted that, should there be significant changes in-year (e.g., due to Council decisions, budget revisions or changes to the community planning legislation) the plans may need to be revised. The Committee would be provided with quarterly update reports on performance against the agreed plans.

RECOMMENDED that the Council adopts the attached plans.

3.1 Waste and Cleansing Services

(Appendix I)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the Waste and Cleansing Services Service Plan.

RECOMMENDED that the Council adopts the attached plan.

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

Councillor Douglas agreed with the requirement for seasonal bins observing that they had been well used the previous year and while they were not a panacea for litter management during the warmer months, they certainly helped to contribute to litter management in public areas. She thanked Council officers for those and also for the support being given to community groups carrying out litter picks around coastal areas.

The Member also expressed concern about the high levels of litter found on arterial routes around the main towns of the Borough, where the problem was exposed particularly during the summer grass cutting season and she remembered that some time ago the Council had raised that matter with the Department for Infrastructure which had come back with a lukewarm response. It was clearly unsafe for litter pickers to collect in those places due to the fast-moving traffic flows. She hoped for a joint initiative between the Council and the Department to help to address the matter and remove the litter which looked unsightly.

The Director explained that the Corporate Leadership Team from the Council had held a meeting with senior officials from the Department, and that had been one of the matters for discussion. The Department explained that it was under a legal obligation not to unduly hinder the flow of traffic in any area so even if the Council applied for permission to close a section of road it would have to be carefully managed. It was a vexing problem for the Council which had been highlighted in the service plan and was one of the biggest challenges being faced. However, at the meeting several actions had been discussed in an attempt to maximise the opportunity for collaborative work between the two organisations and others who were also making applications to close roads.

Councillor Douglas continued with a question about cleansing of town centres and the role of the newly appointed town centre wardens, and she wondered if an audit had been carried out on the impact of those roles and how the investment in personnel had translated into practice. The Head of Waste and Cleansing explained that the appointment of those wardens had coincided with the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic and since then there had rarely been a full complement of staff operating - some of those staff being placed in other critical service areas to deal with Covid absences. There was, however, an overall performance index standard applied to the whole Borough including town centres, and the score in the Ards and North Down Borough was 73 with a Northern Ireland average of 75.

Referring to the point which had been made previously about litter on arterial roads Councillor Cathcart stated that it was a huge issue around Bangor and looked poor from a Council point of view. He believed that the Department seemed to consistently block delivery for the people of the Borough and he pleaded to the Director to keep pushing to find a solution. He was frustrated to hear about the town centre wardens and hoped that in time they could fully perform their own roles and that they, along with improved street washing in town centres, would make an improvement in these areas.

Councillor Cathcart asked about the staffing position within the department and the committee was informed that there was rarely a full complement of staff at any given time. Job vacancies, along with Covid absence and other types of sickness placed a strain on the department but the Head of Waste and Cleansing and his team did a sterling job at filling the gaps and continuing essential services.

The Head of Waste and Cleansing explained that the Council had carried out a number of recruitment exercises for drivers and cleansing operatives and as some joined others were lost to retirement or moving on to other positions. It was a continual process and currently the section was twenty staff down, and so reliance was being placed upon availability of agency staff. There were currently also around four Covid related absences at any time, and that was a burden along with managing staff leave as the Council moved close to the end of the financial year and the continuing need for social distancing. It was still far from being a normal situation.

Councillor Cathcart wished staff well, particularly those who currently had Covid and he congratulated the team as a whole for the work that had been done throughout the pandemic and currently in the absence of being a full team. He asked if there were timescales in place for the washing of the public realm streets and was informed that the new equipment was due imminently, and recruitment of new staff would also be required followed by training. The new service would be commenced as soon as possible.

Councillor Greer noted the Council's current recycling rates and while disappointed asked what the plan was to increase that going forward in 2022/23. Ards and North Down had once been in the top four Councils in Northern Ireland for recycling and had slipped considerably. In response the Director stated that it was his intention to bring a paper to the party group leaders which would focus on some of those questions. The trajectory was still discouraging but the two key targets for turning the current situation around were to increase the blue bin capacity available to householders over each 4 weekly collection cycle, and address the ongoing problems with excess waste receipt at the Council's Household Recycling Centres. Failure to tackle these two core issues would involve extra costs to the ratepayer, adversely impact the environment and would impair our ability to meet statutory waste management targets.

Councillor Greer asked what Ards and North Down Borough could learn from other Councils since the pandemic had affected them in similar ways. The Director indicated that there was ongoing discussion on waste matters at the Northern Ireland Waste Forum. Throughout the pandemic recycling performance had fallen

across NI, but Ards and North Down had seen a disproportionate fall and the main reason for that was the historic problem associated with the Borough's Household Recycling Centres, how those were used and by whom. That was the most significant reason that the Council suffered more than other Councils from falling recycling rates.

Councillor Smart was mindful that Members were considering Service Delivery Plans and he put on record his thanks to officers for how they had responded to his requests personally and for how the service had been delivered consistently throughout the pandemic. He too was disappointed to hear that the Department for Infrastructure could not be more helpful in working in partnership to permit the Council to remove litter on arterial roads. He asked about cleanliness of paving in the public realm schemes and thought that it looked well currently, but he had noticed recently that some of the pointing around the paving stones in Newtownards seemed to be disintegrating. When he had looked at the paving in Bangor, he noted that it did not seem to be suffering from the same issues in that respect. He asked if that was on the Council's radar.

In response to his questions the Head of Waste and Cleansing Services explained that it was hoped that closer co-operation could be established with the Department. He explained that the Department contracted out a large amount of grass cutting to subcontractors who were able to fulfil the requirements of that within their own schedules. The Department had agreed to inform the Council if it intended to close roads for any time within the Borough. There were many operational issues around that and obvious safety concerns of having fast moving grass cutting machines working alongside litter pickers. In respect of the conditions of pavements in the public realms Members were informed that these public realm areas had been transferred back to TFI, who would take responsibility for repairs and maintenance going forward.

(Councillor Johnson left the meeting at 7.40 pm)

Councillor Edmund thought it was worth remembering that the Council was approaching grass cutting season when the litter was revealed at the side of roads. He hoped that a solution could be found with the Department and its subcontractors. The Director explained that a fruitful meeting had taken place where the Council had highlighted the issue as a concern. The Department had taken the comments on board and were willing to explore the matter to more effectively maximise litter management and make the best of a difficult situation. Following a further question about litter cams the Director confirmed that the agreed trial would be progressed in the incoming year, when it was hoped to locate cameras in a couple of locations where roadside littering was most prolific.

Councillor Kendall expressed concern for households in the light of the current energy crisis and rising costs being experienced locally. She was also troubled to hear about the apparent recruitment issues being experienced within the Council. When thinking about the costs of waste disposal she thought it could be helpful to bring people on board with the changes which were now necessary by communicating directly with ratepayers about the true costs of waste and giving options about how that could be improved. In relation to staff recruitment, she was

aware that that was difficult across the board and wondered what was being considered at a strategic level to encourage people to take up posts within the Council and to assist existing staff who would be feeling the pressure of a reduced workforce.

In response and referring to Councillor Kendal's question on informing the public on the cost of landfilling to the Council, the Director stated that it was the role of officers to bring such information before Members, explaining the key data that would help to inform the decisions that needed to be taken - so that that in turn could be communicated to the wider public. He agreed with the Member stating that cost was a key factor, and when that message had been communicated previously in our marketing and communications campaigns, it had caught the attention of the public. Ratepayers did not like to consider that their money was being wasted in paying for landfill tax when different approaches could ensure that more waste resources were recycled and in turn money could be saved. That should always be a key part of the Council's communications. In respect of staffing matters, there was a joint Council management/union forum in place - and one of the key items on the agenda of those meetings was staff recruitment and retention. The Council had an ongoing commitment to limit the use of temporary/agency staff since it was not a desirable way for people to have make a living, and he wished to reassure Members that the Council would continue to review the situation.

Councillor Boyle put on record his thanks to the Director and teams across the service areas and praised the high standard of delivery of each of them. Councillor McAlpine agreed with those comments and the Council had done a fine job of keeping the show on the road during what had been and continued to be very challenging times. Geographically she stressed that the Borough was very unusual in its urban/rural mix, and she thought that unique for service delivery across most of Northern Ireland.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Douglas, seconded by Councillor Johnson, that the Council adopts the Service Plan.

3.2 Assets and Property Services

(Appendix II)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the Assets and Property Services Service Plan.

RECOMMENDED that the Council adopts the attached plan.

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

Councillor Douglas had noted that a condition survey had been taking place on the Council's estate and she asked for an update on the condition of Ward Park Bowling Pavilion. The Head of Property and Assets explained that a significant amount of asbestos had been uncovered in that building and as a result the work had taken longer to complete than expected. However, the work was almost complete.

The officer took the opportunity to explain that there had been a mistake on page eight of the report. He assured Members that the targets for condition surveys and refurbishments had not been reduced, and they remained at 100%.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Douglas, seconded by Councillor Johnson, that the Council adopts the Service Plan.

3.3 Regulatory Services (Appendix III)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the Regulatory Services Service Plan.

RECOMMENDED that the Council adopts the attached plan.

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

Councillor Douglas reported that a constituent of hers had referred to the lack of signage in Ward Park in relation to the management of dogs and enquired what additional measures could be put in place to ensure the health and safety of people using the park. The Director explained that there was a budget for additional signage and that both Members and park users could alert the enforcement team within the Council when dog owners were not using the parks in a respectful manner.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Douglas, seconded by Councillor Johnson, that the Council adopts the Service Plan.

4. PROPOSED STREET NAMING – COPELAND PLACE, COMBER

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report dated 16 February 2022 from the Director of Environment detailing that a small development comprising of six dwellings was currently under construction on lands adjacent to 53 Newtownards Road, Comber.

The developer suggested the name Copeland Place as the site was directly adjacent to the existing street named Copeland Walk and was in close proximity to the existing streets Copeland Link and Copeland Crescent, which was in keeping with the general neighbourhood.

RECOMMENDED that Copeland Place be adopted.

Further recommended that Council accept the general name and delegate acceptance of suffixes to the Building Control department.

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

5. PROPOSED STREET NAMING – ORCHARD MEADOW, KILLINCHY

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report dated 2 February 2022 from the Director of Environment detailing that a development comprising of 34 dwellings was currently under construction on lands adjacent to 68 Whiterock Road, Killinchy.

The developer suggested the name Orchard Meadow due to the site being constructed on a meadow located behind the existing street Orchard Drive and was in keeping with the general neighbourhood.

RECOMMENDED that Orchard Meadow, be adopted.

Further recommended that Council accept the general name and delegate acceptance of suffixes to the Building Control department.

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

6. SOFT PLASTICS RECYCLING AT SUPERMARKETS

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environment detailing that Members may recall that back in 2019 the Council lobbied local large supermarket chains for the provision of comprehensive in-store facilities where the public could deposit soft plastics which were not accepted in the Council's blue bin service due to being more difficult to recycle and hence lower resource value.

The supermarkets subsequently responded in various ways, generally in a positive vein, supporting the goal of instore soft plastics recycling provision for their customers.

Update – Supermarket In-Store Soft Plastics Recycling Facilities

Officers were pleased to report that recent surveys had shown that most if not all of the larger supermarket chains were now providing in store soft plastics collection points within stores located around the Borough. The images below showed conveniently located drop off points in local Tesco, Sainsburys, Asda, Lidl and Co-op store outlets; other stores may well also provide similar such facilities.



Soft Plastics Recycling Cage at Tesco



Sainsburys



Asda



Co-op



Lidl

The range of target soft plastics for each supermarket retailer varied slightly in description, although each outlet provided clear signage to inform their customers which soft plastics they would like them to recycle using the in-store drop off facilities.

Tesco: any plastic bag; crisp packets; food and pet pouches; plastic wrappers; any plastic film.

Sainsburys: dry food flexible plastic; other food flexible plastic; pouches and sachets; non-food flexible plastic.

Asda: clean bags wrap and film; carrier bags and bags for life; bread and produce bags; toilet roll film; shrink wrap and bubble wrap; frozen food bags; drinks multi-pack wrap; cereal inner bags.

Co-op: crisp packets; sweet wrappers; plastic film; pet food pouches; plastic bags.
Lidl: shopping bags; plastic wrappers.

Campaign to Promote Routine Use of Supermarket In-Store Soft Plastics Recycling Facilities by Householders

The most recent waste composition survey showed that 11% of the contents of grey bins in the Borough comprised plastic film that could not yet be accepted in blue bin collections; that equated to around 2,300 tons of such materials currently going to landfill, based on 2020-21 statistics.

Now that we have successfully progressed to a situation whereby many local supermarkets in the Borough were providing in-store recycling drop off points for a wide range of soft plastics, officers would be promoting a campaign to encourage every household across the Borough to use those facilities to complement their blue bin recycling efforts. The key message would be to ask residents to get into the routine habit of collecting up such packaging materials around the home throughout

the week and take them along to the designated soft plastics recycling drop off point at their local supermarket, whilst they were out doing groceries shopping. If all of the soft plastics that could now be recycled in that way were to be kept out of grey bins, the Borough would be saving around £250k per year in landfill costs - not to mention the positive impact upon the environment.

Marketing and communications on that key recycling subject would be progressed through local press, social media, the Council's Bin-Ovation App, and other Council information channels. Members were encouraged to promote the campaign to their local constituents as much as possible.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this report.

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

Councillor Greer was delighted to propose the recommendation and had been amazed to consider the amount of waste that was being placed in her grey bin that could be recycled through this service. She thought that supermarkets had been taking a slow approach to date and it was the role of customers to get recyclable waste that the Council could not yet deal with, back to the source. She thought every resident of the Borough should be encouraged to take back those materials wherever possible. Supermarkets had power in turn to exert pressure on producers to make products simpler to recycle.

The Director explained that the Council had lobbied supermarkets for instore soft plastics take back schemes. Within the grey bin soft plastics were by far the biggest proportion of material that couldn't be accepted in Council kerbside recycling bins, and supermarkets had now agreed to take back that recyclable material in-store, so it was incumbent that the Council put that message out to the public and encourage them to use this additional opportunity to recycle further.

Councillor Armstrong-Cotter explained that since the start of the Covid pandemic she had purposefully tried to shop more locally to encourage small businesses. She had found in doing that, there was automatically less plastic involved. She asked the Council to make contact with the Henderson Group about the instore soft plastics take back scheme, since there were many Spar grocery stores on the Peninsula. She also considered that it would help further if the Education Authority could run a promotion in schools on the matter since children were often the drivers of recycling in their homes.

Councillor McKee asked the Council to give consideration to providing a receptacle to the public to encourage them to store the soft plastics materials before they were taken back to the supermarkets. It might prove to be a worthwhile investment. The Director agreed that that could be considered, but many people were currently using a soft plastic bag to store and transfer other pieces of soft plastic.

Councillor Douglas thanked officers for the initiative. It had been helpful to see the responses from the supermarkets and in turn it could place greater expectations on suppliers of products. She asked about plans for TerraCycle schemes and the

Director explained that plans to work on that had been introduced just as the Covid pandemic had begun, so would now need to be refreshed. However it was noted that some materials covered by TerraCycle schemes were now included in the new supermarket soft plastics take back schemes.

Councillor Cummings was pleased at the very positive report and asked if the supermarkets could take a more uniform approach in terms of the design and appearance of in store soft plastics bins and signage. The Director explained that it was up to each of the businesses to make their own corporate decisions and probably unlikely that we would be in a position to achieve a completely uniform approach. However, he noted that those schemes would cost the supermarkets money and it was great that the Council had been instrumental in the campaign to win the argument about responsible environmental behaviour by the companies in this regard. The Council's message was to inform the public about the opportunities to recycle at these supermarkets and in turn the reduced cost to the ratepayer of landfilling such waste if supermarket recycling of soft plastics could be 'normalised' across all households.

Councillor Kendal asked if consideration could be given to glossy stickers on bins to highlight the issue. The Director agreed that aside from the ongoing drip feed or recycling messages, it was necessary from time to time to undertake a bigger scale 'relaunch' with a more hard-hitting campaign. Any further review of the kerbside collection service model would be accompanied by such a major marketing and promotion campaign.

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

7. NI LOCAL AUTHORITY MUNICIPAL WASTE MANAGEMENT STATISTICS – JULY TO SEPTEMBER 2021

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Environment The official waste management statistics for the second quarter of 2021/2022 (July to September 2021) had been released by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency.

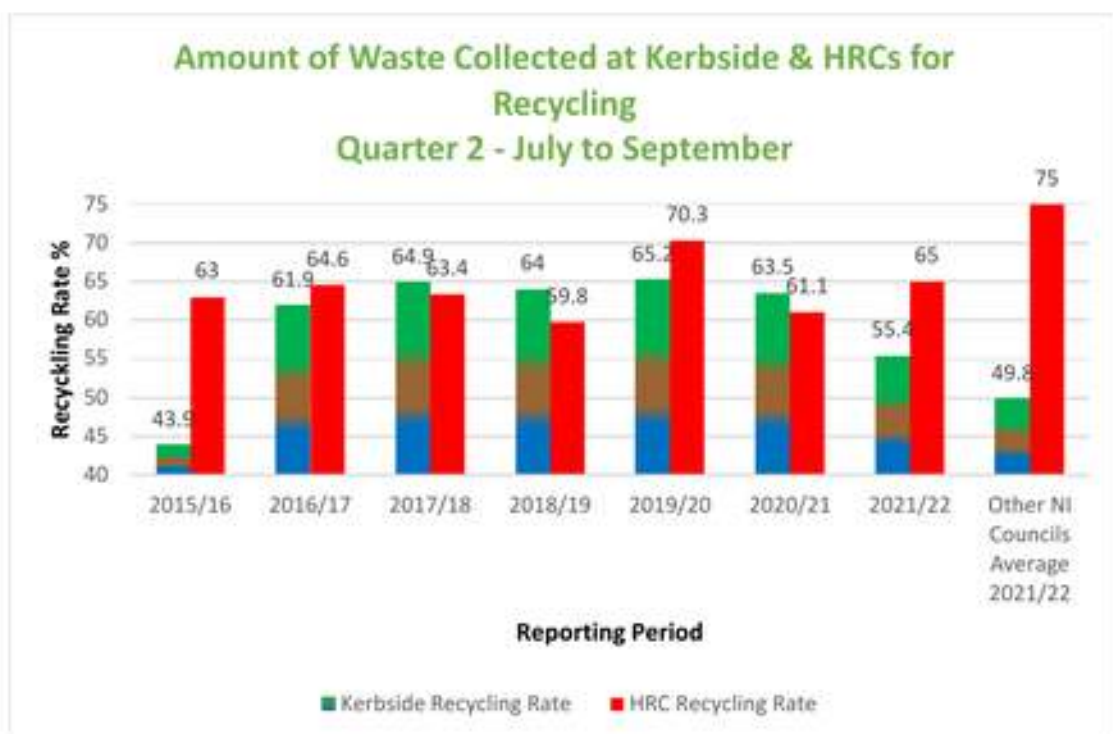
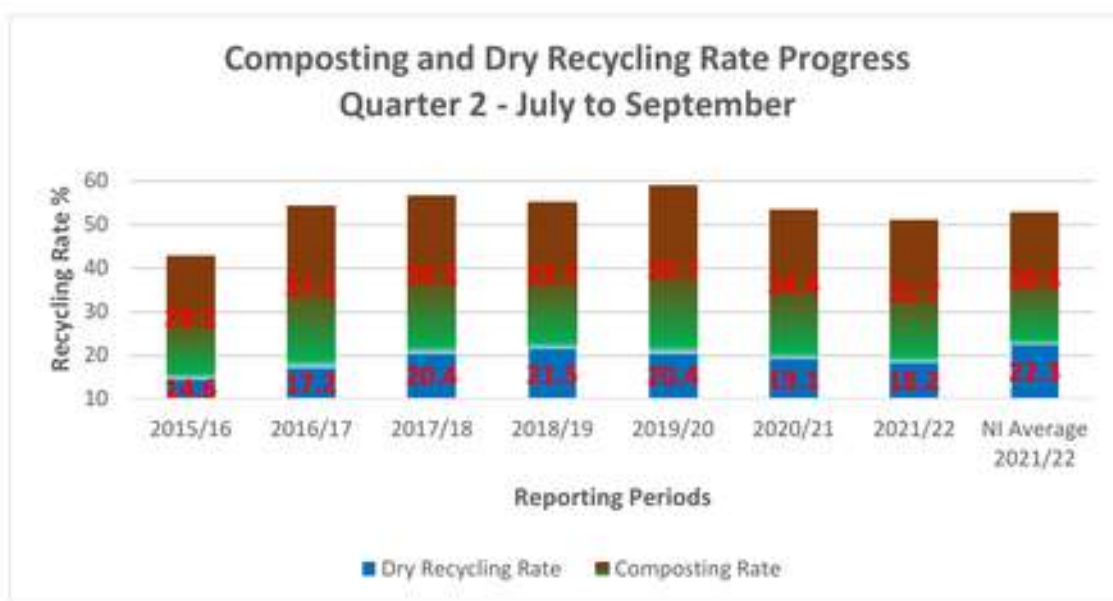
The significant headlines contained within the latest DAERA report showed that:

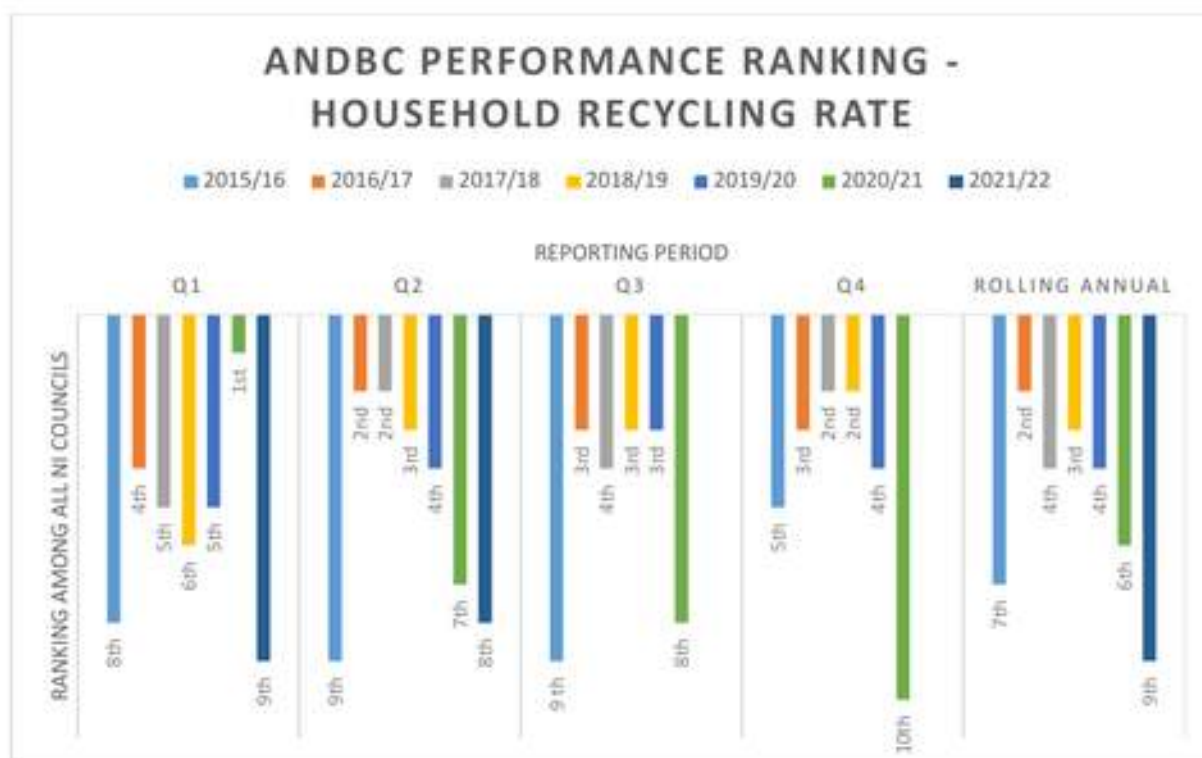
- i. The Council's household waste recycling rate **fell by 2.3%** compared to Q2 last year, (from 53.7% to 51.4%) and **by 7.9%** compared to Q2 the previous (2019/20) year (from 59.3% to 51.4%).



- ii. The Council's household waste recycling rate of 51.4%, was 1.6% lower than the NI average of 53%.
- iii. Ards and North Down was ranked fourth lowest out of the 11 NI Councils for its household waste recycling rate.
- iv. Ards and North Down household waste composting rate fell by 1.7% - from 34.4% to 32.7%. The household waste dry recycling rate fell by 0.9% - from 19.1% to 18.2%.
- v. The household waste composting rate of 32.7% was 2.3% higher than the NI average of 30.4%.
- vi. The Council's household waste dry recycling rate (i.e. recycling of items other than organic food and garden waste) of 18.2% was 4.1% lower than the NI average of 22.3%.
- vii. The Council's kerbside recycling capture rate of 74.3% for household compostable waste materials compared to a NI Council average of 70.7%.
- viii. The Council was at the bottom end of the performance table for 'dry' recycling rate, ranking tenth out of eleven Councils.
- ix. The Council received 45% more waste per capita at its HRCs compared to the average for other NI Councils. That represented a sustained trend over five successive quarterly reporting periods of HRC waste reverting back to excessive levels compared to other NI Councils.

- x. The amount of waste collected at HRC sites for recycling was significantly less than the average for other Councils – 65%, compared to an average rate of 75% for other Councils.
- xi. The Council collected 4% more waste per capita from homes through its kerbside bin collection services.
- xii. The amount of waste collected for recycling through the Council’s kerbside bin collection system was higher than the average for other Councils – 55.4%, compared to an average of 49.8% for other Councils.





The latest official Municipal Waste Management Statistics report presented further clear evidence that the Council's performance in relation to waste resource management had suffered a significant sustained deterioration, both in absolute and relative terms.

The amount of waste the Council is landfilling, and its rate of recycling were now returning close to the levels in the strategy baseline year of 2015/16. **The Council's rolling 12-month average recycling rate of 47.8% has now fallen back below the current statutory minimum of 50% and we are at risk of breaching the annual landfill allowances stipulated under the NI Landfill Allowance Scheme (NILAS).**

Officers would reiterate a view that the structure of the Council's waste management services and how they were delivered must further adapt and change if the Council was to see a return to previous improvements in performance levels, let alone achieve further gains towards the challenging recycling and landfill diversion targets set out in the government's circular economy package as well as the Council's own sustainable waste resource management agenda.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the report.

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

Councillor Boyle began by stating that he had omitted to thank the Chair for her opening comments about the situation in Ukraine. The thoughts and prayers of most people including himself were clearly with the people of Ukraine who had suffered

terrible bombing of their country. He hoped and prayed that the peace talks would be fruitful and that the Ukrainian people could get back to living a normal life.

Referring to the report before the committee he considered that what was being presented was nothing short of damning and it was worth doing more than simply noting it. He believed that it was now time for an honest assessment of where the Council stood, and he thought that if the Council was a business it would now be bankrupt, since it was rapidly heading toward the bottom of the class in terms of recycling and landfill performance. He asserted that this was a wake-up call to start doing things differently. The Council's current model was simply not delivering, and it was time for a different approach. Members and officers were custodians of ratepayers' money and must take courageous decisions, this was not a new problem which had been presented before the Environment Committee but one which had been brought for as long as he could remember and he urged Members to be mindful of the costs they were placing on ratepayers as a result of their decisions.

The Director explained the landfill allowance scheme and saw a three-dimensional position around the key messaging on that subject. Firstly, there was the financial impact which was very significant and indeed had accounted for a significant proportion of the Council's rate rise for the coming year. Secondly, there was the environmental detriment which could be thought of as an even bigger issue and finally there was also a statutory compliance dimension as highlighted in the report. Statutory targets were set in law and non-compliance would result in sanctions and fines; the implications of that would come in time. It was therefore incumbent upon officers to advise Members so that the Council could be navigated clear of such costs. Members were aware of the circular economy which had been introduced by the UK government, involving an even higher recycling target than was currently in place and which the Council was currently unable to meet - and that situation was of grave concern to officers.

Councillor Boyle thanked the Director for those comments and considered that this was not new language and local ratepayers would be angered if the Council did not act promptly to address that situation.

Referring to a question by Councillor Cummings the Director explained he did not believe that there had not been a significant noticeable increase in the van and trailer permits granted for use of the Household Recycling Centres. Officers had observed that the pattern of how larger volumes of waste being brought in had started to change since the permit scheme had been introduced – and officers' belief that a lot of commercial/trade/business waste was now being brought in regularly by car/small trailer that did not require a permit.

Councillor Kendall was in agreement with Councillor Boyle and was also wary of the same excuses for excess waste such as the Covid pandemic or waste tourism. The trajectory of the figures was significant and the Council was on a cliff edge which was ultimately costing hard pressed ratepayers money that they no longer had in many cases, and the issue could no longer be deferred for consideration to a date in the future. She asked the Director had the identification check at the Household Recycling Centres proven to be successful and he explained that a sample exercise had been run, but it was not sustainable to check every person in the absence of

having a booking system in place which would regulate the pace of traffic flow through the centres and provide space and time for scrutiny.

Councillor Greer asked if all Councils were capable of recycling the same materials. The Head of Waste and Cleansing confirmed that for the vast majority of materials it was the same across Northern Ireland. One difference between Ards and North Down and some other Councils was that they were recovering some extra recyclables from residual waste by sending to energy from waste contracts. The Councillor asked the Council to consider something similar and the Head of Waste and Cleansing said that it was already doing so through Arc21.

The Director made it clear that the vast majority of what was currently found in the grey bin, could go into the blue or brown recycling bins (or the new soft plastics bins in supermarkets). When more effective diversion/recovery of the larger scale 'core' materials had been achieved, Council could consider looking at potential for recycling of a wider range of smaller volume materials.

In concluding the debate Councillor Smart recognised the scale of the current difficulties both on the environment and the ratepayers' pockets. Ratepayers were hard pressed financially and would continue to be and since this was the Council's most significant cost base Members owed it to the Borough's ratepayers to support and encourage more positive behaviours.

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

8. CONSULTATION ON THE INTRODUCTION OF MANDATORY DIGITAL WASTE TRACKING

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report dated 16 February from the Director of Environment detailing that the Consultation Paper related to proposals for the introduction of an electronic system for tracking waste movements across the UK. The current systems across the four administrations were not joined up, with a variety of methods of recording waste movements. The perceived benefits included providing a comprehensive understanding of what waste was recycled, recovered, or disposed of. It was envisaged that the reporting requirements would also make illegal activities easier to identify.

While the Consultation Paper was for a large part of a technical nature, the introduction of mandatory digital waste tracking had the potential to place an additional administrative and financial burden on the Council from 2023 – 2024 onwards. At this stage Officers had not received a demonstration of how the system would work, the details to be inputted, etc. As stated in the response, the Council operated eleven licensed waste facilities and two sites with Waste Management Licence exemptions. Waste movements from each of those sites would have to be recorded on the proposed system. While collections from domestic premises would be exempted, the Council would also have to record all commercial waste collections from over 1,000 businesses across the Borough. Current regulations permitted the Council to issue an annual 'season ticket' to businesses detailing repetitive collections over a 12-month period. It was not clear whether a similar

system would be included, or whether there would be a need to make returns after each commercial collection.

The proposed introduction would require training and the possible need for additional support staff, particularly in relation to waste movements from the nine HRCs. In terms of the Waste Transfer Stations, it was hoped that the weighbridge software at Balloo ERC and North Road Depot would allow data transfer to the system.

The emerging environmental problem of Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) and recording their presence was also raised in the Consultation Paper. POPs included a range of organic chemicals used in a wide range of household products, that did not break down when such items were placed in landfill. They could only be destroyed by incineration. They were found in electrical products, household furnishings and textile products. They were also found in older paint products and various now banned herbicides and insecticides, that still turned up on occasions at HRCs, when residents were clearing out garages and old garden sheds.

The Consultation included a series of questions regarding the proposals and the suggested Council response was included in an appendix. The full document could be obtained using the following link:

[Consultation document Introduction of mandatory digital waste tracking.pdf \(defra.gov.uk\)](https://www.defra.gov.uk/consult/consultations/introduction-of-mandatory-digital-waste-tracking/)

RECOMMENDED that the Council agrees the proposed response attached.

The Head of Waste and Cleansing gave a background to the consultation paper. The intention going forward was for a four-nation approach to establish how the information could be reported and recorded. The solution appeared to be an electronic system from the producer to the end destination in terms of treatment or recycling. It would present a challenge for the Council since there was a requirement to log all of its waste movements individually, which would require an additional administration and financial burden.

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

RECESS 8.59 pm

MEETING RECOMMENCED 9.11 pm

9. POWER SUPPLIES TO MOBILE FOOD VENDORS

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report dated 4 February 2022 from the Director of Environment detailing that the Council currently had contracts with mobile food vendors at the following locations: Bank's Lane Bangor, Kingsland Bangor, Seapark Holywood, Groomsport Harbour, Millisle beach Park, Cairn Wood Craigantlet and Kiltonga Duck Pond Newtownards.

Mobile food vendors typically used diesel powered generators to provide electricity for cooking, heating, refrigeration etc. However, the use of those generators had a number of drawbacks:

- They could be noisy, causing a nuisance to staff, customers and nearby residents.
- They produce harmful emissions causing a nuisance and contributing to air pollution.
- They could be unreliable, affecting trade.

In addition, as previously reported to the Environment Committee, HMRC would no longer permit the use of red diesel for those applications, meaning the vendors fuel costs would rise by around 40% when they switched to white diesel.

Proposal

- Officers had surveyed the relevant sites and would propose to phase in the introduction of mains powered "feeder pillars" where it was practical to do so.
- The feeder pillars would be equipped with a top-up card system, the same as what was currently being used at the Council's harbours.
- Vendors would buy cards with top-up credits from the Council, which would then be used to activate the power supplies. The rate per kWh was set by the Council and could therefore include a modest fee to cover any associated maintenance costs.
- The feeder pillar would have a suitably rated, anti-vandal power outlet on the side which the vendors would plug into, to avail of power (similar to the systems found in caravan sites).
- The power outlets remained without power until the card was inserted, thereby avoiding unauthorised usage.
- Council electricity was sourced from 100% renewables suppliers, therefore reducing the carbon footprint of the vendors.
- A trial installation had operated this season at Banks Lane, Bangor to alleviate issues with noise following residents' complaints. If the recommendation was passed the Banks Lane supply would be altered to include the card top up system (it currently relied on meter reads).

Consultation with Current Vendors

Colleagues in the Tourism Service had had initial conversations with all of the current providers about the proposal. No objections were noted but there was a variance in requested urgency for the scheme to be implemented. Some vendors were exceptionally keen for it to be done right away whereas others less so, generally content with their existing arrangements. Therefore, installation would be carried out on a phased basis by the Council in line with available budget and with consideration of specific vendor need/preference.

Costs

Installation costs varied for each site as they were largely affected by the availability of local power supplies.

Cairn Wood did not have any nearby power supplies (or NIE equipment) so used a solar array for power and was therefore unlikely to be suitable for the initiative. Most sites typically cost around £4k to £6k to provide the necessary equipment and cabling.

No budget existed for the work, but it was proposed to ring-fence approximately £10k per year to roll out the installation over the next 2 to 3 years.

Opt-Out

It was not anticipated to make it mandatory for vendors to utilise the system at this stage, meaning vendors could continue to use their own power generation if desired. However, Members may wish to review the position once all locations had had the infrastructure installed, thereby giving adequate time for vendors to adjust and prepare. That would be subject to a further report to the Council at that time. It should be noted that the current contracts with vendors ran for a period of three years, renewed on an annual basis, through to March 2024. Therefore, the Council position could be amended for the start of each financial year.

RECOMMENDED that the Council agrees to phase in the introduction of feeder pillars for mobile food vendors as detailed within this report.

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

Councillor Douglas greatly welcomed the report and she had spoken to a vendor at Banks Lane, Ballyholme about the matter and was aware that constituents had raised concerns about the noise of the generator, and hopefully this would make an improvement.

Councillor McKee was also pleased to read the report and had been unaware that those kiosk businesses had required a generator to run them constantly. This would be an opportunity to improve the air quality at sites in Millisle, Kingsland and Seapark which were locations right beside children's playparks.

The Head of Assets and Property Services stated that it was the Council's intention to roll the initiative out over the coming two years. If the businesses were happy and there were no operational issues, it would be included in the tender exercise for trading concessions on our property - which is due out in 2024.

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

10. GRANT OF OUTDOOR ENTERTAINMENT LICENCES

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report dated 22 February 2022 from the Director of Environment detailing that an application for an outdoor entertainment licence had been received.

1. Crawfordsburn Scout Centre – Lisburn Community Choir

Applicant: Richard Thompson, Lisburn Community Choir, 18 Mount Royal, Lisburn

This event was proposed for 7 April 2022 from 7pm to 9pm.

The proposal was for an outdoor concert for audience of up to 350 people.

The event would be a choral musical event.

RECOMMENDED that the Council grants this licence with the condition that it will not be issued until the licensee provides and implements an Event Management plan to the satisfaction of the PSNI, NIFRS and Council Officers.

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

11. GRANT OF ENTERTAINMENT LICENCE

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report dated 15 February 2022 from the Director of Environment detailing that an application had been received for the grant of entertainment licence as follows:

The Quays, 81 New Harbour Road, Portavogie

Applicant: Ms Leigh Eileen Gamble, 15 Ballyfrench Road, Portavogie

Days and Hours: Monday to Sunday during the permitted hours when alcohol may be served on these premises under the Licensing (NI) Order 1996

Type of entertainment: Indoor dancing, singing and music.

RECOMMENDED that the Council grants the application.

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

12. NOTICES OF MOTION

There were no Notices of Motion.

13. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

There were no items of Any Other Notified Business.

EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC/PRESS

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

14. TENDER FOR EXTENSION FOR THE TREATMENT OF STREET SWEEPINGS 2022/23

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)

15. TENDER FOR THE COLLECTION AND REPROCESSING OF VARIOUS WASTE STREAMS FROM ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL HOUSEHOLD RECYCLING CENTRES

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)

Circulated for information

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)

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 9.35 pm.

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

A meeting of the Regeneration and Development Committee was held remotely via Zoom on Thursday 3 February 2022 at 7.00pm.

PRESENT:

In the Chair: Alderman McDowell (7.52pm)

Aldermen: Girvan Wilson
Menagh

Councillors: Adair Dunlop
Armstrong-Cotter Gilmour
Brooks McClean
Cummings McKimm
Walker

In Attendance: Director of Regeneration, Development and Planning (S McCullough), Head of Regeneration (B Dorrian), Head of Economic Development (C McGill), Head of Tourism (S Mahaffy), Head of Corporate Communications (C Jackson) and Democratic Services Officer (R King)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies had been received from Alderman Smith. An apology for lateness was received from the Regeneration and Development Committee Chair (Alderman McDowell) so the Vice Chair (Councillor McKimm) would chair the meeting during his absence.

NOTED.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Vice Chair, Councillor McKimm, sought Declarations of Interest at this stage and none were made.

NOTED.

3. EVALUATION REPORT, TOURISM EVENTS PROGRAMME 2021-2022 (FILE TO/EV3)

(Appendix I)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Regeneration, Development and Planning, dated 10 February 2022, detailing the following:

Background

In January 2021 Council agreed the following Tourism Events programme:

Event	Date	Budget
May Day, Holywood	May	5,000
Pipe Band Championships	May	26,500
Festivals by the Sea	June	80,000
Spring Food Festival Including Comber Earlies Food Festival	June	74,000
Autumn Food Festival Including Portavogie Seafood Festival	Sep/Oct	74,000
Bangor Christmas Switch On	Nov	12,500
Newtownards Christmas Switch On	Nov	12,500
TOTAL		284,500

Further reports were presented to Council in March and June 2021, with proposals on how to adapt the programme in the face of ongoing Government Covid-19 restrictions. Members would be aware that no events/large gatherings were allowed to take place in Northern Ireland for a significant part of 2021, with this guidance in place until July 2021.

The Government Covid-19 restrictions and guidance from the summer 2021 changed and therefore the programme was adapted and approved by Council to enable events to take place to include:

- attendance at any event was not to exceed 500
- events must be designed to be compliant with that maximum attendance, and manageable within all Covid restrictions, including social distancing guidelines
- the budget to be spent to attract a maximum attendance of 500 represents value for money for ratepayer funds.

Council agreed the final 2021 Tourism Events Programme below, and this report presented an evaluation of those delivered:

Event	Final Agreed Budget	Event
May Day	£5,000	Rescheduled to Autumn event
Pipe Band Championship	£26,500	Changed to 'Pipeband Festival' rescheduled to 4 Sept 2021
Spring Food Festival inc. Comber Earlies Festival	£0	Cancelled
Festivals by the Sea	£40,000	Changed to one-day animation rescheduled to Sat 21 Aug 2021
Autumn Food Festival	£61,000	Tide and Turf Festival with other food activity – Sat 18 Sept 2021
Bangor Christmas Switch On	£12,500	Sat 20 Nov 2021
Newtownards Christmas Switch On	£12,500	Sat 27 Nov 2021
TOTAL	£157,500	

This report presented an evaluation of the six events delivered in the period from August to November. It was unfortunate that one event, the Newtownards Christmas Switch On, had to be cancelled due to adverse weather conditions.

The 2021/22 tourism events programme delivered a total of 17,000 attendees against its revised target of 25,000. The attendee target was revised 'in year' due to the changing programme and changing delivery environment.

There were no reportable health and safety or anti-social behaviour matters. The programme was currently within budget at £130,470 (some minor costs still to be attributed) against the revised budget of £157,500.

May Day event, rescheduled to Autumn – Saturday 30 October 2021

Holywood and District Community Council's event, to mark the reinstallation of Holywood's iconic Maypole, was held on Saturday 30 October 2021 with an exhibition and launch at the Maypole, and brass bands and street theatre around the town throughout the day. This event was organised by Holywood and District Community Council with assistance, advice and financial support provided by the Council. No attendee target was set due to the nature of the event, nor was any market research undertaken.

Back in Bangor, Bangor – Saturday 21 August 2021

At the time of delivery, government restrictions had limited spectator numbers at outdoor events to 500. 'Back in Bangor' was a programme involving a one-day animation of the town to promote Bangor as a place to enjoy/shop. The programme was designed as a re-animation of the seafront and town centre, including a food and craft market at Project 24 and "lower key" activity encouraging enjoyment of Bangor in recovery. Elements included:

- Food and Craft Market at Project 24
- A series of window animations and pop-up performances extending the whole way along Main Street, up High Street and to Project 24 and the promenade towards Pickie. There were also performances on a boat in the harbour.

The event was impacted by very bad weather conditions, a cold and wet day, which deterred many visitors from venturing along the promenade.

Given attendee restrictions, marketing for this event was kept minimal and local.

The UK's Strongest Woman event was also held at McKee Clock Arena on Saturday 21 August, organised and promoted by Ultimate Strongman Promotions with grant-aid from Council's Tourism Event Grant. This was attended by 500 visitors.

Ards and North Down Pipe Band Festival, Bangor - Saturday 4 September 2021

Due to ongoing Covid related restrictions on September events, the Royal Scottish Pipe Band Association NI (RSPBANI) approached Council to discuss adapting their event for safe delivery. Ticketing the event was agreed as the safest way to enable it to proceed. McKee Clock Arena was identified as the most suitable venue due to arena size, enabling fencing and ticketing entrances to be installed. Attendee numbers were agreed at 1,000 and tickets were sold at nominal cost of £1.00 per visitor. This allowed the income (retained by Council) to offset infrastructure costs for fencing, seating and stewarding, and accommodated a track and trace facility.

The full quota of tickets was issued within a week of release. Council officers managed the infrastructure and event set-up, with RSPBANI organising programming and management of the competition/festival. As previously agreed by

Council in May 2021, an Economic Appraisal was not undertaken (due to the change of event model and location). At that time, Council further agreed that the Ards and North Down Pipe Band Championship would take place in Castle Park, Bangor in 2022 to allow the Economic Appraisal to be undertaken for comparative purposes with the original event model and location.

Tide and Turf, Portavogie - Saturday 11 September 2021

The Borough Events Strategy identified Portavogie Seafood Festival as a 'growth' event. Recognising the opportunity to expand the breadth and theme of the programming, the event name was changed to 'Tide and Turf Festival', with inclusion of a range of beef produced in the Borough.

Separate sections of the site were themed 'Tide' and 'Turf', each had its own demonstration kitchen with celebrity chefs, including Suzie Lee (winner of Best British Home Cook), and Oliver Peyton from Great British Menu, cooking/compering throughout the day. Each section had a 'Buy It, Cook It' area, giving attendees the opportunity to buy fish or meat from sellers and have it cooked by SERC students.

This programme was enhanced by a range of entertainment from musical artists; Shanty Boys and Singing Mermaids, brass bands and a funfair.

The event faced some challenges including stall recruitment - many small traders reported difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff, and many had taken up residencies at the increasing number of weekly events/markets. Furthermore, some celebrity chefs were forced to withdraw at the last minute due to Covid. Despite these challenges, the event was very well supported with 6,000 visitors.

Tide and Turf, Portavogie was used as a pilot event for the development of a sustainability audit. This provided useful learnings for future events and would form the basis of new processes to be applied across the programme for 2022 and beyond.

Bangor Christmas Switch-On - Saturday 20 November 2021

Working with Bangor Chamber of Commerce, the agreed aim of this event was to bring increased footfall into Bangor throughout the day. 41 Stalls were placed along Main Street in front of vacant shop units from 9.00 am to 6.00 pm and 10 stalls were placed in the Sunken Gardens. An entertainment programme took place at Trinity Presbyterian with a range of local performers.

Local schools and groups took part in a lantern parade sponsored by 'My Main Street', along with performers from SERC's Christmas pantomime.

'Urban Markets' organised a 'Mills Row Bazaar' with the intention of offering a further range of activity and stalls running from 3.00 pm to 9.00 pm. The organisers had difficulty attracting stalls, and due to the low number of attendees, finished the event at 8.00 pm.

Along with the objective to drive and retain footfall in the Town centre throughout the day, the Chamber and Council wished to differentiate the event to Switch Ons held in

previous years. It was therefore agreed by all partners, to move the Switch On element to the Danske Bank site.

Stall trade and the atmosphere in the town centre were reported very successful by traders, town centre retail, the market organiser, and Bangor Chamber. However, for the period of the Switch-On, the volume of attendees caused difficulties meaning that the traffic had to be stopped and the parade could not progress as planned. A full debrief including Switch-On location was carried out by officers with all of the parties and agencies involved. Further work in identifying and agreeing a suitable location for the 2022 Switch-On was underway.

Newtownards Christmas Switch-On - 27 November 2021

This event was scheduled to take place on 27 November 2021. The programming and activity were organised in conjunction with Newtownards Chamber. Council was responsible for infrastructure and set up of the event, as well as the actual Switch-On Ceremony, with the Chamber responsible for recruitment of the market traders and daytime entertainment.

In the week leading up to the event, concerns were raised by Council officers and the Chamber regarding an Amber Weather warning which had been issued, meaning most elements of the event could not proceed safely. Advice was sought from the Risk Manager and the Emergency Planning Officer and after daily monitoring the difficult decision was taken by the Chamber and Council to cancel the Switch-On event.

Some cancellation fees had to be paid, as per the contracts, for traffic management and the proposed Light Show, due to cancellation within a 7-day period. This was reflected in the final budget figures.

Market Research

Market research was carried out at four of the above events by an appointed market research company. Due to the Covid 19 environment researchers collated email addresses on site (or via social media) to reduce contact with attendees, deeming face to face interviews too high a risk. It should be noted that the results are based on a total sample size of 542 and that should be considered by any reader interpreting the results.

The research carried out at four events indicated they delivered a net positive economic impact into the Borough, by varying degrees for each event. The spend generated by the four events was estimated at £170,823.39 with circa 17.45% (£29,820.26) generated by Out of Borough (OoB) visitors.

There was limited data collected attributable to overnight stays therefore this element has not been included in the estimate of overall spend. This figure was based on attendee spend at the event such as main meals, snacks, shopping and sightseeing.

Additional data showed 82.5% of responses rating sustainability at events very/fairly important as well confirming social media as the most effective way to reach our audiences. 43% Reported finding out about the events via Facebook.

Challenges

Delivery of outdoor events in 2021 presented many challenges, both in terms of the ongoing Pandemic and restrictions changing rapidly, to staff shortages/sickness with suppliers and contractors who play a key role in event delivery and their success. The fact that many were able to proceed was a testament to the commitment and flexibility of suppliers, partners and officers.

Another challenge noted during this year's event season and highlighted by Council's Emergency Planning Officer was consideration of the impact on events of Climate Change. Some of the weather episodes experienced over recent years, with increasingly high winds, storms and gales, suggested what we might face in future. Mitigations would need to be built into the 2022 event programme such as programming events that were less affected by extreme weather conditions.

Tourism Events Programme – 2022/23

Subject to any further Covid-19 restrictions and/or weather challenges, the 2022 Tourism Events Programme, as agreed by Council, was outlined below.

Event	Date (2022)	Budget	Target Attendees
May Day, Holywood	Mon 2 May	£10,000	5,000
Ards and North Down Pipe Bands Championships, Castle Park, Bangor	Sat 14 May	£21,500	5,000
Sea Bangor/Queen's Platinum Jubilee, Bangor	Sat 4 & Sun 5 Jun	£80,000	30,000
Summer Food Festival, inc Comber Earlies Food Festival (CEFF Sat 25 Jun)	Mon 20 Jun – Sun 3 Jul	£71,500	10,000
Autumn Food Festival, incorporating Tide and Turf, Portavogie (T&T Sat 24 Sept)	Sat 10 Sep – 25 Sep	£71,500	8,000
Bangor Switch On	Sat 19 Nov	£15,000	10,000
Newtownards Switch On	Sat 26 Nov	£15,000	7,000
		£284,500	75,000

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this report.

Councillor Adair proposed, seconded by Councillor Walker, that the recommendation be adopted.

On proposing, Councillor Adair felt that the report was positive given the challenges of the Covid-19 Pandemic. He was pleased to see that the Portavogie Tide and Turf Festival had exceeded targeted visitor numbers by 40% and he spoke of the wider benefits that it had brought for local traders. He had also been delighted to observe visitors attending from outside of the Borough.

Councillor Walker asked if there were figures available to show the percentage of visitors that had attended each event from outside of the Borough and if a baseline

was used to review the success of a particular event to determine if it was worth keeping on future events calendars.

The Head of Tourism advised that particular type of analysis was built into a wider Council strategy which looked at various outcomes in relation to social, community and in this case, tourism revenue and spend. There were also targets within the Events section in relation to 'out of Borough' visitors and market research was used to track that activity. She referred to the Council's agreed Borough Events Strategic Direction policy which recommended the use of the Event Impact Radar Model which looked at outcomes of each particular event. If those targets were not met then officers would review, adapt or look to replace with a different event.

Councillor Gilmour acknowledged two difficult years as a result of Covid-19 restrictions but asked if contingencies had been built into forward planning.

The Officer added that a lot had been learned over the last two years and officers were looking at contingencies, not just for Covid-19 impacts but also the changes in the weather and the challenges that had brought. In relation to Covid-19, the biggest challenges were around restrictions on visitor numbers and adapting events under those circumstances which could include ticketing options, for example.

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

4. TOURISM PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR QUARTER 3, 2021-2022 (FILE TO/TD15)
(Appendix II)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Regeneration, Development and Planning detailing the following:

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 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 2021)
- Service Plan – developed annually (approved April/May 2021)

The Council's 17 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 3 2021-22 was attached.

Key points to note:

- An online toolkit to assist Event Organisers had been completed 'How to Manage your Event'. It offered advice on event management planning, legislation and useful contacts. It was scheduled to be available online in Q4.
- A cohort of internal candidates had completed the pilot OCN Level 2 Event Management course at SERC. A session would be available to recipients of Tourism Events Grants from March 2022.
- Recruitment was in progress for vacant posts in the Visitor Information Centre, Marketing and the Events Service.
- Events had not been able to meet targets due to a restricted and reduced programme.
- Food Seminars in partnership with Economic Delivery were scheduled to take place in February and March 2022.

Key achievements:

- Social media audience growth increasing overall 'following' by 66% since start of the financial year.
- New visitardsandnorthdown.com website was now live and had further enhanced the online communications channels for visitors. Built on the same Destination Management System platform as used by Tourism NI and other local authorities. The new layout ensured easy navigation, clear customer journeys and content including a new blog, dedicated offers section was refreshed regularly, as well as integrated feeds to Facebook and Instagram.

Emerging issues:

- The tourism and hospitality industry had continued to operate in a challenging environment. This had impacted on the Service's originally planned activity eg Food Showcases. These had been difficult for restaurants to commit to in the current environment.

Action to be taken:

- Continue to work closely with providers to develop Experience and Food and Drink activity for 2022/23.
- Review of evaluation and feedback data to continue to improve customer satisfaction levels.
- Complete recruitment.
- Monitor web performance cumulative to date.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this report.

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

Councillor Cummings welcomed a significant rise in social media followers and asked if it was known how many subscribers were based outside of the Borough. The Head of Tourism would request that information from the marketing team and respond directly to the member.

In a further query, Councillor Cummings pointed to joint ticketing incentives, including a '3 for 1' idea that had been mooted previously to include Pickie Fun Park, Exploris and Castle Espie. The officer would discuss that with her Tourism Development colleagues and respond directly, but she understood that Exploris and Pickie Fun Park provided a joint ticket.

Welcoming the online tool kit for event planners, Councillor Walker asked when that resource would go live and if that support could include verbal engagement with officers.

There was one query outstanding in relation to Covid-19 restrictions, but the officer expected that the tool kit would be online by the end of March. She added that officers were more than happy to take calls and give further advice to event planners. In addition, the pilot exercise in relation to training last year was being rolled out to grant recipients and bespoke support would be rolled out more broadly.

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

5. TOURISM SERVICE PLAN 2022-2023 (Appendix III)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Regeneration, Development and Planning detailing that Since 2017/18 Service Plans are produced by each Service in accordance with the Council's Performance Management policy.

Plans were intended to:

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

A draft plan for 2022/23 was attached. This plan had been developed to align with objectives of The Big Plan for Ards and North Down 2017-2032; the Corporate Plan 2020-24 and the Annual Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) 2022/23. The Plan would also support delivery of the ITRDS. The agreement of the plan would also aid toward achievement of the Council's performance improvement duties under the Local Government Act (NI) 2014.

The Service Plan highlighted where the service contributed to the Corporate Plan and, where this was the case, set out the objectives of the service for the 2022/23 year. It further identified the key performance indicators used to illustrate the level of achievement of each objective, and the targets that the Service would try to attain along with key actions required to do so.

The plan had been developed in conjunction with staff, officers and management and consultation with key stakeholders where relevant, including consultation for ITRDS.

The plan was based on the agreed budget. It should be noted that, should there be significant changes in-year (e.g. due to Council decisions, budget revisions or changes to the PIP) the plan may have need to be revised.

The Committee would be provided with update reports on performance against the agreed plan.

RECOMMENDED that Council adopts the attached Tourism Service Plan.

Alderman Girvan proposed, seconded by Councillor Adair, that the recommendation be adopted.

Alderman Girvan asked how the Columban Way which had been launched in County Carlow recently to mark the start of the route, fitted in to the Service Plan. She believed it was a great opportunity in relation to international travel with particular interest for Europeans and Americans and should be a priority. She had noted that there was no specific reference to it within the plan.

The Head of Tourism advised that the plan did not make specific reference to the majority of attractions, activities or experiences but the Columban Way would feature in the promotional element of the plan with promotion through digital formats and messaging.

Alderman Girvan thanked the officer and added that St Columbanus was the patron saint of motorcyclists and felt that provided an opportunity for a motorbike event that could finish in Bangor.

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

6. RENEWED AMBITION PROGRAMME 2022-2023 UPDATE **(FILE RDP196)**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Regeneration, Development and Planning stated as follows:

1. Renewed Ambition Background

Council agreed to be a member of the Renewed Ambition Programme (RAP) in January 2022. RAP was a joint public and private sector-led initiative and aimed to work collaboratively to showcase investment and development opportunities across the Belfast City Region as we sought to deliver on our shared ambitions for the region as an exciting place to work, live, visit and invest. It was a 5 pillared programme focused on activities to ensure that Belfast and the wider city region was well positioned to continue to attract investment and to deliver on inclusive growth.

The 5 pillars:

- 1) Programme of Content aimed at the local and international real estate audience which aims to showcase the Belfast City Region for future real estate investment through participation at virtual and in-person conferences and showcase events.
- 2) Programme of Engagement and Advocacy to facilitate two-way conversations with policy makers and to showcase real estate opportunities to the investor community. This aimed to position the Belfast City Region positively and sought to identify and try to address barriers that investors, developers, and occupiers may have faced when they considered Belfast as a destination.
- 3) Media and Stakeholder Engagement, reinforcing positive messaging around Belfast's investment proposition through international marketing and communication campaigns, targeting the national and international real estate investment and development community.
- 4) A shared access Repository on the investinbelfast.com website which facilitated sharing of data, marketing collateral and intel to help ensure consistent messaging and shared narrative was used by all partners when promoting the city region.
- 5) Research aligned to the impact of real estate investment to inform the city proposition and narrative.

2. Current Status Programme Update

The full programme of activity for 2022-23 was still being developed, however, it had been agreed that the RAP partners, led by Belfast City Council, would participate in UKREiiF, the UK's Real Estate Investment and Infrastructure Forum which was a new three-day event taking place in Leeds from 17 - 19 May 2022.

This event would bring together the public sector – with every core UK city and region involved – alongside Government, investors, funders, developers, housebuilders and more.

Participation in the event will offer:

- 3,000+ In-Person Attendees
- 250+ Speakers Across 14 Stages

- 100+ Exhibitors
- 50+ Fringe Events

Key programme themes are:

- UK's Net Zero Target
- Social Value and Inclusive Growth
- The Future of Real Estate
- Building Better Communities and a focus on inward investment via our Investor Centre.

Belfast had been invited to join a panel discussion on the Levelling Up Stage to discuss "Levelling Up Across The UK". This session would take place following the keynote session (TBC Prime Minister or High-Level UK minister) on Day 1. Other speaking opportunities were being investigated.

UKREiiF Proposed RAP activities include:

- Belfast Region branded exhibition stand (8*3m) in the exhibition hall to act as a meeting point for partners and showcase investment opportunities.
- Investment showcase and networking reception
- Private investor lunch
- Speaking opportunities on main and fringe event programmes.

Attendance at UKREiiF was included as part of the £15k sponsorship package which was approved by Council in January. It also included 2 delegate passes for each Council. Participants were expected to cover their own travel and accommodation costs which were estimated to be approximately £600 per participant, depending on time of booking.

As previously reported, a full programme of activity for 2022-23 was being developed and further update reports would be brought to Council.

Attracting investment into the Borough was an integral part of our Integrated Tourism, Regeneration and Economic Development Strategy (ITRDS) and collaborating with the Renewed Ambition Programme to attend UKREiiF would help to raise the profile of AND and reach into wider markets.

RECOMMENDED that Council approves the attendance of three ANDBC officers at UKREiiF, as part of the Renewed Ambition Programme at an estimated cost of £1,800, which will be met from existing budgets.

Councillor Walker proposed, seconded by Councillor Dunlop, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor Walker felt that the value of the event to the Council was clear but warned against the Borough becoming lost under the umbrella of Greater Belfast and asked if plans were in place to ensure there was a unique offer from the Borough.

The Head of Economic Development advised that Ards and North Down was taking a parallel approach in terms of feeding into the greater Belfast region and there would be a push towards Invest AND. Preparations were being made for that with

statistics and information being refined which related specifically to Ards and North Down.

Welcoming the recommendation, Councillor Dunlop felt it was important that officers were exposed to good practices elsewhere.

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

7. BUSINESS START UPDATE

(Appendix IV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Regeneration, Development and Planning detailing that as part of the transfer of functions and Local Government Reform, responsibility for business start-up and support for under-represented groups, in terms of enterprise support, transferred to councils.

When the transfer took place in April 2015, the then DoE (now DfC) set the job targets based on the 2011-2015 Programme for Government (PfG) target and on a Proportional Formula (PF), creating 6500 local jobs, or 1625 jobs per year in NI. The total job numbers were then split across each council area, and loosely aligned to the Regional Business Start-up Programme (**Go For It**). For Ards and North Down the statutory target was set at 85 per year. These targets had remained in place since that date and, in the case of Ards and North Down, had been exceeded each year.

In considering the basis of allocating Job Creation targets, the Capaxo Review, commissioned in 2018, recommended that the Proportional Formula (PF) was a reasonable basis on which to set new targets. The targets were not implemented at the time as the Executive was not sitting.

A report was brought to Council in March 2018, detailing the draft review of Business Start targets, recommending that they, *"...be used as a baseline in the new Business Start Programme to be suggested to DfE when recommending new Statutory targets to DfC for public consultation on the future programme targets."*

The targets articulated in the Consultation paper were reflective of that work.

A response to the consultation paper had been approved by SOLACE and would be returned on behalf of all the Councils.

Future of Business Start Support

Currently the ERDF (European Regional Development Fund), supported interventions such as 'Go For It', the 11-Council Business Start programme, and business development mentor programmes such as SHINE and Digital Growth, at a level of 60%, with additional 20% funding from Invest NI.

As Members would be aware the current phase of EU Funding would finish in March 2023.

To prepare for the future, officers had been working with the other 10 Councils and bodies to ensure that appropriate successor funding was identified and secured, and that sufficient plans and partnerships would be in place to provide continuity of support for local businesses.

There was a considerable 'case for change', looking forward. There were shortfalls in NI's business start-up performance (relative to other UK regions/the UK average position) that created the need to review/reposition the support infrastructure, with a view to a step change in performance. Furthermore, the enterprise ecosystem was complex and difficult to navigate, meaning that those seeking support often found it difficult to get the right help at the right time. It would seem there was a need for a more effective ecosystem of support that offers greater connectivity and simplification for clients.

The cessation of ERDF funding in March 2023 was an opportunity to identify other resources/funding sources that may have been more conducive to the future ambitions of the Councils in this arena.

Through the SOLACE Economic Recovery Group, Morrow Gilchrist Associates (MGA Ltd), had been commissioned by Belfast City Council (BCC), on behalf of the 11 Councils to undertake an Options Analysis to inform the delivery of business start-up support post 2023. A Working Group had been established to feed in and direct an approach to ensure a programme of support that was fit for purpose was designed and, that appropriate funding was identified to leverage optimum delivery models.

Further reports would be brought to Council as this work progressed over the coming months.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this report.

Councillor Adair proposed, seconded by Councillor Gilmour, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor Walker felt that the existing Go For It programme was not providing what was needed but this process would be a good opportunity to change that. He felt that there would be considerable value in taking the time to get a new business support model right and hopefully find alternative ways of funding it. He asked for further detail on the next steps and if the 11 Councils would get sight of further responses.

The Head of Economic Development advised that the response had been submitted but there was an outstanding piece of work that would bring all 11 Councils together to work on the next stage and discuss what the business support model should look like. Recommendations from that work were expected to come forward at the end of the month and a further report would follow. Officers were hopeful that the process would provide a fit for purpose business support programme.

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

8. ARDS AND NORTH DOWN INTERIM LABOUR MARKET PARTNERSHIP UPDATE (FILE RDP47)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Regeneration, Development and Planning detailing the undernoted:

Context

Members would recall that the Department for Communities (DfC) had made funding available for each of the 11 Councils to develop its own Interim Labour Market Partnership (ILMP) with funding available until the end of March 2022. Additional funding for an Interim Action Plan for 2022-23, and a further 3-year Action Plan for 2023-2026 would be subject to the Executive's approved funding.

Ards and North Down LMP Action Plan

Council previously approved the Ards and North Down LMP 2-year action plan for 2021-22 and 2022-23. Subject to a few amendments required by the Department for Communities, the final draft was presented and was currently with the Regional Board (Employability NI) for final approval. Approval and funding for the 2021-22 plan was imminent. Once this was approved by the Regional Board (Employability NI), a Letter of Offer (LoO) would be issued which would enable the LMP to commence delivery of its Action Plan. (Members will recall that a separate Letter of Offer had been received to fund the set-up and administration costs of the LMP).

Procurement

The LMP was keen to maximise delivery of the 2021-22 Action Plan as any actions not completed following receipt of the LoO, would result in funding having to be returned to DfC. To try to expedite plans and be ready to deliver immediate results for the LMP, partner Officers had undertaken the following procurement exercises to deliver on 5 projects from the Action Plan, subject to confirmed funding from DfC and at no cost to Council:

- (i) Two scoping exercises to gather information in respect of existing job portals and support and training programmes;
- (ii) The creation and training of a pool of mentors to assist people to get into employment or up-skill;
- (iii) Creation of a video highlighting the skills within two employment sectors - Engineering and Food Processing - for use in primary schools as part of their careers programme; and
- (iv) The development and delivery of an HGV drivers training programme.

It should be noted that the Department for the Economy (DfE) had been working with the DfC in the creation of LMPs and has also issued a Letter of Offer in the amount of £50K to each of the 11 Councils. This Letter of Offer had been signed by the Council's Chief Executive and would be used immediately to commence a procurement exercise for delivery of a HGV drivers' training programme. DfE had allowed this funding to roll over into the 2022-23 financial year.

It was hoped that by the end of the procurement process on each of the above projects, the LMP would have received its funding, and the projects highlighted above would be able to commence and be delivered within their appropriate timeframe.

Unfortunately, due to tight timeframes, some of the projects would not be commenced but would transfer to the 2022-23 Action Plan as allowed and in accordance with approved funding.

Because of the tight timeframes to deliver, two of the quotations issued in January had not received any response from the delivery agents contacted. It was likely that the funding for these projects would not be spent by the end of the financial year as it would not be feasible to deliver these projects and submit the required claim to DfC by 31st March 2022.

This was reflective of the challenges in dealing with the short-term funding timescales and plans and procedures instigated by central government departments but given to Councils to create and deliver against end year deadlines.

Recruitment

Members would recall that Council approval was granted in January for the recruitment and appointment of a Labour Market Partnership Manager and LMP Administrative Officer, the funding for which would be covered from the DfC administration budget.

The recruitment process included publicly advertising the two posts through the usual channels and in the local press, and the LMP Manager post was also advertised in the Belfast Telegraph. Unfortunately, there had been no applications received for either the LMP Administrative post or for the LMP Manager post. This situation was not unique to Ards and North Down; it appeared that all Councils were experiencing the same recruitment difficulties.

An 11-Council trawl had now been undertaken for the post of LMP Manager, offering the position on a secondment basis. If not successful, officers would seek to recruit through agency.

Successful recruitment was critical for the implementation of the partnership and its plans as the work was currently being carried by officers on top of their usual duties; this was not sustainable in the long-term.

Further updates would be brought to Council.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this report.

Councillor Gilmour proposed, seconded by Councillor Walker, that the recommendation be adopted.

Given the recruitment difficulties highlighted in the report, Councillor Gilmour queried the follow up 11 Council trawl that had been undertaken and how confident officers were of making the necessary appointments. She asked for an indication on the

timeframe involved, particularly in the event of having to approach a recruitment agency.

The Head of Economic Development advised that the 11 Council trawl had now closed and there had been no applications. Officers would now look at appointing from a recruitment agency but the tight deadlines involved in making the project financially viable presented a huge challenge. It was currently a case of trying to follow the project through with existing staff.

Councillor Gilmour appreciated the difficulties but was also aware that the books of recruitment agencies were light and asked if there was possibility for a further trawl to include Civil Service staff.

The officer advised that the current arrangement was a one-way system, in that the Civil Service was able to recruit from local Councils but Councils were unable to offer opportunities to civil servants. It was a matter being discussed with Human Resources.

Councillor Walker was aware that the recruitment difficulties being experienced were a theme at present across the wider economy and he was concerned of the value that would be achieved in terms of quality and cost in recruiting from an agency.

Councillor Armstrong-Cotter wondered if the trawl to Northern Ireland's Councils could be extended to all UK Councils as Ards and North Down could offer an attractive opportunity for someone to work and live, either in the short or longer term. The officer felt it could be worth investigating with HR.

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

9. BELFAST REGION CITY DEAL INNOVATION HUB UPDATE (FILE RDP22)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Regeneration, Development and Planning detailing the following:

BRCD Background

Members would be aware of the background to the Belfast Region City Deal, which had a vision to create 20,000 jobs through a £1 billion capital investment programme in a number of projects, under the four key themes: Innovation, Digital, Tourism and Regeneration and Infrastructure; all supported by an Employability and Skills Programme.

Innovation Hub Background

Following discussion and review of the Innovation Hub OBC with the Department for the Economy and Invest NI, who had been appointed by the department to work with Council to progress the Innovation Hub OBC, officers were now undertaking a further update on the OBC. This included a review of the location for the Hub, including

investigations on the opportunity for it to be located closer to Hollywood where a creative cluster already existed.

The initial vision and concept remained the same, but Council had been asked to investigate the possibilities and opportunities in respect of land availability and demand, together with any issues this might have caused in relation to displacement.

Current status

Following discussions with DfE and Invest NI in respect of investigations into the possibilities of available land in Hollywood, Council placed an Expression of Interest in the local and regional press, seeking a response from anyone who had lands or premises which would accommodate an Innovation Hub.

One response was received and officers were working on the next steps.

An amended OBC may need to be prepared and officers would need to work with the appointed consultants to reflect the location of the Innovation Hub in Hollywood.

This work would be carried out over the coming months with further reports being brought back to Council in due course.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this update.

Councillor Gilmour proposed, seconded by Councillor Dunlop, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor Gilmour queried the expected timeline for the work outlined in the report including the findings on whether Hollywood was going to be suitable location for the Innovation Hub.

The Head of Economic Development advised that while there were a few moving parts to this work, in relation to revising the OBC with regards to Hollywood, that was expected to be completed within the next two months. Some of that was dependent on other variants including the legal title being in place and other paperwork in relation to the land being ready. The BRCD process was another unclear factor, but it was expected that the feasibility of the Hollywood site would be determined in the next two months.

Councillor Dunlop welcomed the report and felt that Hollywood was an excellent fit for the Innovation Hub and it would make an excellent contribution to the town.

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

10. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR QUARTER 3, 2021-22 (FILE 160167)

(Appendix V)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Regeneration, Development and Planning 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. 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 (2015-2019 plan in operation)
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually (2018/19 plan published 30 June 2018)
- Service Plan – developed annually (approved April 2018).

The Corporate Plan 2015-19 set out 17 objectives for the plan period based on themes of People, Place, Prosperity and Performance. The Council's 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

The report for the third Quarter of 2021-22 was below.

Key points to note:

- There had been a slowdown in this quarter of businesses starting and existing creative industries businesses taking up support as they concentrated on dealing with C-19 restrictions while also preparing for the Christmas period. Since the new year activity had picked up again and the team was confident that the numbers would recover over the next period.
- Staff attendance was under target due to longer absences of team members due to illness.

Key achievements:

- Delivery of support continued to work well through digital channels which businesses report offered them and their staff more flexibility.

- Despite closures and restrictions due to C-19, Exploris and Pickie Fun Park had been recovering well and are seeing numbers return to and even exceed pre C-19 figures for this time of year.

Emerging issues:

- As the current phase of EU Funding will soon draw to a close, officers continued to work with other Councils and bodies to ensure that appropriate successor funding was identified and secured, and that sufficient plans and partnerships would be in place to provide continuity of support for local businesses.
- The establishment of a Local Labour Market Partnership (LMP) and the creation of an Action Plan has been approved and submitted to the Department of Communities however, there would be challenges going forward as there were no responses to the Ads placed to recruit the LMP Manager and Administrative post. This situation put added pressure on current staff and broader workstreams as they were diverted from the requirements of their substantive roles.
- In addition to the difficulties with recruiting for the LMP posts, there were also several vacancies within the ED team caused by staff retiring or leaving for other posts. While the replacement of required posts took place, there would be challenges for current team members to continue to respond to all the work requirements across the broad spectrum of tasks. Workloads would need to be carefully monitored and managed.

Action to be taken:

- An 11-Council trawl had been issued to try to attract LMP staff on a secondment basis and, should this not be successful, recruitment through agency would be investigated as the resources would be necessary to effectively deliver the Action Plans. The team would work with HR to recruit and fill all posts as quickly as possible.
- We would need to continue to monitor the situation regarding C-19 and prepare appropriately for any return to the office, to ensure health and safety measures were in place and were effective.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this report.

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

11. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SERVICE PLAN 2022-23

(Appendix VI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Regeneration, Development and Planning detailing that since 2017/18 Service Plans had been produced by each Service in accordance with the Council's Performance Management policy.

Plans were intended to:

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

A draft plan for 2021-22 was attached, which had been developed to align with objectives of The Big Plan for Ards and North Down 2017-2032; the draft Corporate Plan 2020-24 and the draft Annual Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) 2020/21. The Plan would also support delivery of the ITRDS. The agreement of the plan would also aid toward achievement of the Council's performance improvement duties under the Local Government Act (NI) 2014.

The Service Plan highlighted where the service contributed to the Corporate Plan and, where this was the case, sets out the objectives of the service for the 2022-23 year. It further identified the key performance indicators used to illustrate the level of achievement of each objective, and the targets that the Service would try to attain along with key actions required to do so.

The plan had been developed in conjunction with staff, officers and management and in consultation with key stakeholders where relevant, including consultation for ITRDS.

The plan was based on the agreed budget. It should be noted that, should there be significant changes in-year (eg due to Council decisions, budget revisions or changes to the PIP) the plan may have needed to be revised.

The Committee would be provided with update reports on performance against the agreed plan.

RECOMMENDED that Council adopts the attached plan.

Councillor Dunlop proposed, seconded by Councillor Walker, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor Dunlop praised the work that had gone into the service plan and looked forward to it commencing while Councillor Walker had concerns around the pressures that could be placed on staff in light of the previously discussed recruitment challenges and hoped that the plan, and the ambitious content within it, wasn't asking too much of existing staff.

The Head of Economic Development advised that recruitment processes were underway to fill a number of posts in the section but the plan was reflective of the aspirations and the team were passionate about delivering it.

Councillor Walker added that the Council should be impressed and proud of the ambitions in the plan. He felt it was important that the staff were supported and commended them for the volume of work that was undertaken every week in the section.

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

12. PROJECT 24 UPDATE (FILE 141842)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Regeneration, Development and Planning detailing the following:

1. Background

Project 24 was a temporary revitalisation project pending the Queen's Parade development. Project 24 utilised 6 bespoke artist pods split into 2 individual mini studios, creating 12 studios in total. The project opened in April 2013 and had run on a phased basis since then.

2. Site Permissions

Members would be aware that an application was submitted to extend the planning consent for both the Project 24 site and The Hub. Currently there was Planning consent for the Project 24 site to 24 April 2023 and for The Hub until 30 June 2023.

3. Queen's Parade Development Scheme – Bangor Marine Proposal

Members had been made aware that Bangor Marine had expressed an interest in taking over the Project 24 scheme. This would be an opportunity to showcase and trial opportunities on the site and bring the vision of the Queen's Parade development to life before construction commences. Bangor Marine proposed to work with the existing operators within Project 24 and to compliment this with food & beverage, retail and leisure opportunities. The existing Hub would remain onsite and be animated by the Council in collaboration with Bangor Marine.

At the time of writing, no agreement had yet been reached between Bangor Marine and the Department for Communities.

4. Artists

There were twelve studios within Project 24, eight of which were occupied at present. There was a contractual arrangement between the Council and the current Project 24 artists until 31 March 2022, with a view to this being reviewed as the Queen's Parade development and Bangor Marine proposal for use of the site progressed. A further two studios were used as social pods for workshops, meetings, training, equipment storage, etc. If no agreement was reached between Bangor Marine and the Department for Communities, it was proposed the Council seek to fill the two vacant studios.

5. Events

Over the past two years, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, several annual events at Project 24 had to be cancelled. Where possible, 'Market Fresh' and 'Art on the Rails' continued to be delivered (restrictions permitting).

'Art on the Rails' was a contemporary curated art and craft event that took place on the last Sunday monthly from April to September.

Market Fresh commenced in 2019 as an additional offering to the Art on the Rails event. Due to its success, Market Fresh had become a standalone event, taking place on the second Saturday monthly.

Market Fresh was an outdoor market, providing an opportunity for local traders and makers to sell and showcase their product/craft. It provides visitors and residents an opportunity to come along and browse the selection of local produce with the opportunity to meet the maker.

The Council worked in partnership with resident Project 24 artist, Sharon Regan, to deliver Market Fresh and Art on the Rails. Sharon continues to build an extensive range of support and engagement within the local creative and food sectors. Due to the continued success of both events, it was proposed those would continue for the period up to December 2022. It was also proposed to deliver 4 larger-scale Market Fresh events at peak visitor times (Easter, Summer, Halloween & Christmas).

The ongoing delivery of Market Fresh and Art on the Rails built a consistent market within Bangor Town Centre, of which could be facilitated elsewhere within the town following the conclusion of Project 24. A budget for those activities was contained within the rate setting process.

6. Upgrade Works (Queen's Parade Development site)

The Department for Communities (DfC) had advised of the opportunity to apply for capital funding for upgrade works within the Queen's Parade Development site. It should be noted this funding needed to be spent by 31 March 2022.

Officers would make an application for these works which were estimated at c£30,000 and was 100% funded. The proposed works were:

1. Environmental Health Works within the Project 24 site to include power washing of the pods and the Hub and replacement of damaged picnic tables, etc.
2. General upgrade/repairs within the Project 24 site.
3. General upgrade/repairs to the Queen's Parade Development site to include installation of temporary vinyls on the windows of the vacant properties located on lower Main Street to improve the appearance of this area and showcase Bangor. It was proposed the vinyls would include historical images of 'old' Bangor with the possibility to include images of upcoming developments (e.g. Bangor Waterfront, Queen's Parade)

RECOMMENDED that the Council agrees to:

1. Extend the current artist contracts to December 2022. This is conditional on Bangor Marine and the Department for Communities not having reached an agreement by mid-March 2022;
2. The continued delivery of Market Fresh, monthly on the second Saturday through to December 2022, and the delivery of larger scale Market Fresh event four times throughout the year (Easter, Summer, Halloween & Christmas) where Covid-19 legislation and budgets permit;
3. The continued delivery of Art on the Rails on the last Sunday of each month from April to September 2022 where Covid-19 legislation and budgets permit;
4. Proceed with proposed works to the Queen's Parade Development Site should funding be secured.

Alderman Wilson proposed, seconded by Alderman Girvan that the recommendations be adopted.

Alderman Wilson admitted he would have cried had he been told on election to the Council, that he would spend the next eight years supporting the contract extensions of Project 24 on what was the development site for Queen's Parade. He recognised though that the events held there were popular and should continue while central government got its act together over the longer term plans for the site.

Alderman Girvan queried the Market Fresh element of the project and if that was run as a voluntary operation by Sharon Regan.

The Head of Regeneration advised that it was run by Ms Regan in association with other artists and there was no direct payment involved from the Council. He confirmed that the Council paid for the infrastructure around the events, which included coverings, while Ms Regan ran the events.

In response to a query from Councillor Gilmour, the officer clarified that the funding from DfC was for use only on DfC owned land and could not be used for the wider area including unused neighbouring buildings which she felt could have been made more habitable.

Councillor McClean believed that the Council had come a long way in terms of supporting voluntary and community groups and felt the £30,000 funding application was a great suggestion. He queried if it was felt that the Council could be more helpful though, recognising the importance of the community work being undertaken at the Queen's Parade site.

The Head of Regeneration explained that the proposals had come out of a number of meetings with Ms Regan and the artists, and it was felt that they were a good mix of what could be delivered at the current time. He confirmed that the proposals had come from Ms Regan and officers were supporting those in the best way they could.

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

13. REGENERATION PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR QUARTER 3, 2021-22 (FILE 160127)
(Appendix VII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Regeneration, Development and Planning as 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 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 2021)
- Service Plan – developed annually (approved April/May 2021)

The Council's 17 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 3 2021-22 was attached to the report.

Key points to note:

- The Business Adaptation and Improvement Grants were ongoing but taking much longer to deliver due to challenges with the supply of equipment and tradesmen. All Letters of Offer had been issued and most payments had

been made. Officers were continuing to work with those businesses which had not yet submitted a claim.

- DfC had agreed an extension of the Recovery funding until 31 March 2022, however, a request would now be made for a further extension as there were still key projects to be delivered.

Key achievements:

- The tender for the infrastructure improvements at the Harbour in Portavogie had been issued.
- The work on the Masterplan for the Commons in Donaghadee was progressing.

Emerging issues:

- The Departments of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, Communities and Infrastructure had made an award of c£1.7M, subject to a letter of Offer, for projects to be undertaken and developed in the rural areas. The Council had agreed that some of this funding should be used to undertake the public realm scheme in Portaferry.
- The consideration of regeneration schemes by the Planning Section was taking longer than expected as the NIEA had not the resources to respond to the queries from the Planning Section.

Action to be taken:

- To continue to monitor the implementation of all projects.
- To develop and get the Council's approval for the programme of works under the Covid Recovery Small Settlements Regeneration Programme.

RECOMMENDED that the report is noted.

Councillor Dunlop proposed, seconded by Councillor Gilmour, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor Adair praised the Head of Regeneration and his team for their work in sourcing funding and delivering projects right across the Borough.

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

(The Committee Chair, Alderman McDowell, joined the meeting and assumed the role of chair, replacing the Vice Chair, Councillor McKimm, at 7.52pm)

14. REGENERATION SERVICE PLAN 2022-23 (Appendix VIII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Regeneration, Development and Planning detailing that Since 2017/18 Service Plans had been

produced by each Service in accordance with the Council's Performance Management policy.

Plans were intended to:

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

A draft plan for 2022/23 was attached. This plan had been developed to align with objectives of The Big Plan for Ards and North Down 2017-2032; the Corporate Plan 2020-24 and the Annual Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) 2022/23. The Plan would also support delivery of the ITRDS. The agreement of the plan would also aid toward achievement of the Council's performance improvement duties under the Local Government Act (NI) 2014.

The Service Plan highlighted where the service contributed to the Corporate Plan and, where this was the case, set out the objectives of the service for the 2022/23 year. It further identified the key performance indicators used to illustrate the level of achievement of each objective, and the targets that the Service would try to attain along with key actions required to do so.

The plan had been developed in conjunction with staff, officers and management and in consultation with key stakeholders where relevant, including consultation for ITRDS.

The plan was based on the agreed budget. It should be noted that, should there be significant changes in-year (e.g. due to Council decisions, budget revisions or changes to the PIP) the plan may have needed to be revised.

The Committee would be provided with update reports on performance against the agreed plan.

RECOMMENDED that Council adopts the attached plan.

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

15. LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITY WHITE PAPER **(FILE RDP83)** (Appendix IX)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Regeneration, Development and Planning detailing the undernoted:

Background

On 2 February 2022 Central Government published their Levelling Up White Paper, detailing a programme of changes to address and reverse disparities across the UK's geographic regions to level up the spread of opportunity equally across the UK.

Appended was the introductory letter to Council Leaders and Chief Executives sent from Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Levelling Up Housing and Communities and Minister for Intergovernmental Relations.

White Paper Missions

At the Paper's core was a commitment to change how Government worked with places to level up the mix of factors which supported growth. They identified these as: strong innovation, a climate conducive to private sector investment, skills, transport systems, culture, pride in place, safety, and strong local institutions.

Councils would play a central role in this alongside each devolved Government.

The White Paper promoted a programme of 12 new medium-term, UK-wide missions alongside specific policy interventions, building on the 2021 Spending Review. This formed the basis of a plan to tackle widening disparities and deliver transformative change by giving Local Government more powers and accountability to design effective policies at local level.

The full Levelling Up White Paper could be viewed here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/levelling-up-the-united-kingdom>

Levelling Up Fund

Members were aware that Council was successful in securing £3.2m for Greenways from the first round of bids for Levelling Up Funding. It was anticipated that the second round would open for bids in the next one to two months. There were no details yet, however, it was expected that the funding criteria for Round 2 would be similar to that for Round 1.

An internal cross-directorate officer group was being convened to review which Council projects could be submitted to Round 2. Officers were also working with a number of private sector developers, who had indicated their hopes to submit an application to the Fund.

Updates would be reported going forward as required.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this report.

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

Councillor Cummings was pleased to see this coming forward and asked if Round 2 of the funding programme would complement Round 1.

The Director of Regeneration, Development and Planning understood that Round 2 would be similar to Round 1 and that the same process would take place with the Chief Executive consulting officers across Council to shortlist projects and then seek Council agreement. The same process had resulted in the funding of the Greenways project previously and officers would be looking at the existing estate and programme of works already agreed by Council.

The Chair asked if it would be useful to invite some of the Levelling Up representatives to speak to the committee so it could get further understanding and help Council maximise the opportunity. The Director added that there was a local link with the programme's lead officer and that would be followed up.

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

16. SEACOURT PRINT WORKSHOP UPDATE (FILE RDP220)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Regeneration, Development and Planning detailing that Seacourt Print Workshop was an open access printmaking studio with charitable status, offering a wide range of printmaking resources, courses and workshops to a membership of master printmakers, multidisciplinary artists, amateurs and those who printed to improve their wellbeing.

Established in Bangor 40 years ago, its vision and mission (see over) were closely aligned to many of Council's own objectives for Bangor town centre and the wider needs of Borough residents and visitors, e.g. regeneration, place, instilling civic pride, culture, health and wellbeing and tourism.

OUR VISION:

Advance printmaking, support regeneration and prosperity, build respectful engaged communities and improve health and wellbeing.

OUR MISSION:

To be a creative institution introducing people to printmaking and visual arts and delivering personal development, community good and an engaging place to live, visit and work.

We believe that creativity is a powerful tool that can transform lives. But we also believe that being creative for creativities own sake is restorative, exciting and a means of opening up possibility.

HOW WE DO WHAT WE DO:

Our main priorities are to provide access to creativity, educational opportunity, contribute to the cultural regeneration of the seaside town of Bangor, and central to all our services is improving health and well-being.

Further information on Seacourt Print Workshop was available on their website at www.seacourt-ni.org.uk

In September 2021, the organisation relocated to the former Ulster Bank building on Main Street, Bangor, which had been unoccupied since 2017. They planned to renovate and redevelop the premises in coming years. Seacourt Print Workshop believed that cultural organisations would help rejuvenate the town centre by attracting people to experience-based tourism. They saw their move as giving them opportunities to contribute to town centre regeneration and to play an active role in the reanimation of the high street for the benefit of Borough residents and visitors alike.

Request for a Letter of Support

Seacourt Print Workshop were still working towards completing purchase of the old bank building, which they hoped to secure by October 2022. As part of that process, they had requested that Council, along with other local groups and agencies in the community, demonstrated their backing for the venture by contributing a letter of support.

RECOMMENDED that Council agrees to write a letter of support to Seacourt Print Workshop in support of their purchase of the former Ulster Bank building on Main Street, Bangor.

Councillor McKimm proposed, seconded by Councillor Dunlop, that the recommendation be adopted.

Speaking in support of the project, Councillor McKimm felt it fitted exactly with what the Council was trying to do in terms of providing a bespoke art/culture venue and the strategy of having a diverse high street, while Councillor Dunlop added his support, feeling that it would bring much needed vibrancy to the town centre.

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

17. INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF INVEST NI (FILE RDP155) (Appendix X)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Regeneration, Development and Planning detailing that following the announcement by the Economy Minister that an independent review of Invest NI would be carried out, a letter had been received by the Chief Executive (attached) from Sir Michael Lyons, Chairperson of the Independent Review of Invest NI.

The review would provide an independent assessment of Invest NI's efficiency along with its capacity to strategically align and deliver the 10X Economic Vision (a concept which embraced innovation to deliver ten times better economy with benefits for the people of NI).

Sir Michael had stated that he was committed to ensuring that all voices were heard during the consultation and recognised the importance of the voice of local government. There would be a call for evidence in due course and in the meantime he intended to meet with all Chief Executives to explore their views. Further reports, including on the proposed call for evidence, would be brought back to Council once the detail of the process and timelines was understood.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this report.

Councillor Walker proposed, seconded by Councillor Dunlop, that the recommendation be adopted.

Proposing, Councillor Walker welcomed the review and felt it would be worthwhile. In the past people had been critical of Invest NI, feeling that the organisation had been neglectful of Ards and North Down. He hoped that this work would help to raise the Borough's profile and bring a level of contribution to its economy that had not been provided in the past.

The Chair, Alderman McDowell, added that Council had a critical role to play and it was important for it to work closely with Invest NI. He felt it was important to issue a positive and constructive response and demonstrate how a close working relationship with the Council could improve economic development. Councillor Adair supported those comments.

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

18. CONSULTATION ON THE INVESTMENT STRATEGY FOR NORTHERN IRELAND (FILE RDP39) (Appendix I)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Regeneration, Development and Planning detailing that Members had been asked to review the Draft Infrastructure 2050 – Investment Strategy for NI Consultation Document - (linked here) [Infrastructure-2050-draft-Investment-Strategy-for-Northern-Ireland-FINAL.pdf \(isni.gov.uk\)](https://isni.gov.uk/strategy/have-your-say/) and the consultation webpage - <https://isni.gov.uk/strategy/have-your-say/>

The Strategy set out the current state of NI's infrastructure, identified where it needed to be and explained what was needed to do to get there. It defined the strategic investment priorities and demonstrated how to make best use of its resources. The strategy took a long-term view, looking forward to 2050.

Many people inside and outside government had already helped in the Strategy's formation, and it was requested that this dialogue continued. A recommended response would be put to Council in March for approval. In the meantime, Members were asked to consider and feed thoughts into the response.

RECOMMENDED that Members consider and feed in any thoughts on the Draft Infrastructure 2050 – Investment Strategy for NI Consultation Document, with a proposed response brought to March Council for approval.

The Director of Regeneration, Development and Planning outlined the process involved which would see the Head of Regeneration working with other officers across the Council to draft a response. Members were welcome to feed into the process directly through that particular Head of Service.

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

19. NOTICE OF MOTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR ADAIR AND COUNCILLOR EDMUND

That this Council tasks officers to bring back a report on Enhancement and Regeneration of Kircubbin Promenade as a potential village renewal scheme for the benefit of residents and tourists alike in seeking to deliver the Kircubbin village plan.

(Councillor Edmund was admitted to the meeting at 8.03pm)

Councillor Adair proposed, seconded by Councillor Edmund, that the notice of motion be adopted.

Proposing, Councillor Adair advised that a funding bid had since been progressed which could bring most of the improvements that he had been calling for as part of the Notice of Motion. A former elected member Kieran McCarthy had been successful previously in securing improvements to Kircubbin's promenade with tarmacking and picnic tables. Now Councillor Adair and Michelle McIlveen MLA had been contacted by residents with calls for further improvements to include lighting and an outdoor gym for the promenade.

While there was now a funding bid in for much of those improvements, he added that the outdoor gym element was not part of that and he was hopeful that it could be funded through alternative means such as the PEACE Plus programme and that had been his reasoning for keeping the Notice of Motion listed on the agenda.

The seconder Councillor Edmund added that the improvements would complement the recent enhancement of the green area in Kircubbin. An outdoor gym would also bring exercise opportunities and its proximity to the football field would provide a good route for joggers. He also noted the link with the children's play area. In addition it would enhance the Ards Peninsula's tourist trail and provide another stop off point.

Summing up, Councillor Adair thanked the Head of Regeneration and his team for identifying the potential funding opportunity and he was delighted to see the application going forward.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Adair, seconded by Councillor Edmund, that this Council tasks officers to bring back a report on Enhancement and Regeneration of Kircubbin Promenade as a potential village renewal scheme for the benefit of residents and tourists alike in seeking to deliver the Kircubbin village plan.

(Councillor Edmund left the meeting at 8.10pm)

20. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

The Chairman informed members there were no items of Any Other Notified Business.

NOTED.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

AGREED, that the public/press be excluded during the discussion of undernoted items of confidential business.

21. DEPUTATION FROM BROOKLAND PROPERTY LONG-TERM PLANS FOR THE REGENERATION OF THE FLAGSHIP CENTRE AND CAR PARK

(Appendix XI)

*****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)

22. FLAGSHIP UPDATE (FILE RDP83)

(Appendix XII)

*****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)

(The meeting went into recess at 9.01pm and resumed at 9.11pm)

(Alderman Girvan and Councillor Brooks had left the meeting at this stage – 9.11pm)

23. ARDS AND NORTH DOWN SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAMME (ANDSEP) 2021-2023 (FILE ED116 - ANDSEP PROGRAMME 2021-2023)

*****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)

24. UPDATE ON FULL FIBRE NI, DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY INFRASTRUCTURE ACCELERATOR PROGRAMME AND DIGITAL SURGE PROGRAMME (FILE DEVP25)

*****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)

25. DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL FOR HIBERNIA STREET CAR PARK, HOLYWOOD (FILE REG 1/RDP162)
(Appendix XIII - XVII)

*****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)

26. COVID RECOVERY SMALL SETTLEMENTS REGENERATION PROGRAMME (FILE RDP43)
(Appendix XVIII)

*****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)

27. BELFAST REGION CITY DEAL UPDATE (FILE RDP22)

(Appendix IXX - 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)

28. QUEEN'S PARADE

*****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)

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 10.08pm.

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

A virtual meeting of the Corporate Services Committee was held via Zoom on Tuesday 8 March 2022 at 7.00 pm.

PRESENT:

In the Chair: Alderman McIlveen

Aldermen: Keery Girvan
Gibson Irvine

Councillors: Blaney Gilmour
Chambers Mathison
Cooper McKimm
Dunlop Smith, P
Greer Smith, T

Officers: Director of Organisational Development and Administration (W Swanston), Director of Finance and Performance (S Christie), Head of Administration (A Curtis), Head of Human Resources (R McCullough) and Democratic Services Officer (J Glasgow)

1. APOLOGIES

An apology for inability to attend was received from the Chair, Councillor Egan, who was ill. The Vice Chair wished Councillor Egan a speedy recovery.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Vice Chair (Alderman McIlveen) declared an interest in Item 6 (a) - Education Authority Strategic Area Plan Consultation 2022-2027, Item 6 (b) – Special Education Provision: Area Plan 2022-2027 and Item 15 (a) – Notice of Motion from Councillor Cooper and Alderman Menagh regarding Queen's Jubilee funding.

AGREED, on the proposal of Councillor Gilmour, seconded by Councillor Greer, that Councillor Mathison would Chair the meeting during Items 6 (a), 6 (b) and 15 (a).

During the course of the meeting, Councillor Greer declared an interest in Item 25 - Rectification of Title - Main Street, Ballywalter.

Councillor McKimm referred to the size of the agenda and the number of lengthy reports contained within which Members were expected to read with due diligence. He felt that an agenda of this length inhibited Members. Councillor McKimm asked that this be borne in mind for future agendas.

NOTED.

3. DEPUTATION - NI WATER

The Chairman welcomed Mr Steve Blockwell (Head of Investment Management, Assets Delivery Directorate) and Dr Gary Curran (Head of Metering and Billing, Customer & Operations Directorate) to the meeting.

The representatives shared and delivered a PowerPoint presentation.

Mr Blockwell provided an overview of planning infrastructure investment during price control 21 (2021/22 to 2026/27). He firstly outlined the size of NI Water as it operated noting that every part of the infrastructure network had a finite capacity and most of NI Water's assets had been constructed decades ago and the capacity handled today was based on legacy assets. It was therefore important to have network overflows which prevented sewage backing up during rainfall which caused flooding. Mr Blockwell highlighted that during the pandemic NI Waters frontline workers and contractors continued to work across Northern Ireland 24/7 to maintain essential services. Everyday NI Water's keyworkers workers continued to provide clean, high quality drinking water. Water for hand washing was critical to killing the virus and was a leading weapon in the battle against Covid19. NI Water implemented extensive safety processes to continue to deliver key water and wastewater services.

Mr Blockwell outlined the funding levels detailing that the PC21 Capital Plan required approximately £2.2bn of critical capital investment over the next 6 year period. This £2.2bn of capital investment was spilt between the following service areas;

- Sewerage Provision - £1,062M
- Planning and Reactive Maintenance - £440M
- Water Provision - £168M
- Capital Programme Running Costs - £321M
- Planning for the future & Management & General Programme - £187M

A large part of this investment, £557M was to fund the Living with Water Programme (LWWP).

Mr Blockwell then provided a brief overview of the key challenges for NI Water;

- Energy Market Volatility,
- Development Constraints,
- Continued funding through PC21,
- Climate Change Emergency.

Mr Blockwell touched on the Council's Local Development Plan and the ambitions by 2030 for 8,190 new homes and 7,500 new jobs. In terms of Capital Investment in the Borough, he outlined the planned works at Whitespots and Ballybarnes reservoir which were soon to occur. He also outlined planning investment in wastewater in some places where there were unsatisfactory intermittent discharges. Those works would take place across the Borough over the next 6 years representing an investment of £126.6m. Work was occurring presently at Ballygowan in the construction of a new Wastewater Treatment Works representing an investment of £6m. That work was occurring to accommodate future economic growth and development in Ballygowan and the surrounding area along with improving the water quality into the River Blackwater. Furthermore, capital works were underway on a

wastewater improvement project to upgrade the existing wastewater collection and treatment systems serving a large part of the Ards Peninsula and representing an investment of £18m. That would improve the bathing water quality at local beaches.

Dr Curran then outlined the development constraints which were coming from the historic under investment in the wastewater systems and would take a number of years to address.

NI Water was committed to maximising the infrastructure as followed;

- Early investment via pre-development enquires was essential
- Robust planning with conditions, were necessary
- Use of developers led and financed solutions, noting budgetary implications.

To address the economic constraints, NI Water was taking a two level approach at a strategic level to seek significant funding to update network and treatment works over the next 6 years and at a tactical level looking to design and construct, developer led and financed solutions, on a bespoke site by site basis. A Development Constraints Project Team had also been put in place. NI Water had launched a new developer services website.

In finishing, Mr Blockwell highlighted recent NI Water Campaigns and Education Provision.

(Councillor T Smith and Councillor Chambers entered the meeting during the presentation)

The Vice Chair invited questions from Members.

Alderman Irvine noted that the lack of capacity in wastewater infrastructure had been widely reported which was stalling building projects across Northern Ireland. He raised a question regarding planning development constraints in the Borough if the required funding was not received. Mr Blockwell explained that there was a prioritisation plan which could be reviewed if funding was not received. NI Water worked closely in developing plans with the Environmental Regulator, Drinking Water Inspectorate, Consumer Council etc and if there were changes to the programme such bodies would need to be consulted. It was hoped to have 3 year certainty to allow NI Water to manage its supply chain efficiently.

Setting aside a reduction in funding, Dr Curran stated that there still would be development constraints within the area. A lot of work was occurring with the developers to try and mitigate those constraints on a site-by-site basis however there would not be solutions for all sites and there would be some that would not be able to progress due to capacity in the network irrespective of the funding levels.

Councillor McKimm expressed concern to have learnt that Hagen developments was pulling out of buying further land due to planning constraints. Adding to that he referred to Drains for Cranes who were a group of builders very concerned about the infrastructure crisis and asked about NI Waters interaction with that group. He also asked if the funding was not made available how that would affect the Borough.

In terms of contact with Drains for Cranes, Dr Curran advised that they had spoken with the representative of that body recently however that grouping was made up of individual builders who they would have contact with through the developers service team within NI Water. A lot of engagement did occur with developers and he found it disappointing that Hagan Homes felt it needed to seek business outside the country. NI Water had engaged with Hagen developments and found solutions for several of its sites.

Mr Blockwell advised that NI Water had been warning about the capacity issues for a long time and if sufficient funding was not received that would increase. To be an efficient business funding certainty was needed. As Mr Blockwell had outlined the capital plan was huge and showed the ambition of NI Water. It would take a number of price control periods to address the constraints. NI Water was working closely with developers to find a way forward however noted there would not always be the solution that gave the developer what it wanted or within its timeframe. He highlighted that there were difficult decisions between the growth of the economy and the environment. NI Water was a regulated company and it could not make connections and ignore the consequences. If connections were made, rainwater got into the system, capacity was hit and the water reached people's homes and DG5 internal flooding would occur. One of those DG5 schemes was within the Borough at My Lady's Mile, Holywood, and that would be addressed in the price control period.

Alderman Girvan referred to the increase in development occurring in Comber and raised a question regarding the capacity in Comber. Mr Blockwell advised that as pre-development enquires were encouraged and if there was capacity within the system checks were carried out with drainage area models which were built with state of the art modelling techniques and software to assess the capacity of connections. Where there were issues those were identified as unsatisfactory intermittent discharges which were then included within the capital work scheme. If they were at capacity, no additional connections were permitted, or work occurred with the developer to try and take storm water out of the system to create space. Some of the spills could be caused by people flushing the wrong items down the toilet and in those instances a team would send a camera into the system to investigate for blockages or broken pipes.

Adding to that, Dr Curran stated that Alderman Girvan had highlighted the issue that if there was capacity in the network and development went ahead that would only exasperate the problem. That was the reasoning why NI Water was encouraging developers to approach NI Water in the first instance. Once planning was approved, NI Water was obligated to connect.

Alderman Girvan asked if NI Water had a dedicated hot line. Mr Blockwell advised that he would send through the slides to Members which provided a number of channels to contact NI Water.

Councillor P Smith asked if NI Water was looking at alternative funding models. Mr Blockwell recognised that in the business model that NI Water currently did not work as it was restricted by what the Department could borrow and could not hold cash reserves. He was of the understanding that the Infrastructure Committee and the

Department had been looking at different models. The increase in energy costs had caused financial problems for NI Water and additional funding had been required.

Councillor Dunlop stated that Planning was always keen to improve its service but it was dependent on consultees. He referred to a recent audit report which did not portray NI Water in the best light and asked if the responses could be improved. Mr Blockwell stated that in terms of statutory responses, NI Water had a turnaround of around 90% in 15 working days. Dr Curran agreed and felt there were small margins of improvement that could be made in that regard. The responses were efficient however it recognised that sometimes the answers provided were not always appreciated.

Mr Steve Curran and Dr Gary Curran were then returned to the virtual public gallery.

NOTED.

4. PERFORMANCE REPORTS Q3 2021-22

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Reports from the respective Directors 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 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 2021)
- Service Plan – developed annually (approved April/May 2021)

The Council's 17 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 3 2021-22 was attached to each of the reports.

(a) **Community Planning**
(Appendix I)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Chief Executive detailing the undernoted:-

Key points to note:

- Underspend of budget was due to maternity leave and all community planning meetings taking place online.

Key achievements:

- Strategic Community Planning Partnership meeting took place via Zoom on 27 October. Detailed update provided in Performance Update Report and highlighting some 2nd Moved by Nature interactive Calendar provided in partnership with outdoor learning workstream group which was a partnership between Council, National Trust, Sport NI and Strangford Lough and Lecale Partnership. [Moved by Nature Interactive Calendar 2022 \(adobe.com\)](#)
- Collaboration between Community Planning and Community Development Service to work with our Community Support Steering Group to establish a Social Supermarket in the Borough.

Emerging issues:

- Focus of work activities in quarter 4 would be finalising a comprehensive Assessment of Wellbeing which was a significant update of the original statistical baseline undertaken to 2015-16.
- Finalisation of follow up to the Big Plan would also be prioritised. This explained the journey taken from the publication of the Big Plan in 2017, to the review undertaken in 2019/20 and the impact of Covid-19. The document would be known as *The Big Plan Part II – Our Big Priorities*. It would clarify the focus on collaboration and added value by the Strategic Partnership and confirm the 10 priorities that provided the focus of activity.

Action to be taken:

- No action to be taken

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the report.

(b) **Corporate Communications (File CCR Q32122)**
(Appendix II)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Chief Executive providing the undernoted detail:

Key points to note:

- COVID-19 continued to impact the team's ability to deliver internal and external communication activities.
- Significant reactive communication requirements during the period re storms including damage to the roof at Bangor Aurora and Christmas event cancellation/ modifications.

Key achievements:

- Council's social media channels continued to perform strongly with growth across all platforms. Positive progress being made on addressing issues raised in the recent social media audit including more effective cross-service working to identify/ share key messages and tailored training for staff involved in managing social media accounts on behalf of Council.
- Delivery of a very positive Christmas 2021 campaign including promotional video with support local messages – promoting events/ retailers/ hospitality/ covid safety.
- Support for COP 26 communications, profiling the Council's Road Map to Sustainability and key sustainability initiatives being led by the Council and key partners.
- Communications and multi-media/ design support for launch of Tree & Woodland Strategy/ Columban Way Heritage Trail/ In Bloom Competition Winners/ Remembrance Commemorations/ Positive Aging Month/ Youth Forum.
- Delivery of annual business conference for Council managers, considering topics including hybrid working, sustainability and health and wellbeing in the workplace.

Emerging issues:

- Significant staffing challenges. 30% of staff new/ temporary during the period due to secondments and maternity arrangements. This had resulted in unavoidable lack of continuity on projects. Day to day delivery had to be prioritised over the development of some longer-term strategic projects – as reflected in KPI ref comms prioritisation process.

Action to be taken:

- Renewed focus required on internal communications as ongoing restrictions are taking a toll on staff welfare and levels of engagement.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the report.

(c) **Finance (FIN76)**
(Appendix III)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Finance and Performance detailing the undernoted:-

Key points to note:

- One statutory deadline was missed in respect of submitting the annual pension return due to implementation of the new integrated human resource and employee payments software.

- Staff attendance levels have dropped below 90% all year, which was resulting in operational challenges and was likely to deteriorate further by the end of the financial year.

Key achievements:

- Transaction processing activities continued to perform well, with an average of 81% of Debtors paying within 30 days (the highest in 5 years) and Creditors paid within 30 days at 97.9% (highest in Northern Ireland). With regard to pay accuracy, following a dip in performance during quarter 1 due to the implementation of the new Core payroll software performance had now returned to 99.5%.

Action to be taken:

- Manage staff absence in accordance with policy and obtain temporary cover to assist with workload.
- Schedule recruitment of vacant posts.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the report.

(d) Strategic Capital Development (Appendix IV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Finance and Performance detailing the undernoted:-

Key points to note:

- Attendance levels remained at 100% exceeding the 95% Target.
- There continued to be good investment in staff briefings with regular fortnightly team meetings.
- Professional development was also continuing as the unit continued to deliver a capital portfolio in excess of £170m over the next 10 years. The Capital team have all now attended and completing NEC4 Project Management Accreditation training.
- PiP Conversations had been completed for all staff.
- There continued to be a good level of consultation with other Councils and Government departments through BRCD, Community Estates, the Greenways projects and individual meetings.

Key achievements:

- Further integration of procurement and CPU with the sharing of project schedules.
- 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.
- Successful bid to the Complementary Fund for 7.4m funding for Whitespots Country Park

Emerging issues:

- DfI Greenways funding
- Delays in statutory responses to planning creating knock-on delays in programming projects
- Short term very high construction inflation

Action to be taken:

- Presentation on the Capital Handbook to be delivered to HOST and councillors
- Assist in the Estate Strategy implementation

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the report.

(e) **Strategic Transformation and Performance**
(Appendix V)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Finance and Performance detailing the undernoted:-

Key points to note:

- This reports on progress against the Service Plan KPIs. It should be noted that some KPIs are reported on a half-yearly or annual basis and may therefore not be reported against in every quarter. All KPIs would be reported against during the course of the reporting year.
- The Head of Strategic Transformation and Performance post remains vacant.
- The Procurement Manager post had been vacant since November 2021; however, this post had been recruited and would be filled from April 2022.

Key achievements:

- Attendance was 99.72% with only 2 days lost in the quarter and 7 days lost in the year to date.
- On track for spend against budget.
- Good progress had been made on in-service efficiency projects

Emerging issues:

- We continue to experience challenges on achieving Procurement savings owing to increases in energy prices, raw materials costs and shipping costs. The supply chain disruption caused by both Brexit and the Covid Pandemic was also impacting on the overall cost of goods and services in NI. This had led to Procurement Savings being c.52% below the expected target. Further savings were expected to be made in Quarter 4; however, it was anticipated that the target for the financial year would not be met.

Action to be taken:

- Ensure Officers consider market changes when the estimated contract costs are made at the outset of new procurement exercises.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the report.

(f) **Administration (ADM19)**
(Appendix VI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Organisational Development and Administration detailing the undernoted:-

Key points to note:

The majority of targets in the Administration Service Plan were measured annually.

Table 1: Q3 performance update

Performance Measures	Q1 update
Update Customer Service Excellence Strategy and Action Plan	On target - The Action Plan has been updated and the Strategy is under development.
Pilot paperless filing for new files in 2 Departments	On target - Scoping work being undertaken at present with two internal service areas being considered. However, it is likely this will be included in the larger digital transformation project.
All agendas circulated within 5-day notice period	Meeting target - 100% of Agendas went out 5 days in advance of all Committee and Council meetings.
Prioritise 5 potential Public Rights of Way (PROW) and assert at least 1 per year	Likely to miss target - A full review of all PROW (alleged and asserted) is underway, however there is no-one currently in post and agency staff are not currently available. We continue to recruit using agency.
Procure and introduce integrated Health and Safety and Risk/Claims Management system	On target – Integrated system has now been procured and data cleansing exercise is now underway.
EMS – Retain accreditation and expand framework to all Council buildings with a view to accreditation in future years	Met target – The Council have retained accreditation.
FOI/EIR Information response times in compliance with legislation	Missed Target – 91% This is an improvement from 90% for same period last year and given the increased number and complex nature of many FOI requests this is an excellent compliance rate.
Train all CLT/HOST in emergency planning response protocol	Met target
Hold 4 Corporate Health and Safety meetings – with input from directorate Health and Safety meetings	Met target – One took place in Q3
Have 2 emergency planning test activations	Met target
Hold 2 EPIG meetings	Met target

Performance Measures	Q1 update
Deliver 5-year Equality Action Plan	Meeting target – ongoing
Monitor the Roadmap to Sustainability	Meeting target – report updated in December 2021
Review Lands Policy	On target – review underway
Develop Claims Management Policy	On target –work underway
% Staff Attendance (95%)	Met target –93.2%
% Spend against budget (+/-5% of budget)	Met target – 85.3%
% Staff reporting regular receipt of team briefings	100% - Team meets once a month
Pride in Performance Conversations	On target – Not scheduled until Q4

Key achievements:

In terms of the number of FOI requests and the increasing complexity of them achieving 91% was a great achievement.

The recertification of the EMS was a great achievement and continued to demonstrate the Council and staff's commitment to the environment regardless of where their work was being carried out.

The Roadmap to Sustainability was now in place and the Council continued to demonstrate leadership. The monitoring reports to Council has shown that progress was being made on many aspects through many service areas both working on specific service agendas as well as many cross-council partnerships.

Emerging issues:

The effect of the pandemic remains evident in the workload of this service. There were many issues that have been noted due to the fact that this/other service(s) have historically been paper-based. The pandemic had demonstrated the need for systems to be digitised going forward so that information could be accessed in a timely manner as well as to ensure security of data. That required investment and would fall into the transformation programme that the Council had agreed.

Action to be taken:

Officers continued to work towards all of the KPIs.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this report.

(g) Human Resources (Appendix VII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Organisational Development and Administration detailing the undernoted:-

Key points to note:

- This reports on progress against the 23 Service Plan KPIs. Good progress was being made against the PIs with 17 currently being on target although 6 are underperforming. Of the 6 underperforming 4 were as a result of the impacts of Covid, the remaining 2 were explained below.
- Progress had been made to develop a formal workforce strategy and we are in the process of piloting a Gap Analysis survey with a small sample group to identify any potential problem areas before roll-out to the Heads of Service and Service Unit Managers.

Targets not achieved

- % spend against budget had been lower than anticipated owing to:
 - Staff vacancies; and
 - Impact of Covid on Employee Training and associated costs
- Covid-19 continues to impact on the aim of the service to introduce visits to various work locations but it was hoped that during Quarter 4 these can commence. However, that would be kept under review in light of Covid guidance.
- Development of the Corporate Induction Programme for all new Council staff had been delayed and would be progressed during Q4.
- Council wide absence remains challenging with a YTD figure of 6.87% against a target of 5.00%. Detailed information on absence was reported to Committee in February 2022.
- Officers have been unable to complete a number of the activities within the People Plan owing to the ongoing impact of Covid. It was hoped those could be progressed in Q4.

RECOMMENDED that the report is noted.

The above reports were agreed en-bloc.

Proposed by Councillor P Smith, seconded by Councillor Mathison, that the recommendations be adopted.

In respect of Item 4(b) – Corporate Communications; Alderman Irvine referred to the staffing issues that were detailed within the emerging issues and asked how those were being addressed. The Director of Organisational Development and Administration detailed that Corporate Communications was a small section and therefore the 30% staffing turnover was a small number of employees. The vacant posts were in the process of being filled therefore the section should stabilise in due course.

In respect of Item 4 (f) – Administration; Councillor Dunlop referred to the roadmap for sustainability and asked when Members would receive further update information in that regard. The Head of Administration advised that the update report on the roadmap action plan was scheduled to be forthcoming every 6 months. She recalled the last update was brought to Committee in December 2021.

In respect of Item 4 (d) – Finance; Councillor McKimm made reference to the emerging issues which detailed Dfl Greenways funding and he sought clarity in that

regard. The Director of Finance and Performance explained that the greenways development was part funded by Levelling Up and DfI. Engagement continued with DfI in terms of its funding commitment on a forward planning basis.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor P Smith, seconded by Councillor Mathison, that the recommendations be adopted.

5. 2022/23 SERVICE PLANS

(Appendices VIII - XIV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from Director of Organisational Development and Administration attaching Service Plans (a) – (g).

The covering report detailed that Service Plans were produced by each Service in accordance with the Council's Performance Management policy.

Plans were intended to:

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

Draft Service Plans for 2022/23 year were attached for the following areas:

- Community Planning
- Communications and marketing
- Finance
- Strategic Capital Development
- Strategic Transformation and Performance
- Administration
- Human Resources.

The plans had been developed to align with outcomes of the Big Plan for Ards and North Down and with the PEOPLE priorities of the Corporate Plan Towards 2024.

The Service Plans highlighted where the services contributed to the Council KPIs as set out in the Corporate Plan Towards 2024 and, where that was the case, sets out the objectives of the service for the 2022/23 year. It further identified the performance measures used to illustrate the level of achievement of each objective, and the targets that the Service would try to attain along with key actions required to do so.

The Service Plans also identified key risks to the services along with analysis of these and necessary actions to mitigate/manage risks.

The plans were based on the agreed budget for 2022/23. It should be noted that, should there be significant changes in-year (e.g., due to Council decisions, budget revisions or changes to the community planning legislation) the plans may need to be revised. The Committee would be provided with quarterly update reports on performance against the agreed plans.

RECOMMENDED that the Council adopts the attached plans.

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

(Having previously declared an interest in the item, Alderman McIlveen was removed from the meeting and Councillor Mathison took the position as Chair)

6 (A) EDUCATION AUTHORITY STRATEGIC AREA PLAN CONSULTATION 2022-2027

(Appendices XV, XVI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Organisational Development and Administration attaching Planning for Sustainable Provision: Draft Strategic Area Plan 2022-27 (Primary and Post-primary Schools) and Draft consultation response by ANDBC. The report detailed that Planning for Sustainable Provision', Northern Ireland's second regional Strategic Area Plan for the period 2022–2027 sets out the strategic direction for how the future educational needs of children and young people would be addressed through area solutions, consistent with relevant policies and Ministerial priorities. It would shape proposed changes to education provision for the next 5 years.

The plan was developed in accordance with the Department of Education's Schools for the Future: A Policy for Sustainable Schools (Sustainable Schools Policy) and would address Ministerial priorities for Area Planning. The Area Plan reflected and references the policy and Ministerial priorities to create a vision, mission, and key themes for the next five years for primary and post-primary schools of all management types.

The Area Plan aimed to ensure that all pupils could access a broad and balanced curriculum in sustainable schools. The best educational interests of children and young people was the focus of the Area Plan, in particular the need to raise standards through a network of sustainable schools. The Area Plan sets out the objectives and key themes through which that aim could be realised.

In preparing this Area Plan, the Education Authority collaborated with the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools as the planning authority for Catholic maintained schools and engaged with sectoral support bodies representative of the Integrated (Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education), Irish Medium (Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta) and controlled sector (Controlled Schools' Support Council).

In addition, the Education Authority engaged with Voluntary Grammar Schools and their Trustees, through the Governing Bodies Association and Catholic Schools' Trustee Service and other maintained schools (i.e., church schools) through the Transferors' Representative Council, all of whom were represented on each of the Area Planning Group structures. Account had also been taken of the contribution that FE Colleges make to the delivery of the 14-19 Curriculum offer.

A draft response to this consultation had been prepared for Council to consider.

RECOMMENDED that Council agrees to issue the proposed consultation response.

Councillor P Smith noted that the proposed consultation response was missing from Decision Time.

AGREED, that the item be deferred to the Council Meeting.

6 (B) SPECIAL EDUCATION PROVISION: AREA PLAN 2022-2027 (Appendices XVIII, XIX)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Organisational Development and Administration attaching Planning for Special Education Provision: Draft Strategic Area Plan 2022-27 and Draft consultation response by ANDBC. The report detailed that 'Special Education Provision' set out the strategic direction for future educational provision for children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) across Special Schools and Specialist Provision in Mainstreams Schools in Northern Ireland. It would shape proposed changes to education provision for the next 5 years.

This was the first regional Special Education Strategic Area Plan for Northern Ireland 2022 - 2027. This strategy had been informed by two overarching Special Education Area Planning Frameworks, namely the Special Schools Area Planning Framework and the Framework for Specialist Provision in Mainstream Schools. These frameworks act as the drivers for strategic planning of Specialist Provision in Mainstream Schools and in Special Schools in the same way that Schools for the Future – A Policy for Sustainable Schools (Sustainable Schools Policy (SSP) was the driver for Area Planning for Primary and Post-Primary Schools.

The aim of Area Planning for Special Schools and Specialist Provision in Mainstream Schools was to ensure that all pupils with a Statement of Special Educational Needs have access to a placement that best meets their assessed needs.

The Special Education Strategic Area Plan would cover Special Education Area Planning for all Special Schools and Specialist Provision in Mainstream Schools. A separate Strategic Area Plan, "Planning for Sustainable Provision: Strategic Area Plan 2022-27" (SAP 2), had been developed for provision in primary and post-primary schools. Both plans would dovetail to meet the needs of pupils in specialist provision in primary and post-primary schools and would be implemented in accordance with Area Planning governance arrangements to include reporting to Area Planning Local Groups, Area Planning Working Group and Area Planning Steering Group. Whilst the Special Education Strategic Area Plan seeks to set out

the roadmap for Special Education Area Planning, the Operational Plans would provide the detail in relation to proposed actions to address the priorities of the Special Education Strategic Area Plan over the next five years

A draft response to this consultation had been prepared for Council to consider.

RECOMMENDED that Council agrees to issue the proposed consultation response.

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

Councillor P Smith was happy with the content in the proposed response. He referred to the growth in SEN numbers in recent years and wondered if reference to that growth needed to be included to highlight the need to increase resource provision within the mainstream facilities and also within special schools and as such should be referred to within any future funding model.

The Head of Community Planning was happy to include that comment. She advised that the Education Authority had been invited to address the previous meeting of the Community Planning Partnership and it had noted the increase in children recognised with complex needs with that being scheduled to rise therefore there needed to be adequate provision across all schools in Northern Ireland to cope with the additional need.

Councillor McKimm noted that it was not just a rise in numbers but a rise in the complexity of diagnosis meaning a huge extra pressure on schools. There was a need to identify the need to have the future funding.

Alderman Irvine referred to the volume of children now with complex needs and that it was clear that schools did not have the number of staff to cope with that increase. He wondered if there was a joint up approach with Educational Welfare, if pupils could not attend school due to their additional needs they would fall behind in terms of their educational attainment and suggested that be incorporated in the response.

The Head of Community Planning was happy to include that and noted that school education did not start and end at a school gate and there were other organisations that should be considered within the strategy to ensure the best needs of a child were put forward.

Councillor Gilmour referred to the increase in the children with special educational needs diagnosis and the increased resources required for schools. Those resources required were not just monetary but also human resources were there to fulfil the support roles.

The Head of Community Planning agreed with the point and that it was worthwhile referencing that within the response.

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

(Alderman McIlveen resumed the position of Chair).

7. BUDGETARY CONTROL REPORT

(Appendices XIX - XXI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Finance and Performance attaching Budgetary Control report, Payroll Expenditure report , Goods and Services Expenditure Budgetary Control report and Income Budgetary Control report.

The Budgetary Control report covered the 10-month period 1 April 2021 to 31 January 2022. The Revenue Budgetary Control Report by Directorate was set out and showed an overall surplus of £1,066k. The overall favourable variance could be summarised by the following table:

Type	Variance £'000	Comment
Payroll Expenditure		
	(1,031)	Vacancies and non-operational services due to lockdown. The forecast 2021/22 cost of living pay increase is expected to be less than budget. The anticipated underspend to date has been set aside into a Pay Award Unclassified Page 2 of 8 Type Variance £'000 Comment Equalisation Fund which will used to manage the impact of future pay increases.
Goods & Services Expenditure		
Leisure & Amenities inc. Community & Wellbeing HQ	577	Covid 19 related including utility pricing.
Community & Culture	(144)	Arts & Heritage (£114k). Externally Funded programmes (£122k). Community Development £103k (mainly C19 payments so is offset by additional C19 funding)
Environment HQ	(110)	Covid 19 related
Waste & Cleansing Services	275	Mainly due to landfill tonnage being higher than budget resulting in costs £413k being over budget. This is partially offset by the main recycled waste streams being under budget by £203k

Assets & Property	173	Fleet Management costs are over budget, mainly vehicle maintenance costs £178k
Regeneration	(170)	Mainly Project 24 (£76k). This budget included relocation and site clearance costs but this won't be needed this year. Addition, a number of consultancy projects have not progressed (£36k)
Tourism	(126)	Borough Marketing (£106k). Some marketing expenditure not progressed due to Covid
Administration	(238)	Customer Services (£94k) – cleaning services (£29k), stationery (£19k) and catering £13k). Compliance (£71k) – legal fees (£30k) Democratic Services (£148k) – Civic Receptions, Centenary Events Risk Management £75k over budget (insurance costs).
Capital Financing	(130)	Both interest and minimum revenue provision under budget due to slower than expected capital expenditure.
Other Goods & Services Expenditure	(432)	Range of savings across other Council Services – some linked to Services that were not operational during the recent lockdown

Income		
Waste & Cleansing Services	(139)	Bin sales (£41k), recycled waste income (£73k).
Assets & Property	(123)	Wind turbine income Regulatory Services
Regulatory Services	(248)	Building Control (£302k) NET/CST income £58k adverse
Planning	(181)	Planning Property certificates and Planning application fees
Other Services Income	(131)	
Non-Services Income	1,112	In year profiling of rates income and C19 Contingency Fund.
Total	(1,066)	

It was anticipated that this would be the final monthly budget report of the year, with the period 12 report coming to the June Committee once the year end processes had been followed through.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this report

Proposed by Councillor Greer, seconded by Councillor Gilmour, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor Greer referred to the adverse variance within the Community and Wellbeing and Environment directorate and asked for an explanation in that regard. The Director of Finance and Performance explained that Covid costs were captured within that budget. It had been envisaged that the Covid Contingency would cover those costs, however given that corporately finances were positive, the Covid Contingency would be held back for use with future pressures.

Councillor T Smith referred to page 3, non-services income and he asked for clarity if that variance was due to not bringing in the same amount of rates income that had been planned. The Director explained that that was the counter position in relation to the previously alluded to Covid costs. That amount was approximately the amount that would be retained for pressures in future years.

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

8. SCHEME OF ALLOWANCES OF COUNCILLORS (FIN23) (Appendix XXII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Finance and Performance attaching Scheme of Allowances. The report detailed that regulation 3 of the Payments to Councillors regulations required district councils to prepare and publish a scheme of allowances payable to its Members for each year.

The Department for Communities had issued updated statutory guidance in respect of Payments to Councillors in Circular LG 23/2019 and rates for allowances in Circular LG 7/2021.

The maximum Basic Allowance was £15,486 (subject to review in line with the NJC 2022/23 pay award). However, Council has held the basic to be paid at the 2019 level of £15,071. Out of the maximum permitted of £76,335 (subject to review as above), the draft scheme allocated Special Responsibility Allowances (SRA) totalling £51,156 (approximately 67% of the maximum). 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 9 (approved in April 2021), however the following changes had been made:

- Paragraph 6.6 Dependant Carers' Allowance has been updated in line with Department for Communities direction, which is in line with the increase in the National Living Wage.
- Paragraph 7.5 Subsistence Rates been increased in line with inflation. These have not changed in the past seven years.
- Minor textual and presentational adjustments to improve clarity.
- Updated forms (which are now available in Excel format).

Both the scheme of allowances and the statutory guidance issued by the Department for Communities form Part 5 of the Council's constitution and therefore need updating following approval of the new scheme.

During the coming year Members would be able use the new integrated Human Resources and Employee Payments system to submit claims through a web portal. Further information would be issued in due course, in this regard.

RECOMMENDED that Council approves version 10 of the Scheme of Allowances to replace the previous version 9, with effect from 1 April 2022 and updates its constitution accordingly with the new scheme.

Proposed by Councillor Gilmour, seconded by Alderman Irvine, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor T Smith welcomed that rates of allowances had been frozen and the mileage rate payable had decreased.

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

9. DFC RETURN - IMPACT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM ON SERVICE DELIVERY AND COST EFFECTIVENESS

(Appendix XXIII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Finance and Performance attaching DfC Information Request. The report detailed that the Department for Communities (DfC) Local Government Finance branch were working with the Department's Professional Services Unit to complete a cost benefit analysis of Local Government Reform in Northern Ireland (Terms of Reference included within Annex A).

This followed on from initial work undertaken by the Department for Regional Development¹ in 2015 which sought to "identify the costs and benefits associated with moving to an 11-council model relative to the current 26 council model". The 2015 research noted that "This analysis will be built up and added to over time as more information becomes available. When this study was initiated in the second half of 2014 councils were only in the process of appointing their new senior management teams. The focus at that time was on the immediate challenge of getting the new structures in place for April 2015. While some work had been initiated in some of the councils looking at potential areas for efficiency savings this work was not in general very detailed or comprehensive. The main work on these areas was generally expected to take place in 2015 with some results evident during that year and others taking longer to materialise."

DfC recognised that the new Councils had only been operational since April 2015 and as such some of the anticipated efficiencies may not yet be realised. They also

recognise that the LGR would not only deliver financial benefits but was bringing significant qualitative and productivity benefits to Northern Ireland also.

Therefore, DfC had requested some additional insight that may not be easily identifiable from publicly available sources from each of the 11 Councils within a standard template designed between DfC and a sub-group of the 11 Councils Finance Directors to facilitate this.

The DfC Economist Team was currently reviewing publicly available financial data and may have some additional queries for individual Councils in due course and alongside queries that may arise following the analysis of information submitted in this return.

The Department were initially seeking to collate the required financial information by 7 January 2022 with a view to completing analysis and reporting by end of March 2022. Many if not all Councils missed this deadline due to workload and capacity constraints and requested an extension (including ANDBC). An extension was granted to 31 January.

This deadline had now also passed, no further request for an extension had been made or deemed appropriate.

The return had been co-ordinated by the Head of Finance and all Heads of Service have been given the opportunity to input into the document. Further information had also been added from the Committee Report – 'Report on Notice of Motion – Efficiency and Achievements from April 2015' presented to the Corporate Services Committee in February 2019. The Director of Finance and Performance in completion of the Officer draft reviewed the document and added in some further information deemed relevant.

Due to the importance of the return and subsequent DfC regional report it was considered necessary to obtain Council approval of the document before submitting it formally to DfC. However, it was too long a time period to request a further extension to after the Council meeting on the 30 March 2022.

Therefore, as a compromise the report had been shared on agreement with DfC as a draft (subject to Council approval) to allow DfC to progress their work. A final version would be sent after Council approval.

RECOMMENDED that Council agree the draft report to be shared with DfC as a final draft.

Proposed by Alderman Irvine, seconded by Councillor Gilmour, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor T Smith stated that he would like more information as to how the savings were arrived at. As an example, he highlighted page 8 which outlined a saving of £600k per year in respect of Leisure for operating changes and investment in facilities reducing operating and maintenance costs. He wondered what the operating changes were that had occurred to allow those savings to be made and

how much of the savings detailed could have been made anyway had the two Councils remained separate.

The Director of Finance and Performance explained that the information had been compiled in response to a request from the DfC which was obligated to report on the impact of Local Government Reform. As detailed in the report, the information was a follow up from an internal review carried out in 2019. The report was a Council wide effort and he was unable to provide all the detail. The response was contained within a prescriptive template that had been asked to be completed and he felt the document highlighted some of the benefits that came from Local Government Reform along with some the challenges. The Director felt the report needed to be looked at in its totality as it provided a balanced view since reform in 2015.

Alderman McIlveen sought assurances that the figures could be supported with additional evidence, and that the Director was content that the figures within the document were an accurate reflection of what had occurred since the merger.

The Director confirmed this and if any Members wished for further detail he could provide that.

Councillor T Smith clarified that he wished to know how the figures were arrived at and he was happy to email the Director in that regard.

Councillor T Smith wished to be recorded as abstaining.

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

10. BUSINESS CASE FOR HYBRID COUNCIL AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS (Appendix XXIV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Chief Executive attaching business case. The report detailed that in September 2021 Members agreed for Officers to bring back a business case on the long-term use of hybrid arrangements for Council and Committee meetings, including the infrastructure required and costs involved when social distancing restrictions had eased. Any decision would be subject to further legislative changes.

Whilst this business case considered the longer term arrangements for the Council post Covid, the preferred option had also been future proofed in order to equip the Council to hold hybrid Council and Committee meetings (subject to risk assessments) if Covid restrictions remained in place or were re-introduced in the future.

The Council had 66 scheduled Council and Committee meetings per year.

1 Annual General Meeting
1 Special Council Meeting
12 Council

12 Planning
 10 Community and Wellbeing
 10 Environment
 10 Regeneration and Development
 10 Corporate Services

Currently the Council was conducting these meetings via Zoom and would continue to do so until Covid 19 restrictions permit it to revert to more traditional face to face meetings.

There was no scope to conduct hybrid Virtual/Physical meetings without the purchase of additional technology and incurring additional revenue running costs.

The business case explored four options including the option to do nothing i.e. continue with Zoom meetings during restrictions and revert to full physical meetings when legislation and guidance permits.

The four options were as follows:

Option 1 – Do nothing, this will incur no additional cost going forward.

Option 2 - The Council purchases one set of equipment - uses it to operate hybrid virtual/physical Council and Committee meetings across various Council facilities (Bangor Chamber, Ards Chamber, Queens Hall (Committees only) and ABMWLC) i.e. non semi-permanent (subject to legislation). This option provided a high degree of flexibility both in and out of restrictions, however it was punitive at **£274k** over the 5 year period with the running costs exceeding **£46k** per annum.

Note that this option does not include the extra cost of £50k for wireless microphones required for full Council meetings in the Queens Hall.

Option 3 The Council purchases one set of equipment installs it semi-permanently in the Town Hall Bangor for hybrid Council meetings (with option for Committee meetings) going forward (subject to legislation). This option was the lowest cost for all the do something options with a total 5 year cost of **£110k**. Whilst it was not as flexible as option 2 it does provide the Council with the ability to deliver all hybrid Council and Committee meetings unrestricted in the Bangor chamber during periods of no restrictions, and unrestricted Committee meetings and partial physical/zoom meetings (approx. 15 members physical) during periods of restrictions.

However, this option would make the chamber unavailable in the afternoons of 65 days per year, this restriction has been factored in by reducing the score of the non-monetary benefits.

Option 4 - The Council purchases equipment to support 2 semi-permanent installations, 1 in Bangor Chamber and 1 in Ards Chamber for hybrid Council and Committee meetings going forward (subject to legislation). This option ranks number 1 from a cost/benefit perspective with a total 5 year cost of **£120k**. Whilst it is slightly more costly than option 3, the benefits of not restricting the Bangor chamber to the public for 52 days per year result in a more favourable cost/benefit score.

However, under this option, during periods of restrictions all Committee meetings would be required to switch to the Bangor Chamber to avail of hybrid meetings.

The opportunity cost of income generation losses has not been included in the economic cases as it has been deemed not to materially change the costs or the preferred option.

An option for hiring equipment instead of purchasing it was not taken forward in the business case due to the excessive cost of £1,800 being incurred per meeting.

RECOMMENDED that Council agrees either;

Option 4 in the business case, The Council purchases equipment to support 2 semi-permanent installations, 1 in Bangor Chamber and 1 in Ards Chamber for hybrid Council and Committee meetings going forward at a total 5 year cost of **£120k** (subject to permanent legislative change). Running costs from year 2 of £17.5k per year to be included in district rates.

or

Option 1 in the business case, to continue to run Council and Committee meetings via Zoom during periods of restrictions and full physical meetings at all other times at no additional cost.

Proposed by Councillor T Smith, seconded by Councillor Cooper, that the Council returns to Ards Council Chamber for Committee meetings and the Town Hall, Bangor for Council meetings in person.

Speaking to his proposal, Councillor T Smith stated that his position had remained that should Covid regulations change the Council should revert back to meeting again in person. He referred to the potential costs outlined in the report for the hybrid approach and viewed those as obscene. Now that Covid regulations had been lifted he felt it was time to go back to meet again in person.

In terms of the report, Councillor McKimm stated that he expected to see reference made to the capacity for the public gallery and he wondered did the Council need to apply a disability/equality impact assessment given that if the Council proceeded with the option to do nothing that would mean some Members would not be able to attend meetings.

Alderman McIlveen noted that Councillor T Smith was proposing that Council did not incur the cost.

Councillor McKimm was not content with the response and asked if the Council decided to move to a hybrid what numbers could be accommodated and did the Council need to undertake a disability/equality impact assessment. He wondered if those factors were relevant as he did not see them outlined within the report.

The Director referred to the options within the report; to do nothing would mean that the Council would revert back to its previous meeting arrangements and he did not feel an impact assessment would be required in that respect. If the Council was to agree to purchase the equipment and move to the hybrid approach, meetings would be operated from the Chambers in both Ards and Bangor and therefore the access would not have been reduced and would furthermore provide an opportunity for those people who may not be able to attend physically.

Councillor Greer stated that she would not be supporting the proposal, there were a number of Elected Members who would be deemed clinically vulnerable and she felt it would be wrong to ask those Members to return to the Chamber and put their health at risk. On what was International Woman's Day she noted that a quarter of elected Members were women and there were a number of female officers. Covid had changed how the Council conducted its business however it had also helped with providing work life balance and the virtual approach had allowed Members to do business whilst remaining in the home. She felt it would be wrong to return to the existing arrangements given that the Council had operated virtually relatively successfully.

Councillor Chambers stated that he would prefer to continue on Zoom until the restrictions and guidance changed. He asked if the Council proceeded with one of the hybrid options within the report was the Council committed to that for five years or would further discussion occur once the guidance changed. The Director advised that the business case was for 5 years as a reasonable timeframe for longer term arrangements. The future of Covid was unknown and there was no reason why over time the approach could be changed.

Councillor Chambers added that he was open to technology however he would have a concern that the technology would fail with a hybrid approach and proceedings may not run as smoothly. However, he hoped measures could be put in place to mitigate those potential issues.

Alderman Irvine questioned the restrictions that were in place at the current time that inhibited the Council meeting in the Chamber. The Head of Administration noted that the legislation had been removed however the guidance was still in place and in consultation with the Health and Safety Executive the health and safety of the workforce was paramount. The Council was continuing to adhere to the guidance with the appropriate mitigation measures in place.

Alderman Irvine expressed a degree of reluctance in respect of the spend for the hybrid approach.

Councillor Mathison felt that the Council should be following public health guidelines and he felt uncomfortable supporting the proposal. He recognised that all Members would prefer to return to the Chamber as that facilitated better debate and improved interaction between Members. However, Covid remained and he felt would be irresponsible to ignore public health guidance at the current time.

Councillor Gilmour stated that consideration needed to be given to where the Council stood as an employer. She would love to see Members return to physical meetings

as the debate and the flow worked much better in person. However, Councillor Gilmour stated that she could not support the proposal at this time.

Councillor P Smith noted with the majority of organisations there was a move to agile working and he felt that Covid had shown the need for the Council to be more agile in its approach. Personally, he would like to see the return of physical meetings as soon as possible however the hybrid approach presented opportunities to bring people in for a short period of time for example an officer, a deputation and Planning speakers. He acknowledged the cost proposed and noted that was for over 5 years.

Councillor Cooper stated that as detailed by the Head of Administration restrictions had been lifted and he believed it was time for the Council to move on. He believed it was a foolish approach of the Council to commit to the expenditure for 5 years. Councillor Cooper felt the virtual approach had become too convenient. Council and Committee meetings were the only meetings which he currently attended which were still held virtually. He urged the Committee to move on, to overcome and adapt and return to physical meetings as soon as possible.

Alderman McIlveen highlighted the need to appreciate that there were a number of elected Members and Council Officers who were vulnerable and to take those people into consideration. While some Members may feel comfortable attending physical meetings there were others who felt very reluctant, and the Council should not be in position where it was forcing or excluding vulnerable people to attend meetings. Alderman McIlveen highlighted the need for a flexible approach.

Councillor T Smith noted that the Health Minister had deemed it safe to remove the legal restrictions. The best place for the Council to do business was in person. The technology outlined was not required and he felt one camera was enough. Councillor T Smith felt there had been number of technical issues faced with zoom and viewed that in every meeting there was one elected member who encountered difficulties and could not get access.

The proposal was put to the meeting and was declared lost with 4 voting FOR, 10 AGAINST, 1 ABSTAINED and 1 ABSENT.

Proposed by Councillor Mathison, seconded by Councillor Greer, that the Council proceeds with Option 4 in the business case – That the Council purchases equipment to support 2 semi-permanent installations, 1 in Bangor Chamber and 1 in Ards Chamber for hybrid Council and Committee meetings going forward at a total 5-year cost of £120k (subject to permanent legislative change). Running costs from year 2 of £17.5k per year to be included in district rates.

Councillor Mathison outlined the benefits of the hybrid model. He felt option 4 provided a good balance and he did not feel installing additional infrastructure into venues that the Council did not intend to use long term had any great value. Councillor Mathison stated that he would like to see the Council resuming business as usual as soon as possible but in a safe way. The hybrid approach Covid proofed how the Council ran meetings in the future. Reference had already been made to the number of elected members and staff who were potentially clinically vulnerable and he did not wish to see a scenario where those people were being forced not to take

place in democratic debates in the Chamber or for them to be placed in situations where they did not feel comfortable. Councillor Mathison stated that he was supportive of the approach from a family/carer friendly perspective which provided flexibility. Also there were environmental benefits, there was no reason why those making deputations could not continue to do so in that way. It provided a better access to democracy and there had been an increase in the number of members of public engaging. On all of the aforementioned grounds, Councillor Mathison viewed option 4 as a progressive option. The costs over five years were not astronomical and the Covid Contingency Fund was available to draw down some of that fund.

Councillor Greer added the advantage with the approach was the savings on travel claims with the hybrid approach limiting the need to travel.

Councillor Gilmour stated that she did wish to see Members return to the Chamber but she did feel option 4 was the most suitable to ensure adequate safety measures were in place for Members and staff. She noted that Audit Committee meetings had not been included on the schedule within the report. The hybrid approach demonstrated that the Council could provide a choice of accessibility. The Planning Committee meetings had worked via Zoom. If the recommendation was to proceed she asked how quickly the appropriate equipment could be operational.

The Director of Finance and Performance stated that it would take approximately 6 weeks between the order being placed and the equipment being operational with the appropriate training in place. The critical point was the legislation and when that would change and therefore the decision would be subject to that.

Councillor T Smith wished to pick up on a point made by Councillor Greer regarding saving mileage and with most Members returning to the Chamber he did not feel that would be the case. He expressed concerns regarding the expenditure and highlighted that there was a cost-of-living crisis. Councillor T Smith stated that he would rather continue to meet virtually than spend £50k on video cameras which he viewed as obscene. An audio only route would be much more cost effective however he noted that had not been explored as option. Councillor T Smith stated that he would not support the amendment.

Councillor P Smith understood the concerns in respect of the cost however there was a need to understand that that was part of a change process occurring across organisations. He felt there were benefits to the hybrid approach and noted that there were Councils with more modern facilities who already had such a system in place. The approach provided the Council with the opportunity to better engage with the public and noted there had been an increase in engagement with the current Zoom model which also provided a better record of meetings and allowed people to join and leave without having to be physically in attendance. Councillor P Smith highlighted the need to have standards and processes in place to be clear on the expectation for Members and staff. Overall, he felt the benefits outweighed the costs and as outlined in the business case option 4 provided the best value.

Councillor McKimm noted that organisations were moving forward and developing different services from the pandemic. He felt that the amendment offered a blended approach that was in keeping with staff returning to the office. Councillor McKimm

felt there was a need for the change to occur and he added his support to the amendment.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Mathison, seconded by Councillor Greer, that the Council proceeds with Option 4 in the business case – That the Council purchases equipment to support 2 semi-permanent installations, 1 in Bangor Chamber and 1 in Ards Chamber for hybrid Council and Committee meetings going forward at a total 5-year cost of £120k (subject to permanent legislative change). Running costs from year 2 of £17.5k per year to be included in district rates.

11(A) REQUEST TO LIGHT UP COUNCIL BUILDINGS FOR ST. VINCENT DE PAUL DAY (LP37)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Organisational Development and Administration detailing that the Council had received a request from Nicola Bothwell, representing the Society of St Vincent de Paul, to light up Council buildings blue, on St Vincent de Paul Day on Tuesday 27th September 2022. The society had previously requested a one-off light up, which was ratified by Council in September 2021, but have now asked for this to be added to the annual schedule.

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul (SVP) charity, was an international Christian voluntary organisation, working with poor and disadvantaged people, and was founded in Ireland in 1844. The first Conference of SVP in North Down and Ards was founded in Newtownards in 1893.

The society offered confidential support and friendship, assistance according to individual needs including food, fuel, household goods and school uniforms. They aim to promote self-sufficiency and work for social justice. The help offered embraces persons of different creeds and cultures.

Their member volunteers come from a wide range of backgrounds and are committed to the ethos of the Society. They have an SVP shop in Kircubbin which offers low priced donated clothing, children's wear and household goods. They receive support from local churches, council and individuals within the borough and have developed working relationships with for Storehouse North Down, Advice NI, Women's Aid and the Housing Executive amongst other organisations. Financial support comes from church door collections, fundraising appeals and last year they were in receipt of a grant from Council which enabled them to provide direct relief to families and individuals directly affected by the COVID 19 pandemic.

The current lighting up policy stated that requests for the lighting up of Council buildings are deemed eligible if they: -

- Charitable, community or other non-profit making organisations based in or with a significant connection to the Borough and which are celebrating a significant anniversary or occasion.

RECOMMENDED that as this request meets the policy requirements, it is recommended that Council accedes to the request and lights up Council buildings in blue on 27th September 2022 and annually thereafter.

Proposed by Councillor T Smith, seconded by Councillor Mathison, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor T Smith paid tribute to work of St Vincent de Paul.

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

11 (B) REQUEST TO LIGHT UP COUNCIL BUILDINGS IN SUPPORT OF UKRAINE (FILE LP37)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Organisational Development and Administration detailing that in response to the invasion by Russia of Ukraine last week, and to show Council's support for and solidarity with Ukraine, it was agreed at short notice by Members through the Party Group Leaders, Independents and single Member Parties to light up Council buildings blue and yellow on Friday 25th, Saturday 26th and Sunday 27th February 2022.

There was no opportunity to bring this request to the Council, given the fast-moving events and as there was unanimous support for it, Officers proceeded with the lighting in blue and yellow of the Town Hall / Arts Centre in Newtownards. There was unfortunately a fault with the lighting system at the McKee Clock which prevented it from being included.

The action was well received as measured by messages from the public.

RECOMMENDED that Council accedes to the request retrospectively, to light up Council buildings blue and yellow on 25th to 27th February in support for and solidarity with Ukraine.

Proposed by Councillor P Smith, seconded by Councillor T Smith, as an amendment, that the Council continue to light up its buildings in support and in solidarity with the people of Ukraine if there were no other scheduled events and review that in one month.

To provide clarity on the amendment, Alderman McIlveen asked who would undertake the review. Councillor P Smith was open to officers' guidance however suggested the Corporate Services Committee would undertake the review.

Councillor P Smith noted it was a small gesture however noted cumulatively across the world many buildings were being lit up and that had been seen as a mark of support globally. He was conscious there were other scheduled events however when there were no light ups programmed to occur the Council should continue to light up its buildings in solidarity with the people of Ukraine.

Councillor T Smith was in agreement, it was a small token however the Council was joining with other towns and villages showing opposition to the barbarity of Putin and what he had done and what he sadly continued to do every day. There was a strong level of support across the Borough for the people of Ukraine and it was only right to continue to light up the buildings to stand with Ukraine.

Councillor Mathison agreed it was entirely appropriate to continue to light up the buildings. There was a desire across the Borough to stand with the people of Ukraine and the proposal was a gesture. He hoped to see an end to the barbarity.

Alderman McIlveen sought clarity from the Director if the request would need to wait for Council approval or was there a mechanism that could be used to ensure the light up occurred as soon as possible. Given the unanimous support that had been received for the first request the Director was happy to seek approval from the Mayor, Party Leaders and Independents for the request to occur with immediate effect.

Alderman Irvine stated that the actions of the Russian Army under Putin had been horrific over recent days and were unjustifiable. Although the proposal was a small gesture, it was in solidarity with other Councils across the United Kingdom. Military support and humanitarian aid was needed for the people of Ukraine.

Councillor Cooper concurred with the sentiments expressed and advised that he had been in Ukraine many times. He believed that all the gestures did matter and suggested that the Council write to other Councils to replicate what this Council was proposing to do.

Councillor P Smith as proposer and Councillor T Smith as seconder was happy to incorporate that suggestion from Councillor Cooper into the amendment.

Councillor Greer noted that there had been a fault with the lighting system at the McKee Clock which prevented it from being included and she asked if that had been resolved. The Director confirmed that matter was being resolved and an electrician would be rectifying the problem as soon as possible.

Councillor Gilmour questioned if the pavement lights in Bangor town centre could be lit up in alternating colours. The Director advised that the Council did not have a policy in respect of pavement lights. The policy solely covered the lighting up of the Town Hall, Conway Square and the McKee Clock, Bangor.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, as an amendment that the Council continues to light up its buildings in support and in solidarity with the people of Ukraine, if there are no other scheduled events and the Corporate Committee review this in one month. Furthermore, that the Council writes to the other 10 Council's calling on them to do the same.

RECESS

The meeting went into recess at 9.00 pm and resumed at 9.15 pm.

(Alderman Girvan and Councillor McKimm left the meeting during the recess)

12. RESOLUTION FROM FERMANAGH AND OMAGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

(Appendix XXV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Organisational Development and Administration attaching letter from Fermanagh & Omagh District Council. The report detailed that a letter had been received from Fermanagh & Omagh District Council in which they ask Ards and North Down Borough Council if they would like to work with them to develop procurement policies that support the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement.

RECOMMENDED that Council considers the letter.

Proposed by Councillor Cooper, seconded by Councillor T Smith, that the Council does not support the resolution.

Councillor Cooper viewed the resolution as the usual undertones of antisemitic diatribe from Fermanagh and Omagh District Council and therefore he would not be supporting the resolution.

Alderman Irvine supported Councillor Cooper and felt the resolution had no merit.

Councillor T Smith was content with the proposal and stood with Israel on the matter.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Cooper, seconded by Councillor T Smith, that the Council does not support the resolution.

13. THE QUEEN'S PLATINUM JUBILEE PROPOSED PROGRAMME

(Appendix XXVI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Organisational Development and Administration attaching detailed Programme for Queen's Platinum Jubilee. The report detailed that at Corporate Committee in October 2021, it was agreed that a report detailing the options to celebrate Her Majesty The Queen's 70th year as our Monarch and Head of the Commonwealth - her Platinum Jubilee - would be brought back to Members for their consideration as part of the estimates process.

At Corporate Committee in November 2021 a proposed programme was presented, and the budget had been secured through the 2022/23 rates setting process.

An Officers' working group was established to work up proposals to celebrate this event over the weekend of 2 – 5 June 2022. The officer's group had met multiple times since then and the programme had been further refined.

RECOMMENDED that Council approves the outline programme.

Proposed by Councillor Cooper, seconded by Alderman Irvine, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor Cooper was pleased to see the programme and hoped that could be expanded upon for the occasion. He stated that he would comment further during his Notice of Motion.

Alderman Irvine was content with the programme and felt it was a good and broad base across the Borough to mark the event. In relation to the Thanksgiving Service he noted that Council Officers had been exploring erecting screens however that funding was now being provided for localised screenings. The Head of Administration explained that Officers had met to discuss the programme in its entirety. The screens had proved to be expensive and the group felt that the weekend was already very busy in terms of resources and also that this aspect may not attract the engagement to warrant the spend. Officers had explored alternatives and had felt that faith groups would provide a more inclusive approach and be a better use of money.

Councillor Gilmour highlighted the exciting elements within the programme for the momentous occasion. She noted there were details for activities still to be worked upon and she wondered if consideration had been given to a children's artwork competition as she felt that would be a lovely way to attract the imagination of the younger generation. The Head of Administration stated that with the budget only recently having been agreed there were many aspects of that being worked upon by the Events and Community sections. She stated that she would feedback that specific request for consideration.

Councillor T Smith questioned what was available if there was a street that wished to throw a party he wondered if they could apply for funding or was that only for constituted groups. The Head of Administration stated that the community grants had always been for constituted groups. However, there were other resources available including invitations and bunting for example.

Councillor T Smith suggested other avenues be advertised on the website.

Councillor P Smith welcomed the programme and the increase in the grants budget. He noted with the Centenary the uptake on those grants was low and he wondered if there would be any flexibility in the amount awarded. He noted it was difficult to predict the uptake however he was of the view there was only 40 constituted groups within the Borough and therefore all of them would need to apply to utilise the budget. Councillor P Smith asked how the grants could be managed to maximise the funding and provide some flexibility. The Head of Administration stated that in terms of the grants report that would be presented to the Community and Wellbeing Committee.

The Director of Organisational Development and Administration stated that the grant scheme had now been published and the uptake would be kept under review.

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

14. RESPONSE TO NOTICES OF MOTION:

(a) Visitor Parking (NOM 153) (Appendices XXVII, XXVIII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Organisational Development and Administration attaching letter from Southern Division Roads and email reply from the PSNI. The report detailed that a Notice of Motion debated at Corporate Committee December 2021 and subsequently ratified by Council stated:

"That this Council notes and welcomes the additional visitors who attend various sites across the Ards Peninsula during peak tourist times and the positive impact this has on the local economy; acknowledges that during that peak period Main Street, Millisle and Main Street, Springvale Road, Ballywalter experience particular problems with parking which adversely impact on essential services in the Peninsula including emergency vehicles; and tasks officer to liaise with both DfI Roads and PSNI to look at solutions to this issue to include seasonal prohibitions on parking and adequate enforcement to ensure the free flow of traffic on these vital routes."

Letters were sent from the Chief Executive on 13 January 2022 to the Chief Constable of the PSNI and to the Department for Infrastructure and a reply email was received on 17 January 2022 from the office of the Chief Constable detailing a contact within PSNI. A reply was also received from Southern Division Roads on 4 February and a copy was attached to the report.

However, on street parking was not a matter for Council to enforce and the Council did not therefore employ any officers who would have this within their remit. Such issues were the responsibility of DfI (illegal parking) and PSNI (dangerous parking or parking causing an obstruction), and, as such, those incidents should be reported by residents directly to either DfI or PSNI depending on the circumstances.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the responses to the Notice of Motion.

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

15. NOTICES OF MOTION

(Having previously declared an interest, Alderman McIlveen withdrew from the meeting and Councillor Mathison took the Chair)

(a) Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Cooper and Alderman Menagh

That this Council recognises the remarkable reign of Her Majesty the Queen and Her devotion and dedication to the people of the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth and will write to the Secretary of State and all ministers in the N.I Executive to urge adequate funding to be available to all eleven councils in N.I. for celebrating Her Platinum Jubilee in a manner befitting such a memorable and

historic achievement; and furthermore, tasks officers to investigate all possible external revenue streams to identify financial sources to enable our council to hold a programme of events in our borough to honour this unique and inspiring occasion.

Councillor Cooper advised that Alderman Menagh's computer battery had issues and he was therefore now unable to be in attendance to second the motion.

Proposed by Councillor Cooper, seconded by Councillor T Smith, that the Notice of Motion be adopted.

Councillor Cooper outlined that the motive of the motion was to get funding from the Executive and furthermore to explore external funding streams. He recognised there was a programme that had been presented earlier in the meeting with a budget attached. He thought that the Queen was a remarkable lady with a remarkable life and devotion given to the world.

Alderman Irvine felt the Notice of Motion added to what the Council already had planned and put the onus on the Executive to provide funding. The Council had a good programme of events and he felt for a celebration of this magnitude the Council should receive some government funding. In terms of her Majesty's health, he hoped that would be back to full strength in time for the celebrations. He welcomed the exploration of the external funding streams to provide the people of the Borough a fantastic occasion that would be remembered for years to come.

Councillor T Smith hoped central funding would be provided and felt it was right the Council raised the issue.

Councillor Cooper welcomed the agreement. The Queen had conducted herself with the upmost intelligence and integrity, she had been a beacon during some very dark times and he hoped that would continue for a long time to come.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Cooper, seconded by Councillor T Smith, that the Notice of Motion be adopted.

(Alderman McIlveen was readmitted to the meeting and resumed the Chair)

(b) Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Chambers and Alderman Smith

We ask this Council to engage with Translink to establish the possibility of using part of the car park at Bangor Sportsplex as a park and ride. This is to, hopefully, find a way to mitigate the parking issues residents and commuters are facing daily, in Bangor West. A bus service departing from here to Belfast or/and the train station using a booking system could potentially offer a solution to the ongoing problems.

Proposed by Councillor Chambers, seconded by Alderman Smith, that the Notice of Motion be adopted.

(Councillor Blaney returned to the meeting – 9.34 pm)

(Councillor Cooper withdrew from the meeting – 9.34 pm)

Councillor Chambers highlighted that the parking issues faced by the residents of Bangor West and the commuters who used the train station at the Bangor West halt was long-standing however despite the efforts from many elected representatives a solution had never materialised. He referred to Bangor Sportsplex and often noticed that the car park which had in the region of 130 car parking spaces lay much of time entirely empty. Councillor Chambers felt there was value in the Council engaging with Translink to investigate the feasibility of providing a park and ride in partnership. He would like to see a couple of buses leaving from the location going directly to Belfast and a small shuttle bus that would run directly to the train station. Having a booking system in place would allow for the numbers to be managed. The idea could at least be trailed for a period of time to measure its potential success. He recognised that it would not fix all of the ongoing parking problems in Bangor West but he felt it would go some way in mitigating those.

Alderman Smith noted that the problem surrounding the Bangor West station area by cars using the rail system had been an ongoing problem for years. Translink promoted travelling by train which she totally accepted but that should not occur at the cost of the residents living in this area. Translink accepted that it did not have parking facilities at the station and no realistic scope to offer relief through the provision of park and ride facilities in such dense residential areas. Unfortunately, the Department for Infrastructure gave the same message. Over the years, Alderman Smith advised that she had been contacted by many residents who had to put up with constant parking outside their homes and often exiting their driveway was difficult because cars were parked so tightly. Cars parked on corners occurred every day as did parking in the cycle lanes. Translink to date had offered no short-term or long-term answer to the problem. Alderman Smith felt that using part of the car park at Bangor Sportsplex could help solve the problem facing so many residents in Bangor West. She recognised that there were issues which would need to be addressed while negotiating that possibility. If the Notice of Motion was agreed, engaging with Translink on the possibility of using a section to this car park it would be the first positive step taken in many years and that this partnership, if formed, could be one that actually positively addressed residents' concerns and worries.

Proposed by Councillor Greer, seconded by Councillor Mathison, as an amendment, that this Council recognises the need to alleviate the problem parking that residents and commuters are facing daily near train stations in the Borough and invites Translink to answer questions relating to the viability of possible measures, such as the use of a shuttle bus from Bangor Sportsplex, that could be introduced to help tackle ongoing problems.

Speaking to her amendment, Councillor Greer stated that the issue was not only isolated to Bangor West. Bangor town centre, Carnalea, Helens Bay and Holywood were also impacted by people parking to use the train. It was not just residents that were impacted with many spaces being taken in town centres having a detrimental impact on traders. She had advised that the Alliance Party had previously proposed a multi-agency parking working group as part of the parking strategy and it was disappointing that almost 3 years later that group had not yet met. Councillor Greer felt it would be useful for Translink to be invited to answer Members' questions and

explore the viability of such measures. Councillor Greer stated that better transport links, cycle lanes and the encouragement of sustainable transport use was all needed and Translink had a role to play in that. More needed to be done to reduce the congestion along the A2 and connect those people who lived outside the town centres. She would like to see the Council working closing with TNI and Translink to provide transport links that were fit for purpose. Case Studies could be explored from elsewhere to glean ideas.

Councillor T Smith raised a point of order and sought clarity if a seconder was required when an amendment to a Notice of Motion was submitted in advance. Alderman McIlveen clarified that for a Notice of Motion be submitted a proposer and seconder was required however that was not the case for an amendment.

Councillor Dunlop supported the amendment and advised that pre-Covid there had been a number of private buses which collected the commuters who parked at Queen's Parade and had taken them to Belfast. The amendment would help alleviate that issue and ensure that Queen's Parade was used for Town Centre activity. Councillor Dunlop highlighted there was also obvious environmental benefit to a park and ride facility.

Councillor Gilmour stated that parking around the train stops along the Bangor to Belfast line was an issue that had been discussed many times in the Chamber and Members had fought to see a solution for the residents. She stated that she had many meetings with Translink in respect of commuter car parking in many areas around the Borough and she outlined various areas where that occurred and the problems that existed. A number of options had been explored over the years and she welcomed the amendment to explore future options and she hoped the Sportsplex proposal could be successful. However, there was a need to ensure that the overall parking strain along the rail line did not displace parking from one location to another. Currently the connecting bus service was not adequate and the previous replies had indicated that the budget constraints would not allow for an increase in service. Councillor Gilmour advised that she had recently emailed Translink in respect of giving consideration to engaging with the Council to explore the possibility of using part of the car park at Bangor Sportsplex. The response she received stated 'that whilst we are happy to engage with Ards and North Down Borough Council on this matter it will be important that everybody takes a range of matters into consideration of a number of factors including license agreements, potential liabilities, responsibilities and costs'. Whilst Councillor Gilmour supported the motion and the amendment and hoped that there would be success to provide some relief for those living in the streets neighbouring the train stops, she did have concerns that Translink was already lining up its excuses. Councillor Gilmour hoped Translink could be invited to the Council to explore all possibilities as the residents and commuters both deserved a level of care and service. It had to be recognised that the commuters parking on the streets were trying to travel to work and did not have the provision of adequate car parking.

Councillor Blaney stated that whilst he agreed with the amendment to some degree, he would be voting against it. He had sat in many meetings with Translink, a number of topics were covered and in many instances he felt those meetings were wide ranging, with a lot of requests coming from Councillors across the Borough and

those meetings often became convoluted. The original motion provided focus in one area and if the park and ride at Bangor Sportsplex was a success he felt it would provide benefit for the entire Borough. If Councillor Greer was to provide her amendment as a motion in its own right he stated that he would be willing to support it.

Councillor P Smith agreed with Councillor Blaney and said that he was aware of the issues along the train line. The original motion was focused on trying to achieve an outcome which he felt was achievable and he would be supporting the substantive motion.

Councillor T Smith was aware of the number of issues in particular in Bangor. In terms of the amendment he was unsure of the benefit of inviting Translink to a Committee meeting as Standing Orders dedicated that would only allow for 15 minutes of questioning and he was unsure if that was the best way to pursue the matter. There were many affected areas and the discussion needed to be in depth and explore all possibilities.

Alderman Irvine agreed with the amendment however the original motion provided particular focus. He noted that Councillor Greer had alluded to the multi-agency parking working group and suggested that would be the forum for a Borough wide park and ride issue debate.

Councillor Mathison did not perceive that the amendment was trying to dilute the original motion and instead saw it as an addition. He stated that the amendment was trying to ensure that all the areas along the Bangor to Belfast train line in the Borough were taken into account and agreed that inviting Translink to come before Council was the best way to do that.

Councillor Chambers noted that the amendment was well intended however his motion was focused on addressing a very specific problem in Bangor West. He felt that the amendment diluted the original motion and caused further unnecessary delay.

The amendment was put to the meeting and was declared LOST with 3 voting FOR, 9 AGAINST, 0 ABSTENTIONS and 4 ABSENT.

Councillor Gilmour sought clarity on who was engaging with Translink. Councillor Chambers felt that engagement would best come from Council Officers.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Chambers, seconded by Alderman Smith, that the Notice of Motion be adopted.

16. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

There were no items of any other notified business.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

17. UNITE BALLOT ON STRIKE ACTION

(Appendices XXIX, XXX)

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)

18. MENOPAUSE POLICY

(Appendix XXXI)

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

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

19. LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY AND PLAN FOR TRAINING 2022/2023 (HR27)

(Appendix XXXII)

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)

20. LEARNING, TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT POLICY (HR27)

(Appendix XXXIII)

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)

21. MENTORING TO INSPIRE SCHEME (HR27)

(Appendix XXXIV)

*****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)

22. LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR ELECTED MEMBERS 2022/2023 (HR27)

(Appendix XXXV)

*****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)

23. REQUEST FOR COUNCIL TO CONSENT TO THE SALE OF GREYABBEY VILLAGE HALL BY NICVA

(Appendix XXXVI)

*****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)

24. LEASE TO COMMUNITY ADVICE ARDS AND NORTH DOWN

(Appendices XXXVII, XXXVIII)

*****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)

25. RECTIFICATION OF TITLE - MAIN STREET, BALLYWALTER
(Appendices XXXIX, XL)

*****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)

26. REQUEST FROM SURE START TO USE LAND AT SKIPPERSTONE COMMUNITY CENTRE FOR AN ALLOTMENT
(Appendix XLI)

*****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)

27. RENEWAL OF LEASE TO DONAGHADEE FOOTBALL CLUB OF PREMISES ABOVE THE PUBLIC TOILETS AT THE PARADE, DONAGHADEE (FILE LP468)
(Appendices XLII)

*****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)

28. INTERIM HOME WORKING ARRANGEMENTS - TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS - PHASE 2

*****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)

29. FREEDOM OF THE BOROUGH - IRISH GUARDS

*****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)

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 10.27 pm.

Unclassified

167

ITEM 7.4.1**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Council/Committee	Council
Date of Meeting	30 March 2022
Responsible Director	Chief Executive
Responsible Head of Service	Community Planning Manager
Date of Report	24 February 2022
File Reference	
Legislation	Local Government (NI) Act 2014
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below.
Subject	Education Authority Strategic Area Plan Consultation 2022-2027
Attachments	Planning for Sustainable Provision: Draft Strategic Area Plan 2022-27 (Primary and Post-primary Schools) Draft consultation response by ANDBC

Planning for Sustainable Provision, Northern Ireland's second regional Strategic Area Plan for the period 2022–2027 sets out the strategic direction for how the future educational needs of children and young people will be addressed through area solutions, consistent with relevant policies and Ministerial priorities. It will shape proposed changes to education provision for the next 5 years.

The plan is developed in accordance with the Department of Education's Schools for the Future: A Policy for Sustainable Schools (Sustainable Schools Policy) and will address Ministerial priorities for Area Planning. The Area Plan reflects and references the policy and Ministerial priorities to create a vision, mission, and key themes for the next five years for primary and post-primary schools of all management types.

Unclassified**168**

The Area Plan aims to ensure that all pupils can access a broad and balanced curriculum in sustainable schools. The best educational interests of children and young people is the focus of the Area Plan, in particular the need to raise standards through a network of sustainable schools. The Area Plan sets out the objectives and key themes through which this aim can be realised.

In preparing this Area Plan, the Education Authority collaborated with the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools as the planning authority for Catholic maintained schools and engaged with sectoral support bodies representative of the Integrated (Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education), Irish Medium (Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta) and controlled sector (Controlled Schools' Support Council).

In addition, the Education Authority engaged with Voluntary Grammar Schools and their Trustees, through the Governing Bodies Association and Catholic Schools' Trustee Service and other maintained schools (i.e., church schools) through the Transferors' Representative Council, all of whom are represented on each of the Area Planning Group structures. Account has also been taken of the contribution that FE Colleges make to the delivery of the 14-19 Curriculum offer.

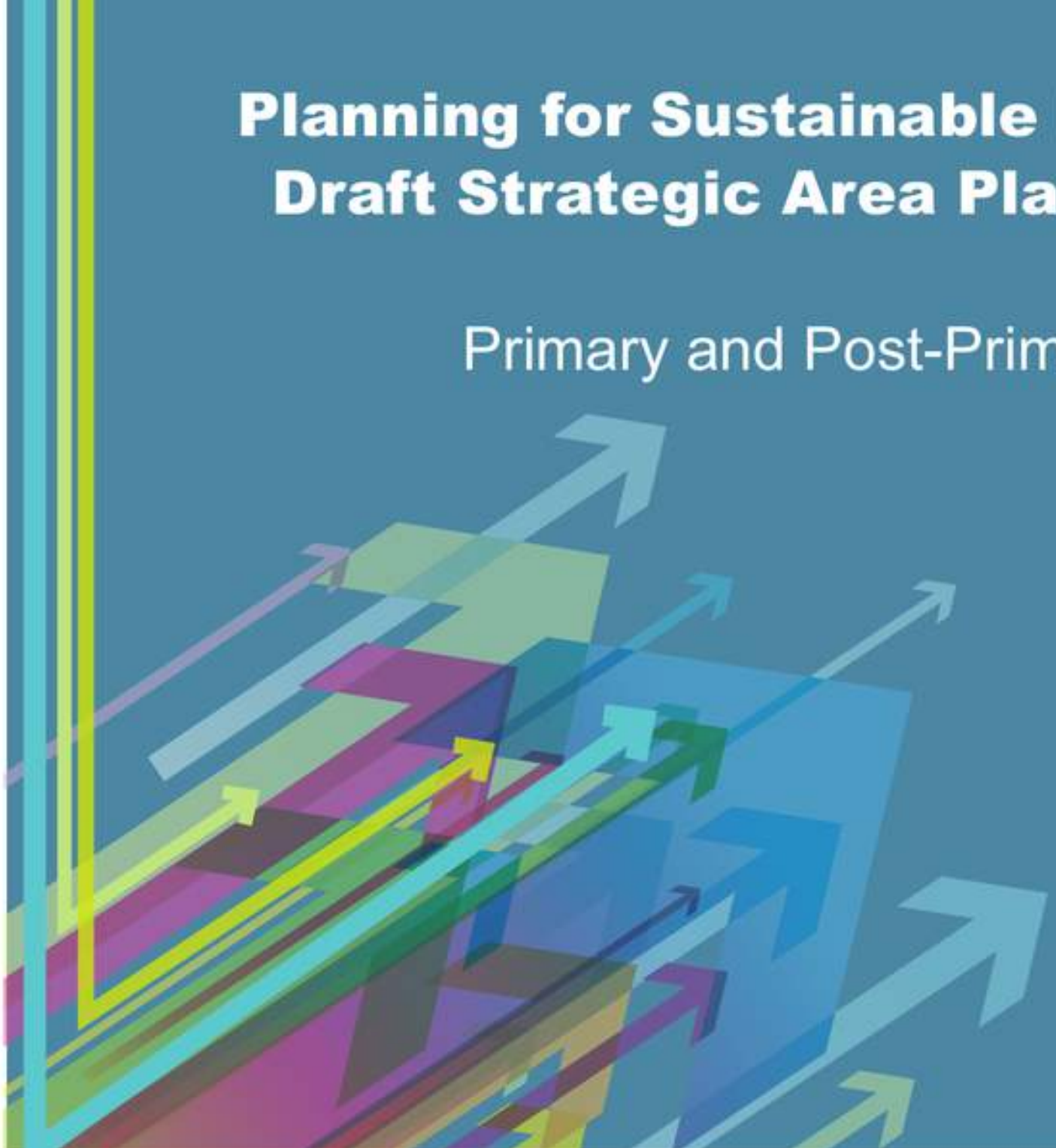
A draft response to this consultation has been prepared for Council to consider.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council agrees to issue the attached consultation response.

Planning for Sustainable Provision: Draft Strategic Area Plan 2022-27

Primary and Post-Primary Schools



18 January 2022

'Plan on a Page'

Aim

The aim of Area Planning is to ensure that all primary and post-primary pupils have access to a broad and balanced curriculum that meets their educational needs in a school that is educationally and financially viable and sustainable.

Vision

All children will have access to a high quality educational experience, through a broad and balanced curriculum that meets their needs, in educationally and financially viable schools, within a diverse system of education.

Mission

Focus on improving the quality of educational provision for all pupils. To do this Area Planning will:

- address school provision which is not educationally and/or financially sustainable;
- explore realistic, innovative, shared and collaborative solutions with a view to ensuring there is a viable and sustainable level of quality educational provision;
- aim to find solutions which deliver sustainable education provision in rural areas;
- address issues and challenges specific to local areas, by ensuring there are sufficient places which may result in increasing places in some areas while reducing places in others.

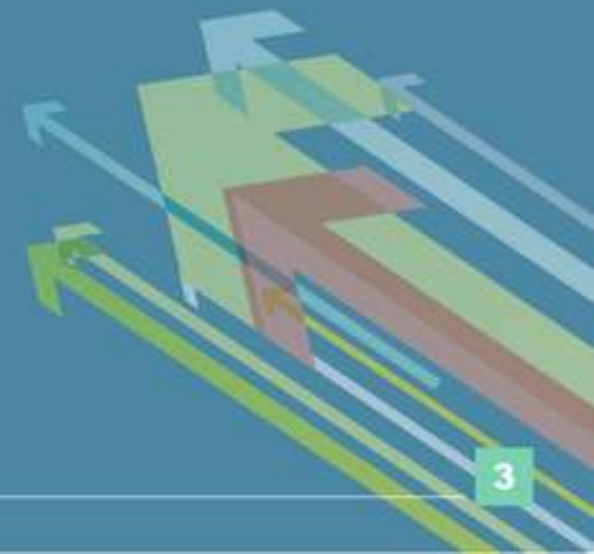
Providing a network of viable and sustainable schools that are of the right type, the right size, located in the right place at the right time with a focus on raising standards.

Key Themes

- Increase parity of access for all to appropriate pathways
- Promote cooperation, collaboration and sharing across all sectors
- Maximise resources and sustainability
- Inform strategic infrastructure planning and investment

CONTENTS

Foreword	4
Section 1 Introduction, Vision and Mission Statement	5
Section 2 The Area Planning Environment	8
Section 3 The Drivers for Change	10
Section 4 The Challenges to Change	14
Section 5 Achieving the Vision – Planning for Sustainable Provision	16
Section 6 Northern Ireland Summary Data	18
Section 7 Operational Plans	21
Section 8 How will we know we have been successful?	24
Section 9 Supporting Schools Through Change	25
Section 10 Consultation	26



Foreword

On behalf of the Education Authority and all Area Planning partners, I am delighted to present 'Planning for Sustainable Provision', Northern Ireland's second regional Strategic Area Plan for the period 2022–2027. This plan has been developed by the Education Authority working in partnership with the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools and collaborating with other sectoral support bodies. It sets out the strategic direction for how the future educational needs of children and young people will be addressed through area solutions, consistent with relevant policies and Ministerial priorities. It will shape proposed changes to education provision for the next 5 years.



The education of our children and young people in educationally and financially viable and sustainable schools is of paramount importance and I do not under-estimate the challenges that lie ahead. However by working collaboratively and placing the needs of our children and young people at the heart of the planning process we will be able to achieve the aim of Area Planning to ensure that all children and young people have access to pathways through a broad and balanced curriculum that meets their needs, and leads to improved outcomes.

The success of the plan lies in co-operative and collaborative solution focused planning across managing authorities and sectoral support bodies; focused on the educational needs of pupils and not on the needs of individual institutions or sectors. Community participation in, and engagement with the planning process is equally important.

The Minister has stated publicly that pupils should not be denied opportunities due to the sustainability of their school and we therefore must work together to provide equity of opportunity and to find creative and innovative solutions for sustainable education provision, particularly in rural areas.

In the development of this plan, we have engaged with a number of stakeholders across the system and I would like to thank each and every one of you for your contribution and engagement. The plan is without doubt much more comprehensive and meaningful as a result of your efforts.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sara Long', written in a cursive style.

Sara Long
Chief Executive, Education Authority

Section 1

Introduction, Vision and Mission Statement

1 Introduction

This is the second regional Strategic Area Plan for Northern Ireland (Area Plan). The first Strategic Area Plan 'Providing Pathways - Strategic Area Plan for Schools 2017-2020' (Providing Pathways) completes on 31 August 2022 with the achievements of this Plan and previous Area Planning activity since 2010/11 outlined in the Department of Education's Sustainability Baseline Report - <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/sustainability-baseline-report>.

This Area Plan sets the strategic direction of Area Planning for the next five years and spans the academic years 2022-2027. The plan is developed in accordance with the Department of Education's Schools for the Future: A Policy for Sustainable Schools (Sustainable Schools Policy) and will address Ministerial priorities for Area Planning.

The Department of Education has published Area Planning Guidance and a Sustainability Baseline Report which inform the Strategic Area Plan 2022-27. The Area Plan will reflect and reference the policy and Ministerial priorities to create a vision, mission and key themes for the next five years for primary and post-primary schools of all management types.

A separate Special Education Strategic Area Plan 2022-27 will be published for special schools and specialist provision in mainstream schools. Both plans will dovetail to meet the needs of pupils in specialist provision in primary and post-primary schools.

The Area Plan aims to ensure that all pupils can access a broad and balanced curriculum in sustainable schools. The best educational interests of children and young people is the focus of the Area Plan, in particular the need to raise standards through a network of sustainable schools. The Area Plan sets out the objectives and key themes through which this aim can be realised.

In preparing this Area Plan, the Education Authority collaborated with the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools as the planning authority for Catholic maintained schools, and engaged with sectoral support bodies representative of the Integrated (Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education), Irish Medium (Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta) and controlled sector (Controlled Schools' Support Council). In addition the Education Authority engaged with Voluntary Grammar Schools and their Trustees, through the Governing Bodies Association and Catholic Schools' Trustee Service and other maintained schools (ie church schools) through the Transferors' Representative Council, all of whom are represented on each of the Area Planning Group structures. Account is also taken of the contribution that FE Colleges make to the delivery of the 14-19 Curriculum offer. Within this Area Plan the term 'Area Planning' refers to the collective work of all Area Planning partners.

What is Area Planning?:

Area Planning is the process of strategic planning of primary and post-primary education provision to support the implementation of the Sustainable Schools Policy.

Aim of Area Planning:

To ensure that all primary and post-primary pupils have access to a broad and balanced curriculum that meets their educational needs in a school that is educationally and financially viable and sustainable.

Sustainable Schools Policy:

The Sustainable Schools Policy provides the framework (for schools and managing authorities) to consider the educational experiences of children and young people and make the best use of resources. It sets out six sustainability criteria and associated indicators which are the key reference for assessing existing and future education provision to ensure it meets the needs of pupils.

The six criteria are:

Quality Educational Experience;

Stable Enrolment Trends;

Sound Financial Position;

Strong Leadership & management by Board of Governors & Principals;

Accessibility; and

Strong Links with the community

The Sustainable Schools Policy also provides guidance as to **minimum enrolment thresholds** by which sustainable schools should be assessed.

	Minimum Threshold
Rural Primary School	105 pupils
Urban Primary School	140 pupils
Post Primary School - Years 8-12	500 pupils
Post 16	100 pupils

A copy of the Sustainable Schools Policy can be accessed on the Department's website at: <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/schools-future-policy-sustainable-schools>

Ministerial Priorities:

The Minister of Education in her statement to the Northern Ireland Assembly on 9 August 2021 set out three over-arching Area Planning priorities which must be the core focus of the Strategic Area Plan over the next five years. The issues to be addressed are:

- Primary pupils being taught in composite classes of more than two year groups.
- Post-primary schools that are failing to provide a broad and balanced curriculum for pupils in years 8-12.
- Sixth forms with fewer than 100 pupils that cannot offer a full range of courses. **[This priority will be actioned in the first operational plan.]**

1.2 The Vision

Minister of Education, Michele McIlveen, has set out the key priorities for Area Planning for 2022-27 which are supported through this vision, citing the importance of educating all of our children and young people in educationally and financially viable and sustainable schools. The Area Plan will also support the Department of Education's commitment to the New Decade, New Approach suite of actions to contribute to addressing pressures in the Education system in terms of improved efficiency and effectiveness.

“ All children will have access to a high quality educational experience, through a broad and balanced curriculum that meets their needs, in educationally and financially viable schools, within a diverse system of education. ”

1.3 Mission Statement

Across the next five years the Area Plan seeks to benefit pupils, teachers, schools, parents, communities, wider society and the economy by having a network of viable and sustainable schools meeting the educational needs of all pupils.

The Area Plan will focus on improving educational provision for all pupils. To do this Area Planning will:

- address school provision which is not educationally and/or financially sustainable;
- explore realistic, innovative, shared and collaborative solutions with a view to ensuring there is a viable and sustainable level of quality educational provision;
- aim to find solutions which deliver sustainable education provision in rural areas; and
- address issues and challenges specific to local areas, by ensuring there are sufficient places which may result in increasing places in some areas while reducing places in others.

Providing a network of viable and sustainable schools that are of the right type, the right size, located in the right place at the right time with a focus on raising standards.

This can only be achieved through co-operative and collaborative solution based planning across managing authorities and sectoral bodies; which remains focused on the educational needs of pupils and not on the needs of individual institutions or sectors. Maximising community involvement and participation is also key to the success of the Area Plan.



Section 2

The Area Planning Environment

2.1 Objectives

The objectives of Area Planning are set out in the Department of Education's Area Planning Guidance:

For Pupils

- identify and meet the needs of all primary/post-primary aged pupils in an area;
- ensure that pupils are taught in an education system that comprises a network of sustainable schools; are within a reasonable travelling time for pupils (as defined in the SSP) and capable of delivering effectively the statutory curriculum and, in post-primary schools, the Entitlement Framework; and
- enhance the quality of provision and raise standards.

For the System

- maximise effective engagement with all stakeholders through the Area Planning Support Structures (eg Area Planning Steering; Working and Local Groups);
- support effective strategic planning for delivery of the curriculum through the use of robust and verifiable information;
- identify deliverable, innovative and creative solutions to address educational need, including opportunities for collaborative, shared and cross-sectoral models, particularly to retain a sustainable educational presence in rural communities;
- maximise the use and sharing of the existing schools' estate including potential for collaborative models of shared and/or co-located facilities (including colocation of mainstream and special schools);
- maximise the impact of available resources by reducing duplication of provision and the number of available places; and take full account of appropriate and relevant Further Education (FE) Sector provision for 14-19 year olds to avoid unnecessary duplication.

In meeting the objectives of Area Planning, four key themes and associated actions have been developed in order to drive forward the changes required in order to realise the vision.

Key Themes

Increase parity of access for all to appropriate pathways

Promote cooperation, collaboration and sharing across all Sectors

Maximise resources and sustainability

Inform strategic infrastructure planning and investment



Section 3

The Drivers for Change

The Department of Education's vision for education in Northern Ireland is '*a system that is recognised internationally for the quality of its teaching and learning, for the achievements of its young people and for a holistic approach to education*'. The Department of Education's Area Planning Guidance also states:

'All Departmental policies contribute to the delivery of that vision and all have, as a central tenet, the educational well-being of the children and young people for whom the education system is designed. It is essential that schooling reflects the educational needs of the pupils and addresses these needs in the most efficient and effective way possible. This can best be achieved through a network of viable and sustainable schools that are of the right type, the right size, located in the right place at the right time and have a focus on raising standards.'

It is only through putting the needs of children and young people at the core of education and above the interests of institutions and sectors that this can be achieved. The needs of children and young people is the driver for Area Planning and the focus of all partners in Area Planning, Department of Education, managing authorities, sectoral support bodies, schools and their communities and other stakeholders.

In order to realise the Department of Education's vision and to achieve the aim, mission and objectives of Area Planning change will be required. Some changes may be minor, but in many cases a major change requiring co-operation and collaboration across all stakeholders will be needed. Change can bring uncertainty and challenges but also opportunity, anticipation and enthusiasm.

3.1 Creating Opportunities for Change

3.1.1 Collaborative Working

In the Minister's statement on 9 August 2021, Setting the Priorities for the Next Regional Area Plan for the Education Sector in Northern Ireland, building on the priorities, outlined specifically that 'Collaboration and Partnership' needs to be built into Area Planning 'recognising no sectoral boundaries' and 'children and young people at the heart of decisions' and 'it is unacceptable that the interests of individual school or sectors should prevail in planning considerations'. The Minister stated:

It is therefore incumbent upon all Area Planning stakeholders and schools to engage positively with the Education Authority and other sectors and collaborate and partner in the co-design of Development Proposals; to bring forward innovative, creative and shared solutions for sustainable provision and to continue to encourage and facilitate Integrated and Irish Medium Education.

It will only be by working collaboratively that the vision, mission and key themes of this Area Plan can be achieved – together we can achieve more.

Within the lifespan of this Area Plan, managing authorities and sectoral bodies will work together to consider:

- Partnership working
- Collaboration, particularly at Post 16
- Federations within the primary phase
- Transformation
- Jointly Managed Church Schools
- Amalgamations

Only after all options have been explored will discontinuance be considered as an option to strengthen future education provision in an area.

Annex B details models of collaboration for Area Planning.

Partnership Working
 Collaboration, Particularly at Post 16
 Federations Within the Primary Phase
 Transformation
 Jointly Managed Church Schools
 Amalgamations

3.1.2 Supporting Integrated and Irish Medium Education

The managing authorities and sectoral bodies in their statutory duty will seek to identify, explore and bring forward proposals to encourage and facilitate both Irish Medium and Integrated education to provide sustainable education for an area. Both Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta and the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education will provide guidance and direction on innovative sustainable provision, working with all education partners in achieving Area Planning solutions.

3.1.3 Supporting Schools and Communities

The collaborative working models above provide an overview of the commitment of Area Planning to consider sustainable options to ensure educational provision within an area. In addition to the above Area Planning continues to strive to explore all possibilities to ensure sustainable provision in an area. Area Planning is working with other partners to support schools and communities with regard to sustainable primary school provision to make everyone more aware of, and proactively engaged in, the Area Planning process, particularly in relation to the Sustainable Schools Policy.

Area Planning partners will continue to undertake research on innovative Area Planning options and support for schools involved in an Area Planning solution.

3.1.4 Engaging with Governors, Staff, Parents and Pupils

Governors, Principals, Staff and Parents/Guardians have an important role in realising the vision and aims of Area Planning.

It is acknowledged that Area Planning discussions are often difficult for governors, particularly as many are from the local community and often have historical connection with the school. However it is imperative that the educational needs of all pupils in an area are considered as opposed to individual institutions. The challenge, therefore, is for governors to consider whole area solutions rather than focusing on their own school and in all

engagements with school governors the focus will be on the needs of an area rather than single institutions. A programme of Governor Training on Area Planning will be delivered throughout the lifespan of this strategy to enable governors to increase their awareness and understanding of Area Planning in order to play a fuller role in the process.

School leaders, staff and parents/guardians also have important role to play in Area Planning as those most directly impacted by any change. In any change, the managing authorities and sectoral bodies will consult on any proposed change with the responsibility of staff and parents/guardians to engage in the consultation process. In order to ensure more active parental participation, Area Planning will continue to engage with key parent representative organisations, including Parentkind.

Effective engagement with children and young people is also imperative. In meeting the requirements of Children's Services Co-operation Act (Northern Ireland) 2015 and Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) Area Planning will actively listen to the views of Children and Young People. To ensure the participation of children and young people, Area Planning will continue to work collaboratively with the Education Authority's Youth Service, and/or other Youth Organisations, to create engagement programmes for Area Planning activity.

3.1.5 Additional Drivers for Change

i) Clearly Defined Aim, Policy and Statutory Process

The publication of Area Planning guidance provides clear policy and process from the Department of Education to be implemented by the Education Authority as the lead planning authority, working in partnership with the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools and collaborating with sectoral support bodies. Clearly defined process and governance provides clarity of purpose and direction for Area Planning to meet the aim, vision and Key Themes for the Area Plan.

ii) Established Partnership Working

Since 2017, following the publication of 'Providing Pathways 2017-22' Area Planning is well embedded within all educational partners with significant progress made during the life span of that strategy. This is detailed in the Sustainability Baseline Report. Area Planning has clearly defined structures and processes which support the implementation of the Sustainable School Policy. The defined structures provide for engagement and robust discussion on work streams. While the ideal is to achieve consensus from all partners, where this cannot be reached, the established processes provide for understanding and information sharing.

Collaborative practices and partnership working will be a priority throughout this Area Plan to take forward innovative and cross sectoral working to ensure sustainable provision in all areas, in the best interests of pupils, urban and rural.

iii) Community Planning

The Education Authority and Council for Catholic Maintained Schools, as statutory partners for Community Planning, will engage and inform Local Community Planning partners on the Strategic Area Plan. Whilst working within the Local Government District context, the Area Plan seeks to ensure that administrative boundaries do not prevent the development of natural and logical solutions for effective and efficient delivery of education provision. It also takes account of the natural flow of pupils across administrative boundaries.

iv) Education Authority's School Improvement Strategy

The Education Authority's School Improvement Strategy is in the final stages of drafting and it expected to be consulted on in early 2022. The priorities and actions from the Strategy will dovetail with the Area Plan.

The opportunities the Strategy provides are:

- to support schools to improve; and
- to support schools through and after the implementation phase of an Area Planning activity.

To achieve this the Education Authority will:

- develop high-quality aspirational learner-centred provision to increase parity of access for all to appropriate pathways;
- develop a culture of collaborative enquiry-based learning and innovation to promote cooperation, collaboration and sharing across all sectors;
- develop contextualised and empowering intelligence for school improvement to maximise resources and sustainability; and
- develop self-evaluation and planning for improvement to further maximise resources and sustainability.

v) School Development Planning and Self-Evaluation

In seeking to enable sustainable education provision within an area, the key to early identification of challenges and opportunities for individual schools comes from self-evaluation. It is important that all schools undertake an annual self-evaluation against the criteria and indicators of the Sustainable Schools Policy. This should not be considered as additional to what schools already do but rather provide a structure and context as to where the school sits within the Sustainable Schools Policy. In developing the School Development Plan, schools should address and consider many of the criteria and indicators within the Sustainable Schools Policy. Looking at this process through the Area Planning lens will bring challenges and opportunities for schools through self-evaluation.

4.1 Rural Provision

The Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 places a duty to have due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising policies, strategies and plans, and when designing and delivering public services. Area Planning activity will give due regard to the requirements of the Act.

Within the Northern Ireland context, 479 schools are identified as rural with 505 schools identified as urban. However, when the Sustainable Schools Policy minimum threshold is applied, the statistics show a large percentage of rural schools fall below the 105 pupils in a primary school and 500 pupils in a post-primary school (Years 8-12).

Primary Schools

Sustainable Schools Policy Minimum Threshold	Below the minimum threshold	Above the minimum threshold	Total
Rural (105 pupils)	193	248	441
Urban (140 pupils)	35	315	350
Totals	228	563	791



Section 4

The Challenges to Change

Post Primary Schools

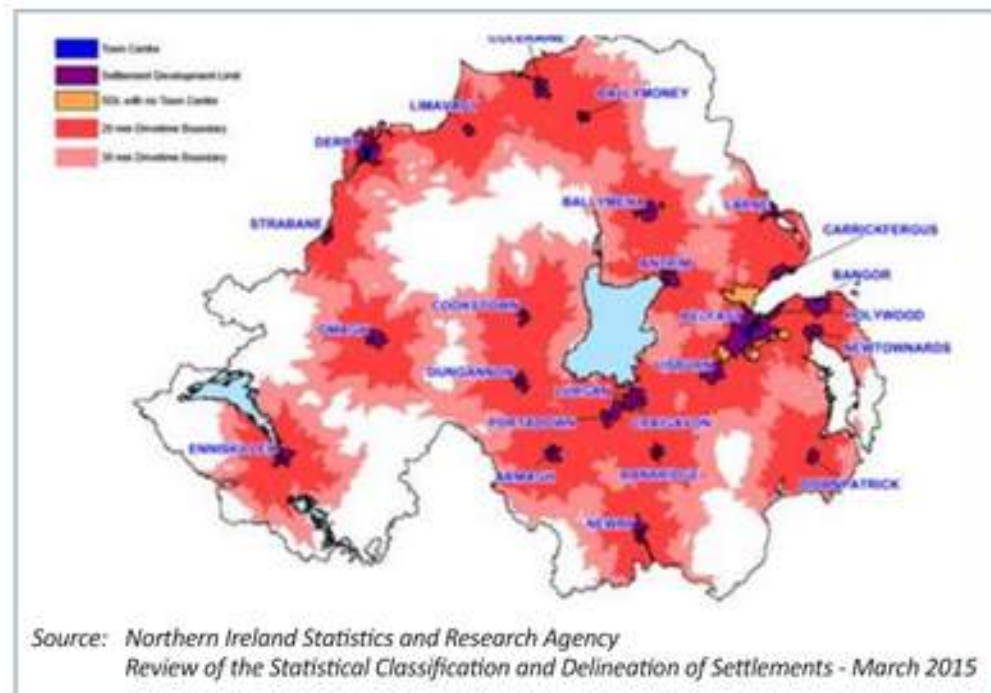
Sustainable Schools Policy Minimum Threshold	Below the minimum threshold	Above the minimum threshold	No post 16	Total
Rural Years 8 – 12 (500 pupils)	18	20		38
Urban Years 8 – 12 (500 pupils)	36	119		155
Totals	54	139		193
Rural Post 16 (100 pupils)	10	14	14	
Urban Post 16 (100 pupils)	32	103	20	

default urban/ rural population threshold of 5,000. The classification also included a consideration of service provision for each settlement. This was introduced by calculating estimated travel times to the location of a major service provider, operationalised as the town centre of a settlement containing at least 10,000 usual residents. Accordingly, areas have been classified by whether they are within a 20 or 30 minute drive-time of the centre of a settlement containing at least 10,000 usual residents.

<https://www.nisra.gov.uk/sites/nisra.gov.uk/files/publications/review-of-the-statistical-classification-and-delineation-of-settlements-march-2015.pdf>

Map 1 has been sourced from NISRA and shows the relevant classification across Northern Ireland.

Comparison of the 20 and 30 minute drive-time boundary



While aiming to support sustainable rural provision, there are still too many small/unsustainable schools. There may be some local circumstances, where provision will be necessary but the determination of this will be subject to consultation, assessment and rationale for provision.

The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) classification which is within the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 proposed a

Source: Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency
Review of the Statistical Classification and Delineation of Settlements - March 2015

4.2 Legislative Barriers to Innovative Solutions

A challenge in implementing shared or innovative solutions is the limitations of current legislation or where no legislation exists. For example, in considering a Federation (where two or more schools agree to share a single Board of Governors managing each individual school), revised legislation required to allow for cross sectoral federations in primary schools. For post-primary schools no legislation exists.

For Jointly Managed Schools (grant-aided school, providing cross sector education with a Christian ethos) revised guidance will be required following the Churches coming to an agreement on legislative and administrative processes.

Therefore, legislation and updated guidance is required to allow for same sector and cross sector innovative solutions.

4.3 Alignment of Strategic Capital Development and Area Planning

The Department of Education's strategy for capital investment in the coming years will continue to be focused on supporting the development and delivery of a network of viable and sustainable schools, in the context of the Sustainable Schools Policy. In some instances, the accommodation within the current schools' estate limits Area Planning solutions. The challenge is that there needs to be greater alignment between the Capital Programme and the outworking of the Area Planning and Development Proposal process to ensure that Area Planning informs strategic infrastructure planning and investment.

To build on the opportunities and address the challenges, the managing authorities will continue to work with the Department of Education to seek early commitment to capital investment.

Section 5

Achieving the Vision – Planning for Sustainable Provision

5.1 Key Themes: Actions

The four key themes and associated actions have been developed to drive forward the changes required in order to realise the vision and meet the objectives of Area Planning.

Within the life span of this Area Plan, the actions associated with the key themes are outlined below.

Increase parity of access for all to appropriate pathways

Increase the number of pupils taught in educationally and financially sustainable schools

Decrease the number of pupils taught in composite classes of more than two year groups in primary schools

Increase the number of pupils who can access the Entitlement Framework at Key Stage 4 and Post 16 either in their own school or through collaboration/ Area Learning Community in post-primary schools

Endeavour in all Area Planning proposals that reasonable travelling time for pupils is in accordance with the Sustainable Schools Policy

Ensure provision is appropriate to meet the needs of the area

Promote cooperation, collaboration and sharing across all Sectors

Increase the number of pupils in educationally and financially sustainable schools as a result of successful collaboration/sharing in an area

Inform policy and legislative changes required to implement innovative and creative solutions

Identify realistic, sustainable, innovative and creative solutions through cross sectoral engagement with schools

Encourage and facilitate the development of sustainable Irish Medium and Integrated Education

Work within the Area Planning governance structures to advance Area Planning

Increase awareness of Area Planning through:

- Engaging with parents and children and young people's representative group/forum
- Working collaboratively with the youth sector including EA's Youth Service to create engagement programmes for Area Planning activity
- Increasing the number of governors participating in Area Planning governor training
- Encouraging schools to self-evaluate against the Sustainable Schools Policy

Maximise resources and sustainability

Increase the number of pupils taught in educationally and financially sustainable schools

Increase the number of pupils who can access a Entitlement Framework at Key Stage 4 and Post 16 either in their own school or through an Area Learning Community

Increase sustainable Post 16 provision

Ensure provision is appropriate to meet the needs of the area

Reduce the number of schools in the lower range of school average costs (tables 1 and 2 below) showing the highest average cost per pupil

Publish quarterly reports on Area Planning activity against Operational Plans

Inform strategic infrastructure planning and investment

Identify, for an Area Planning activity, the capital requirement essential to the activity's implementation

Engage with the Department of Education to strengthen links between capital investment and Development Proposal implementation

Seek approval to commence the business case for major capital investment in conjunction with Development Proposal approval

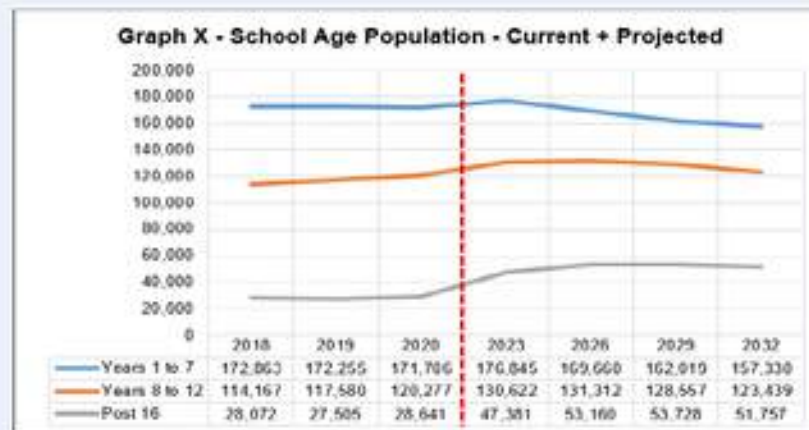
Prioritise approved Development Proposals for capital investment



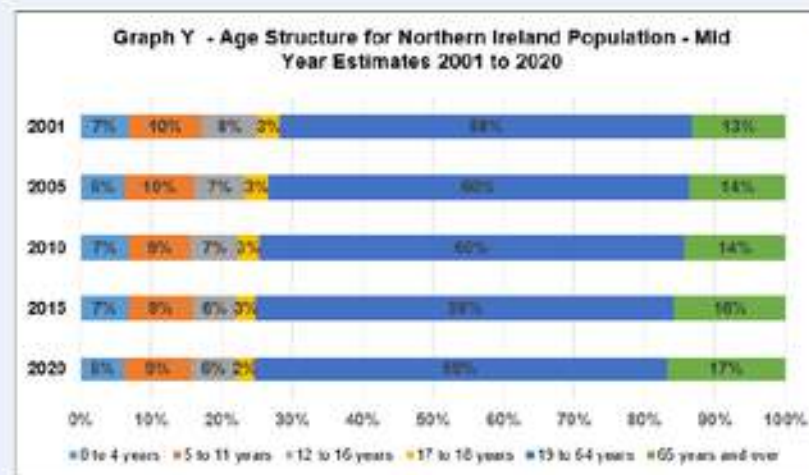
Section 6

Northern Ireland Summary Data

Graph X, details the past, current and projected school age pupils in attendance at schools in Northern Ireland

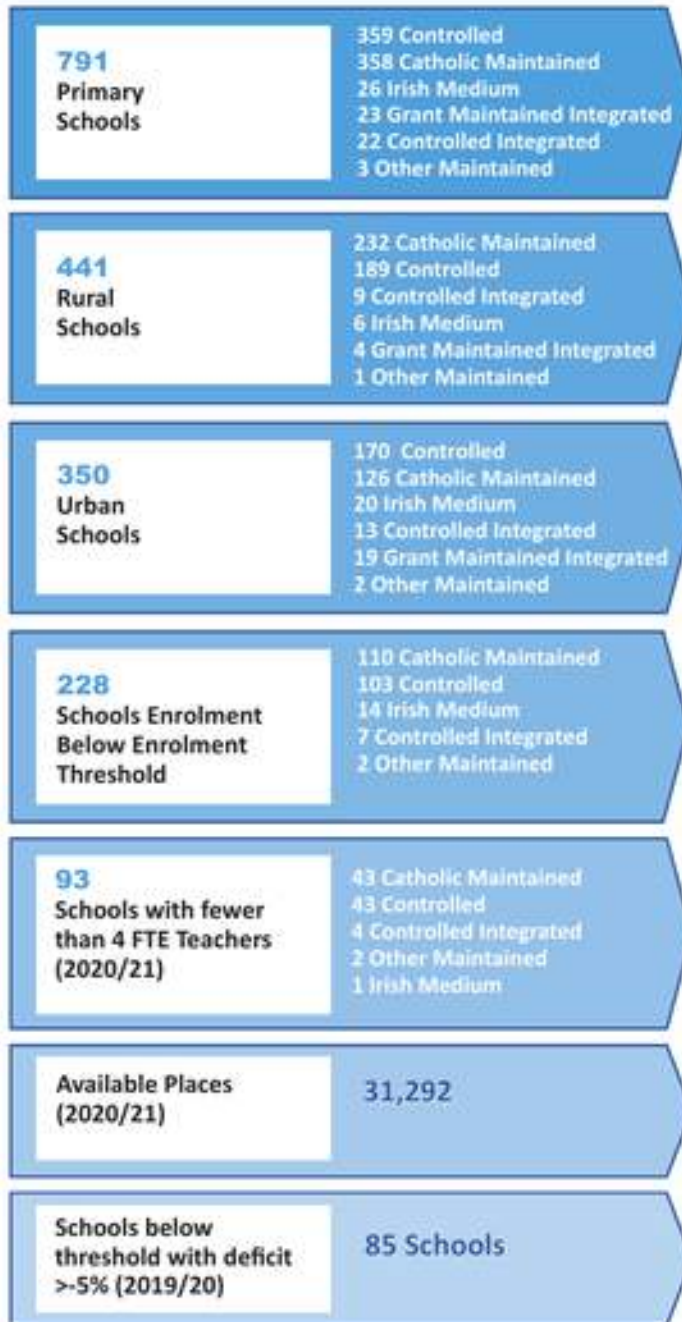


Graph Y, details the changing age structure of the population-projected data

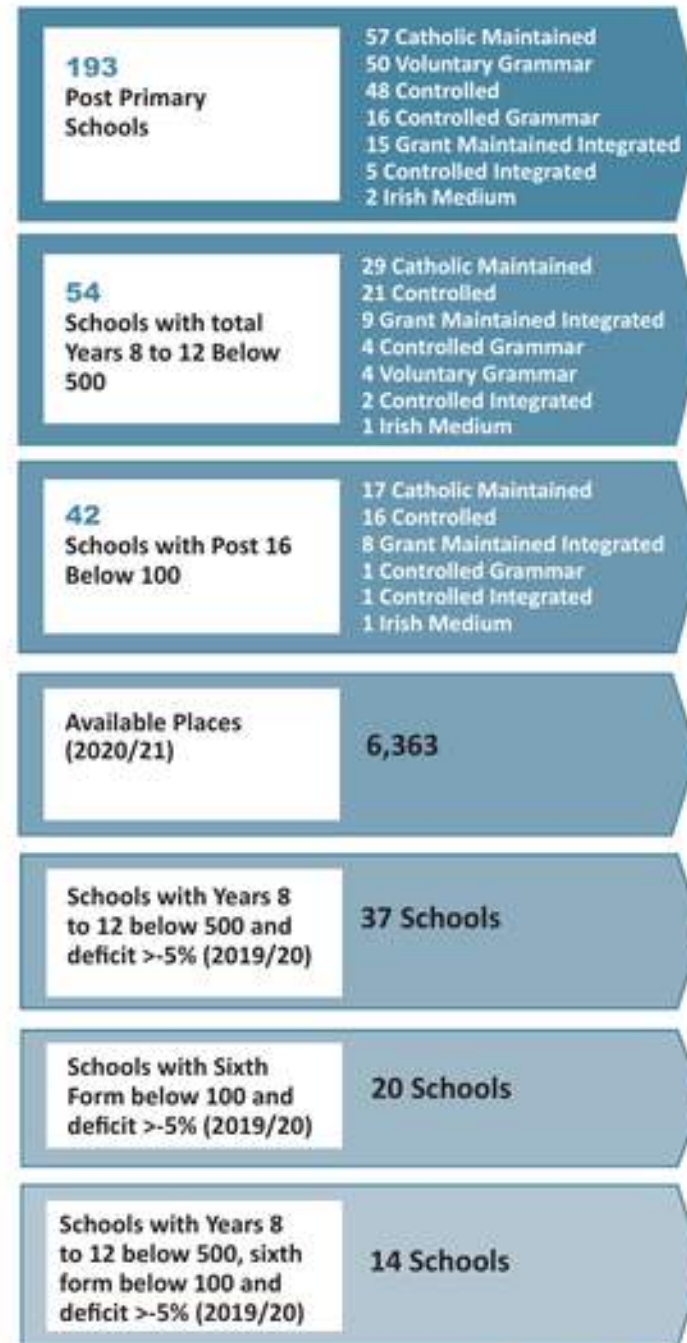


Source: NISRA

Primary Schools



Post-Primary Schools



Tables 1 and 2 provide average expenditure and teaching costs per pupil as well as the average pupil teacher ratio against the pupil number ranges.

Table 1: Primary Averages - Northern Ireland Summary Data

Pupil Number Range	Number of Schools	Total Pupils	Average Number of Pupils	Expenditure Per Pupil (£)	Average Teaching Costs Per Pupil (£)	Average Pupil Teacher Ratio Per School
0-60	75	2,805	37	5,605	4,094	13.50
61-105	167	13,812	83	4,022	3,036	19.21
106-210	251	40,153	160	3,533	2,681	21.83
211-300	88	21,569	245	3,454	2,584	23.30
301-420	119	43,938	369	3,206	2,435	24.02
421-500	24	10,813	451	3,237	2,449	23.91
501-630	39	22,036	565	3,104	2,391	24.10
631+	16	11,725	733	3,176	2,459	23.78
Total	779	166,851	214	3,411	2,588	21.18

Table 2: Post Primary Averages - Northern Ireland Summary Data

Pupil Number Range	Number of Schools	Total Pupils Year 8-12 (inc Special Units)	Total Pupils Year 13-15	Total Pupils Year 8-15	Average Number of Pupils	Expenditure Per Pupil (£)	Average Teaching Costs Per Pupil (£)	Average Pupil Teacher Ratio Per School
0-250	19	3,042	401	3,443	181	6,233	4,586	12.32
251-500	7	8,124	1,921	10,045	1,435	4,715	3,667	16.27
501-700	44	16,926	2,556	19,482	443	5,048	3,813	15.38
701-900	39	23,134	4,353	27,487	705	4,793	3,641	16.22
901-1000	18	13,928	3,142	17,070	948	4,725	3,664	15.82
1000+	5	4,761	1,349	6,110	1,222	4,528	3,661	15.49
Total	132	69,915	13,722	83,637	634	4,869	3,729	15.30

The Northern Ireland wide issues to be taken forward within the four Key Themes will be to:

Primary Schools

- Develop solutions for small schools with composite classes with three year groups or more (Ministerial Priority)
- Develop solutions for schools with sustainability issues
- Reduce or increase the number of available places in schools according to population trends
- Encourage and facilitate the development of sustainable provision in the Integrated Sector
- Encourage and facilitate the development of sustainable provision in the Irish Medium Sector
- Encourage, facilitate and promote the development of sustainable provision in Shared Education

Post-primary Schools

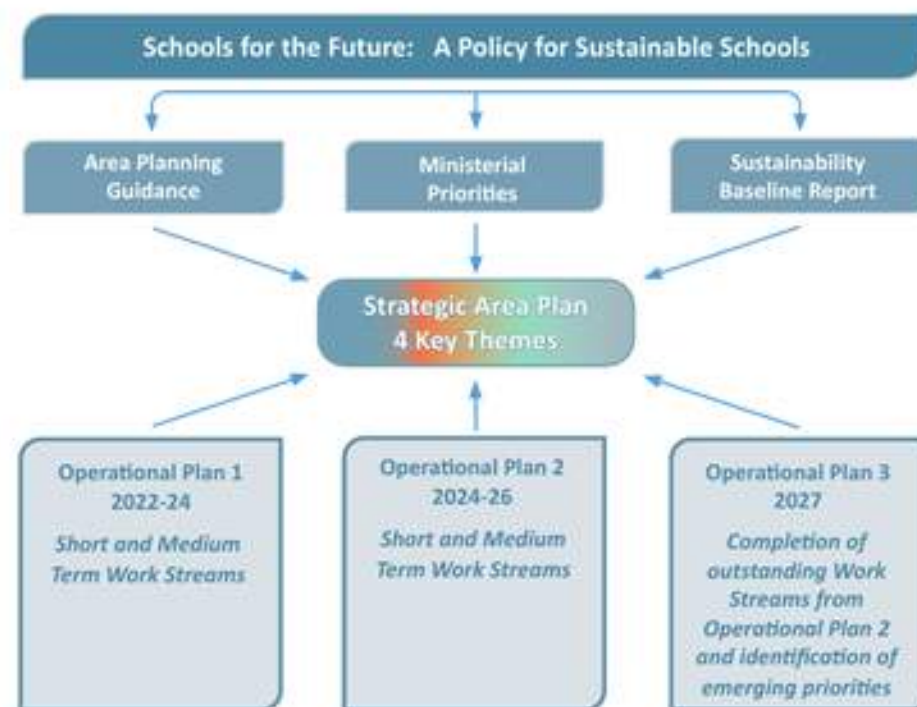
- Develop solutions for schools that are failing to provide a broad and balanced curriculum for pupils in Years 8-12. (Ministerial Priority)
- Develop solutions for schools with sixth forms of fewer than 100 that cannot offer a full range of courses (Ministerial Priority)
- Develop solutions for schools with sustainability issues
- Reduce or increase the number of available places in schools according to population trends
- Encourage and facilitate the development of sustainable provision in the Integrated Sector
- Encourage and facilitate the development of sustainable provision in the Irish Medium Sector
- Encourage, facilitate and promote the development of sustainable provision in Shared Education

Local Government District summary data is available in the associated document link <https://www.eani.org.uk/publications/consultations/public-consultation-on-the-draft-strategic-area-plan-2022-27>.

To achieve the vision of the Area Plan 2022-27, Operational Plans will translate the vision into the practical workings of Area Planning and enact changes to the current school provision.

The Operational Plans will focus on the:

- Ministerial Priorities
- Sustainable Schools Policy
- Delivery of the Vision of the Strategic Area Plan 2022-27



The Operational Plans will be developed by the Area Planning Local Groups, representative of statutory planning authorities, sectoral support bodies and stakeholders, including representatives from Further Education on behalf of the Department of the Economy.

Section 7

Operational Plans



Each Area Planning Local Group will consider the strategic issues for their respective areas, shown above across three localities: East, North and South-West, taking cognisance of the Strategic Area Plan's Vision, Aim and Key Themes. Following analysis and discussion, the Operational Plan will be agreed by each Area Planning Local Group.

The monitoring of the Operational Plans will be the responsibility of the Area Planning Working Group which is representative of statutory planning authorities, sector support bodies and FE sector.

7.1 Operational Plans 1, 2 and 3

Over the lifespan of the Strategic Area Plan 2022-27, three Operational Plans will be published, Operational Plan 1 (2022-24), Operation Plan 2 (2024-26) with the final Operational Plan 3 (2027), to allow for completion of Operational Plan 2 and identification of emerging priorities.

Area planning is an ongoing process and at any time there will be work streams at differing stages of development. It is envisaged that the overall Area Plan and supporting operational plans will reflect the differing aspects of the process which include strategic direction, exploration of options and making firm proposals through the statutory Development Proposal process. With this in mind and in keeping with the Sustainable Schools Policy and Ministerial priorities, each plan will identify short and medium term work streams which will reflect the Area Planning work to be progressed:

Short term work streams will be undertaken and completed within the period of an Operational Plan and will mainly involve an individual or small number of schools. **Medium term** work streams will require collaborative and innovative work to provide for the education provision for a geographical/school cluster area and will require a longer timeframe and may span a number of Operational Plans.

The Operational Plans will be arranged by Local Government District and by primary and post-primary (pre-school provision will be included where it will have a significant change to a primary school).

The specific issues within a Local Government District will be identified with work streams to address its particular circumstances and its surrounding districts, and while boundaries exist for Local Government Districts, pupils transcend these boundaries.

7.2 Work Streams

Work streams, short and medium term, identified within the operational plans will be taken forward through discussion, engagement and consultation with schools and educational partners.

However, in an evolving education environment, circumstances may arise which will necessitate the Education Authority and/or education partners having to progress actions/proposals in advance of publication of the plans. Such an instance/s would be exceptional and would require discussion and consensus from the Area Planning Local Group and Working Group.

Collaborative solutions will mainly not require the outcome for the work stream to progress to a Development Proposal. In some cases, no change will be considered appropriate at that time due to changing circumstances. However, where rationalisation/change to status (amalgamation, discontinuance, transformation) has been identified as the outcome for the work stream, a Development Proposal is required.

All Development Proposals are taken forward in accordance with Article 14 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 and are subject to a consultation process.

Where an option has been identified which does not require a Development Proposal, the managing authority/trustees/board of governors will communicate the outcome to governors, staff and parents.

In achieving the Vision, Area Planning (managing authorities and sectoral support bodies) cannot do this in isolation. There is a responsibility on each school community, governors, principals, staff and parents/pupils and key stakeholders to influence and engage in the Area Planning process.

Section 8

192

How will we know we have been successful?

Area planning activity will be monitored and evaluated through the operational plans, and measurements below:

Increase parity of access for all to appropriate pathways

Number of pupils in sustainable schools

Number of pupils in schools with enrolments below SSP thresholds

Number of primary schools with fewer than four Full-Time Equivalent Teachers

Promote cooperation, collaboration and sharing across all Sectors

Number of pupils involved in each collaborative and cross sectoral action

Number of pupils in more sustainable schools as a result of successful collaboration/sharing in an area

Number of cross sectoral options developed

Number of engagement programmes developed with stakeholders

Quarterly reports on Area Planning activity

Maximise resources and sustainability

Number of pupils in sustainable Post 16

Available places to match demographic trends

Comparison from base year – 2019/20 – LMS average costs

Inform strategic infrastructure planning

Number of pupils/schools benefitted from capital investment

Level of capital investment linked directly to Area Planning activity

The Education Authority, working in partnership with the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools and collaborating with sectoral support bodies will report to the Department of Education on the achievements against the Key Themes on the completion of each Operational Plan. In addition, an annual engagement programme will be undertaken with schools and other stakeholders to get feedback on what is working well and what changes are required to continually improve the Area Planning process.

The Department of Education, managing authorities and sectoral support bodies acknowledge that change is difficult and all education partners are available to provide support to schools through the change process with 'implementation' being identified as a constant in all the stages of the Area Planning Process as detailed in the Area Planning Guidance 2022-27.

9.1 Implementation Plans

In taking forward change, an implementation plan, tailored to the specific needs of the change, will be prepared. In ensuring an implementation plan and support is available to schools, the proposer will work with the school as the main link providing support, guidance and direction throughout the process and will also engage with and support staff, parents/guardians and pupils through the implementation plan.

It is only by **all** working together that the aim of Area Planning can be achieved:

To ensure that all primary and post-primary pupils have access to a broad and balanced curriculum that meets their educational needs in a school that is educationally and financially viable and sustainable.

Section 9

Supporting Schools Through Change

The consultation on the draft Strategic Area Plan 2022-27 will be undertaken by the Education Authority on behalf and in conjunction with the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools, Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education, Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta, Controlled Schools' Support Council, Transferor Representatives' Council, Governing Bodies Association and Catholic Schools' Trustee Service.

10.1 Education Authority Consultation

The Education Authority is committed to consulting with key stakeholders and the local community on the draft Strategic Area Plan 2022-27 and engaging local people in the planning and delivery of Area Planning. This Consultation Strategy outlines the methodology that will be adopted.

Consultation also means effectively consulting with those who are representative of the local community and those who use the services provided by the Education Authority. This includes hard-to-reach groups in line with the Education Authority Equality Scheme. The Education Authority will ensure that specific efforts will be made so that the consultation reaches groups in the format that best meets their needs, for example, the consultation documentation will be made available upon request, in other languages for those not fluent in English, and/or in braille or larger print.

Section 10

Consultation

The Education Authority will observe the principles of the Consultation Charter (Consultation Institute), which are:

1. **Integrity** - Honest intention, willing to listen and be prepared to be influenced.
2. **Visibility** - Stakeholders should be aware of the consultation exercise.
3. **Accessibility** - Methods that meet the needs of the intended audience.
4. **Confidentiality** - Ensure all stakeholders are aware as to the level of information that will be made public.
5. **Disclosure** - Disclosure of information that can influence the exercise and disclosure on behalf of consultees, for example, if the consultee represents an organisation.
6. **Fair Interpretation** - Objective collation and assessment of information and viewpoints.
7. **Publication** - Publication of both the output and the outcomes of the exercise.

By observing these principles, the Education Authority is demonstrating its commitment to best practice and to assisting stakeholders to participate fully in the process.

10.2 How to Respond – the draft Strategic Area Plan 2022-27

The Education Authority is seeking your views on the draft Strategic Area Plan 2022-27 as this draft will inform the final Strategic Area Plan 2022-27 to achieve the vision: *'All children will have access to a high quality educational experience, through a broad and balanced curriculum that meets their needs, in educationally and financially viable schools, within a diverse system of education.'*

During the consultation period the Education Authority will actively seek to engage with a wide range of stakeholders.

The draft Strategic Area Plan 2022-27, a narrated powerpoint, easy read and associated video are available on the Education Authority's website <https://www.eani.org.uk/publications/consultations/public-consultation-on-the-draft-strategic-area-plan-2022-27>.

The Education Authority would encourage you to respond using the online version of the Consultation Questionnaire on the draft Strategic Area Plan 2022-27 via the link above.

Should you be unable to respond online, the Consultation Questionnaire is available upon request using the email address - DraftSAP2@eani.org.uk.

Copies in other formats, including Braille, large print, etc may be made available on request. Please contact us using the link below if you need copies in an alternative format or a language other than English, and Education Authority officers will do their best to assist you: DraftSAP2@eani.org.uk.

Alternatively you can send written responses to: DraftSAP2@eani.org.uk

Or by post to:
Education Authority
Education Directorate, Area Planning
17 Lough Road
Antrim BT41 4DH

Responses must be received by the Education Authority by Tuesday 12 April 2022 at 5.00 pm.

Should you have any queries about the consultation, or requests for alternative formats, please contact the e-mail or postal details above.

10.3 Next Steps

The Education Authority will consider all responses received and will provide a 'Summary of Consultation' report regarding the responses received and how the consultation process influenced development of the final version of the draft Strategic Area Plan 2022-27.

The draft Strategic Area Plan 2022-27 will be finalised following the consultation process and will be considered by the Area Planning Working Group and Area Planning Steering Group for approval by the Education Authority's Strategic Planning and Policy Committee. Following approval the final Strategic Area Plan 2022-27 will be forwarded to the Department of Education for endorsement.

The 'Summary of Consultation' report will be made available on the Education Authority's website when approved.

10.4 Equality Consideration

Under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 all public bodies are obliged to consider the implications of any decisions on nine different groupings before decisions are implemented. The two duties within this Equality legislation include promoting equality of opportunity and promoting good relations between all communities. The equality of opportunity duty requires that the Education Authority shall, in carrying out all its functions, powers and duties, have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity.

1. Between persons of different religious belief.
2. Between persons of different political opinion.
3. Between persons of different racial groups.
4. Between persons of different age.
5. Between persons of different marital status.
6. Between persons of different sexual orientation.
7. Between men and women generally.
8. Between persons with a disability and persons without.
9. Between persons with dependants and persons without.

The Good Relations Duty requires that the Education Authority shall, without prejudice to their equality obligations, have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations:

1. Between persons of different religious belief.
2. Between persons of different political opinion.
3. Between persons of different racial groups.

The draft Strategic Area Plan 2022-27 has been considered in the context of Section 75(1) and Section 75(2) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and decision was taken not to conduct an equality impact assessment as there are no negative impacts on any of the equality of opportunities and/or good relations categories. The Education Authority would welcome any comments or views with regard to the screening. The link to this screening is available on the Education Authority's website.

10.5 Freedom of Information

The Education Authority will publish a summary of responses following completion of the consultation process. The closing date for responses to this consultation will be Tuesday 12 April 2022 at 5.00 pm.

Unless individual respondents specifically indicate that they wish their response to be treated in confidence, the nature of their response may be included in any published summary of responses.

Respondents should also be aware that the Authority's obligations under the Freedom of Information Act may require that any responses not subject to specific exemptions under the Act, be disclosed to other parties on request.

ANNEX A: Legislative and Policy Landscape

1. Legislative Landscape

The Area Plan is being taken forward within a suite of Government and Department of Education Policies and Guidance.

Existing legislation provides the landscape in which Area Planning activity operates, the extracts of the relevant legislation is outlined in the Area Planning Guidance 2022-27 – Annex A.

Education Authority

The Education Authority has overall operational responsibility for planning of provision within the policy, strategic framework and timeframe set by the Department. In particular it has:

- statutory duties to ensure (inter alia);
 - that efficient primary and secondary education provision is available to meet the needs of all pupils; and
 - that schools sufficient in number, character and equipment are available in its areas;
- responsibility for the co-ordination of the production and publication of:
 - the Area Plan in line with the agreed Area Planning cycle;
 - Annual Area Profiles; and
 - responsibility (insofar as its powers as the managing authority extends) for the implementation of Operational Plans.

While the Education Authority is the chief planning authority, there is a need for all sectors to have the opportunity to present evidence based proposals that reflect the interests of their sectors in the Area Planning process.

In preparing this Area Plan, the Education Authority collaborated with the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools as the planning authority for Catholic maintained schools, and engaged with sectoral support bodies representative of the Integrated (Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education), Irish

Medium (Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta) and controlled sector (Controlled Schools' Support Council). In addition the Education Authority engaged with Voluntary Grammar Schools and their Trustees, through the Governing Bodies Association and Catholic Schools' Trustee Service and other maintained schools (ie church schools) through the Transferors' Representative Council, all of whom are represented on each of the Area Planning Group structures. Account should also be taken of the contribution that FE Colleges make to the delivery of the 14-19 Curriculum offer. Within this Area Plan the term 'Area Planning' refers to the collective work of all Area Planning partners.

Council for Catholic Maintained Schools

The Council for Catholic Maintained Schools has a statutory duty to promote and co-ordinate, in consultation with the Trustees, the planning of the effective provision of Catholic maintained schools.

2 Statutory Duty

The Department has a duty to ensure that its Arm's Length Bodies effectively deliver the full suite of education policies. The managing authorities and sectoral bodies in their statutory duty to plan education provision are expected to assist the Department, through their planning activities, to exercise these duties.

Integrated Education

Under Article 64 of the Education Reform (NI) Order 1989 there is a duty to encourage and facilitate the development of Integrated Education.

Area Planning will seek to identify, explore and bring forward proposals to encourage and facilitate Integrated education to provide sustainable education for an area. The Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education will provide guidance and direction on innovative sustainable integrated provision, working with all education partners in achieving Area Planning solutions.

Irish Medium Education

Under Article 89 of the Education (NI) Order 1998 there is a duty to encourage and facilitate the development of Irish Medium Education.

Area Planning will seek to identify, explore and bring forward proposals to encourage and facilitate Irish Medium Education to provide sustainable education for an area. Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta will provide guidance and direction on innovative sustainable Irish Medium provision, working with all education partners in achieving Area Planning solutions.

Shared Education Act

Under the Shared Education Act (NI) 2016 there is a duty to encourage, facilitate and promote shared education. All education partners will encourage, facilitate and promote shared education to seek to bring forward Area Planning solutions which are built upon the foundation of Shared Education.

Rural Needs Act

The Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 places a duty to have due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising policies, strategies and plans, and when designing and delivering public services. Area Planning activity will give due regard to the requirements of the Act.

Children's Services Co-operation Act (Northern Ireland) 2015

In addition to the above, Area Planning reaffirms its commitment to deliver on its obligations under the Children's Services Co-operation Act (Northern Ireland) 2015, namely, that the ultimate goal in the delivery of key children's services such as education, should be to improve the wellbeing of children and young people in a manner which ensures the realisation of their rights as required by the Act.

3 Policy

In addition to the Sustainable Schools Policy, Ministerial priorities and Area Planning objectives, the Department of Education's Area Planning Guidance (page 2) stipulates that Area Planning will be taken forward in the context of the:

- The new draft Programme for Government
- New Decade, New Approach
- Current education policies

The Department of Education Area Planning Guidance (August 2021)

The Department of Education has developed Area Planning Guidance for the five year Area Planning period – 1 September 2022 to 31 August 2027. The guidance document provides information on:

- The aim and objectives of Area Planning
- Roles and responsibilities of DE, EA, CCMS and the sectoral support bodies
- Governance and support structures
- The Area Planning process
- The legislative context for Area Planning
- The Area Planning timetable

Department of Education - Sustainability Baseline Report (SBR) August 2021

The Sustainability Baseline Report (SBR), has been developed by the Department of Education to inform and support Area Planning priorities for the five-year period 1 September 2022 to 31 August 2027. It sets the context within which the Area Plan will be delivered and aims to encourage schools to self-assess their sustainability with a view to planning ahead for address future challenges.

The SBR sets out the rationale and purpose of Area Planning and presents a detailed baseline analysis of Area Planning activity since 2010/11. This analysis is presented primarily at Northern Ireland and Local Government

District (LGD) levels, but also examines aspects of the planning process by education sector.

The key themes emerging from the Sustainability Baseline Report have informed the Ministerial priorities over the 2022-2027 planning period.

Analysis presented in the report focuses substantially on the quantifiable criteria of “stable enrolment trends” and “sound financial position”. Options for accessing system wide reliable and up-to-date data covering the other four SSP criteria are being investigated under a Data Development Agenda (DDA).

This analysis is presented in Section 5 of the Area Plan and will be used to develop the operational plans that will be brought forward to give effect to the Ministerial priorities. The SBR can be found on DE’s website at the following link:

<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/sustainability-baseline-report>.

Developing Schools

Area Planning is the process of strategic planning of primary and post-primary education provision to support the implementation of the Sustainable Schools Policy. While this applies to all primary and post-primary schools, there are some exceptions. A developing school is defined by DE as a new school established as a result of an identified need for additional provision, which is not a result of two or more schools amalgamating. It is acknowledged that a new school needs a reasonable timeframe to develop and become established. DE anticipates that new schools should be established, viable and sustainable within ten years of opening. The Sustainable Schools Policy is therefore not applied to a developing school within this timeframe.

In Northern Ireland, over the past ten years, six developing schools have been established. These have all been within the Irish Medium Sector which is acknowledged as a growing sector.

No developing schools have been established since 2015.

ANNEX B: Area Planning Collaborative Models

Collaborative Options for Area Planning

Positive working has been ongoing over the past number of years to progress collaborative working and to identify a suite of collaborative options to support sustainability.

Partnership:

Partnership working is well embedded in schools through Shared Education and Area Planning working closely through Shared Education in the anticipation that some partnership working will result in collaborative approaches to ensure and improve sustainability in the future.

Collaboration:

In working in collaboration, mainly and particularly in Post 16, sustainability can be achieved through jointly working and in putting the needs of pupils to the fore. Schools looking outwardly rather than inwardly are continually seeking to ensure access to a broad and balanced curriculum. For Post 16, the work of the Area Learning Community is central to achieving the Entitlement Framework for schools below the Sustainable Schools threshold of 100 pupils in Post 16.

Federation:

A federation is where two or more schools agree to share a principal/ senior management/staff with a single Board of Governors managing each individual school. Schools in a federation continue to be individual schools and keep their existing category and character and, in particular, do not gain, lose or change their religious character, foundation or Trust status through membership of a federation.

Within the Northern Ireland context legislation only exists for primary schools and limited to same sector. Currently no federations operate within Northern Ireland. Over the past year, the Education Authority has brought forward a research paper which is being expanded through the Area Planning Working Group to progress to guidance on how a federation could operate. Research in England and Wales has shown that federations have shown that:

- Achievements and behaviour had improved in all federations visited especially where a weaker school had federated with a stronger one;
- Aided staff retention and development, providing more opportunities for staff to gain experiences in different types of schools with increased staff progression opportunities;
- In a weak/strong federation, governance improved across the federation as governors are able to share best practice and experience; and
- Federating also had a positive effect on pupils' outcomes.

Federations will provide a positive step forward to providing sustainable area solutions and create strong primary school clusters.

Transformation:

As part of its statutory duty to encourage and facilitate integrated education, the Department of Education produced the operational guidance, 'Integration Works: transforming your school', to support schools that wish to consider Transformation to Integrated Status. The guidance outlines what is meant by integrated education and transformation, identifies key issues which are likely to arise and how they might be addressed, outlines the legal and administrative processes and requirements and provide details of the various sources of advice and assistance available.

Since 2017, four schools have transformed to controlled integrated status. This is welcomed by Area Planning where it brings forward a sustainable school option which embraces the ethos of integration. Transformation should not be seen as the last option to ensure sustainability where neither sustainability nor religious balance can be clearly shown.

Jointly Managed:

A jointly managed school, is defined in the Department of Education Circular 2015/15 as: 'A jointly managed church school is a grant-aided school, providing shared education with a Christian ethos, with Trustee representation agreed by the Transferor churches and the Catholic Church and managed by a Board of Governors with balanced representation from both the main communities here.'

Within Northern Ireland there are currently no jointly managed schools.

The legislative and administrative process to provide for a Jointly Managed Church School in Northern Ireland is currently being progressed by the Transferor Representatives' Council, and Catholic Schools' Trustee Service with the expectation that legal framework would be agreed by 2022/23. This is positive and in advance of the framework, this will provide an opportunity for all to consider this option as a potential solution as a sustainable Area Planning solution.

Amalgamation:

A shared option already well established within Area Planning is amalgamation and details in the Department of Education Circular 2018/15 - Guidance on Implementation of Approved Development Proposals for School Amalgamations.

Discontinuance:

Where all Area Planning collaborative models have been explored and future sustainability cannot be achieved, discontinuance is the last option considered. While this will be a loss to the individual school and local area, it should be seen as positive as an area solution as it will strengthen the sustainability of other local schools.

Ards and North Down Borough Council's response to Education Authority Strategic Area Plan 2022-27 Consultation

Having read the draft Strategic Area Plan 2022-27 'Planning for Sustainable Provision' (draft Plan)

1. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the Vision of the draft Plan reflects the aim of area planning to ensure that all primary and post primary pupils have access to a broad and balanced curriculum that meets their educational needs in a school that is educationally and financially viable and sustainable?

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Please provide additional comments

We strongly advocate that all children should be equipped with the ability to fulfil their lifelong potential. We believe that this more holistic view of need is missing from the proposed aim of the Strategy. Access to education is an important element of fulfilling potential and we think this should be highlighted. While the vision encompasses 'all children', we advocate that those decisions taken in respect of this strategy need to be able to consider the specific needs of children as individuals. While we agree that schools need to be educationally and financially viable and sustainable, we also recognise that the needs of the child are just as important. Their needs should also factor in the decision about whether a school is sustainable. We also acknowledge that while it may be perceived as an unpopular decision, a more diverse curriculum and access to better facilities at the expense of a local facility may be what is best for the child.

2. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the Mission of the draft Plan reflects the aim of area planning to ensure that all primary and post primary pupils have access to a broad and balanced curriculum that meets their educational needs in a school that is educationally and financially viable and sustainable? *

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Please provide additional comments

We still tend to think of schools as physical buildings within set geographical locations. The second bullet point states that Area Planning will improve the quality of education provision by exploring a realistic, innovative, shared and collaborative solution. We are supportive of this and feel that some of the positive experience of distance and online learning (as experienced during Covid) could be further explored

to see how this approach could increase access to the curriculum by children living in more rural locations and enrolled in smaller schools.

3. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the four Key Themes meet the objectives of Area Planning for Primary and Post Primary Schools as outlined in Section 2 of the draft Plan? *

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Please provide additional comments

How public sector organisations operate, interact and collaborate with each other needs to change to promote the sustainability of the entire public estate. We assume that the word 'sectors' is used in its widest context and that this does not solely refer to the various education sectors but could also include other public sector organisations. We believe a community planning approach to collaboration could be an important aspect of increasing educational sustainability. There are already examples of shared facilities and the positive impact this can have on local communities.

4. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the Drivers for Change:

- Collaborative Working
- Supporting Integrated and Irish Medium Education
- Supporting Schools and Communities
- Engaging with Governors, Staff, Parents and Pupils
- Clearly Defined Aim, Policy and Statutory Process
- Established Partnership Working
- Community Planning
- Education Authority's School Improvement Strategy
- School Development and Self-Evaluation

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Please provide additional comments

Collaboration and looking outside the confines of the traditional 'education sector' is important if we aim to meet the needs of each child. While it is understandable that this Strategy Document focuses on the school setting in terms of meeting the educational needs of the child, it is imperative that the other factors influencing a child's ability to fulfil their potential are also recognised. Therefore, we strongly support the first, six and seventh drives for change 'collaborative working', 'established partnership working' and 'community planning'. Many other factors

impact upon a child's learning ability. Examples of these include ACEs, external community influence and poverty. While attempts are being made to take a holistic approach to these issues, they are still largely siloed and additional work is needed to address the false barriers we create with our models for allocation of funding.

5. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the Challenges to Change:

- Rural Provision
- Legislative Barriers to Innovative Solutions
- Alignment of Strategic Capital Development and Area Planning

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Please provide additional comments

While we are largely supportive of this Strategy, we can't see any reference to the external influences that affect a child's ability to learn and that may challenge the effectiveness of the learning pathway. While the child may have access to a high-quality educational environment, this alone may not meet their needs to fulfil their potential.

We need to use the drivers for change within this Strategy document to consider how every government body that does have responsibility for formal education considers their responsibility. The challenge of silo working, and lack of an adopted Programme for Government, is not ideal.

Access to schools within an appropriate travel time is important. We are concerned about the disparity in ability to learn for children with short travel times to schools compared to those with longer ones. While we accept that it is often a family's choice to live in a rural setting, and all services cannot be made available on their doorstep, reducing existing services is perceived as a problem. The need to reduce school facilities in underserved rural areas needs to be focused on the educational access of the child rather than the unsustainable cost of the build.

6. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the Key Themes Actions will 'Increase parity of access for all to appropriate pathways'?

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Please provide additional comments

Really important that the individual child is considered rather than children as a statistic. All children should have access to the pathway that is appropriate to them.

7. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the *Key Themes Actions* will 'Promote cooperation, collaboration and sharing across all Sectors'? *

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Please provide additional comments

While the Covid pandemic has had a detrimental impact on the education of children at key transition points, it also gave us an opportunity to test alternative education methods. We need to use this experience to consider the impact of virtual learning and sharing teaching resources between schools where access to subjects is not broad enough. We also need to increase collaboration between schools and consider the impact of moving teachers rather than pupils.

8. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the *Key Themes Actions* will 'Maximise resources and sustainability'? *

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Please provide additional comments

While we agree with this in principle, we again want to stress the need to consider the child and not base decisions purely on statistics. It is important to consider the impact of any decision on the individual children.

9. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the *Key Themes Actions* will 'Inform strategic infrastructure planning and investment'? *

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Please provide additional comments

While community planning and partnership is mentioned within the 'Drivers for Change' section, the importance of this is not followed through within the document. Community planning could be of particular importance in current and future infrastructure. We believe that no public sector organisation should consider its capital build programmes in isolation. More should be done to explore the concept of

shared buildings and outdoor facilities / spaces. In fact, it should be a duty to do so. For example, Councils have many community centres that are most frequently used in the evenings, schools have facilities that are primarily used during the day. Where change is being considered it makes sense to see how facilities can be shared or amalgamated. There is a similar argument for the provision of outdoor facilities and where school grounds / pitches could be more sustainable if they were planned and shared with another outdoor recreation providers such as Council. The framework for the design of schools should require an assessment of how these can be developed to complement those already provided or planned by other partners such as Council or delivered in partnership with others.

10. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the suggested structure of the Operational Plans as set out in Section 7 of the draft Plan? *

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Please provide additional comments

No additional comments

11. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the 'How will we know we have been successful' statements to measure success against the Key Themes? *

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Please provide additional comments

There is no reference to the ability of children to fulfil their potential by the implementation of this strategy. The measures are focused on children as numbers rather than as individuals who will benefit from improved access to a broad and balanced curriculum that meets their educational needs. This all focuses on what we do, and to a lesser extent how well we have done it. There is little consideration about whether anyone is better off as a result.

We would suggest that the impact of the Strategy on the impact of this access should also be considered. This would also align with the outcomes focus of Programme for Government and the community plans.

We would also like to see measure included to assess the number of collaborative capital projects that take place with outside partners.

12. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the draft Plan sets the strategic direction for Area Planning for Primary and Post Primary Schools for the next five years - 2022-27?

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Please provide additional comments

We are broadly supportive of this Strategy. Our Community Planning Service has attended some of the consultation events and our Strategic Community Planning Partnership received a presentation.

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

A virtual meeting of the Community and Wellbeing Committee was held via Zoom on Wednesday 9 March 2022 at 7.00 pm.

PRESENT:

In the Chair: Councillor Thompson

Aldermen: Carson
Irvine
Menagh

Councillors:	Boyle	Kendall
	Chambers	MacArthur
	Douglas	Mathison
	Edmund	Smart
	Egan	T Smith
	Johnson	McRandal

Officers: Director of Community and Wellbeing (G Bannister), Head of Environmental Health Protection and Development (M Potts), Head of Leisure Services (I O'Neill), Head of Community and Culture (J Nixey), Interim Head of Parks & Cemeteries (S Daye) and Democratic Services Officer (H Loebnau)

WELCOME AND CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS

The Chairman (Councillor Thompson) welcomed everyone to the meeting and informed them that this would be the last meeting which the current Head of Environmental Health Protection and Development would attend as Marcus Potts would be retiring over the next weeks after almost 39 years working within Councils. He thanked the officer for the wonderful job he had undertaken and thanked him for his commitment to the role and wished him a great retirement. The officer thanked the Chair for his good wishes.

NOTED.

1. APOLOGIES

The Chairman sought apologies at this stage and none were noted.

NOTED.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairman asked for any Declarations of Interest.

Alderman Menagh

Item 11 - Community Development Grants
 Item 13 - Ards and North Down Sports Forum Grants

Alderman Irvine
 Item 25 - Northern Community Leisure Trust Q3 2021-2022

Councillor Kendall
 Item 11 - Community Development Grants

Councillor Chambers
 Item 25 - Northern Community Leisure Trust Q3 2021-2022

Councillor MacArthur
 Item 11 – Community Development Grants

NOTED.

3. COMMUNITY AND CULTURE SERVICE PLAN 2022-2023 (Appendix I)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing, detailing that since 2017/18 Service Plans were produced by each Service in accordance with the Council's Performance Management policy.

Plans were intended to:

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

The Community and Culture Service Plan for 2022/23 year was attached.

The plan had been developed to align with outcomes of the Big Plan for Ards and North Down and with the PEOPLE priorities of the Corporate Plan Towards 2024.

The Service Plan highlighted where the services contributed to the Council KPIs as set out in the Corporate Plan Towards 2024 and, where that was the case, set out the objectives of the service for the 2022/23 year. It further identified the performance measures used to illustrate the level of achievement of each objective,

and the targets that the Service would try to attain along with key actions required to do so.

The Service Plan also identified key risks to the services along with analysis of those and necessary actions to mitigate/manage risks. Key risks impacting the service were mapped to the Corporate Risk Register.

The plans were based on the agreed budget for 2022/23. It should be noted that, should there be significant changes in-year (e.g., due to Council decisions, budget revisions or changes to the community planning legislation) the plans may need to be revised. The Committee would be provided with quarterly update reports on performance against the agreed plan.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approves the attached Community and Culture Service Plan.

Proposed by Alderman Irvine, seconded by Councillor Kendall that the recommendation be adopted.

Seconding the recommendation Councillor Kendall asked whether the team had given consideration to the current fuel crisis and what it would mean for the Borough and how Council services could be adapted to deal with the uncertainty.

The Head of Community and Culture said that the Community Planning Partnership had a Poverty Forum and some of its work was now looked after by the Community Steering Group. She was aware that that group was considering the subject.

Councillor MacArthur asked the Head of Community and Culture about the pilot social supermarket in relation to the significant issues around the hike in fuel and energy costs and if there were any plans to bring it forward under the current circumstances. The officer explained that as per the report later in the meeting it was still being developed but that the intention was to try to move it forward as soon as possible.

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

4. PERFORMANCE REPORT COMMUNITY AND CULTURE Q3

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 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 2021)
- Service Plan – developed annually (approved April/May 2021)

The Council's 17 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 3 2021-22 was attached.

Key points to note:

- % Spend against budget is down as some face to face services had been reduced due to the pandemic
- Consultation for PEACEPLUS had not commenced as a call for applications had been delayed
- The establishment of a one stop shop for community volunteers had been delayed as staff within the Community Development team had been administering additional grant monies from DfC
- 4 Arts Summer Schemes were not delivered due to the pandemic
- The mapping of public art would be rolled over into 2023

Key achievements:

- The NI 100 Grants Scheme was delivered
- Both the Council run and community led summer schemes were delivered albeit with reduced numbers participating the ensure compliance with risk assessed community halls
- 41 arts sessions were delivered

Emerging issues:

- Staff attendance to be monitored

Action to be taken:

- A community Ezine would be produced by the end of Q4
- All Pride in Performance Conversations would be held in Q4
- Recruitment to Youth Voice was ongoing

RECOMMENDED that the Council note the report.

Proposed by Alderman Irvine, seconded by Councillor Johnson that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor Johnson asked what had been done to recruitment young people in Ards and North Down to Youth Voice. The Head of Community and Culture explained that she was currently working with the Education Authority as a key partner to see how participation by young people could be encouraged.

Councillor Egan clarified to the meeting that Youth Voice had previously been known as the Youth Council where there had been a significant group of young people participating and she wondered if those young people were still involved since it would be a shame to lose them. The officer explained that she was not entirely sure but she was aware that Youth Voice had been promoted widely.

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

5. PEACE IV MINUTES 28TH OCTOBER 2021

(Appendix II)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Minutes of PEACE IV dated 28th October 2022.

RECOMMENDED that the minutes be noted.

Proposed by Alderman Irvine, seconded by Councillor Kendall that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor McRandal referred to the paths in Holywood and Comber and noted that those had not performed as well as expected. It was explained that an independent report on both of those paths and also the one in Portaferry had taken place. It was reported that Holywood was performing as expected and that it was the path at Portaferry that was under review. The issue in Portaferry was the gradients and bitmac was being considered.

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

6. PEACEPLUS

(Appendix III)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that the Council had received the attached Draft Partnership Guidance Document which was to be used as part of a discussion and planning process between Senior Council Officials within each of the 17 local authorities and the assigned consortium support consultant, Blu Zebra.

The document was to be used to help identify the most appropriate PEACEPLUS Partnership model for each local authority area. It should build on learning to date from PEACE IV and other iterations of PEACE as well as complement Community Planning/Local Community Development Committee processes in each area. The recommended PEACEPLUS Partnership Model was outlined in the annex of the attached Guidance Document.

It was recognised that some PEACE IV Partnerships were still operational so there may be some overlap between a PEACE IV Partnership and a PEACEPLUS Partnership. It was possible that the same people may be represented on both partnerships, however, clear demarcations between the role of each partnership should be made given the unique role that each performed.

The Special EU Programmes Body, which was responsible for the implementation of the PEACEPLUS Programme, would not be overly prescriptive in terms of partnership composition, development process or selection. The guidance paper had been produced to help ensure good practice around the establishment of an effective partnership. Representation should be balanced, at least some members should have appropriate skills (e.g., expertise and interest in peace building, good relations and reconciliation, project planning, procurement, community engagement), and community interests and needs must be represented.

The process must ensure effective communication on the establishment of the PEACEPLUS Partnership and in the development and implementation of the PEACEPLUS Action Plan led by appropriate best practice governance including, ideally, a consensus-based approach to, and transparency of decision making.

In addition, the Partnership must be an appropriate size to be effective and efficient. A Partnership Agreement would ensure equality of contribution from all participating stakeholders. Partnerships may include all or some of the following:

- Local authority elected members
- Public sector bodies;
- Government departments;
- Youth organisations;
- Community and voluntary sector organisations;
- Good Relations organisations;

- Local community organisations;
- Universities; Institutes of Technology and Colleges of Further Education;
- Tourism sector bodies;
- Environment/climate action organisations; and
- Trade Unions; and Business federations.

The PEACEPLUS Partnership must oversee the design and implementation of a co-designed process in their local authority area which would be used to inform the development of an overarching PEACEPLUS Action Plan. Following approval, each Partnership would be responsible for overseeing the implementation of their PEACEPLUS Action Plan. All partnerships should ensure their Action Plan aligned with the local Community Plan for the area.

The Blu Zebra consortium had been appointed by SEUPB to assist and help to facilitate the partnership development process.

Local Authorities must ensure;

- Representation is balanced for example within the groups of elected members, statutory sector, community voluntary sector, geographical representation, communities of interest, PEACEPLUS target groups, gender and community background
- At least some members have appropriate skills and expertise on peace building and reconciliation
- The Partnership is of an appropriate size to be effective

The following four membership pillars were recommended for inclusion in each PEACEPLUS Partnership as outlined below.

PEACEPLUS Partnership – four recommended membership pillars for inclusion



Following discussions and support from the Consortium, the report set out the recommended composition of the PEACEPLUS Partnership and the recommended approach to making the necessary appointments.

It was proposed that the composition of the Partnership was as follows:

Table 1. PEACE PLUS Partnership

<p>Elected Members – 11 selected by D'Hondt,+1</p> <p>DUP 4 UUP 2 Alliance 3 Green 1 Single Party member or Independent 1</p>	<p>Public Sector Bodies - 9</p> <p>Education Authority NI Housing Executive Police Service of Northern Ireland South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust South Eastern Regional College Education Authority Youth Service Invest NI Public Health Agency Tourism NI</p>
<p>Social Partners - Geographical Community Representatives / Civic Society - 5</p> <p>Ards Community Network County Down Rural Network North Down Community Network Business Sector Voluntary Sector</p>	<p>Social Partners - PEACE PLUS Target Groups; S75 / under-represented groups - 6</p> <p>Older People Youth Voice BME Women's Sector Climate Action Organisation Good Relations Organisation</p>

Appointment Process

Eleven (11) places allocated to Elected Members on the basis of d'Hondt plus one, to be an Independent Member or Single Member Party (to be agreed amongst the Independents and Single Member Parties). Appointments should seek to achieve, where possible, balanced representation in terms of gender, age community background and representation from each District Electoral Area across the Borough. Those appointments would be reviewed following the Council Elections in 2023 to ensure the appointments reflected the makeup of the new Council. A panel of Elected Members would recruit the Social Partners following an open, transparent and robust application process.

Eleven (11) places were allocated to Social Partners representing the sectors across the two social partner pillars as listed in the table. Appointment would be made following a recruitment exercise facilitated by the Peace team and Council's HR

Department, with advice and support from the Blu Zebra Consortium. Criteria would be set to ensure the required Pillars were represented i.e. Geographic (DEA representation), PEACE PLUS Target Groups and Section 75/under represented and marginalised groups.

Where gaps still existed, a further recruitment/nomination process may need to be considered, once again using an open and transparent process.

Nine (9) places were allocated to those Public Sector Bodies listed. Each organisation would be asked to nominate an appropriate representative. The sectors listed broadly aligned with the Council's Community Planning Partnership.

It was envisaged that the Partnership would be appointed and would be operational by June 2022, following which the necessary governance arrangements could be collectively agreed.

The PEACEPLUS Partnership would have delegated authority to manage the development of the local PEACEPLUS Action Plan and the development and delivery of the Action Plan, supported by the PEACE Team within Council. The Council would be regularly updated on progress via the Community and Wellbeing Committee and Community Planning Partnership.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approves the composition of the PEACEPLUS Partnership detailed in Table 1 above and the appointment process detailed in the report, and the identified process for decision making and operation of the action plan, by the partnership.

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

7. ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCILS POLICING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY STRATEGY (2022-2025) AND ACTION PLAN (2022-2023)

(Appendix IV & V)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing, detailing that the Council's current Policing and Community Safety Strategy and annual Action Plan terminated on 31 March 2022 and in order to access funding from the Department of Justice a new three-year Strategy and Annual Action Plan was required to be submitted to the Department by 18 February 2022.

Blue Zebra was appointed in November 2021 to carry out the necessary consultation to inform the development of the Strategy and Action Plan. A comprehensive on-line consultation process had been carried out including:

- 7 x Public consultation meetings by DEA (including local EM)
- 2 x Section 75- across the Borough
- 4 x Focus groups with hard to reach, marginalised and isolated CVSs
- 2 x Young People engagement sessions (through Youth Council)
- 1 x Elected Members Meeting
- 4 x Statutory Body Meetings
- 1 x Community Planning Meeting
- 8 x Staff meetings
- Turning the Curve Exercise
- GR Public & Staff Surveys & Analysis
- Strategic Context undertaken
- Desktop Analysis
- New TEO guidelines consideration for outcomes and monitoring

As a result of the above consultation the attached Policing and Community Safety three-year Strategy (2021-2024) and annual Action Plan (2021-2022) had been approved by the Policing and Community Safety Partnership and had been submitted to the Department for consideration.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this report.

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

Proposing the recommendation, Alderman Irvine considered that the plan had been coming together well and would hopefully contribute to community safety within the Borough. Councillor Chambers agreed highlighting that Blu Zebra had carried out a wide consultation and he felt that it had been successful in representing the views of the public accurately.

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

8. SUMMER SCHEME UPDATE

(Appendix VI – IX)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing, detailing that the Council via the Community Development Team (CDT) directly delivered an annual summer scheme programme in 5 community halls across the Borough. The schemes normally ran for 3 consecutive weeks in late July and early August, providing full day places for 260 children in P1-P7 per week.

- Alderman George Green Community Centre, Bangor (80 children per week)
- Ballygowan Village Hall, West Ards (40 children per week)
- Portavogie Community Centre, Ards Peninsula (40 children per week)
- Redburn Community Centre, Holywood (60 children per week)

- West Winds Community Centre, Newtownards (40 children per week)

The direct delivery relied heavily on a bank of experienced and trained agency staff, in order to ensure safeguarding requirements were met and provided summer scheme places for 780 children if fully subscribed. The appendix showed the distribution of Council delivered summer schemes.

Community Development funding and support services were also provided for 4 Community Partners who ran their own summer schemes, using local volunteers.

- Ballyphilip Youth Group, Portaferry (40 children per week x 1 week)
- Breezemount Com Association, Bangor (40 children per week x 3 weeks)
- Kilcooley Women's Centre, Bangor (80 children per week x 3 weeks)
- Millisle Youth Forum, Millisle (30 children per week x 2 weeks)

The partner schemes provided 460 summer scheme places if fully subscribed and an attached appendix showed the distribution of partner delivered summer schemes.

To increase the provision of summer schemes across the Borough following a request from the Council to do so, the Community Development Team (CDT) had investigated the possibility of an additional 2 locations to directly deliver in Comber and Donaghadee. They had also found a new Community Partner to deliver in Killinchy. To enable that and ensure that it was delivered within the available budget the summer schemes would need to be reduced to 2 weeks at each location.

Below showed where the Community Development Team would deliver summer schemes if the recommendations in the report were adopted.

- Alderman George Green Community Centre, Bangor (80 children per week)
- Ballygowan Village Hall, West Ards (40 children per week)
- Comber Leisure Centre (60 children per week)
- Donaghadee Community Centre (60 children per week)
- Portavogie Community Centre, Ards Peninsula (40 children per week)
- Redburn Community Centre, Holywood (60 children per week)
- West Winds Community Centre, Newtownards (40 children per week)

Therefore, a total of 760 places for children would be offered in 7 locations in the Borough. Although there was a reduction of 20 child places utilising this method, there was a significant increase in service delivery geography throughout the Borough by using similar resources. A further appendix showed how the Council delivered summer schemes would run in 2022.

Below showed where the Community Partners would deliver summer schemes if the recommendations were adopted.

- Ballyphilip Youth Group, Portaferry (40 children per week x 1 week)

- Breezemount Community Association, Bangor (40 children per week x 3 weeks)
- Kilcooley Women's Centre, Bangor (80 children per week x 3 weeks)
- Killinchy and District Community Development Association (30 children per week x 2 weeks)
- Millisle Youth Forum, Millisle (30 children per week x 2 weeks)

A total of 520 places for children would be offered in 5 locations of the Borough. An appendix showed how the partner delivered summer schemes would look.

With more easing of Covid-19 restrictions it was expected that volunteering opportunities would become available on the Council delivered summer schemes.

Discussions had commenced between the CDT and the Education Authority to ensure there was no overlap in summer scheme provision. That would facilitate maximum attendance at Council delivered summer schemes.

It should also be noted that the CDT were going to trial online registration for summer schemes in 2022. Online registration would open late April/early May and would be advertised by the usual means.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approves the expansion of summer scheme provision for 2022 as detailed in this report.

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

Councillor T Smith welcomed the report and was pleased to see the proposal for the summer scheme programme to be expanded. He thought that it was unfortunate that the schemes only operated in particular areas and while he was pleased to note that one would be taking place in Donaghadee and was also pleased for Comber and Killinchy this year, he considered that the resourcing by the Council to the summer schemes should be expanded further.

Councillor Boyle also appreciated the report and thanked the Head of Community and Culture for the work that had been done to ensure that many children had a good summer full of activity. From a community partner perspective all communities welcomed the schemes and there was good collaboration to avoid duplication of work.

Alderman Irvine was pleased to see the summer schemes extended, indeed he thought that these were one of the best programmes the Council offered. He asked about trying to improve the registration process, and the officer advised that there would be a move to trial digital methods although it was hoped that no one would be disadvantaged by that.

Councillor Edmund wished the highly successful schemes well for the coming year but was a little disappointed to note that the children of Ballyhalbert and Ballywalter would have to travel if they wished to attend. While he appreciated that the Council did not have a bottomless pit of funds, he considered there to be a gap in provision in the middle block of the Peninsula and it would be wrong of him not to fight for the children of his area and put that fact on record. The Head of Community and Culture was aware that Members appreciated that the situation was not perfect, and that the Council was trying to do the best it could with the budget and premises that it had available.

Summing up, Councillor T Smith fully supported Councillor Edmund's comments and agreed that there were some gaps in particular areas and believed that the budget for summer schemes should be reconsidered.

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

9. QUEENS PLATINUM JUBILEE GRANTS

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing, detailing that Members would be aware that a budget of £30,000 had been agreed through the estimates process for grants for the community and voluntary sector to organise street parties across the Borough to celebrate the Queens Platinum Jubilee. This month the Council would consider increasing the budget to £40,000.

The Council's Community Festival Fund (CFF) was presently open for applications, closing on 21 March 2022 with a total budget of £90,000, with individual small grants available up to £1,000 each for local festivals, £4,000 for Neighbourhood Festivals and £15,000 for Large Festivals. The CFF grants could not be used to run street parties to celebrate the Jubilee and community and voluntary groups were being advised that a separate grant scheme would be available for that purpose.

In order to ensure parity between the two grant schemes it was recommended that the Jubilee Grants were increased, from a budget £350 each, as per the previous Queen's Birthday Grants in 2016, up to a maximum of £1,000 each. That would not require an increase to the overall programme budget for the Jubilee as already approved by the Council. The Jubilee Grants opened for applications week commencing 7 March 2022. As per the Council's Grants Policy the grants would be assessed by a panel of officers and their recommendations would be brought to Council in April 2022 for approval. A small proportion of the budget would be used to purchase party packs containing bunting, table clothes napkins etc, which would be made available to groups who could not apply for Jubilee Grants. The party packs would be issued on a first come first served basis.

RECOMMENDED that the Council agrees to increase the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Grants up to a maximum of £1,000 each for Street Parties to celebrate the occasion.

Proposed by Councillor MacArthur, seconded by Alderman Irvine, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor MacArthur very much welcomed the grants and encouraged as many constituted groups as possible to apply especially for the funding for street parties.

Alderman Irvine was pleased to note the increase in funding, and it was hoped that groups would apply particularly as society was rapidly returning to normal after the pandemic. It was noted that groups which were not constituted were able to apply for party packs also which was welcomed if streets party celebrations were planned.

Councillor T Smith asked about the budget for small party packs suitable for street parties and the Head of Community and Culture agreed to report back to the member directly on that.

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

10. ARDS AND NORTH DOWN SOCIAL SUPERMARKET

(Appendix X)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing, stating that Members would be aware that in September 2021 approval was granted from the Council for officers along with key stakeholders and the Department for Communities to proceed with exploring two pilot Social Supermarket schemes, one in Bangor and the other in Newtownards.

Since then, and with Council approval, £10,000 had been awarded to Kilcooley Womens Centre to contribute towards the cost of establishing a Social Supermarket (SSM) in Kilcooley Square, Bangor. Officers were awaiting a quote from NIHE's contractor, for the installation of heating in the property, in order to release the funding.

In January 2022, through the Department for Communities (DfC) Community Support Programme, the Council was awarded money towards the cost of establishing a Social Supermarket in Newtownards. With DfC's approval a proportion of that funding was used to appoint a suitable organisation to manage the selection of an organisation to operate the pilot process.

In February 2022, Blu Zebra, was appointed and had been initially tasked to carry out a needs assessment to draft a report recommending a suitable operating organisation and location to establish a 'pilot' SSM for Ards and North Down in

Newtownards. The assessment of need must be considered first and completed no later than 21 March 2022.

Blu Zebra would then facilitate a co-design process with the Covid Recovery Community Support Steering Sub-Group, the referral pathways for members of the SSM, along with the necessary wrap around support and operating guidelines.

Finally, Blu Zebra would work with the appointed operating organisation to agree a costed project plan to develop and then implement the SSM, from the start of any required capital (building) works, to the opening and operation of the SSM.

Officers would continue to keep Members updated on progress.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this report.

Proposed by Councillor Kendall, seconded by Councillor Mathison, that the recommendation be adopted.

Proposing the recommendation, Councillor Kendall stated that she massively supported social supermarkets and believed now more than ever these were necessary as residents of the Borough were facing desperate pressure financially and many were in hardship and facing food poverty. She encouraged everyone involved to move as quickly as possible to support local residents.

Councillor Mathison fully supported those comments and welcomed the report and asked if officers had any idea of the timescale of when the initiative could be up and running. He queried if the budget would cover capital works as well. The Head of Community and Culture explained that it would, but it would also be very difficult to give information on timescales now since many details were being worked through, but it was hoped that more information would be made available soon.

Councillor MacArthur asked about assessment of need and the expectation that more people than ever before would need help. It was explained that further information on that would be provided at a future meeting. The Member was aware that people in need were often reluctant to ask for help but she hoped that the Council could be a pointer for people in need directing them to sources of help locally. Criteria would be set by the funders and would be much wider than that for affordable warmth.

The Chair, Councillor Thompson, supported those comments noting the real cost of living crisis which could often be hidden.

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

(Having declared an interest in Item 11 Alderman Menagh, Councillor Kendall and Councillor MacArthur left the meeting at 7.45 pm).

11. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT GRANTS

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that the Community Development (CD) Fund 2022/23 was supported by the Community Support Programme from Department for Communities and the Council's Community Development Section. The total budget available for the 2022/23 Community Development Grant scheme was £92,000 of which £50,900 was provided by the Council and £41,100 was expected from the Department for Communities. The Letter of Offer from the Department for Communities had yet to be received by the Council, so all grant awards outlined in the report would be subject to funding being received from the Department for Communities.

The Community Development Fund was split in two categories 1) running costs up to £2,000, 2) project costs up to £1,000. Those who were eligible, could apply for either category or both.

The grants were open for three weeks to allow applicants enough time to gather the necessary documentation and information to support their applications.

The objectives of the CD Fund were to strengthen local communities: to increase community participation; to promote social inclusion through the stimulation and support of community groups; and to encourage and promote community activity.

The expected outcomes for the CD Fund were:

- An active and organised community
- An influential community
- An informed community
- A sustainable community

There were 69 applications received for running costs and 35 applications received for project costs, with a total amount of £114,287.12 being requested.

An assessment panel comprised of the Community Development Manager, Community Development Officer, Community Development Grants Officer, Community Safety Officer, assessed and scored the grants under the following criteria:

Grant Criteria – Running Costs	Max Points
Purpose and Aim	5
Benefit to the community	5
Sustainable Communities	5

Value for money	5
Tackling poverty & social inclusion	5
Encourage and Promote health & wellbeing	5
Equality	5
Total	35
Grant Criteria – Project Costs	Max Points
Purpose and Aim	5
Location, Need and benefit	5
Outcomes, impacts & benefits	5
Value for money	5
Tackling poverty & social inclusion	5
Encourage and Promote health & wellbeing	5
Equality	5
Total	35

Grant Criteria-

A 20% weighting had been applied to:

- i) applicants located in the top 10% of the most deprived wards in the Council area, (using the DfC Recommended Weighting) and
- ii) those that specifically targeted socially excluded groups.

Out of the 69 applications received for running costs 54 were successful, 12 applications did not meet the pass mark of 45% and 3 applications were deemed ineligible (see Tables 1 and 2 below).

From the 35 applications received for project costs 22 applications were successful, 3 applications did not meet the pass mark of 45% and 10 applications were deemed ineligible (see Tables 3 and 4 below).

In line with current Community Development budgets, and projected funding from DfC, it was recommended that 80% of the approved grant be awarded to all successful applicants, with a total value of £91,429.70.

For those applicants who were unsuccessful, due to lack of detail or missing information within their forms, they would be offered feedback on their application from the scoring panel and the Community Development Team were available to help and support with sourcing and completing other funding applications.

Table 1 Running Costs - Successful Applicants

	Name of Group	Score	Eligible Amount	Amount awarded 80%
1	12th Bangor Scout Group	71.5%	£2000	£1600
2	1st Newtownards Somme & Historical Society	48.62%	£2000	£1600
3	Ards Peninsula U3A	45.76%	£1170	£936
4	Ards Peninsula Villages Partnership	65.78%	£1445	£1156
5	Ballygowan Concert Flute Band	68.64%	£1966	£1572.80
6	Ballyhalbert Youth Group	51.48%	£1720	£1376
7	Ballywalter & District Historical Society	51.48%	£570	£456
8	Ballywalter Community Action group	54.34%	£590	£472
9	Bees Nees EYC	54.34%	£2000	£1600
10	Bekind Kids Club	80.08%	£2000	£1600
11	Bloomfield Community Association	77.22%	£2000	£1600
12	Breezemount Community Association	82.94%	£2000	£1600
13	Clandeboyne VCA	77.22%	£2000	£1600
14	Cloughey & District Community Association	51.48%	£2000	£1600
15	Cloughey Heritage Group	48.62%	£953.20	£762.56
16	Codo Drops	80.08%	£2000	£1600
17	Comber Youth For Christ	57.20%	£2000	£1600
18	Conlig Community Regeneration Group	74.36%	£1770	£1416
19	Donaghadee Community Development Association	60.06%	£2000	£1600
20	Donaghadee Youth For Christ	60.06%	£2000	£1600
21	East End Residents Association	48.62%	£2000	£1600
22	Friends of Abbey PTA	51.48%	£1570	£1256
23	Hollywood Family Trust	65.78%	£2000	£1600
24	Hollywood Residents Association	51.48%	£1600	£1280
25	Hollywood Shared Town	74.36%	£2000	£1600
26	Home-Start Ards, Comber and Peninsula Area	62.92%	£2000	£1600
27	Inspiring Yarns	62.92%	£2000	£1600
28	Kilcooley Women's Centre	57.20%	£2000	£1600
29	Killinchy After School Club	57.20%	£2000	£1600
30	Killinchy and District Community Development Assoc	45.76%	£2000	£1600
31	Killinchy Senior Citizens	54.34%	£1750	£1400
32	Kiltonga Christian Centre	60.06%	£2000	£1600
33	Ladybirds Parenting Centre	54.34%	£2000	£1600
34	Lisbarnett and Lisbane CA	48.62%	£2000	£1600
35	Little Doves Childcare	62.92%	£2000	£1600

CW 09.03.2022PM

226

36	Loughries Men's Shed	48.62%	£1500	£1200
37	Love Ballyholme	45.76%	£1000	£800
38	Millisle & District Community Association	48.62%	£2000	£1600
39	Millisle Youth Forum	62.92%	£2000	£1600
40	Millisle Regeneration	57.20%	£2000	£1600
41	North Down and Ards U3A	45.76%	£2000	£1600
42	Portaferry and Strangford Trust	51.48%	£2000	£1600
43	Portaferry Community Collective	57.20%	£1789	£1431.20
44	Portaferry Community Services Ltd	60.06%	£2000	£1600
45	Portaferry Gala Fest	57.20%	£2000	£1600
46	Portaferry In Bloom	45.76%	£1580	£1264
47	Portaferry Mens Shed	54.34%	£1500	£1200
48	Portavogie Regeneration Forum	71.50%	£880.50	£704.40
49	Redburn Loughview Community Forum	54.34%	£2000	£1600
50	Redburn Parent and Toddlers	48.62%	£1583	£1266.40
51	Seahaven Residents Association	45.76%	£1000	£800
52	United Ulster History Forum	54.34%	£800	£640
53	Warehouse Open Centre	48.62%	£1406	£1124.80
54	Whitehill CA	65.78%	£2000	£1600
			Total:	£75,314.16

Table 2 Unsuccessful Running Cost Applicants:

	Name of Group	Score	Reason for Unsuccessful Application
1	Ballygowan District Community Ass	40.04%	Failed to reach pass mark
2	Ballygowan Presbyterian Church - Youth	37.18%	Failed to reach pass mark
3	Bangor and North Down Samaritans	31.46%	Failed to reach pass mark
4	Clandeboyne Nature Rangers	34.32%	Failed to reach pass mark
5	Comber Regeneration Community Partnership	34.32	Failed to reach pass mark
6	Decorum NI	28.60%	Failed to reach pass mark
7	Donaghadee Heritage Preservation Company	34.32%	Failed to reach pass mark
8	Greyabbey Village Hall Mgt Cttee	25.74%	Failed to reach pass mark
9	Groomspoint Guides	Not scored	No supporting documents with application
10	Kilcooley Over 50s Club	37.18%	Failed to reach pass mark
11	Millisle Health and Wellbeing	42.90%	Failed to reach pass mark
12	North Down Scout Centre	34.32%	Failed to reach pass mark
13	Peninsula Amateur Theatre Players	Not scored	Group not eligible- referred to Arts
14	The Play Centre at Manor Court	42.90%	Failed to reach pass mark
15	Portavogie Coastal Rowing Club	Not scored	Sports club excluded- referred to sports development

Table 3 Project Costs – Successful Applicants:

	Name of Group	Name of Project	Brief Description	Score	Eligible amount	Amount awarded 80%
1	1st Newtownards Somme & Historical Society	Walking through History 1912-present	Mural painting project	48.62%	£1000	£800
2	Ballygowan Presbyterian Church - Youth	Building Capacity	Equipping young people for future	48.62%	£1000	£800
3	Ballyhalbert Youth Group	Mental Health in the Community	Improve mental health	48.62%	£1000	£800
4	Bees Nees EYC	Reconnect & Recover building Resilience	Series of activities for families	45.76%	£1000	£800
5	Bekind Kids Club	Be Kind to your Mind	Workshops focused on parents & carers	80.08%	£1000	£800
6	Cloughey & District Community Association	20 th Anniversary	Commemorative project	51.48%	£1000	£800
7	Codo Drops	Re-igniting Creativity & Belonging in Bangor	Small scale street art sessions	80.08%	£1000	£800
8	Comber youth For Christ	Heads Up	Series of workshops for mental health	48.62	£1000	£800
9	Donaghadee Community Development Association	Donaghadee-Bloomin' Marvellous	Window plant boxes	60.06%	£1000	£800
10	Include Youth	Planting Roots Project	Create planters from unused tyres	54.34%	£354.42	£283.54
11	Inspiring Yarns	Yarn Together for Good Causes	Series of yarn groups	60.06%	£1000	£800
12	Kilcooley Women's Centre	DELTA Project	Develop a digital platform	62.92%	£1000	£800
13	Killinchy Senior Citizens	Homeplace	Create a piece of art	54.34%	£500	£400
14	Ladybirds PC	Early Years Pocket Park	Create playground markings to zone areas	54.34%	£1000	£800
15	Love Ballyholme	Easter@Holme	Outdoor intergenerational Easter event	48.62%	£750	£600
16	Millisle & District Community Association	Millisle Women's Craft & Cultural Group	Craft Workshops	48.62%	£1000	£800

17	Millisle Youth Forum	Circus comes to Millisle	Delivery of facilitated circus classes	57.20%	£1000	£800
18	Millisle Regeneration	Millise Mens Shed	Small projects to bring men of Millisle together	54.34%	£540	£432
19	Portaferry and Strangford Trust	Vikings on Strangford Lough-Junior Edition	Create an exhibition for young people	54.34%	£1000	£800
20	Portaferry Community Services Ltd	SEANACHAI/WE E YARNS/ANEGDO CIARZ-Storytelling Through Drama	Story telling targeting social exclusion	65.78%	£1000	£800
21	Portaferry Gala Fest	"Flash Mob" Celebrating Covid Recovery	Create a surprise community dance flash mob	60.06%	£1000	£800
22	Portaferry In Bloom	Portaferry's Growing Together	Provide 100 "do it yourself" growing kits	45.76%	£1000	£800
					Total:	£16,115.54

Table 4 Unsuccessful Project Grant Applicants:

	Name of Group	Score	Reason for Unsuccessful Application
1	Ballycrochan Presbyterian Church	Not scored	Applied for Queens Jubilee project (social event) referred to Jubilee fund
2	Bangor District LOL 18	Not scored	Project costs not eligible- training courses excluded
3	Bangor Foodbank	Not scored	Project costs not eligible- project deemed capital build
4	Conlig Community Regeneration Group	Not scored	Project costs not eligible- social event excluded
5	Donaghadee Heritage Preservation Company	34.32	Failed to reach pass mark
6	Groomsport Guides	Not scored	No supporting documents with applications
7	Hollywood Family Trust	Not scored	Project costs not eligible – training not eligible
8	Hollywood Shared Town	Not scored	Project costs not eligible – project deemed public meeting
9	Kilcooley community Forum	37.17%	Failed to reach pass mark
10	Leonard Cheshire	Not scored	Community group based outside the borough – referred to Business Regeneration
11	Loughries Men's Shed	Not scored	Project costs overlapped running costs/ not a new project
12	Millisle Health and Wellbeing	34.32%	Failed to reach pass mark
13	Redburn Loughview Community Forum	Not scored	Project costs ineligible- deemed as equipment upgrade

Members would be aware that the CD Grants were consistently heavily oversubscribed resulting in an increasing number of applications being unsuccessful, despite reducing the overall award to each successful application. Given that, officers would review the CD Grants process in advance of next year in an attempt to

reduce the number of organisations receiving multiple grants in order to support new and emerging groups.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approve the recommendations detailed in this report.

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

Proposing the recommendation Councillor Boyle thought the report to be excellent and he welcomed it for different reasons, firstly it felt like a return to normal and secondly it was pleasing to read about the grants awarded. Sadly, there had been groups that did not qualify but he was pleased that the Council would help them prepare for the future. It was encouraging to see communities and organisations benefitting from small pots of funding.

Councillor Smart was in agreement noting that so much could be done with fairly small grants he hoped that the grants would be reviewed annually to ensure a good spread across the Borough. He noted that the Department provided the budget and that the Council contributed to it and there was always a huge demand for the funding which suggested that the community development team was doing a very good job.

Councillor Edmund welcomed the funds and reported that for many groups these were the lifeblood which gave them just enough to keep operating. These were also volunteers who were working for the benefit of their local communities and the Council should remember that. He agreed that it would be great if the budget could be increased, and he praised the community groups who had been successful.

Alderman Irvine agreed and recognised that the work that was carried out by these community groups had never been more important. He asked that those groups which used community houses were kept on the officers' radar.

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

(Alderman Menagh and Councillors Kendall and MacArthur were readmitted to the meeting at 7.50 pm)

12. LEISURE SERVICES SERVICE PLAN 2022-2023 (Appendix XI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that attached was the Service Plan for Leisure and Amenities in accordance with the Council's Performance Management policy.

Plans were intended to:

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

The Service Plan for 2022/23 was attached. That had been developed to align with the objectives of the Big Plan, the Corporate Plan and in line with the Annual Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) 2022/23.

The agreement of the Service Plan would also assist toward achievement of the Council's performance improvement duties under the Local Government Act (NI) 2014. The Service Plan highlighted where the service contributed to the Corporate Plan and, where that was the case, set out the objectives of the service for the 2022/23 year. It further identified the key performance indicators used to illustrate the level of achievement of each objective, and the targets that the service would try to attain along with key actions required to do so. The Service Plan also identified key risks to the service along with analysis of those and necessary actions to mitigate/manage risks. Key risks impacting services were incorporated into the Corporate Risk Register. The Service Plan had been developed in conjunction with staff, officers and management and consultation with key stakeholders where relevant. The Service Plan was based on the agreed budget. It should be noted that, should there be significant changes in-year (e.g. due to Council decisions, budget revisions or changes to the PIP), the Service Plan may need to be revised. The Committee would be provided with update reports on performance against the agreed Service Plan.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approve the attached plan.

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

Councillor Boyle thanked officers for the detailed report and expressed concern about the position relating to staff shortages and the challenge of what could be done with the staff that were available. The leisure centres could not operate fully until that matter had been resolved and that would take time which in turn had an effect on revenue flow. The Head of Leisure Services agreed that the projections were based on the availability of a full staff complement.

Councillor Kendall shared the Member's concern and wondered what was being done to address the situation which existed across the Council. The Director explained that it was not permissible to comment on staff matters in public and that should only be commented on in confidence.

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

(Having declared an interest Alderman Menagh left the meeting at 8 pm).

13. ARDS AND NORTH DOWN SPORTS FORUM GRANTS (Appendix XII - XIV)

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. £35,000 had been allocated within the 2021/2022 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 January 2022, the Forum received a total of 17 grant applications; 1 of which was for Coaching, 15 of which were for Equipment and 1 of which was for an Event. A summary of the **13** successful applications was detailed in the attached appendix 1 - Successful Equipment Applications and appendix - Successful Events Applications.

A total of **4** of the applications failed to meet the specified criteria. The reasons for the unsuccessful applications are detailed on a further appendix - Unsuccessful Applications.

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

	Annual Budget	Funding Awarded January 2022	Remaining Budget
Anniversary	£1,000	£0	£1,000
Coaching	£3,000	*£0	£1,499.25
Equipment	£9,000	*£7,799.41	-£6,028.41
Events	£6,000	*£171	£3,499.52
Seeding	£500	£0	£58.57
Travel and Accommodation	£14,500	*£0	£12,422.82
Discretionary	£1000	£0	£1,000
Goldcards proposed during the period January 2022 is 0.			

*The proposed remaining budget for Coaching of **£1,499.25** was based on Withdrawn costs of **£100**. The proposed remaining budget for Equipment of - **£6,028.41** was based on a proposed award of **£7,799.41** as outlined in Successful

Equipment Applications – for Approval/Noting. The proposed remaining budget for Events of £3,499.52 was based on a proposed award of £171 as outlined in Successful Events Applications – for Approval/Noting, and reclaimed costs of £112.52. The proposed remaining budget for Travel and Accommodation of £12,422.82 was based on reclaimed costs of £50.

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) be noted.

Proposed by Alderman Irvine, seconded by Councillor Johnson that the recommendation be adopted.

Alderman Irvine praised the applications coming through which would provide much needed equipment to increase the skill and aptitude of those in the sports clubs. He referred to the Ards and North Down Sports Awards and thanked the sports development team for its work in that area also.

Councillor Boyle was encouraged by the broad enthusiasm that existed across the Borough with sports people voluntarily giving of their time to promote wellbeing and healthy lifestyles. He was delighted to see the Sports Awards back again and hoped that it would be successful and a further signal of a return to normal times.

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

(Alderman Menagh was readmitted to the meeting at 8.03 pm)

14. PARKS AND CEMETERIES SERVICE PLAN 2022-2023

(Appendix XV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that attached was the Service Plan for Parks and Cemeteries in accordance with the Council's Performance Management policy.

Plans were intended to:

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

The plan for 2022/23 was attached. The plan had been developed to align with the objectives of the Big Plan, the draft Corporate Plan 2020/24 and the draft Annual Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) 2022/23. The agreement of the plan would also assist toward achievement of the Council's performance improvement duties under the Local Government Act (NI) 2014.

The Service Plan highlights where the service contributed to the Corporate Plan and, where that was the case, sets out the objectives of the service for the 2022/23 year. It further identified the key performance indicators used to illustrate the level of achievement of each objective, and the targets that the Service would try to attain along with key actions required to do so.

The Service Plan also identified key risks to the service along with analysis of those and necessary actions to mitigate/manage risks. Key risks impacting services were incorporated into the Corporate Risk Register. The plan had been developed in conjunction with staff, officers and management and consultation with key stakeholders where relevant.

The plan was based on the agreed budget. It should be noted that, should there be significant changes in-year (e.g., due to Council decisions, budget revisions or changes to the PIP) the plan may need to be revised.

The Committee would be provided with update reports on performance against the agreed plan.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approve the attached plan.

Proposed by Councillor MacArthur, seconded by Councillor Kendall that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor MacArthur asked the Interim Head of Parks and Cemeteries about the aspirations within the plan for rewilding and tree planning and also about the proposed apprenticeship scheme with Greenmount. The officer explained that rewilding was to be doubled, and a plan concerning apprenticeships had been put together which would be discussed with the college, and a draft job description would be drawn up.

Referring to the volunteering scheme the officer hoped to bring back a report on how that could be structured. There were already schemes in existence such as friends groups in parks or with young people through the Duke of Edinburgh's Award for example. Those were opportunities for the Council to take advantage of working in partnership with the community.

Councillor MacArthur asked about rewilding and it was noted that there was a proposal to double the rewilding scheme. She suggested the Moat at Donaghadee

which would lend itself to rewilding and wondered how those areas would be selected. The officer explained that a report had been prepared looking at suitable areas where it was believed that there would be community 'buy in'.

Councillor Kendall referred to Conlig which would welcome engagement at this point, but she thanked officers for the report and agreed with the opportunities that had been identified and believed those linked well to the Council's strategy. The creation of green jobs along with a commitment to biodiversity and sustainability showed that the Council was listening to the community.

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

15. PERFORMANCE REPORT PARKS AND CEMETERIES Q3

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 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 (published 30 September 2021)
- Service Plan – developed annually (approved April/May 2021)

The Council's 17 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 3 2021-22 was attached.

Key points to note:

- Walled Garden now open to public in winter months
- Herbicide Reduction Policy agreed and implementation process started.
- Procurement of new computer software system, PlotBox now being implemented.

Key achievements:

- Ards and North Down in Bloom Community Competitions winners announced.
- Tree Week community events throughout the Borough underway.
- Orchards planted in Greyabbey, Portaferry and Portavogie.
- Recruitment of 1 x Supervisor and 5 x Gardeners undertaken.

Emerging issues:

- Investigate opportunities to start an apprenticeship scheme in association with Greenmount College.

Action to be taken:

- Local Biodiversity Action Plan would be completed in Q4.
- Pride in Performance conversations would be completed in Q4.
- A rolling programme of tree planting was being implemented across the Borough.

RECOMMENDED that the report is noted.

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

Councillor Mathison asked for clarity on the Council's position on tree planting. The Interim Head of Parks and Cemeteries stated that the proposal for the current year was to plant 15k trees and that the 35k stated in the report had been in error. The proposal over 10 years was 170k trees. That was what Council had agreed to and was reasonable given the resources the Council had. Volunteers would help to plant those out too.

The Member was aware that another Council had its own nursery to grow young trees and he asked if that was in the mix for Ards and North Down Borough. The officer reported that it was and it was vital that the Council could secure a source of trees and it also addressed the bio security issues. Locally sourced trees helped in that process. It was hoped that the Council would soon reach agreement with the Woodland Trust on that matter.

Councillor Edmund asked if the tree count would include memorial trees in cemeteries and the officer explained that while all trees were useful for the environment those were not included in the figure for community planting.

Councillor Douglas was delighted to see this progress and thanked staff for their commitment, and she hoped to help in the plant at Castle Park over the coming weeks.

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

16. DISPLAY BED APPLICATIONS

(Appendix XVI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing Members would be aware that on the 27th February 2019 the Council agreed a policy for the use of Display Beds in the Borough. This policy required Officers to report to the Council any applications received by external organisations. Through the pandemic the display bed application process had been suspended and those floral beds had been used to celebrate the excellent work carried out by NHS staff and other key workers. It was proposed that the display bed application process now recommenced and that the NHS staff / key workers displays continued until new applications had been approved by the Council.

The Council had received two applications for use of the display beds. Officers had assessed both applications and had determined that both 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 detail design may alter in order 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
Hollywood Bowling Club	Bangor Road entrance to Ballymenoch Park	01/05/2022 - 30/06/2022	75th Anniversary
Assisi Animal Sanctuary	Adjacent to Bangor Post and Sorting Office	10/09/2022 - 22/10/2022	25th Anniversary

RECOMMENDED that the Council approves the applications outlined in this report for the display beds.

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

Councillor McRandal was pleased to note that Assisi had reached its 25th anniversary and he wished it more successful years to come. He also paid tribute to Holywood Bowling Club on its 75th anniversary.

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

17. TREE AND WOODLAND STRATEGY 2021-2032 UPDATE

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that the purpose of the report was to update Members on the first-year progress of the Council's Tree & Woodland Strategy 2021 to 2032 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.

To ensure improved tree cover within the Borough, a new tree planting initiative entitled STAND4TREES was formed. The STAND4TREES complemented the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) initiative 'Forests for our Future'.

STAND4TREES was launched during National Tree Week in November 2021. Tree Week was the UK's largest annual tree celebration, it ran from Saturday 27th November to Sunday 5th December 2021. The theme this year was 'Are you ready to #PlantForOurFuture?',

Residents from across the Borough, took part in planting thousands of trees to mark the start of the winter tree planting season. In total 12,000 trees had been planted in the Borough since the start of Tree Week until the last planting day in early March 2022.

In addition, to the 12,000 trees planted the Council agreed to plant three Community orchards per year. The three orchards for 2021/22 period were now in position at Greyabbey, Lawson Playpark at Portavogie and Ann Street Open Space in Portaferry. In 2022/3 the Council hoped to plant another three Community orchards at Londonderry Park in Newtownards, Carrowdore and Cottown Park and Open Space would be working with more community partners of future orchards sites.

As part of the implementation of Strategy it was agreed to appoint an Officer. Unfortunately, the recruitment process had so far been unsuccessful but it was hoped to readvertise the position in April/May.

In the tree planting period 2022/23 it was hoped to plant a further 15,000 trees and increase the number of community tree planting events from 12 in 2021/22 to 20 events in 2022/23.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this report.

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

Councillor Douglas was excited at the proposal and welcomed the trees and the difference they would make to the local environment.

Councillor Boyle also looked forward to seeing progress and referred to large amounts of tree planting in the Portaferry area which was a welcome step for benefits in the future.

Councillor McRandal was pleased to hear about Community Orchards and asked how the sites were selected. The Interim Head of Parks and Cemeteries stated that that was done with community support and would be spread across the Borough with on average three every year over the next ten years. It was anticipated that there would be at least one orchard for every settlement in the Borough.

Councillor Kendall asked if the strategy included the maintenance of trees and if the sites would be managed. She wondered if there had been much engagement with the schools in the Borough. The officer replied that the maintenance of trees was very important within the strategy. There had been engagement with local schools and it was expected that that would be developed further as life returned to normal post pandemic.

Councillor MacArthur hoped that there would be engagement with schools for the Queen's Canopy and planting for that later in the year. The officer informed the meeting that the Queen's Canopy was only one project that was operating and there was also Stand 4 Trees projects. The Council needed to plan and prepare but it was aware of what was needed and what was due to take place by December 2022.

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

18. ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH PROTECTION AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICE PLAN 2022-2023

(Appendix XVII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that attached was the Service Plan for Environmental Health Protection and Development in accordance with the Council's Performance Management policy.

Plans were intended to:

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

The plan for 2022/23 was attached. The plan had been developed to align with objectives of the Big Plan, Corporate Plan and the draft Annual Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) 2022/23. The agreement of the plan would also assist toward achievement of the Council's performance improvement duties under the Local Government Act (NI) 2014.

The Service Plan highlighted where the service contributed to the Corporate Plan and, where that was the case, sets out the objectives of the service for the 2022/23 year. It further identified the key performance indicators used to illustrate the level of achievement of each objective, and the targets that the Service would try to attain along with key actions required to do so.

The Service Plan also identified key risks to the service along with analysis of those and necessary actions to mitigate/manage risks. Key risks impacting services were incorporated into the Corporate Risk Register. The plan had been developed in conjunction with staff, officers and management and consultation with key stakeholders where relevant.

The plan was based on the agreed budget. It should be noted that, should there be significant changes in-year (e.g., due to Council decisions, budget revisions or changes to the PIP) the plan may need to be revised.

The Committee would be provided with update reports on performance against the agreed plan.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approve the attached plan.

Proposed by Alderman Irvine, seconded by Councillor Mathison, that the recommendation be adopted.

Alderman Irvine thought the report showed the breadth of work that went through the Environmental Health section, and he took the opportunity to wish the Head of Environmental Health Protection his best wishes on his retirement. He stated that the officer would be greatly missed, and he thanked him and considered that his successor would have a hard act to follow.

Councillor Mathison also thanked the officer and agreed that he would be sorely missed and noted that he had been very helpful and always available at the end of the telephone. The work of that section had been particularly challenging at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Councillor T Smith welcomed the hard work going on but stated unfortunately the Council had been implementing the rules of the Northern Ireland Protocol and he was opposed to that and did not believe that the Council should be engaging with it or implementing it in any shape or form. He said that he would abstain from agreeing with the recommendation for that reason.

Councillor MacArthur welcomed the report and thanked the officer and his team. The officer had been continuously helpful to her and given time to explain matters when that was required. She thought the work of the team could not be underestimated.

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

19. PERFORMANCE REPORT ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH PROTECTION AND DEVELOPMENT Q3

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 2021)
- Service Plan – developed annually (approved April/May 2021)

The Council's 17 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 3 2021-22 was attached.

Key points to note:

- Some targets had been missed including budget spent. That was because of difficulties in recruiting suitably qualified EH staff to fill vacancies which had led to pressure on the service.

Key achievements:

- The service had continued to adapt to Covid restrictions being lifted and had been able to provide a service to the residential and business community. Demands on the service in terms of service requests continued to exceed pre-Covid-19 emergency levels.

Emerging issues:

- Increased energy costs would hit the most vulnerable in society therefore services such as the Affordable Warmth Scheme would take on even greater importance as the Council entered the 22/23 year. It would be important that the DfC continued to fund that initiative.

Action to be taken:

- Staff vacancies needed to be filled as soon as possible to ensure the effective functioning of the service.

RECOMMENDED that the report is noted.

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

20. RECOGNITION OF THE WORK OF EHPD DURING THE PANDEMIC

(Appendix XVIII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that the staff of Environmental Health Protection and Development (EHP&D) had been thanked for their "outstanding" contribution to protecting public health during the pandemic.

In a letter from the Association of Directors of Public Health, the Faculty of Public Health and the Health Departments of Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland, it was recognised that the public health teams across the UK responded "with integrity, skill, and determination" to the demands of "a rapidly changing environment".

Signed by all four Chief Medical Officers, the letter noted: "As is always the case with public health, the work is never done and much of the most important work is never noticed" but warns of the new challenges that lie ahead particularly with deprivation, health improvement and the need to reduce health inequalities.

In Ards and North Down, EHP&D delivered "business as usual" as far as possible during the pandemic – responding to Public Health and Housing complaints and concerns to keep people safe at home; supporting Food businesses to adapt to delivery and take away services without compromising food safety; responding to a huge increase in noise complaints partly attributable to the shift to home working; ensuring Health and Safety requirements were met including the enforcement, advice and guidance of ever changing Covid legislation and medical advice; ensuring those without heat or food were assisted with rapid responses; and leading on the Care Call support to our most vulnerable residents as well as assisting with the community food parcels.

One member of staff was seconded to the Track and Trace team and currently was a lead officer supervising the identification of close contacts and providing advice to those directly affected by Covid.

The Head of Environmental Health Protection and Development, on behalf of Environmental Health Northern Ireland (EHNI) and SOLACE, was asked to provide expert advice and guidance to the Department of Health in determining the proposed legislative changes; and worked closely with the various industry bodies in particular Hospitality Ulster and the Hotels Federation, to aid their understanding in relation to new proposals and take cognisance of industry opinion regarding the impact of

Covid restrictions and how difficulties in implementation could be addressed without compromising safety. Guidance was also provided on any Covid clusters in the Ards and North Down Borough Council area, including dissemination of safety information through social media in partnership with the Public Health Agency.

The letter from the Presidents of the Association and Faculty of Public Health and the four Chief Medical Officers concluded: "Your expert knowledge, local insight, leadership and collection and use of data have been outstanding. We have been immensely proud to work alongside you and are profoundly thankful for all you and your teams have done."

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the contents of the letter to the Public Health Community received by EHP&D.

Proposed by Councillor Kendall, seconded by Alderman Irvine, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor Kendall thanked the officers for the work they had carried out during the Covid-19 pandemic. Alderman Irvine agreed and offered his thanks to the Environmental Health staff for their contribution throughout the pandemic. The rules and regulations were very complex in the early days and the hospitality industry had been hit hard. He knew that the staff had performed to their limit.

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

21. FUEL POVERTY (Appendix IXX & XX)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that at the Council meeting on 24th November 2021 the following Notice of Motion was discussed and agreed:

That this Council notes with concern the significant increase in the cost of energy; recognises this will adversely affect many households across our Borough and calls on the Minister for Communities to establish a departmental led fuel poverty task force to assist the department in developing solutions to support those impacted and prevent many more people from falling into fuel poverty.

A letter was sent to the Minister for Communities and a response had been received from David Polley, Director of Housing Supply Policy.

The letter noted:

- Minister Hargrey was pleased to announce that a £55 million Energy Payment Support Scheme was approved by the Executive on 13 January 2022. The Energy Payment Support Scheme was for vulnerable individuals struggling to meet rising energy costs due to the global fuel crisis.
- The Minister also announced a £2M Emergency Fuel Payment Scheme, operated by the Bryson Charitable Group, developed in very close collaboration with the Consumer Council, the Utility Regulator and a range of local energy companies in response to the recent and unprecedented energy price rises.
- In terms of an update on the Emergency Fuel Payment Scheme, a link to the website and form for the Emergency Fuel Payment Scheme was below, as well as a link for further information on the Energy Costs Support Scheme.

<https://www.brysongroup.org/news/emergency-fuel-payment-scheme>

<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/energy-costs-support-schemes>

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the response letter from the Department for Communities.

Proposed by Councillor Mathison, seconded by Alderman Irvine, as an amendment, that Council welcomes the financial assistance noted in the correspondence. Council will reply to the Minister and request that she urgently update Council if she will be seeking further resource to roll out additional funding for financial support for those impacted by the rising cost of utilities and home heating oil, including those in work but on low incomes.

Councillor Mathison stated that he welcomed some support being rolled out which would undoubtedly be of some assistance but in the current environment it may not even touch the sides in addressing the level of need. It may, however, raise the possibility that the Department could roll out further support. Residents may not be receiving benefits or tax credits but could be very affected by rising prices due to receiving a relatively low income. He regretted that there was no First and Deputy First Minister in the Assembly but this was a time of real crisis for people who were not concerned with the politics at Stormont. He hoped that Members could get behind the Executive and would like to hear the views from the Minister and her Department.

Alderman Irvine was happy to support the amendment and further action certainly needed to be taken. He welcomed £200 payment to some people but many people were equally in need and would be missing out on that so he hoped that more funding could be made to help those in need as quickly as possible. He also thought that the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Prime Minister also needed to step up

when it came to the energy crisis and thought that nothing should be taken off the table.

Councillor Chambers was more than happy to support the amendment and thought that a family could very quickly spend £200 on heating their homes. Prices were rising steeply, and this was a critical and worrying time for those in need of financial assistance.

Councillor T Smith had no problem in giving support and he made it clear that it was not only low-income families that were affected but also those where a couple in one household both worked. Incomes were being squeezed so much and this issue went beyond those on low incomes since everyone was feeling this except perhaps for people who were extremely well off financially. He stated that there was a dysfunctional government in Stormont which could not deliver and suggested that an approach be made directly to the Westminster government.

Councillor Boyle had no problem supporting the amendment and agreed with the comments that had been made particularly those of Councillors Chambers and T Smith. He agreed that this matter should be presented to the British Exchequer since the Northern Ireland Executive did not have the type of funding that should be made. The whole economy was suffering, and he agreed that two income homes were also feeling the pinch. He thanked Councillor Mathison for bringing the amendment.

Councillor Kendall believed that the current difficulties and energy crisis was a result of the country's over reliance on fossil fuels which had been highlighted for many years. The time was now to look at renewables so that the country could sustain itself. The current troubles would push more people below the poverty line since the average family was now settling and trying to survive.

Councillor Mathison thanked Members for their comments and support for his amendment and was more than happy for the scope it to include a letter to the Chancellor of the Exchequer to press the UK government for urgent intervention. He agreed that it was not only low-income homes that were feeling the pressure at the current time.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Mathison, seconded by Alderman Irvine, as amendment, that the Council welcomes the financial assistance noted in the correspondence. Council will reply to the Minister and request that she urgently update Council if she will be seeking further resource to roll out additional funding for financial support for those impacted by the rising cost of utilities and home heating oil, including those in work but on low incomes, and that a letter should also be sent to the UK Treasury asking for further support.

22. REQUEST FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON GREENWAYS CONSULTATION

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and wellbeing detailing that following an update report to Community and Wellbeing in February 2022 relating to the Council's Greenway Network project(s), the Council agreed to the following amendment to the Officer's recommendation at its meeting on 23rd February.

That was that Council agree with the recommendation but to include that officers bring back a report with further details on the appropriateness of, and any possibility for further public consultation in relation to the Comber to Newtownards Greenway scheme, with particular reference to the route to be followed by that greenway.

The report was in response to that amendment being agreed to by Council.

Comber to Newtownards and Newtownards to Green Road, Bangor schemes.

Planning permission was sought over 2 years ago for Comber to Newtownards and Newtownards to Bangor (Green Road). The Council held public meetings and undertook a significant pre application community consultation (PACC) exercise for the Comber to Newtownards Section in determining the detail of the eventual application. Section 27 of The Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 and Regulation 5 of The Planning (Development Management) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 required that applications for all major developments must comply with the PACC process. That was to ensure that communities were made aware of and had an opportunity to comment on development proposals before a planning application was submitted.

Following the PACC process verified by the Planning Service as meeting legislative requirements, the final routes for both Greenways were determined and planning applications with detailed designs submitted. The report on the consultation undertaken was attached for information.

As well as the general public, landowners involved were consulted individually and draft legal heads of terms drawn up. Most of that took place between 2016 and 2019. The detailed design got underway with changes to the proposed routes made that were agreed with the public at those meetings and through the other consultation exercises that were undertaken as detailed in the report.

The consultation exercise resulted in changes to the routes that were now proposed to be developed, with updated routes as follows

- a) to run along part of the A21 near Comber,

b) to run along to the east of the Bangor Road from Whitespots to Bangor, instead of through the Clandeboye Estate and Clandeboye Avenue to Helens Bay.

Both changes were approved by the Council and the planning applications then submitted.

The Council agreed to the business cases with the details of the routes and their design for those in July 2021, which were then submitted to the Department of Infrastructure as part of the request for funding. A response from DFI was expected this year to add to the offer the Council had already received from Levelling up based on those routes.

Officers believed that it was not appropriate to carry out further consultation at this late stage therefore, for the following reasons.

1. We carried out an extensive consultation exercise already which included residents meetings. Those at times were difficult but resulted in the route that had now been agreed and for which planning permission had been submitted.
2. The Council in July signed off the business cases for the scheme and submitted it to the DFI in order to secure grant funding for the agreed scheme. The Council had met with Dfi over that and been in correspondence with the Permanent Secretary on signing it off.
3. Planning permission may be imminent for the schemes as submitted.
4. The Council agreed to apply for and had received a letter of offer for a significant amount of funding towards both schemes under the Levelling Up fund, and this was time bound. To propose further consultation which would cost additional resources would further delay the scheme and may therefore result in the Council losing the opportunity, certainly the funding, altogether.
5. As described above, a further approach to the public about the route would aggravate some landowners who were opposed to the scheme on their land. By taking advice, and Councils general indication which asked the Council to avoid vesting, it developed an alternative route and had landowners who were in agreement on board now. There would be concern over reputational damage to the Council if it was to effectively rerun the exercise. It would not be fair to landowners between the wastewater treatment works and Island Hill to suggest again that the route may run through those lands considering the very clear objections made and the fact that there was an alternative.
6. The Council was not getting any significant pressure from the public over the scheme. There had been justifiable queries and concerns and those had resulted in holding meetings with local residents. At this point in time issues

were being addressed. It was not comparable in any way in that respect with the North Down Coastal Path scheme which was the reason for the amendment to consult further being brought to the Council. The scheme was at a much earlier stage.

7. As both applications were still live within the planning system there remained an opportunity for the public to respond to the planning applications. The Council was continuing to discuss the detailed routes with landowners, and that may produce some slight alternations. The Council was and would continue, to respond to any request for information and/or questions raised by any member of the public who corresponded with the Council, either through the planning process or directly with officers.

However, an amendment to the detail of the route near the carriageway section may be possible within the existing redline of the planning application, on DFI land, to ensure that the route was as far away as possible from the roadside and possibly hidden from view. That may require further capital investment, but discussions with DfI were taking place in relation to that currently to assess its feasibility and cost.

RECOMMENDED that the Council acknowledges the extensive public consultation that has taken place in relation to the extension to the Comber Greenway and the advanced stage of development that this project has now reached and the risks to the project outlined above from entering into further public consultation at such a late stage.

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

Councillor Boyle thanked the Director and his team for bringing back the report promptly and he appreciated the detail within it. He acknowledged that the project was at an advanced stage of development, and he did not wish to put that in jeopardy but hoped to ensure that the route should be as far as possible from the roadside and possibly even hidden from view. He asked if there would be further reports to the committee.

The Director confirmed that there would be. He confirmed that officers had had a meeting with the Department for Infrastructure the previous week and discussed the route alongside the carriageway and a shared path and greenway specifically. The detail was still being worked upon but improvements had been made and the plan was better than what had been proposed up until now. There would be an additional cost, but it was believed that it was worth the investment. The Department was the only consultee to comment on the new plan, and the report would come back to committee for information on the detail once agreed.

Alderman Menagh stated that he had always been supportive of the Greenway but that he could not support that being close to the road.

Councillor T Smith asked to be noted as abstaining.

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

23. NOTICES OF MOTION

23.1 Submitted by Councillor T Smith and Councillor Brooks

That this Council recognises the great anger from residents regarding the proposed closure of Play Parks contained in the Play Strategy. This Council notes the strong public opposition from residents in Donaghadee, Groomsport, Ballywalter and beyond - including a petition signed by nearly 1700 people as well as hundreds of letters and emails opposing the plans. The people have spoken and this Council must demonstrate that it listens. Therefore, we make it clear that this Council will not close any play parks as recommended by the Play Strategy. Also, given concern around Pinks Green, the Council confirms that it has no intention of disposing of this land which is a very valuable asset for the residents of the town and the Borough. When the Play Park Strategy was first proposed, one option was to proceed with the Strategy but without making any of the closures that the report contained. We believe this is the best way forward. We should not only maintain the parks that we have but, as laid out in the Play Strategy, build, maintain and upgrade them for the future.

New wording submitted by the proposer Councillor T Smith and Councillor Brooks: (Proposal)

"That this Council recognises the great anger from residents regarding the proposed closure of Play Parks contained in the Play Strategy. This Council notes the strong public opposition from residents in Donaghadee, Groomsport, and beyond - including a petition signed by nearly 1,700 people as well as hundreds of letters and emails opposing the plans. The people have spoken and this Council must demonstrate that it listens. Therefore, we make it clear that this Council will not close the play parks in Donaghadee and Groomsport as recommended by the Play Strategy. In relation to the play parks at Pinks Green and Donaghadee we note that the play strategy states:

" Donaghadee (Population 6,869)

In Donaghadee there is an overprovision of play areas. The play area at Pinks Green is considered surplus and will be removed given its proximity to Lemons Wharf. Given the proximity of Beechfield and Northfield alongside the provision at Lemons Wharf, Beechfield is considered surplus."

This Council rejects that there is an overprovision of play areas in Donaghadee and we reject that Beechfield and Pinks Green play parks are surplus to requirements. We also reject the recommendation to removal the play park at Springwell in

Groomsport should the play area at the sea front in the village be upgraded. We believe the Springwell play park is important to the surrounding residents. We recognise that other play areas outside of the Bangor East and Donaghadee area are also under threat of closure. We would encourage other members, who represent those areas, to amend this motion to include these play parks if they are of the opinion they should be retained. Also, given concern around Pinks Green, the Council confirms that it has no intention of disposing of this land which is a very valuable asset for the residents of the town and the Borough. Play areas are an essential part of local lives throughout the Borough and we should retain the play parks mentioned above. We believe that not only should retained but properly maintained and, as laid out in the Play Strategy, we should continue to invest in and build new play areas for the future.

Proposed by Councillor T Smith, seconded by Councillor Brooks that the Notice of Motion be adopted.

Councillor T Smith stated that the play strategy accepted by the Council was that Donaghadee had an over provision of playparks and he, and the people of that town, disagreed with that. Pinks Green was considered surplus given its proximity to Lemons Warf and Beechfield was also considered to be surplus to requirements. He thought that rather than looking to the future the Council should consider present needs. The same position was being taken in Groomsport where Springwell playpark which was used by local residents and was now considered to be surplus. He called for the Council to lift the threat of closure of playparks. These were important decisions for local communities who used them. Summer was coming and the playparks would be used greatly, they were free to use and were needed now more than ever and there to be enjoyed. He urged the Council to not rob families and children of these facilities and disagreed with that part of the strategy.

In seconding the Motion, Councillor Brooks did not wish to add anything further to what he had said at previous meetings.

Councillor Edmund proposed an amendment, which was seconded by Councillor MacArthur

"That this Council notes the strong public opposition to reports on the passing of the Play Strategy and the possible implications this might have on a number of existing play parks; That Council tasks officers to carry out local consultations where actions are to be considered under the Play Strategy prior to final decisions being taken by Council on those actions. This is to ensure that the local residents have their say on decisions that affect their local area and that those opinions are properly informed and based on the facts pertinent to that area".

Councillor Edmund referred to the change to the original Motion but believed that slicing it was unhelpful. He was putting forward his own amendment to it to ensure that consultation was embedded within the Motion. He stated that despite the

misinformation that had been spread local consultation was occurring. His amendment would follow up those assurances. Referring to Portaferry and the threat of closure in that area the decision had been reversed following consultation and would not now happen. This strategy was a roadmap, but he did not feel that it needed to be set in stone. The aim of the strategy was to provide improved provision across the Borough for all ages and he wanted local people to be involved in that conversation about how the strategy would shape their own areas. The strategy had a goal of widening facilities across age groups and opening up play facilities and engagement would take place throughout that transformation. In order to allay fears he put forward the requirement for the Council to have the final say on each measure. That meant that the strategy could be retained as the roadmap but the Council could make determination based on the weighting of local responses and other material considerations that were relevant at that time. The final determination of steps would be taken by the Council and that would apply across the Borough rather than be limited to Groomsport and Donaghadee which only focussed concerns locally.

If his amendment was passed he hoped it would go some way to address the fears and concerns of local residents who had taken the time to sign petitions and email Members. He did feel that those concerns had unjustifiably been stoked up and he trusted the specific requirement for local consultation which would be helpful in allowing the Council to develop play provision in all the towns and villages to see facilities improved.

Councillor MacArthur did not wish to rehash old ground and she was sure that Councillor T Smith and the Mayor were on the same page when it came to children and the value of play. Play was important and so was taking a pragmatized approach to play provision. She wanted to see playparks being the best they could be and also inclusive to all children. There was a fabulous park at Lemons Warf but not all were inclusive for those children who were paraplegic or who were on the autistic spectrum. She did not wish to see a section of the community being left behind and pointed out that good playparks were more than a slide and a swing.

She had the best interests of the area at heart, and it was incorrect to suggest that everything in the strategy would happen since consultation was central to the delivery of the strategy and stoking up fear within communities was pointless. She was passionate about the development of playparks in Donaghadee and making them the best that they could be. Indeed 84% of respondents had indicated that there was not enough provision for older children. She supported Councillor Edmund's amendment to work through the strategy rather than slice it by ensuring that public consultation was central to delivery.

Councillor Smart certainly agreed with Councillor MacArthur about her comments around the importance of play and how the Council needed to adapt to the ever-changing needs of the Borough. There were currently insufficient facilities for older children in terms of play and he hoped we the Council could address that and make

playparks the best that they could be. Consultation was absolutely right since the strategy had come up with recommendations and it was right that the community had its say and it was his understanding that that was already entrenched within the strategy.

The Director confirmed that what was being suggested fitted with the strategy implementation plans. Council would consult where there were major changes proposed, ie where the strategy proposed closures, new facilities, or relocation of existing playparks, but would not consult on every upgrade or refurbishment of an existing park in situ as that was normal business. That would make the process unworkable.

Councillor Mathison was happy to support Councillor Edmund's amendment on that basis and did not see the need for the Council to tie its hands. It had been clearly articulated that any significant change would require consultation with the local population and the final decision would rest with those who had been democratically elected. He pointed out that this was a long-term strategy and gave flexibility to ensure the right decision was made at the right time and also ensured that local voices could be heard.

Alderman Irvine believed that Councillor Edmund's amendment was well meaning but that the Motion as proposed was a lot more focused since it identified the concern about those three playgrounds in Donaghadee and it took them out of the strategy.

Councillor Kendall stated that when it had been discussed at the previous committee a petition of 1700 spoke volumes to her while the consultation itself received far fewer signatures. She thought that the people seemed to have raised their voices already and did not see how Councillor Edmund's amendment could make any difference.

Councillor Chambers asked if there had not already been assurances to the people of Donaghadee and Groomsport about consultation. The Director confirmed that he had received a number of letters and replied to those which had provided an address confirming that the Council would consult before carrying on. Councillor Chambers asked why the Council could not make improvements while still protecting the playparks that already existed in Donaghadee and Groomsport.

Councillor Boyle believed that Members should be more mature than currently and remember that the play strategy was for the Borough as a whole and the Council's intention was to improve and invest across the Borough. The strategy had been brought back telling what the priorities were and that nothing significant could be implemented in any area without a full consultation. He said that he would support Councillor Edmund's amendment.

In summing up Councillor T Smith said that he had listened to comments and went back to the strategy which had suggested that there was an over provision in Donaghadee and he did not believe that to be true. He urged the Council not to close any playparks.

On Councillor Edmund's amendment being put to the meeting with 11 voting For, 4 voting AGAINST and 1 Absent it was declared CARRIED.

FOR (11)	AGAINST (4)	ABSENT (1)
Alderman	Aldermen	Alderman
Menagh	Irvine	Carson
Councillors	Councillors	
Boyle	Chambers	
Douglas	Kendall	
Edmund	T Smith	
Egan		
Johnson		
Mathison		
MacArthur		
McRandal		
Smart		
Thompson		

The new substantive motion was therefore agreed.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Edmund, seconded by Councillor MacArthur, that this Council notes the strong public opposition to reports on the passing of the Play Strategy and the possible implications this might have on a number of existing play parks; That Council tasks officers to carry out local consultations where actions are to be considered under the Play Strategy prior to final decisions being taken by Council on those actions. This is to ensure that the local residents have their say on decisions that affect their local area and that those opinions are properly informed and based on the facts pertinent to that area.

23.2 Notice of Motion submitted by Alderman McIlveen and Alderman Gibson

That Council in recognition of Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee year names the park on the Comber Road in Ballygowan "Platinum Jubilee Park".

Proposed by Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Alderman Gibson, that the Notice of Motion be adopted.

Alderman McIlveen referred to the list of events that had been prepared to mark the fantastic achievement of Her Majesty the Queen on her Platinum Jubilee which had been brought the Corporate Committee the previous evening.

He noted that many of those events were centred in Bangor and there were events in Newtownards with a beacon trail. However, he believed that the event should be marked across the Borough. There was a park in Ballygowan that did not have a name and he thought that it would be suitable to name it Platinum Jubilee Park to honour the anniversary. He explained his family connection with Ballygowan and his sister had brought the Notice of Motion to establish the original park on that site. Naming the park as such would be a permanent marker of the Queen's phenomenal achievement and was unique since it was highly unlikely it would ever happen again.

(Councillor T Smith and Councillor Egan left the meeting at 9.57 pm)

Alderman Gibson was happy to support the Motion and had lived in Ballygowan for over 70 years. He explained the history of the site which had once been a quarry and had a hole of deep water where young people had played, indeed on one occasion someone had lost their life in that area. In 1972 Ards Borough Council had assigned the area to be a landfill site with the result of flies and vermin in the area. In 2005 Councillor M McIlveen had pushed for it to become a park and the area had been vented and the gases removed so that they could not escape into the surrounding area. Many people in Ballygowan saw this as an important community park with its seating areas and trees. In 1952 Alderman Gibson explained that he had been a young baby at the Queen's Coronation, and he hoped that the Motion would receive unanimous support.

Councillor Chambers thought it highly unusual that the park currently had no name. He believed that the naming of the park as such marks her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee in a respectful and appropriate way. He also suggested that it would be worthwhile to erect a plinth in the park explaining how it got its name so that future generations would be aware of the area's history.

Councillor Boyle fully supported the Motion and he thanked Alderman Gibson for the history lesson. He wanted the Council to do all it could for the people of Ballygowan and believed that naming it after Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee was welcome and he wished the Motion every success.

Alderman Irvine also fully supported the Motion believing that all areas of the Borough should share the celebration of the Platinum Jubilee and that this was a fitting addition to the programme of events.

Councillor Mathison was in agreement and considered this gesture to be a fitting, simple and straightforward way to mark the Platinum Jubilee year.

Councillor MacArthur also gave her support stating it was a great legacy to the younger generation and he thanked the Councillors for bringing forward their Motion.

Councillor Edmund spoke to remind the committee that the country might never see this again and he praised the Queen's loyalty and sense of duty to the nation over her long reign.

Alderman McIlveen thanked the committee for their kind words and agreed that this was a simple and straightforward Motion. He also agreed that appropriate signage at the park explaining why the name had been chosen would be welcomed.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Alderman Gibson, that the Notice of Motion be adopted.

(Councillor Egan re-entered the meeting at 10.08 pm)

24. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

(a) Verbal Update on Ards Citizens Hub Capital Project

The Director stated that Members would recall that this capital project had been signed off a year previously. The Council was looking at how it could use Queen's Hall which included the Public Library and the Billiards Club, Newtownards Town Hall, and Regent Street which housed the VIC. He informed the meeting that an Outline Business Case had now been completed.

However further to a recent Council decision, he reminded that committee that the report would not be brought to the Community and Wellbeing Committee. Instead, it would be brought to the next meeting of the Strategic Policy and Finance Group at the end of March, along with the OBC on the civic / office accommodation project as the two were interlinked. This would be before both being taken through the Corporate Committee and Council for approval of an option and next steps and investment decisions.

NOTED.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

AGREED, on the proposal of Councillor Boyle, seconded by Councillor Edmund, that the public/press be excluded from the meeting.

(Having declared an interest in Item 25 Alderman Irvine and Councillor Chambers left the meeting at 10.20 pm)

25. NORTHERN COMMUNITY LEISURE TRUST Q3 2021-2022

(Appendix 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)

26. TENDER APPOINTMENT OF INSOURCING CONSULTANT

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)

Arising from Item 12 - Leisure Services Service Plan 2022-2023

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

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

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

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

The Head of Environmental Health Protection and Development thanked the committee for working with him over the last seven years since Ards and North Down Borough Council had been formed. He had worked for various Councils for almost 39 years and he wished Councillors and officers well for the future. He explained that everyone was aware that individuals were not always on the same page but they had a common goal with different ways to get the work done.

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 10.31 pm.

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

A meeting of the Audit Committee was held virtually via Zoom on Monday 21 March 2022 at 7.00pm.

PRESENT:-

In the Chair: Alderman Wilson

Councillors:	Armstrong-Cotter	McClellan
	Douglas	McRandal
	Gilmour	P Smith
	McAlpine (7.08pm)	

Independent Member: Mr T McGonigal

In Attendance: ASM – J McCallion
Deloitte – C McDermott
NIAO - A Allen

Officers: Chief Executive (S Reid), Director of Finance and Performance (S Christie), Head of Finance (S Grieve) and Democratic Services Officer (P Foster)

1. APOLOGIES

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

Apologies were noted from Alderman Gibson, Councillor Blaney, David Kinsella – Deloitte and Christine Hagan – ASM.

NOTED.

2. CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting including the internal and external auditors to the Committee from the Northern Ireland Audit Office, ASM and Deloitte. Continuing he also expressed his thanks to the Vice Chairman for stepping in at the December 2021 Committee meeting in his absence.

NOTED.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairman asked for any Declarations of Interest at this stage and none were made.

NOTED.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

(a) Audit Committee Minutes from December 2021

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Douglas, seconded by Councillor Armstrong-Cotter, that the minutes be noted.

(b) Actions Register (File AUD02) (Appendix I)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Finance and Performance detailing that in line with best practice, the purpose of this report was to make the Audit Committee aware of the status of outstanding recommendations or any outstanding actions from the previous Audit Committee meetings.

It was noted there was one item from the previous committee, which had been completed.

RECOMMENDED that the Committee notes the report.

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

5. EXTERNAL AUDIT

(a) Annual Audit Letter 2020/21 (Appendix II)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Northern Ireland Audit Office outlining the Annual Audit letter for the Council for 2020/21.

RECOMMENDED that the report be noted.

At this stage, Mr Allen, provided members with a detailed overview of the report which included matters such as Audit of Financial Statements, Audit on Economy, Efficiency & Effectiveness and Governance.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Armstrong-Cotter, seconded by Councillor Douglas, that the report be noted.

(b) S95 Audit and Assessment report 2021/22 and certificate (Appendix III)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Northern Ireland Audit Office detailing the Audit and Assessment report for the Council for the period 2021/22, also letter dated 28 February 2022 and Certificate of Compliance.

RECOMMENDED that the report be noted.

At this stage, Mr McCallion, thanked the Chief Executive and his staff for their assistance and hard work and proceeded to provide members with a detailed overview of the report. He highlighted that the Auditor had been unable to assess whether Council was likely to comply with Part 12 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 (the Act) during 2021-22 due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on normal services. It was further noted that in respect of Statutory recommendations, the Auditor had made no statutory recommendations however there had been five new proposals made for improvement.

(Councillor McAlpine joined the meeting at this stage – 7.08pm)

At this stage the Chairman sought questions from members.

Picking up on the issues raised in respect of the Council's Consultation process, Councillor Douglas sought further details asking particularly if this was an issue for all Council consultations undertaken.

In response Mr McCallion confirmed that the Council did not have a specific consultation strategy stating the number of weeks required for consultations. He indicated that some other Councils did have a strategy. Furthermore it was noted the consultation period for the 2021-21 PIP ran for only three weeks, which was a reduction from four weeks in the 2019-20 process, however he acknowledged that may have been impacted by the Covid 19 pandemic.

Councillor Douglas referred to major criticism directed towards the Council about recent consultations undertaken.

Councillor Douglas was aware that currently the Council could be open to challenge and as such she would welcome the development of a consultation strategy.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Douglas, seconded by Councillor P Smith, that the report be noted.

(c) Draft Audit Strategy 2021/22 (Appendix IV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Northern Ireland Audit Office detailing the Draft Audit Strategy for the Council for 2021/22.

RECOMMENDED that the report be noted.

At this stage, Mr McCallion, provided members with a detailed overview of the report highlighting the Key Messages and Audit Risks.

The Chairman sought questions from members.

Referring to Section 3 of the report, Audit Approach, Mr McGonigal noted the key accounting changes introduced by the 2021-22 Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom (the Code) including the Reframing the Code requirements in terms of UK-adopted standards rather than EU adopted standards,

reflecting the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union. He commented that he would have assumed there would have been very little in the way of changes.

Mr Allen informed Mr McGonigal that element of the report had been undertaken by another section of the team and as such he would report back to him on that point. He added that he would not have anticipated there being any major changes made to this.

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

6. INTERNAL AUDIT

(a) Internal Audit Progress Report (Appendix V)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from Deloitte detailing the Audit Committee progress on the following service areas (reports attached at appendix):

- i. Supplier Payments
- ii. Organisational Development
- iii. Policing Community Safety Partnerships (PCSP)
- iv. Grant Funding
- v. Waste Services
- vi. Customer Service
- vii. Bi-annual Follow up March 2022

RECOMMENDED that the reports be noted.

Ms McDermott, Deloitte, summarised the progress report which had been tabled confirming that all planned audits had now been completed. She expressed her gratitude to Council staff for their assistance throughout the audit process and proceeded to guide members through the reports for each of the service areas.

i) Supplier Payments

Ms McDermott highlighted the salient points and audit priorities within the report and noted there were no Priority 1 recommendations, two Priority 2 recommendations and one Priority 3 recommendation with an overall Satisfactory level of assurance given. Ms McDermott provided members with a brief synopsis of each of those Priority findings before seeking queries from members at this stage.

Referring to Supplier Payments, Councillor P Smith commented that it would normally be necessary to have either a Purchase Order or Cost Code to enable a payment to be progressed.

Ms McDermott confirmed that a manual system for that was currently in place, however it was being suggested that new finance system would support the process better.

The Head of Finance added that the section's Service Plan included reference to the provision of a Business Case for the introduction of such a system.

Mr McGonigal referred to the Management responses to the report and suggested that future reports detailed such responses as either: Accepted, Rejected or Partially Accepted. Continuing he noted two actions points had been described as not feasible by management and sought further clarification on that.

The Director of Finance & Performance stated that generally management accepted all recommendations and if it was felt that it could not then this would be specifically drawn to the attention of the committee. Alluding to the recommendations referred to, the Director indicated that they had been accepted and the first step to implement would be the development of a business case for the purchase of a new finance system. He added that in such cases it was probable that some recommendations could take considerable time to implement.

Mr McGonigal quoted directly from the report which indicated management had said a recommendation 'was not feasible'.

The Director of Finance & Performance reiterated that the recommendation in that case had been accepted but a business case would need to be developed in order to implement it.

At this stage the Head of Finance confirmed that the recommendation had been accepted in principal and added that currently a manual system was in place which mitigated the level of risk.

ii) Organisational Development

Ms McDermott highlighted the salient points and audit priorities within the report and noted there were no Priority 1 recommendations, one Priority 2 recommendation and five Priority 3 recommendations with an overall Satisfactory level of assurance given. Ms McDermott provided members with a brief synopsis of each of those Priority findings before seeking queries from members at this stage. There were no questions from members.

iii) Policing Community Safety Partnerships (PCSP)

Ms McDermott highlighted the salient points and audit priorities within the report and noted there were no Priority 1 recommendations, two Priority 2 recommendations and two Priority 3 recommendations with an overall Satisfactory level of assurance given. Ms McDermott provided members with a brief synopsis of each of those Priority findings before seeking queries from members at this stage.

Mr McGonigal noted the projected sign off date of March 2023 in respect of the introduction of electronic sign offs and suggested that was something which should already be taking place due to new working arrangements introduced as the result of the Covid 19 pandemic.

In response the Director of Finance & Performance indicated that he would liaise with his PCSP colleagues on this matter and report back to Mr McGonigal in due course. He suspected that it may be a typographical error within the report.

iv) Grant Funding

Ms McDermott highlighted the salient points and audit priorities within the report and noted there were no Priority 1 recommendations, three Priority 2 recommendations and three Priority 3 recommendations with an overall Satisfactory level of assurance given. Ms McDermott provided members with a brief synopsis of each of those Priority findings before seeking queries from members at this stage. There were no questions from members.

v) Waste Services

Ms McDermott highlighted the salient points and audit priorities within the report and noted there were no Priority 1 recommendations, no Priority two recommendations and four Priority 3 recommendations with an overall Satisfactory level of assurance given. Ms McDermott provided members with a brief synopsis of each of those Priority findings before seeking queries from members at this stage. There were no questions from members.

vi) Customer Service

Ms McDermott highlighted the salient points and audit priorities within the report and noted there were no Priority 1 recommendations, two Priority 2 recommendations and one Priority 3 recommendation with an overall Satisfactory level of assurance given. Ms McDermott provided members with a brief synopsis of each of those Priority findings before seeking queries from members at this stage.

Mr McGonigal noted a March 2023 Target Date for implementation throughout the report and sought clarification on the rationale for that.

Ms McDermott commented that she felt a target date of March 2023 was reasonable as training would need to be carried out. Furthermore she noted that a lot of work had already been carried out by the team throughout the past year with a lot of good progress made.

vii) Bi-annual Follow up March 2022

Ms McDermott highlighted the salient points and audit priorities within the report and referred to the Summary Update for the Status of Implementation of Internal Audit Recommendations which detailed the following:

- Total open issues as at last Audit Committee report – December 2021 – 68
- Items added to the tracker since the last Audit Committee meeting as at 31/01/2022 – 8
- Issues closed / superseded since the last Audit Committee meeting – 10
- Issues remaining open as at 31/01/2022 –
Priority 1 – 4

Priority 2 – 30
Priority 3 – 31

Continuing Ms McDermott informed members of 57 Total Overdue Issues adding that Appendix I detailed those Target Dates for Implementation. Ms McDermott sought questions from members at this stage and there were none.

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

(b) Annual Assurance Statement 2021/22 (Appendix VI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from Deloitte detailing the Council's Annual Assurance Statement 2021/22.

RECOMMENDED that the report be noted.

At this stage, Ms McDermott, provided members with a detailed overview of the report before seeking questions from members.

Mr McGonigal commented that he found some of the tables within the report a little confusing. He noted that in Table 1 of the recommendations there were 14 in total and asked if those had been added to the Tracker in the previous document.

Ms McDermott advised that once this report had been formally finalised and approved by the Audit Committee it would be added to the Tracker at that point.

At this stage Mr McGonigal sought further clarification on some of the items to be added to the Tracker and Ms McDermott outlined when that would take place.

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

(c) Draft Internal Audit Plan 2022/23 (Appendix VII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from Deloitte detailing the Council's Internal Audit Plan 2022/23.

RECOMMENDED that the report be noted.

At this stage, Ms McDermott, provided members with a detailed overview of the report highlighting three new audit areas those being:

- Labour Market Partnership
- Planning for New Ways of Working in Post Covid Environment
- Strategic Environmental Planning

Ms McDermott sought queries from members at this stage, however there were none.

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

7. PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT

(a) 2021/22 Performance Improvement progress report to 31 Dec 2021 (File 260501-03) (Appendix VIII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from Director of Finance and Performance stating that the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 Part 12 put in place a new framework to support continuous improvement in the delivery of council services. The Council was required each year to determine its priorities for improvement which were aligned to the Community Plan and Corporate Objectives and to publish those in the format of an Improvement Plan.

In the 2020/21 year the requirement to publish a Performance Improvement Plan was set aside and for the 2021/22 year the publication date was extended to September.





The Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) for 2021/22, identified 5 improvement objectives with a corresponding 33 measures including 7 Statutory Indicators and 6 self-imposed indicators, all were included in the Council’s Service Plans and were monitored and reported on quarterly through each Service’s respective Standing Committee.





It should be noted that this report reflected performance of the PIP only and was not necessarily representative of the overall performance of the organisation.

The following table gave an assessment of the status across all measures in the PIP and overall progress at this point was on track.

Performance Assessment Key

The key outlined below provided definitions for the three Red, Amber, Green (RAG) status levels which had been chosen to measure progress.

RAG Status	Definition
	Target/standard, actions and measures are of concern and are mostly falling short of plan
	Target/standard, actions and measures are mostly on track, but some are falling short of plan
	Target/standard, actions and measures are on track
	Rescheduled/no progress owing to impact of Covid

Corporate Plan PEOPLE priority	Improvement Objective	No of measures			
					

PROSPERITY	▶ We will grow the economy and create jobs		-	-	7
ENVIRONMENT	▶ We will improve the cleanliness of the streets in our borough by targeting littering and dog fouling incidents	1		2	-
	▶ We will improve recycling rates from Household Recycling Centres (HRCs)		1	1	-
LIFE	▶ We will support our businesses and residents to protect and improve their health and wellbeing	1	-	-	4
EXCELLENCE	▶ We will use technology to drive change		-	2	1
STATUTORY INDICATORS	▶ Municipal Waste		6	1	-
	▶ Economic Development				
	▶ Planning				
SELF-IMPOSED INDICATORS	▶ Resident Satisfaction	-	-	-	1
	▶ Prompt Payment of Invoices	-	-	-	3
	▶ Average number of working days lost per employee	-	-	-	1
	▶ % staff attendance	-	-	1	-
OVERALL		2	7	7	17

Detailed information on progress against each of the measures could be found in the Appendix to the report. Information on performance against the PIP 2021/2022 could also be found on the Council's [website](#) following ratification of this report.

RECOMMENDED that the report be noted.

Councillor P Smith proposed, seconded by Councillor Douglas, that the recommendation be adopted.

The proposer, Councillor Smith, acknowledged the two main areas of concern where Waste and Planning and he sought clarity on how those issues could be taken forward.

In response, the Director of Finance & Performance advised that a performance report in respect of Waste issues was considered by the Council's Environment Committee on a quarterly basis. In respect of Planning matters those issues highlighted were long standing ones whose targets had never been met and he reassured members that matters such as those were taken seriously by the Council.

While appreciating those issues were complex matters, Councillor Smith commented that the only issue was that this tool before them highlighted those key issues and areas of concern.

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

8. CORPORATE RISK REGISTER (FILE AUD02) (Appendix IX)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from Director of Finance & Performance stating that the Corporate Risk Register (CRR) was a live document which was amended as required to reflect new or changing risk factors. The CRR had been

updated to reflect the current status of controls with associated amendments together with any further actions required. Minor amendments were not included in the report.

Two new actions had been included under CR4 to reflect actions required in consideration of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The Executive Office were developing a Situation Report to identify and report any impacts flowing from this crisis. They were also developing a dashboard to similar to the CIVID dashboard. This would be reviewed and monitored for potential for supply chain issues, or risks that may affect the operation of Council services or impact the Borough. It was also noted that risks of cyber-attack may increase as a direct result of this crisis.

Despite the removal of Regulations, there were no substantive amendments to reflect the risks and responses to the COVID-19 pandemic (primarily reported under CR14, with substantial references in CR4 and CR6). As a health and organisational risk, the Council must ensure that measures continued to reflect its obligations arising out of health and safety legislation and the need to maintain services. Arrangements were kept under review to ensure account was taken of regional and local transmission rates in addition to the current guidance. Whilst transmission rates continued to be high, and there had been significant infection numbers amongst Council staff, the measures had ensured that there had been little transmission within the workplace with low impacts on service provision. Working from home arrangements had also allowed some staff to continue to work effectively. The responses to this risk had also resulted in some positive impacts with innovations and changes in working practices that could be considered for inclusion in "return to normal" plans.

Updates within Version 18, March 2021:

CR1 Updated to reflect the recent review of the Community plan and the 10 priorities agreed by the strategic partnership, as well as the current progress on producing an Assessment of Wellbeing for the Borough and the appointment of a Data and Evidence Analyst.

Further Actions reflect the ongoing work emanating from the current controls, including the intention to publish the Assessment of Wellbeing, revision and improvement of the Performance Scorecard, the creation of a reliable database, and development of a mechanism to report on whole population indicators to show progress made.

CR2 The AND Update publication is to be reintroduced in April 2022. Focus groups are ongoing for the new Our People Plan, the coaching and mentoring programme has recommenced. In addition, Heads Together communication sessions have been facilitated for teams/services across Council to discuss hybrid working and how services will be provided in the future. The Customer Service Excellence working group is back in operation and officers are currently working on producing a new Customer Services Strategy for the Council.

- CR3** Updated with further action to recruit additional qualified accountants to increase capacity and resilience within the finance section.
- CR4** Current Controls have been updated to reflect that refresher training of Council's emergency response plan was carried out with HOST/CLT in January 2022. In addition, a Safety Advisory Group has been established for the concert to take place in Ward Park, August 2022. Additional sandbag containers have been provided, they are now in place at Groomsport, Ballywalter, Portavogie and Portaferry in order to provide community support for flooding incidents.
- Further actions have been updated to include monitoring of potential impacts of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, including specifically supply chain issues and any other potential impacts, as well as giving effect to any actions deemed necessary to maintain services in light of any potential escalation of the crisis. An overarching Business Continuity Plan is in development and a roll out of Business Impact Analysis have begun.
- The Gross Risk has increased from 15 to 16 to bring it from medium to high risk, this is to demonstrate the potential high impact of a major incident if the current control measures were not in place. Whilst the Coronavirus pandemic remains to have potential for major impact the measures in place have resulted in a low impact and continuance of the provision of Council Services so that this risk would not be a significant (high) influencing factor in the Residual Risk at this time. The Residual Risk has, however, remained the same given that the Business Continuity piece has not been concluded and the potential risk of the Ukraine crisis cannot be accurately assessed at this time, but has the potential for significant impacts.
- CR5** The Customer Service Excellence Strategy action plan is in place and regularly reviewed, under future actions this risk has been updated to include that the Customer Service Excellence Strategy is being created, the Events Panel is to be reintroduced and that customer service/complaints training will be included in new starters' inductions.
- CR6** This has been updated to state that Drugs and Alcohol at Work policy training has been provided to all employees and managers. The interim home working policy has been introduced, return to office arrangements will continue to be reviewed in light of the ongoing pandemic. Implementation of a new incident management software suite is ongoing.
- CR7** Several policies have been included for finalisation as future actions. In addition, a business case is to be developed in relation to consideration of introducing an Electronic data and records management system.
- CR9** Under further actions for this risk an entry on reviewing the standard Council and committee report template to see if there is a possibility of

providing greater clarity for members on any financial or other corporate risk implications of the matter discussed in the report.

- CR13** This risk has been updated with a considerable list of further actions related to cyber security, including the need for a Cyber security action plan to be agreed, the need to review potential sources of risk across the organisation and the need to create "play books" to manage any incidents that do occur. With the implementation of agile working there will need to be an assessment and mitigation of risk associated with this specifically.
- CR14** This risk has been updated to include the possibility of future pandemics, in addition under future actions an item has been added to assess and mitigate the risk associated with agile working, as for CR13. Under current controls references have been added to the Councils medium term financial strategy which is in place.
- CR15** As the Core2 system has now had the main payroll and HR elements launched successfully the residual risk has now a lower likelihood of failure of the system, as such the residual risk has dropped to 5, which puts it in the category of a risk that can be tolerated. Consideration will be given to removing CR15 from the register in the next review.

RECOMMENDED the amended Corporate Risk Register be noted.

Councillor Douglas proposed, seconded by Councillor P Smith, that the recommendation be adopted.

The proposer, Councillor Douglas, referred to new regional emergency planning arrangements in place and the need for lobbying for appropriate legislation and clarity with regard to the role of Council in emergency response and recovery. She asked what was in place in terms of managing refugees and suggested that consideration needed to be given to the creation of a central hub and outreach facilities.

The Director of Finance & Performance suggested that issues such as this were not included in the Corporate Risk Register, risks which were perceived as potentially having a severe impact on the Council if they materialised were included. He suggested the issues raised by Councillor Douglas would therefore not form part of the Corporate Risk Register at this time.

(Councillor Gilmour left the meeting at this stage – 8.19pm)

Councillor Douglas referred to the situation with Afghan refugees which had resulted in a lot of negativity within her own District Electoral Area and subsequently had put the Council on a back footing on this matter. She indicated that she would be keen for this to be considered by the Council perhaps through the Community & Wellbeing Committee.

At this stage Mr McGonigal referred to Page 23 of the report which detailed CR13 Breach of Cyber Security and asked if the Council currently had in place insurance against cyber-attacks.

In response the Director of Finance & Performance indicated that he believed the Council had no specific insurance against cyber-attacks.

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

9. MEETING SCHEDULE AND WORK PLAN 2022/23 (FILE AUD02)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Finance & Performance stating that in order to assist the Committee with its oversight responsibilities a suggested meeting schedule and work plan had been prepared.

Meeting Date	Agenda Items
27 June 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft Financial Statements Review • Governance Statement Review • Statements of Assurance Update • Review of Terms of Reference
19 September 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audited Financial Statements Approval • Draft Report to those charged with Governance • Corporate Risk Register Review • Internal Audit Contract Tender
12 December 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final Report to Those charged with Governance • Final Audit Letter • Improvement Audit and Assessment Reports • Interim Statements of Assurance Update • Internal Audit Contract Tender
20 March 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Internal Audit Report • Draft Internal Audit Plan for 2023/24 • Review of Corporate Risk Register • Meeting Schedule and work plan 2023/24

In addition there were standing items on the agenda:

- Declarations of Interest
- Follow-up actions from previous committee meetings
- Outstanding Audit Recommendations Follow-up
- Performance Improvement Progress
- Internal Audit Update

- Single Tender Action Update
- Fraud, whistleblowing and data breaches update

RECOMMENDED that Council approves the work plan for the 2022/23 financial year.

At this stage, the Head of Finance, provided members with a brief overview of the report.

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

10. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

The 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 Douglas, seconded by Councillor McClean, that the public/press be excluded during the discussion of the undernoted items of confidential business.

11. SINGLE TENDER ACTIONS UPDATE (FILE 231329)

IN COMMITTEE

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

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

12. FRAUD, WHISTLEBLOWING AND DATA-PROTECTION MATTERS

IN COMMITTEE

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

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

CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS

13. MEETING WITH NI AUDIT OFFICE AND INTERNAL AUDIT SERVICE IN THE ABSENCE OF MANAGEMENT

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

The Chief Executive, Director of Finance & Performance, Head of Finance and Democratic Services Officer all withdrew from the meeting during the discussion of the item (8.27pm).

NOTED.

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, that the public/press be readmitted to the meeting.

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 8.28pm.

Dear All

RE: CONSULTATION ON MINIMUM UNIT PRICING FOR ALCOHOL IN NI

I am writing to inform you that the Department of Health has today launched a public consultation on the introduction of Minimum Unit Pricing for Alcohol in Northern Ireland. This was a specific commitment from Minister Swann and a key action in our new 10-year substance use strategy "**Preventing Harm and Empowering Recovery: A Strategic Framework to Tackle the Harm from Substance Use**" which was launched on 07 September 2021.

The full consultation document and link to the online response questionnaire can be found on the DoH website at: www.health-ni.gov.uk/MUP-consultation.

We are now seeking views from partners and the general public on proposals to introduce legislation to enact Minimum Unit Pricing (MUP) of Alcohol in Northern Ireland. Everyone with an interest is encouraged to respond to the consultation on this important policy proposal.

Your views are sought on:

- the overall policy aim of reducing the harm alcohol causes;
- if, of the pricing options considered, MUP for alcohol is the most effective way of achieving the policy aim;
- what information or evidence should be considered when setting a MUP for alcohol and the level MUP should be set at initially;
- if the level of the MUP should be varied over time and, if so, how;
- the mechanisms for setting the MUP, including the formula and how it will be monitored; and
- any other information that you feel should be taken on board in respect of the policy or the various impact assessments?

The Closing Date for responses is Tuesday 17 May 2022.

Alternatively you can respond directly to Health Development Policy Branch either by email at: HDPB@health-ni.gov.uk or by writing to us at:

Health Development Policy Branch
Department of Health
Room C4.22
Castle Buildings

Stormont Estate
BELFAST
BT4 3SQ

Following this consultation, we will collate and analyse all views and inputs, which will allow the Minister to decide on the way forward. We hope you will take the time to respond to this consultation – we really welcome your views.

Please feel free to circulate this notification as widely as you deem appropriate.

Thank you.

Barry McCrory

*Health Development Policy Branch
Department of Health
Room C4.22
Castle Buildings
Stormont Estate
BELFAST
BT4 3SQ*

Tel: (028) 9052 0540

E-Mail: hdpb@health-ni.gov.uk



MAKING LIFE BETTER

Dear Consultee

Re: Public Consultation on the temporary changes to Urgent and Emergency Care services at Lagan Valley Hospital, Lisburn

The South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust has launched a public consultation about the temporary changes to Urgent and Emergency Care Services at Lagan Valley Hospital, Lisburn.

On Monday 18 October 2021, opening hours at the Lagan Valley Hospital Emergency Department were temporarily changed from 8am – 8pm Monday to Friday, to 8am – 6pm Monday to Friday. A 'Phone First' service was also introduced on this date.

The decision to reduce the opening hours by two hours a day, was taken by the Trust in response to the significant shortage of suitably qualified emergency medical staff and the ability to maintain high quality standards of care for patients. Patient safety remains the Trust's key priority and there was no alternative to making this decision. We would like to assure you that the Trust is continuing to try to recruit new medical staff to support our Urgent and Emergency Care services at Lagan Valley Hospital.

The 'Phone First' service involves patients being assessed by a senior doctor over the phone and ensures people receive the right care, first time. This system is being implemented across the region and is consistent with the Department of Health's strategy for Urgent and Emergency Care services which is expected to be published shortly.

Whilst continuing to focus on providing high quality care for patients, the Trust needs to consider the best way to be able to provide safe, sustainable and clinically appropriate Urgent and Emergency Care services. The Trust believes that these changes can, and will continue to meet the needs of the community safely, and is hopeful that they will provide a better experience for patients attending the Lagan Valley Hospital Emergency Department.

The Trust remains committed to the Lagan Valley Hospital and recognises how important it is to the people of Lisburn and surrounding areas. The Hospital has a key role providing a comprehensive range of inpatient, day case and outpatient services. In addition to these core services, the Lagan Valley site will be further enhanced by a new Primary and Community Care Centre which will bring together a full range of GP, community care and hospital services. The Hospital is also the first dedicated Regional Day Procedure Centre and provides vital planned day surgery to patients from right across Northern Ireland.

The Trust would like to consult with you on how the organisation proposes to deliver Urgent and Emergency Care services at Lagan Valley Hospital.

As part of the consultation, there will be a range of opportunities for staff and the local community to give their views. Details of the consultation including the consultation document and consultation questionnaire can be found on the Trust's website at:

<https://setrust.hscni.net/getinvolved/consultations/>. Alternatively, if you would like us to send you a copy of the consultation document please contact the Trust on 028 9055 0434 or email consultation@setrust.hscni.net.

In keeping with the commitments in our Equality Scheme we have carried out an Equality Screening of this proposal. We have also carried out a Rural Needs Impact Assessment. A copy of the Equality Screening Template and Rural Needs Impact Assessment can also be found on the Trust's website.

If you have any queries about these documents, and their availability in alternative formats (including Braille, audio and minority languages) please contact:

Strategic & Capital Development Department
South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust
Kelly House
Upper Newtownards Road
Dundonald
Belfast
BT16 1RH

Tel: 028 90550434

Text Phone: 028 91510137

E-mail: consultation@setrust.hscni.net

The consultation period will run from 23 February 2022 to 22 April 2022. Comments should be submitted by the closing date. The Trust will also be holding an online listening event. Further information and details on how to register can be found at www.setrust.hscni.net/getinvolved/consultations/.


Comments made during the consultation process will be considered carefully and feedback will be provided.

Please forward this email to any stakeholders who you think may also wish to participate in the consultation.

The Trust is keen to hear your views and looks forward to engaging with you.

Yours sincerely

Naomi Dunbar
Interim Director of Planning, Performance and Informatics

 South Eastern Health
and Social Care Trust



Northern Ireland Insolvency Service

2 March 2022

Dear Consultee,

CONSULTATION ON PROPOSALS TO RAISE THE ELIGIBILITY CEILINGS FOR THE DEBT RELIEF SCHEME

The Department for the Economy has today launched an eight week consultation seeking views on proposals to increase the monetary eligibility limits for entry to the debt relief scheme.

The consultation document and all associated papers are available to view or download from the Department's website at <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/consultations/proposed-increases-monetary-eligibility-limits-debt-relief-orders-northern-ireland>

Please contact Eileen Glenn, eileen.glenn@economy-ni.gov.uk if you require this document in hard copy, or in an alternative format- e.g. Braille, disk, audio cassette or in a minority ethnic language.

The closing date for responses to the consultations is 28 April 2022

Eileen Glenn
Legislation Unit
Insolvency Service
Department for the Economy
Fermanagh House
Ormeau Avenue
Belfast BT2 8NJ
Eileen.glenn@economy-ni.gov.uk

Email received 15.03.2022

Good afternoon

The Justice Minister launched a public consultation on the 11th March 2022 to consider further measures to tackle modern slavery and human trafficking.

The consultation considers the following areas

Slavery and Trafficking Risk Orders

The commencement and nature of the Duty to Notify provisions

New powers to search an individual during a property search under existing modern slavery and human trafficking legislation.

Further information on the public consultation can be found at the link below . Any views provided through the public consultation will help inform consideration of the proposed measures in the new mandate

<https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/news/modern-slavery-and-human-trafficking-long-launches-consultation>

Regards

Richard

Richard Black

Modern Slavery Human Trafficking Branch | Safer Communities Directorate | Department of Justice, Room 4.20 Castle Buildings, Stormont Estate, Belfast, BT4 3SG, T: 028 9052 8680 ext28651 | Email: Richard.Black@justice-ni.gov.uk | M: 07599101103

From: DoH Pharmacy Consultations <Pharmacyconsultations@health-ni.gov.uk>

Sent: 16 March 2022 17:50

Subject: Publication of consultation on hub and spoke dispensing

Dear colleagues,

Following a government commitment to pursue legislative change to enable all community pharmacies to benefit from 'hub and spoke' dispensing models, with the intention of supporting efficiencies for pharmacies and freeing up pharmacists and their teams for other tasks, a consultation has been launched today and will run for 12 weeks, closing on 8 June 2022. It seeks views on key areas, including patient safety, governance, transparency and accountability.

Hub and spoke dispensing is where parts of the dispensing process are undertaken in separate pharmacy premises. Typically, there are many 'spoke' pharmacies to one 'hub' pharmacy. The concept is that the simple, routine aspects of assembling prescriptions can take place on a large scale in a 'hub' that usually makes use of automated processes. This means that pharmacists and other staff in the 'spokes' are freed up to provide more direct patient care. Currently it is only possible when the hub pharmacy forms part of the same retail business as the spoke pharmacy.

Some of you may have attended the hub and spoke engagement sessions which the Department of Health and Social Care held last year. The sessions were designed to seek your views in order to help shape a consultation about proposed changes that would facilitate the use of hub and spoke between pharmacies of different legal entities.

The consultation, including full details of the proposals, and how to respond are available [here](#) . All interested parties and stakeholders are encouraged to complete the survey and share their views.

We would also be grateful if you could share this information with your colleagues encouraging them to respond to the consultation to enable a full range of views to be obtained. If you could please forward this email, rather than sharing the link directly, that would be most appreciated.

Thank you

Regards

Cathy Foster

From: DoH Pharmacy Consultations <Pharmacyconsultations@health-ni.gov.uk>

Sent: 21 March 2022 16:15

Subject: UPDATED Introduction of Statutory Regulation of Pharmacy Technician workforce in NI Consultation [UNSCANNED]

Dear Colleague,

Please find attached updated consultation of the Introduction of Statutory Regulation of Pharmacy Technicians in NI.

The consultation, including full details of the proposals, and how to respond are available here:

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/consultations/introduction-statutory-regulation-pharmacy-technician-workforce-northern-ireland>

We would welcome your views on this consultation.

Kind regards,

Aislinn McAlister | Professional Regulation | Workforce Policy Directorate | Department of Health

From: Kelly, Roisin <Roisin.Kelly@health-ni.gov.uk>

Sent: 23 March 2022 15:50

Subject: Public Consultation and EQIA - Review of Urgent and Emergency Care in Northern Ireland

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organisation. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

Please see a link below to a public consultation and draft EQIA, from the Department of Health NI, on the Review of Urgent and Emergency Care in Northern Ireland. The consultation opened on the 16 March 2022 and will run until the 15 June 2022.

[Consultation on Review of Urgent and Emergency Care Services in Northern Ireland | Department of Health \(health-ni.gov.uk\)](#)

We would very much welcome your feedback as part of this public consultation exercise. If you have any questions about the consultation please let us know.

Best regards,
Roisin

Roisin Kelly
Communications and Engagement Lead
Hospital Services Reform
Annexe 3, Castle Buildings
BT4 3SL

ITEM 9.1

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Council/Committee	Council
Date of Meeting	30 March 2022
Responsible Director	Chief Executive
Responsible Head of Service	
Date of Report	21 March 2022
File Reference	
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Subject	National Association of Councillors Conference, Leisure & Tourism, The Royal Hotel, Scarborough, 8th-10th April 2022
Attachments	

The National Association of Councillors (NAC) is holding a Leisure & Tourism conference at the Royal Hotel, Scarborough, from the 8th – 10th April 2022. NAC has provided the following information:

"As we come out of the pandemic changes are happening in the Leisure & Tourism industry. Leisure & Tourism is an important contributor to the national and local economies of the UK.

This conference will look at ways local authorities operate leisure services and drive tourism. This sector provides essential jobs for the local population and this impacts on the majority of our Local Authority areas. Ways of supporting the industry need to be continued or in some cases increased to help protect this vital part of the economy.

This event will provide opportunities to hear quality speakers from Local Government & the Tourism industry, participate in Q&A sessions and contribute to conference workshops. The conference will benefit elected members from every tier of local government."

The event costs £350 plus VAT per Member attending, accommodation is available at £70 plus VAT per night, and there would be the cost of flights in addition to this.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council considers whether it wishes to nominate a Member(s) to attend the NAC Conference.

Unclassified

283

ITEM 10**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Council/Committee	Council
Date of Meeting	23 March 2022
Responsible Director	Chief Executive
Responsible Head of Service	
Date of Report	08 March 2022
File Reference	
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable <input type="checkbox"/>
Subject	Request for Deputation from NI Housing Executive - Housing Investment Plan
Attachments	

The NI Housing Executive have been in touch to seek a date to present their annual Housing Investment Plan to Council. They have sought a suitable date between 15 August and 28 October 2022.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council agrees to the deputation request from the NI Housing Executive and refers to this to Corporate Services Committee on 13 September 2022.

Alison McCullagh
Chief Executive



Fermanagh & Omagh
District Council
Comhairle Ceantair
Fhear Manach agus na hÓmaí

Our Ref: Democratic Services

Date: 11 March 2022

Email: democratic.services@fermanaghomaght.com

Mr Stephen Reid
Chief Executive
Ards and North Down Borough Council
Townhall
The Castle
Bangor
BT20 4BT

Dear Mr Reid,

Re: Free School Meals

At the Regeneration and Community meeting held on 8 March, Members asked that I write to all Councils in Northern Ireland to seek their support for its request that the Northern Ireland Executive introduce a scheme for all school children in Northern Ireland to receive a free school meal.

The Council trusts you will give this issue due consideration and looks forward to receiving your response.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Alison McCullagh".

Alison McCullagh
Chief Executive

Unclassified

285

ITEM 12**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Council/Committee	Council
Date of Meeting	30 March 2022
Responsible Director	Director of Organisational Development and Administration
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Administration
Date of Report	02 March 2022
File Reference	LP
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable <input type="checkbox"/>
Subject	Request from Upper Ards Orange District No.11 to use Crommelin Park, Donaghadee
Attachments	Map

The Council has received a request from the Upper Ards Orange District No. 11 to use Crommelin Park on Saturday 9th April from 4pm to 8pm to commemorate 100 years since the formation of Northern Ireland.

The parade will assemble in the park at 5pm where there will be a short platform address. It will then leave the park at 6pm and parade around Donaghadee then finish at Crommelin Park at 7.15pm. The organisers anticipate that approximately 500/600 people will be in attendance.

Officers have been consulted and have no issues. Officers did advise that the organiser must be aware that the event must be restricted to the hardstanding area.

In addition, permission should be subject to the following:

1. Receipt of a risk assessment and event management plan.
2. A bond of £500.00 must be paid prior to the event, which will be refunded following a satisfactory inspection of the area by a Council officer after the event has left the site.

Unclassified

286

3. Display public notices before the event to notify the public that said event is due to take place in the area. Signage to be agreed in advance with appropriate Council officer.
4. Public notices must be removed after the event within seven days.
5. Provide appropriate welfare facilities at own cost.
6. Provide evidence of relevant insurances and fully indemnify Council against all risks associated with the use of land or property.
7. Make good any damage caused during the use.
8. Put in place protective measures for areas where important natural heritage is present.
9. Arrange for the collection and subsequent removal, and where appropriate, recycling of all litter and other debris from the main event and adjacent areas during the event, as well as once the event has concluded, however, should the Council have to do any additional cleaning the costs will be recovered from the Organiser.
10. Organiser to put in place plans for recycling waste
11. Arrange for the prompt removal of any items used in connection with the event
12. Put in place plans to limit any negative impact on the public using the land at the same time as the event.
13. Provide evidence of permits/licences/registrations and approvals, where required.
14. Indemnify the Council against all claims which may result from the event or use of the area and provide the Council with a copy of the relevant insurance policy.
15. Ensure that only the designated area, or areas specified by Council officers are used for the event.
16. Ensure that adequate marshals are placed throughout the designated area so as members of the public are not endangered by the event.
17. Where electric supplies are being used this must be agreed in advance with Council officers. Additional costs may apply depending on the services required.
18. Comply with any other relevant legislative provision.
19. No petrol generators are to be used.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council accedes to the request subject to the organisers agreeing to the conditions detailed above.

Crommelin Park



Legend

- Pointer - Updated 02/02/2022
- AND Borough Boundary

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Scale: 1:1,250
Date: 02/03/2022
Author:

Unclassified

288

ITEM 13**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Council/Committee	Council
Date of Meeting	30 March 2022
Responsible Director	Chief Executive
Responsible Head of Service	
Date of Report	03 March 2022
File Reference	CX181
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable <input type="checkbox"/>
Subject	Annual Somme Pilgrimage 2022
Attachments	

On 1st July 2022 it will be the 106th anniversary of the Battle of the Somme and Members will be aware of the strong connection of this to the Borough.

The Council has participated annually in the commemoration events at the Thiepval Monument, Ulster Memorial Tower and the Memorial at Guillemont. This has usually also included wreath laying at the Menin Gate, Ypres and, in 2018, the dedication of a new memorial to the 36th (Ulster) Division and 16th (Irish) Division at Essigny Le Grand. There is also the opportunity to visit the Island of Ireland Peace Tower at Messines and lay a wreath in the honour of Edmund de Wind VC at Pozieres British Cemetery.

In line with previous years, it is recommended that the Council approves the attendance at the commemoration events from 30th June to 3 July 2021 of the Mayor (or if unable to travel the Deputy Mayor), another Member and an Officer.

RECOMMENDATION

1. It is recommended that the Council approves the attendance at the annual Battle of the Somme Commemorations in 2022 of the Mayor (or if unable to travel the Deputy Mayor), another Member and an Officer.
2. It is recommended that the Council nominates the other Member.

Unclassified

289

ITEM 14**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Council/Committee	Council
Date of Meeting	30 March 2022
Responsible Director	Director of Regeneration, Development and Planning
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Regeneration
Date of Report	10 March 2022
File Reference	RDP39
Legislation	n/a
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable <input type="checkbox"/>
Subject	Infrastructure 2050 - Draft Investment Strategy for NI Consultation Document
Attachments	Appendix 1 - Ards and North Down Borough Council Consultation Response

Background

As previously reported at the Regeneration and Development Committee on 3 March 2022, the Draft Infrastructure 2050 – Investment Strategy for NI Consultation Document has been released.

The Strategy sets out the current state of NI's infrastructure, identifies where it needs to be and proposes what is needed to get there. It defines the strategic investment priorities and demonstrates how to make best use of its resources. The strategy takes a long-term view, looking forward to 2050.

The recommended Council response is outlined in Appendix 1.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council agrees the attached Council response to the Infrastructure 2050 Draft Investment Strategy for NI consultation.

Infrastructure 2050 - Draft Investment Strategy for NI Consultation Document Ards and North Down Borough Council response

QUESTION 1

Do you agree with our vision for infrastructure? If not, what would you change?

Yes, on the assumption that 'enabling' covers the wider approach and processes that are required to realise this vision. This includes fundamental changes in for example the way NI delivers planning policy, supporting legislation, partnership models for delivering such capital projects, etc. Also, that 'everyone' includes not just those who live in Northern Ireland, but also those who work, invest and visit.

Also on the assumption that the focus on delivering for those who live in NI will therefore provide sufficient and quality infrastructure which also meet visitor needs to ensure NI is competitive in the global marketplace.

There is also a need to ensure a focus on sustainability, blue green connectivity, coastal protection and active travel.

QUESTION 2

Do you agree with our assessment of the challenges that we will face with our infrastructure over the next 30 years? If you disagree, why? And what do you think are the challenges and why?

Yes, however the issue in relation to rural needs and connectivity is missing. Although approximately 65% of the population is deemed to live in urban areas, 35% live in rural areas with the main landmass in NI being rural in nature.

Recent global events have emphasised the need to accelerate the sustainable energy agenda, active travel, and a better infrastructure to support essential services is required to meet the needs going forward.

QUESTION 3

Do you agree that these five key investment objectives address the challenges? If not, what would you consider to be the key investment objectives?

Yes, however, as Northern Ireland is coastal in nature, a focus on Coastal Erosion should also be specially included.

There are significant challenges in decarbonisation, both at a government level and encouraging at a household level. This includes fleet management, waste treatment, reliance on fossil fuels. Flood management and coastal erosion also need to be considered.

QUESTION 4

Are these the investment priority areas we need to focus on to decarbonise our economy and society? If not, what are the investment priority areas that will help decarbonise our economy?

It is noted that 'travel' is one of the largest contributors of Carbon, however Northern Ireland is within an island and requires flights/ferries for transportation of certain goods and realisation of key parts of our economy, most notably tourism. Government needs to ensure the strategy does not work against tourism aspirations, and likewise still protect the unique environment and assets that make Northern Ireland unique and appealing to visitors in the first place.

Also, there is a need to be aware that a significant proportion of the Northern Ireland population do not live within urban centres and that the current public transport provision is not adequate to meet their needs, this needs to be affordable, accessible and regular to shift the reliance on private cars. Without significant investment, both in terms of capital as well as ongoing revenue, it is unlikely that public transport solutions could be found to resolve these issues. Although policies can encourage more people to live within urban areas, it is likely that there will still be a reliance on the private car, thus investment in adequate electric charging networks across Northern Ireland is key, these should be accessible in suitable locations and rapid, fast charging.

Coastal erosion is a key challenge for Northern Ireland, it would be good to see what is actually going to be undertaken in this regard strengthened within the Strategy.

As tourism continues to recover and grow post pandemic, visitors will expect sustainable experiences, products and services when choosing destinations for travel. Tourism businesses and infrastructure must be able to meet this demand to remain competitive. Current infrastructure relating to public transport does not support sustainable travel within and around NI. Rental companies and modes of transport will be key to consumer choices – more access to bikes, cycle lanes, walking routes and connecting routes to rural areas to ensure visitor dispersal. Many of the NI tourism assets are coastal and protection of those via mitigations or adaptations will be vital to retain what is unique and special to NI for generations of the future.

Significant investment is required in technological advances to reduce the reliance on fossil fuels, hi-tech sustainability businesses should be given investment priority as the province moves to a more sustainable strategy. How investment in infrastructure is managed and the use of materials will be key to improving our communities and demonstrating to the public the benefit of a more sustainable approach to all services.

QUESTION 5

Are these the priority areas we need to focus on to strengthen our essential services? If not, what do you think are the investment priorities that will strengthen our essential services?

Significant transformation of the healthcare system is required with more recognition for mental health support. Primary care hubs should be enhanced with innovation in response services required. Learning and education requires innovative solutions to deliver a quality workforce matched to industry needs and emerging technologies, there is a huge opportunity in the sustainable technologies and services sector to match the decarbonisation agenda. Wastewater treatment must adhere to the highest standards with major penalties for non-compliance and contamination.

QUESTION 6

Are these the investment priority areas we need to focus on to enhance our communities and places? If not, what do you think are the investment priorities that will enhance our communities and places?

The location of public sector services and administration centres to support the regeneration of town centres needs to come through stronger as a key investment priority. Central Government could truly help the regeneration of town and village centres through the relocation of services such as Medical Centres/GPs and central Government services, this objective needs to be embedded within all Business Cases for capital spend projects. For example, the Department for Education administration facility in Balloo Industrial Estate, Bangor, and the Medical Centre/GP practices at Abbey Street Bangor are both not fit for purpose and capital investment business cases are being undertaken. The objective to help the regeneration of Bangor town centre should be one of the key objectives within both these businesses cases. Also, the lessons learned from the Scotland Review in terms of strengthening Planning Policy, tax initiatives and funding schemes to support town centre regeneration also needs to come through stronger in the priority areas.

The transfer of Regeneration powers and the promised budget to Local Council also needs to be a key action.

By regenerating our key urban and rural towns and villages for local populations they will also be attractive to visitors who will stimulate further spend within businesses. The right mix of authenticity regarding the inherent characteristics of each town or village will determine the level of attractiveness for a visitor – good access, active travel, open spaces, services, cultural, leisure opportunities and safe streets should be fundamental to creating thriving welcoming places. Accessibility and pedestrianisation should be highlighted to reduce the carbon footprint and encourage sustainable transport. The use of vacant sites and spaces requires all stakeholders, at all levels with an inter-Governmental approach as well as local stakeholders.

Active travel must be prioritised with greenways and active travel hubs to promote and encourage participation. Housing mix is vital with a good balance of social -v- privately owned housing, encouragement for town centre living should also be a

priority to encourage footfall and enhance vibrancy. Accessible sports, art and culture need to be encouraged as participation for all, a separate stream can be developed for elite athletes.

With increasing housing stock in most areas as per BMAP, such as evidenced in Comber and surrounding areas, there are significant increased demands on utilities on these areas and the increased commuter flow, infrastructural demands all need to be addressed and balanced for new developments.

QUESTION 7

Are these the investment priority areas we need to focus on to build a strong, competitive and connected region? If not, what do you think are the investment priorities that will help build a strong, competitive and connected region?

The development/investment of airports and ports is key to the economic growth of Northern Ireland, both for the transport of goods as well as business and leisure visitors. To remain competitive in the global marketplace the routes into high quality transport hubs are vitally important. To ensure a share of the tourism coming to the island is dispersed, good travel connections between north and south is a requirement. High quality digital infrastructure across NI is also key to support business growth, new ways of working and visitors.

The leverage of key strategic development sites is very important, and we would suggest that Kinnegar Logistics site should also be highlighted within the Strategy. Currently owned by the MOD, who have declared the site surplus to needs, it sits within a strategic location beside Belfast Port and George Best Belfast City Airport, with the potential to support a number of major NI Investment initiatives including for example NIW's vision and plans for a new state of art Wastewater Treatment Centre and the Belfast Power Station plans for low-carbon power generation. The site also has the potential to support a high number of jobs in line with the Government 10X strategy.

City and Growth Deals must align with this investment strategy to optimise budgets and integrate strategies for effective delivery.

Key for visitors and the growth of tourism is development/investment of airports and ports. To remain competitive in the global marketplace the routes into high quality transport hubs are vitally important. To ensure a share of the tourism coming to the island is dispersed, good travel connections between north and south is a requirement. High quality digital infrastructure in all places is a visitor necessity as bookings, ability to move freely, proof of various requirements (e.g., possible continuation of passports, vaccine status) cannot be prohibitive in any manner. It is a visitor expectation in the global marketplace.

Strategic transport corridors are fundamental for the growth of the economy and for connectivity for visitors, travel connectivity needs to be available from key arterial routes to town and rural connections. Digital infrastructure will be essential for delivering jobs in new sustainable technologies and redistribution of Government Departments

in areas of need should also be a priority. With ongoing difficulties of rolling out effective full fibre broadband, the challenge of reaching rural areas is significant.

Also, in the context of outlying areas, a significant amount of investment has been forthcoming in our town centres and villages across the borough. Securing improved full fibre broadband could be a positive development in establishing localised business hubs thereby reducing unnecessary travel and reducing the carbon footprint.

QUESTION 8

Are these the investment priority areas we need to focus on to maximise the benefits from emerging technologies? If not, what do you think are the investment priorities that will maximise benefits from emerging technologies?

The digitalisation of public services is key, but these services also need to be able to interact and interlink with each other. This will in turn save costs, make the system more effective and efficient, improve the user journey and ensure that big data is robust and easier to access and use. Also need to ensure these are accessible to the population, particularly as the population is ageing and many live in rural locations with limited digital infrastructure.

Tourism innovations in technology are an expectation of customer – Smart cities and the Internet of Things afford opportunities in developments and can a key role in the NI tourism experience.

Digital innovation should be driven through the public sector with access to hot desking and substantive reviews of infrastructure and property for key service delivery. A new blended model of delivery should offer digitised solutions, and either diversification of assets or divesting assets. Smart towns can optimise digital solutions and ensure connectivity, another iteration should be smart villages. There needs to be a recognition of the UK industrial and R&D strategy to ensure we have a skilled workforce trained locally to match employment opportunities, preferably within the local area.

QUESTION 9

How should we prioritise between maintaining or upgrading existing assets and new aspirations?

As outlined in the Strategy, there is the requirement to balance between the funding need to upgrade existing assets and new. This needs to be done on a case-by-case basis, as well as at a programme level and NI level. Co-ordination across capital plans at all levels is key, as is the need to consider new approaches, ways of working, partnerships, and delivery models. The programme needs to be agreed by all partners, with regular reviews on a 10-year rolling programme.

QUESTION 10

How should we communicate with consultees on projects that present affordability challenges, and thus may require alternative funding and financing to be utilised?

Decisions should be based on evidence, with open and transparent processes. Communications shouldn't come as a surprise and partners should be involved in the process. There needs to be collective and shared capital programmes, with a willingness to look at new delivery/operating models and ways of working. The culture, budget, policies, and processes need to support this, with public sector working together across all departments and levels (central and local).

QUESTION 11

Do you agree with the proposed prioritisation criteria? If no, then what changes would you suggest?

Delivering the outcomes and supporting the vision for economic return, healthy and vibrant town centres needs to be strengthened. Also, question as to whether these prioritisation criteria will enable and encourage new innovation ways of working.

QUESTION 12

What level of engagement should we have with consultees on project milestones and delivery progress once a project has been programmed for delivery?

Individual projects should have a communication and stakeholder engagement plan to ensure effective communications across the lifetime of the project. The Programme level also needs to ensure effective communications, particularly as outlined so that the construction industry and education sector are geared up and ready to support the Strategy. However, this should not only be providing information, but also undertaking engagement so that both parties understand the opportunities and challenges.

In terms of the planning process, statutory response times delay and prolong decision making, consideration should be given to how can this process improve.

QUESTION 13

Do you agree that the proposals we have set out will adequately measure progress and impact? If no, then how should we measure progress and impact?

The Strategy outlines the challenges with several key areas that require reform to ensure the effective delivery of the Strategy, for example Planning Policies. It is not clear how the measurements will take into account potential issues arising from areas such as Planning. Likewise with Public Procurement. How will this be measured to ensure public procurement, which is currently viewed by many as adding time and expense, is actually delivering value?

QUESTION 14

Do you agree that the proposed accountability and oversight structures will support successful delivery? If no, then what other proposals should we consider?

There is a need to ensure that any oversight structure adds value in terms of more joined up projects, innovation ways of working and ultimately more effective use of public infrastructure expenditure. Its shouldn't just be about ensuring the budget/programme is on track, but also asking the fundamental questions of 'why are we doing this', 'what the outcome will be' and 'is there a more effective way of achieving this'.

QUESTION 15

Do you agree with the process and the findings of the draft EQIA and Rural Needs Impact Assessment (RNIA)? If no, then please explain why.

No comment

QUESTION 16

Are there any other issues or inequalities that have not been highlighted in the draft EQIA or RNIA that you believe need to be noted? If yes, then please explain what they are.

No comment

QUESTION 17

Are there any other comments or suggestions that you think are relevant to help us develop and deliver the Investment Strategy?

There are a number of key Strategy areas that need to be addressed to enable the effective delivery of the Strategy. For example, the reform of the NI Planning Act, as outlined in the recent NIAO Report, needs undertaken urgently. As does a new approach to budgeting by Central Government and the willingness to look at new innovative working models and approaches to delivery. How Government procures these projects should also be reviewed, not just to add new criteria into a procurement exercise, but a fundamental review to ensure best value both in terms of budget, as well as time, risk and outcome.

Unclassified

297

ITEM 15**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Council/Committee	Council
Date of Meeting	30 March 2022
Responsible Director	Director of Regeneration, Development and Planning
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Regeneration
Date of Report	01 March 2022
File Reference	RDP15
Legislation	N/A
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable <input type="checkbox"/>
Subject	Portavogie Harbour EIS Tender Award
Attachments	None

As previously reported the Council has been awarded a SEAFLAG grant of £250,000 to deliver an environmental improvement scheme at Portavogie Harbour. The planning application and tendering process is ongoing.

Due to a lengthy response period from the statutory consultees as part of the Planning process, the timeframe for the works to be completed is now extremely tight. The following is the draft timeline:

Seek Council approval for Delegated Authority to R&D Committee	30 March 2022
Report to R&D Committee on tender process	7 April 2022
Call-In Period Ends	Circa 20 April 2022
Voluntary Standstill Ends	Circa 25 April 2022
Award letter i.e. date of contract	Circa 26 April 2022
Pre-start meeting	W/C 02 May 2022
Contractor completion of procurement of materials [4weeks]	Assume completed by the 27 May 2022
Assume lead in time of 20 weeks [Street lighting columns are expected to the longest]	Assume W/C 10 Oct 2022
Assume site works start on site beginning of October 2022 ending in the middle of December 2022 – 10-week duration.	Assume start W/C 03 Oct 2022 with completion 09 Dec 2022

Unclassified

298

SEAGFLAG has advised that, as the programme spend must be completed by 31 December 2022, there is no opportunity for extensions or increased grant.

It is important that the contract be awarded as quickly as possible to achieve the required deadline.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council agrees to grant delegated authority to the Regeneration and Development Committee to award the tender contract at its meeting of 7 April 2022, following the tender process.

Unclassified

299

ITEM 16**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Council/Committee	Council
Date of Meeting	30 March 2022
Responsible Director	Director of Organisational Development and Administration
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Administration
Date of Report	10 March 2022
File Reference	LP37
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable <input type="checkbox"/>
Subject	Request to light up Council buildings for World Parkinson's Day
Attachments	

The Council has received a request from Parkinson's UK (NI) to light up Council buildings blue on Monday 11th April 2022 and annually thereafter.

There are almost 4000 people living with Parkinson's in Northern Ireland and Parkinson's UK also has a group supporting these people and their families in our Borough - North Down Support Group.

This year, Parkinson's UK, right across the UK, is making a concerted effort to get as many buildings as possible to Light Up Blue to raise awareness of Parkinson's UK. They hope that by lighting up a significant number of public buildings in Northern Ireland that people will wonder why and learn more about Parkinson's. They have a number of prominent buildings confirmed - and hope that local press will take interest in the campaign. More information about the campaign can be found here: <https://www.parkinsons.org.uk/get-involved/world-parkinsons-day>

The current lighting up policy states that requests for the lighting up of Council buildings are deemed eligible if they are from: -

Unclassified

300

- Charitable, community or other non-profit making organisations based in or with a significant connection to the Borough and which are celebrating a significant anniversary or occasion.

RECOMMENDATION

As this request meets the policy requirements, it is recommended that Council accedes to the request and lights up Council buildings blue on 11th April 2022 and the date is added to the annual schedule.

ITEM 19**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Council/Committee	Council
Date of Meeting	30 March 2022
Responsible Director	Chief Executive
Responsible Head of Service	
Date of Report	23 March 2022
File Reference	CG 12172
Legislation	Local Government Act (NI) 2014
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Subject	Notices of Motion
Attachments	Notices 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.

NOTICE OF MOTIONS UPDATE – MARCH 2022

TO BE POPULATED BY DEMOCRATIC SERVICES							
DATE RECEIVED	NOTICE	SUBMITTED BY	COUNCIL MEETING DATE	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	24/06/15	Corporate Services Committee – October 2015	Agreed	March 2022 Corporate Services Committee	Update sought at Jan Council – to be reported to April CSC
21/1/19	Shelter at slipway in Donaghadee	Councillor Brooks & Cllr Smith	Council – January 2019	Environment Committee	Agreed	TBC	
25/9/19	Report on feasibility of holding annual remembrance service for those lost to suicide	Councillor Martin	Council – October	Corporate Services – November 2019	Agreed	Reported to CSC January 2020. Further report to come back	
16/01/20	Closing of a public right of way at Andrew Shorefield, Groomsport	Alderman Keery	Council – January 2020	Corporate Committee – February 2020	Agreed	Reported to CSC in March and	

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						October 2020. Further report to follow.	
16/01/20	Installation of CCTV for Donaghadee with costings	Alderman Keery	Council – January 2020	Environment Committee – February 2020	Agreed	TBC	
27/2/20	Council opposes money spent on Irish Language Act	Councillor Cooper	Council- June 2020	Corporate Committee – August 2020	Agreed	SoS reply reported to and noted by Nov 2020 CSC	Letters sent to SoS and NICS Perm Sec. SoS reply reported to CSC. NICS Perm Sec reply awaited.
3/3/20	Management of Sand Dune Systems in Cloughy and Portavogie	Councillor Adair	Council – June 2020	Community and Wellbeing Committee – September 2020	Agreed	Report on sand dunes to CWB in January 2021 – complete.	Coastal Erosion Forum meeting took place and information to be

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							considered for scoping out report to be brought back to Members. Site meeting organised for 8 April 2022
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	Councillor Brooks	Council October 2020	Community & Wellbeing Committee – December 2020	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

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	involve consultation with the local community.”						back a report thereafter.
22.10.20	Officers to work with the National Trust to develop and regenerate the Park Land adjacent to Greyabbey Village Hall as potential village renewal scheme.	Councillor Adair	Council November 2020	Regeneration and Development - December 2020	Agreed	Awaiting ratification by March Council of the Small Settlements Scheme report submitted to March RDC	Officers working with the National Trust and key stakeholders to review potential options and report will be brought back to future Council.
8 April 2021	Council to source funding for Millisle Lagoon and Beach Park	Councillor Thompson and Councillor MacArthur	Council April 2021	Regeneration and Development Committee - September 2021	Agreed	Awaiting ratification by March Council of the Small Settlements Scheme report submitted to March RDC	Officers working up report for Council consideration

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19 April 2021	Flying of Union Flag on all Council buildings and war memorials all year round. Flags at half mast on death of any monarch or any other member of the Royal Family or Prime Minister of the UK for the period of mourning.	Councillor Cooper	Council April 2021	Corporate Committee – September 2021	Agreed that a debate deferred until report is brought back with further detail	March 2022	
10 May 2021	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	23 June 2021	Environment Committee – October 2021 (deferred from September Committee)	Agreed	TBC	

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17 May 2021	Loughview Cemetery, Comber - It is requested that officers bring back a report outlining a proposal for the design, costs and positioning of a sign that is comparable to other graveyard signs throughout the Borough. Furthermore, that the report also includes the option of planting flowerbeds or similar at the entrance to the cemetery on the Ballygowan Road.	Alderman Girvan & Councillor Cummings	23 June 2021	Community & Wellbeing Committee -October 2021 (deferred from September Committee)	Agreed	TBC	
17 May 2021	That this Council recognises the value of providing Changing Places facilities and agrees to request a Report on the feasibility of creating such a facility within the public toilet building in Donaghadee. The report should reflect the specific requirements for a	Councillors Walker & Brooks	23 June 2021	Environment Committee – October 2021 (deferred from September Committee)	Agreed	April 2022	

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	Changing Places toilet, the level of demand at this site, potential costs and possible external sources of funding. Additionally, it should highlight how users might be aware of the new facility including via the Changing Places and Euan's websites. This report should be used to inform a Borough- wide review of provision of Changing Places.						
25.8.2021	That this Council acknowledges the need to react in a timely manner to littering problems on all lands for which it has litter management responsibility, taking account of public health issues, environmental impact and the detrimental effect that the presence of litter has on enjoyment of public spaces.	Councillor McRandal and Councillor Douglas	Council August 2021	Environment Committee - September 2021	Agreed	April 2022	

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	That Environment Directorate Cleansing and Parks Officers work together to agree a draft plan for collaborating to ensure that waste management staff can be deployed to problem litter locations in a timely manner, having regard for severity and urgency. This should include consideration of need for a single, cross department out of hours contact to log issues and to facilitate the deployment of resource. That a report outlining the plan, complete with costings, is brought before the relevant committee.						
20.10.2021	This Council recognises and acknowledges the potential symptoms and impacts experienced during peri-menopause and menopause, and will treat all staff fairly and equally, with	Councillor Kendall and Councillor Dunlop	Council – December 2021	Corporate – January 2022	Agreed	March CS Committee	Policy agreed by Committee (to be ratified by Council)

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	<p>dignity and respect, whilst seeking to improve their wellbeing, comfort and general health.</p> <p>Furthermore, council officers will introduce a policy that shows commitment to supporting the wellbeing of our workforce by ensuring appropriate support is available to anyone experiencing symptoms or impacts associated with menopause.</p>						
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	Council November 2021	Community & Wellbeing December 2021	Agreed	TBC	

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20.10.2021	That this Council notes and welcomes the additional visitors who attend various sites across the Ards Peninsula during peak tourist times and the positive impact this has on the local economy; acknowledges that during that peak period Main Street, Millisle and Main Street, Springvale Road, Ballywalter experience particular problems with parking which adversely impact on essential services in the Peninsula including emergency vehicles; and tasks officer to liaise with both DfI Roads and PSNI to look at solutions to this issue to include seasonal prohibitions on parking and adequate enforcement to	Councillors Edmund & Thompson	Council November 2021	Corporate Services December 2021	Agreed	March 2022	Responses reported to March Committee and noted (to be ratified by Council)

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	ensure the free flow of traffic on these vital routes.						
20.10.2021	<p>That this Council writes to the Minister for Communities to express concern at the high level of housing stress and shortage of social housing within our Borough. Further, that the minister is made aware of the limited temporary accommodation available to our residents.</p> <p>The Council further requests that the minister should bring forward proposals to identify sites in towns and villages within our Borough for additional social housing and, in the interim, requests that she works with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive to ensure that additional emergency</p>	Councillors MacArthur & Adair	Council November 2021	Corporate Services (deferred to January 2022)	Agreed	April CSC	Letter issued to DfC Minister. Response will be reported to April CSC.

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	accommodation is made available to those in extreme housing stress, particularly in these challenging times.						
20.10.2021	That this Council notes with concern the significant increase in the cost of energy; recognises this will adversely affect many households across our Borough and calls on the Minister for Communities to establish a departmental led fuel poverty task force to assist the department in developing solutions to support those impacted and prevent many more people from falling into fuel poverty.	Councillors P Smith & Blaney	Council November 2021	Heard at Council November 2021	Agreed	C&WB March 2022	Reported to C&WB March. Council to respond to Ministers Letter and write to UK Treasury

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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	Council November 2021	Regeneration & Development December 2021	Agreed	TBC	Consultation with Town Advisory Group currently taking place and outcome will be reported to future meeting.
01.12.21	That this Council recognises the need for an additional park and ride to serve the Ards Peninsula and agrees to lobby Translink and the Department of Infrastructure to seriously consider this facility, which would further reduce vehicle movements within the Borough and	Councillor Thompson and Councillor Edmund	Council – December 2021	Corporate (deferred from January to February CSC)	Agreed		Letters issued to DfI and Translink

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	assist our residents to continue to reduce the Borough's carbon footprint.						
31.12.21	Coastal and Storm Damage to Ballywalter Harbour, repair costs and reinstatement costs	Councillors Adair and Edmund	Council January 22	Environment February 2022	Agreed	TBC	Report to be brought back
14.12.21	Proposed closure of playparks and the Playpark Strategy. Assurances that none will close	Councillors T Smith and Brooks	Council January 22	C&W February 22 and March 22	Agreed at Feb C&W, but Council referred it back to March C&W		Amendment agreed at March C&WC (to be ratified by Council) noting strong opposition and tasking officers to carry out local consultations where actions are being considered under the Play Strategy prior to final

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							decisions being taken by Council on those actions.
17.12.21	Sea Swimming, promotion and water quality and consultation with users	Councillors Egan and Douglas	Council January 22	C&W February 22	Agreed	TBC	Letter to DAERA Minister
10.1.22	Review of Old Minerals Permissions (ROMPs). For Department to implement, administer and deliver ROMPs	Councillors McKee and Kendal	Council January 22	Planning Committee February 22	Agreed		Letter issued to DfI Minister. Awaiting reply.
17.1.22	Roads and Footpaths Ballygowan upgrade and build on and work up further enhancements for village	Councillors P Smith & Blaney	Council January 22	Regeneration and Development February 22	Agreed	Awaiting ratification by March Council of the Small Settlements Scheme report submitted to March RDC	

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18.1.22	Refugees Sanctuary in the Borough	Councillors McKimm, Dunlop, Smart and Mathison	Council January 22	C&W February 22	Agreed	TBC	Refugee strategy and report to be brought back
19.1.22	Queen's Platinum Jubilee Funding	Councillor Cooper and Alderman Menagh	Council February 22	Corporate Committee – March 22	Agreed (to be ratified at March Council)	TBC	Letters to Sec of State and Ministers
20.01.22	Stand4Trees and Tree Protection Orders	Councillors Kendall and McKee	Council February 22	Planning Committee – March 22	Agreed (to be ratified at March Council)	Subject to ratification at March Council, reports to be produced for future Planning Committees	
1.02.22	Park and Ride at Bangor Sportsplex	Councillor Chambers and Alderman Smith	Council February 22	Corporate Committee – March 22	Agreed (to be ratified at March Council)	TBC	Letter to Translink

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1.02.22	Kircubbin Promenade Enhancements	Councillors Adair and Edmund	Council February 22	Regeneration & Development Committee – March 22	Agreed (to be ratified at March Council)	Awaiting ratification by March Council of the Small Settlements Scheme report submitted to March RDC	
3.02.22	Naming of Play Park in Ballygowan	Aldermen McIlveen and Gibson	Council February 22	Community & Wellbeing Committee – March 22	Agreed (to be ratified at Mar Council)	TBC	
16.02.22	Funding for sub-regional football stadiums	Councillors P Smith and Smart	Council - February 22	Heard at Council	Agreed (as amended)	April C&WB	Letter issued to Minister 4/3/22.

488th Meeting of the Northern Ireland Housing Council

**Minutes of the 488th Meeting
of the Northern Ireland Housing Council held on
Thursday 10th February 2022 at 10 am via Zoom**

Present:

Anne-Marie Fitzgerald	Fermanagh & Omagh District (Chair)
Nick Mathison	Ards & North Down Borough
Jim Speers	Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough
John Finlay	Causeway Coast & Glens Borough
Mickey Ruane	Newry, Mourne & Down District

In Attendance:

David Polley	Department for Communities
Grainia Long	Chief Executive, Housing Executive
Catherine McFarland	Director of Finance, Audit & Assurance
Andrew Barbour	NIHE (For Item on the Agenda)
Gillian Greer	NIHE (For Item on the Agenda)
Kelly Cameron	Secretary (Housing Executive Secretariat)

Apologies:

Mark Cooper	Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough (Vice Chair)
Michelle Kelly	Belfast City
Amanda Grehan	Lisburn & Castlereagh City
Tommy Nicholl	Mid & East Antrim Borough
Catherine Elattar	Mid Ulster Borough
Paul Price	Department for Communities

1.0	<p><u>Welcome</u></p> <p>The Chair welcomed David Polley from the Department for Communities, Grainia Long and the Presenters Catherine McFarland, Andrew Barbour and Gillian Greer from the Housing Executive.</p>	
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488th Meeting of the Northern Ireland Housing Council

2.0	<p><u>Declarations of Interest</u></p> <p>The Presenter, Gillian Greer declared that she was a Councillor in Ards & North Down Council area.</p>	
3.0	<p>To adopt the Minutes of the 487th Housing Council Meeting held on Thursday, 13th January 2022</p> <p>It was proposed by Alderman Speers and seconded by Councillor Mathison and resolved, that the Minutes of the 487th Meeting of the Housing Council held on Thursday 13th January 2022 be approved and signed by the Chair.</p>	
4.0	<p><u>Matters Arising</u></p>	
4.1	<p><u>Members Queries</u></p> <p>It was noted that Members had received responses to their queries, as follows:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alderman Jim Speers – Consultants Assessing Houses • All Members - Housing Associations newbuild guide 	
5.0	<p><u>Forward Workplan</u></p> <p>The workplan was noted.</p>	Secretary
6.0	<p><u>Update by the Department on the Department for Communities Housing Top Issues</u></p> <p>Mr David Polley gave an update of changes under the specific headings on the Department for Communities (DfC) Housing Issues:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Newbuild starts • Co-ownership • Programme for Social Reform • Fundamental Review of Social Housing Allocations Policy • Reclassification of Northern Ireland Social Housing Providers • Supporting People Delivery Strategy 	

488th Meeting of the Northern Ireland Housing Council

- Homelessness Strategy
- Regulation of the Private Rented Sector

Councillor Mathison's in relation to the Private Tenancy Bill asked on the provision of the 'notice to quit' period are there amendments to provide some protection for private landlords, in particular with tenants who have significant rent arrears.

In response David Polley confirmed that the Consultation Report will be issued in the coming weeks, there is a power in the Bill for different lengths 'notices to quit' and exemptions for individual cases, as it is at the minute 4 weeks for under 12 months; 8 weeks for 1 to 10 years.

- Increasing Housing Supply
- Affordable Warmth Scheme
- NIHE Rent Increase
- ERDF Investment for Growth and Jobs Programme 2014 - 2020
- Housing Executive historical debt and exclusion from having to pay Corporation Tax
- Programme for Government (PfG) Outcomes Framework
- Long term rent trajectory
- Affordability of social rents

In response to Councillor Mathison's query, in relation to Intermediate Rent, Mr Polly explained that there was a public consultation on the delivery of Intermediate Rent which was published in October 2021 which the Housing Council received a presentation on the proposals. Following closure of the consultation on 14th of January 2022, officials have begun to analyse the responses received.

488th Meeting of the Northern Ireland Housing Council

	<p>The outcome of the consultation will be published in due course, subject to Ministerial approval, and work is ongoing to develop the detail of the final scheme, and will begin to make preparation for its implementation.</p>	
<p>8.0</p>	<p><u>Presentation on Discretionary Housing Payments</u></p> <p>Andrew Barbour and Gillian Greer gave Members a presentation on Discretionary Housing Payments (Copies of the Slides are appended to these Minutes – Appendix A).</p> <p>Members noted that in June 2021, the Department for Communities had commenced a review of the policy intention of the Discretionary Housing Payment scheme and in response, changes were made to the scheme. It was noted that this was a Stage 1 review that didn't require any legislative changes, however the 2nd stage recommendations would require a change in legislation and were therefore not currently being progressed.</p> <p>Members were given an overview of outcome of the Stage 1 review, the DHP scheme itself; the recent changes and the ongoing work that the Housing Benefit (HB) units are carrying out.</p> <p>Members welcomed the policy change to remove the two year time limit, for claimants receiving DHP.</p> <p>It was confirmed that from April 2021 to December 2021, there has been 17,877 of awards paid out this year.</p> <p>The Chair requested the number of claimants who have been taken off Discretionary Housing Benefit over the past year.</p> <p>Several Members reiterated the importance of communicating with claimants, keeping them updated of their eligibility and the changes, assurance was given that there are several forums and platforms to deliver the scheme and target those in need.</p> <p>Referring to the LHA Award of the 75th percentile, Mr Barbour explained that as it is discretionary and each case is accessed on an individual basis subject to their circumstances and there are several factors attributing to what rates they are awarded; ie. household details, location, what the LHA rates for the area and then are accessed individually to award the percentile of the LHA.</p> <p>David Polley commended and thanked the Housing Executive Team on their hard work.</p> <p>The Chair thanked the Presenters for a very informative Presentation.</p>	<p>A Barbour/ G Greer</p>

488th Meeting of the Northern Ireland Housing Council

9.0	<p><u>Housing Starts January 2022</u></p> <p>Members noted the Report.</p>	
10.0	<p><u>Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) Conference 28th-30th June in Manchester</u></p> <p>It was agreed that Mark Cooper (Vice Chair) would represent the Housing Council.</p>	Secretary
11.0	<p><u>Any Other Business</u></p> <p>Housing Executive's response to the Department of Finance draft three year budget.</p> <p>Ms Long drew Members attention to the Housing Executive's response to the Department of Finance's draft three year budget, which had been circulated to Members for their information. She added that there are a number of significant implications for the housing sector potentially for the Homelessness budget and in particular temporary accommodation and Ms Long offered to discuss further at future Meetings.</p>	GL
12.0	<p><u>Date and Venue of next Meeting</u></p> <p>It was agreed that at the next meeting was scheduled for Thursday, 10th March at 10 am via Zoom.</p>	

The Meeting concluded at 11.20 am.



CHAIR
Councillor Anne-Marie Fitzgerald

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324

MARCH HOUSING COUNCIL BULLETIN

The Northern Ireland Housing Council met on Thursday, 10th March 2022 at 10.00 am via Conference Call.

For Information, a report of the attendance is undernoted:-

Present by Video Conferencing

Anne-Marie Fitzgerald	Fermanagh & Omagh District (Chair)
Mark Cooper	Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough (Vice Chair)
Nick Mathison	Ards & North Down Borough
Jim Speers	Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough
Allan Bresland	Derry City & Strabane District
Tommy Nicholl	Mid & East Antrim Borough
Mickey Ruane	Newry, Mourne & Down District
Michelle Kelly	Belfast City (Left Meeting @ 11 am)
Amanda Grehan	Lisburn & Castlereagh City
Catherine Elattar	Mid Ulster Borough Council

Apologies

There were no apologies

Discussions on the undernoted matters took place as follows:-

Report from Grainia Long, Chief Executive, Housing Executive

The Report provided the Housing Council with a monthly update summarising a range of strategic, major or routine matters, including any emerging issues. A summary of the current / emerging issues are outlined as follows:-

- NIHE Budget Bid and Budget Uncertainty 2022/23
- Rents
- NIHE Revitalisation Programme - Progress Update
- Supporting People Strategy
- Sustainable Development Strategy
- Derry & Strabane LDP Draft Plan Strategy
- Corporate Strategy
- Low income Rates Relief for Owner Occupiers
- Cavity Wall Insulation Action Plan

Continued.....

- Tenant and Customer Services Committee
- Homelessness Strategy 2022-25

Members also received a Presentation from the Housing Executive on how the Housing Executive is addressing Derelict/Void Properties.

Once the minutes of the meeting are ratified at the April Meeting, they can be accessed on the Housing Council website: www.nihousingcouncil.org

The next Housing Council Meeting is scheduled for Thursday, 14th April 2022 at 10.00 am via conference call.

Should you require any further information or have any questions regarding the content.

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Review of Discretionary Housing Payments

Housing Council Meeting

10 February 2022

What is a Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP)?

A Discretionary Housing Payment is financial support towards housing costs

This award can be considered when we are satisfied that a claimant needs more help with housing costs

To be eligible for a Discretionary Housing Payment claimants must:

- Reside in Northern Ireland;
- Privately rent – although some social tenants can apply;
- Receive Universal Credit, which includes the Housing Cost Element or Housing Benefit; and
- Require additional support with the shortfall in their housing costs

How is the DHP Budget funded?

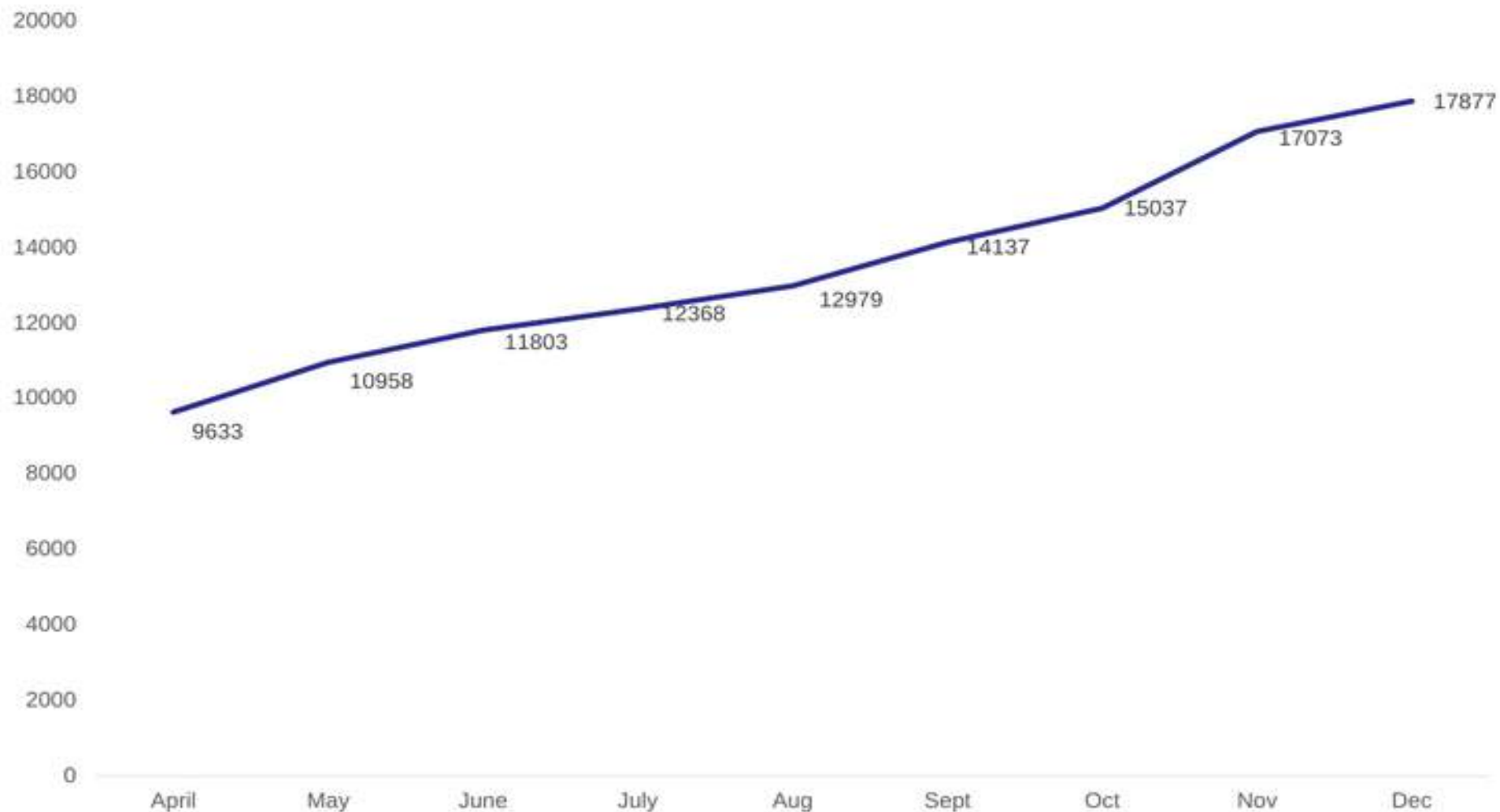
- Discretionary Housing Payments are funded by the Department for Communities (DfC) on an annual basis through the Barnett Consequentials using AME and are therefore cash limited
 - 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022 - £6.1 million
- Discretionary Housing Payments are **not** payments of Housing Benefit. They are made in addition to Housing Benefit and Universal Credit housing costs
- The Housing Executive are responsible for making awards of Discretionary Housing Payments to both Housing Benefit and Universal Credit claimants receiving housing costs

How to Apply for a DHP?

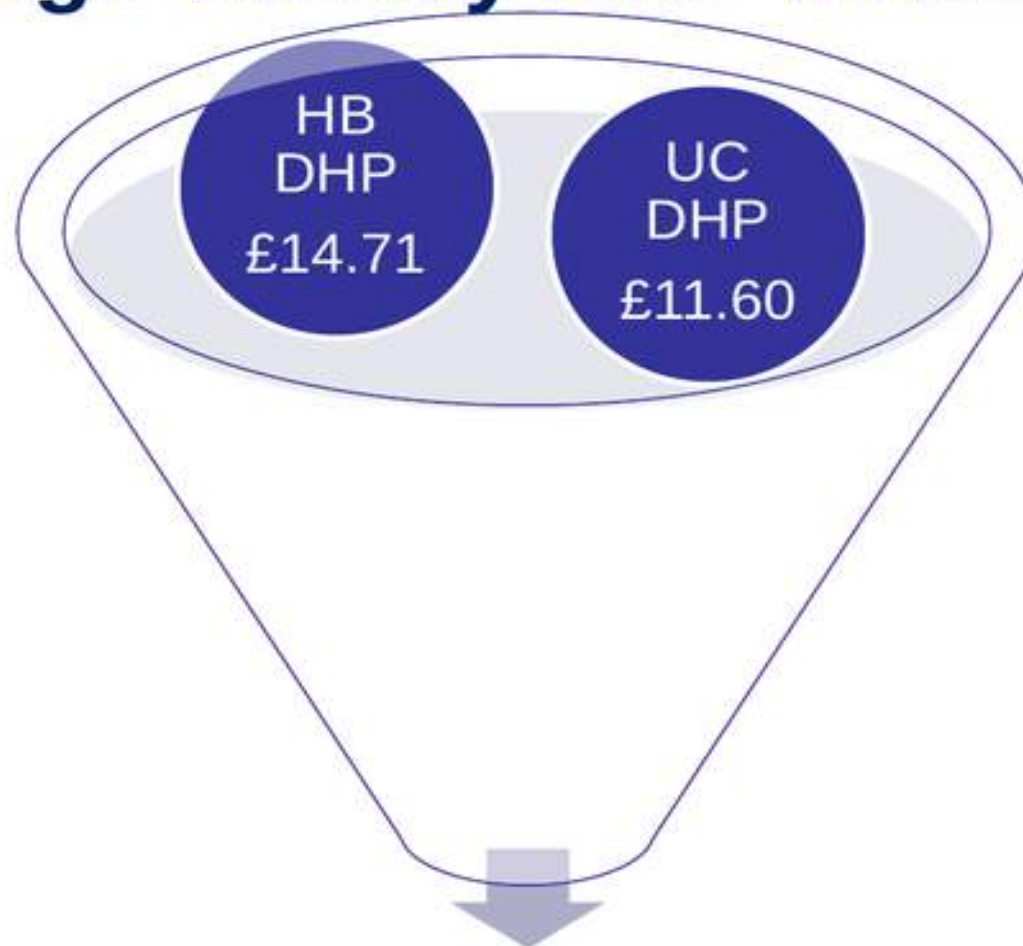
Claimants can apply:

- Online using our quick and simple form. Go to www.nihe.gov.uk, select '**Apply**' and then select the appropriate form
 - Receive Universal Credit – [UC Discretionary Housing Payment](#)
 - Receive Housing Benefit – [HB Discretionary Housing Payment](#)
- By phoning **03448 920 902** and a DHP form can be posted for completion

Number of DHP Awards per month



Average Weekly DHP Award



Spend to date =
£3,825,466.94*

* As at 31 December 21

Promotion of DHPs



DfC Review of the Discretionary Housing Payment Scheme

- In June 2021 DfC commenced a review of the Discretionary Payment Scheme
- At the outset, the policy intent of DHPs was updated
- Main policy objective of DHPs is now to sustain tenancies and prevent and alleviate homelessness

Recent Policy Changes

- Two year time limit removed
- 13 week protection which was introduced during Covid-19 is now policy going forward
- Claimants moving from temporary accommodation and young people leaving care will have the full shortfall between contractual rent and LHA met for a period of 13 weeks
- This will then be reviewed and further awards made in line with available budget without the need for a further DHP application

Recent Policy Changes

- Claimants receiving UC housing costs who have had a bereavement within their household which resulted in their LHA rate being reduced will have the reduction covered in full by DHP for a period of 9 months (the first 3 months are currently covered by UC)
- All new awards will be paid to a minimum of the 50th percentile of LHA and if appropriate and applicable to the 75th percentile*
- Claimants receiving UC housing costs who have been impacted by the loss of the £20 uplift which was introduced as a temporary measure during Covid-19 can have their DHP award reviewed and increased in line with the new rules
- Any UC claimants in receipt of housing costs who have had a significant change in their income or circumstances can request a review of their DHP award

* See Appendix 1 (slide 15)

Ongoing Work

- HB Units have reviewed all awards which ended in the past two months and re-instated (where applicable)
- A review of all DHP awards under £10 per week was recently completed and awards were increased to at least the 50th percentile and if appropriate and applicable to the 75th percentile
- Staff in the HB Units are now reviewing all awards which ended between 1 April and 31 October and they will re-instate where appropriate

Collaborative Working

- Continuing to promote DHPs across the sector
- Maximising support for customers
- Future policy changes



Long Term Recommendations of DfC Review

- A number of recommendations have been suggested as part of the DfC review; however, the suggestions would require a change in legislation as well as an increase in the DHP budget which isn't currently possible
- These recommendations include:
 - Tenancy deposits
 - Rent in advance
 - Assistance with arrears
- Further research will be required to consider extending DHPs to provide assistance with tenancy deposits, rent in advance and assisting with arrears.

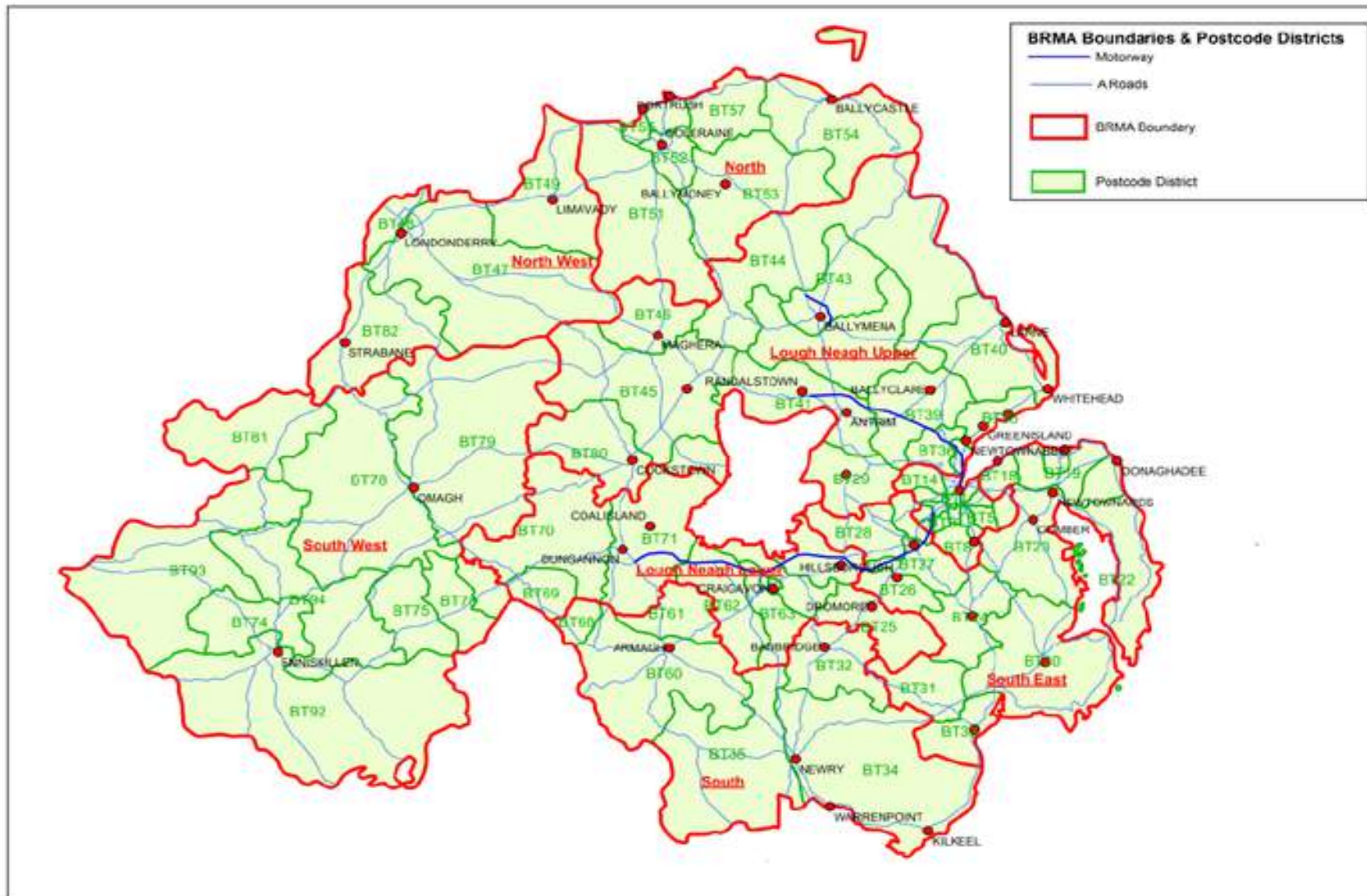
ANY
QUESTIONS ?

A hand is shown on the right side of the image, holding a piece of white chalk and writing the text 'ANY QUESTIONS ?' on a dark grey chalkboard. The text is written in a bold, sans-serif font. The word 'ANY' is on the top line, and 'QUESTIONS ?' is on the bottom line. The hand is positioned at the end of the question mark, as if it has just finished writing it.

Appendix 1

BRMA	Bedrooms	LHA Rate	50th Percentile	75th Percentile
South	Shared Room Rate	£55.80	£69.65	£76.57
South	1 Bed Rate	£74.22	£90.15	£101.70
South	2 Bed Rate	£94.33	£98.94	£109.96
South	3 Bed Rate	£102.81	£114.62	£125.54
South	4 Bed Rate	£108.94	£128.83	£146.83
North	Shared Room Rate	£38.57	£44.08	£45.92
North	1 Bed Rate	£77.40	£85.80	£92.21
North	2 Bed Rate	£92.07	£98.59	£107.75
North	3 Bed Rate	£100.56	£110.37	£119.99
North	4 Bed Rate	£114.43	£121.92	£132.11
Lough Neagh Lower	Shared Room Rate	£60.80	£67.73	£76.57
Lough Neagh Lower	1 Bed Rate	£77.72	£85.42	£94.36
Lough Neagh Lower	2 Bed Rate	£90.96	£101.23	£113.73
Lough Neagh Lower	3 Bed Rate	£102.00	£115.81	£124.32
Lough Neagh Lower	4 Bed Rate	£120.28	£123.76	£135.26
North West	Shared Room Rate	£70.07	£74.22	£78.24
North West	1 Bed Rate	£83.64	£91.15	£98.30
North West	2 Bed Rate	£100.20	£104.36	£110.00
North West	3 Bed Rate	£107.39	£110.72	£121.19
North West	4 Bed Rate	£116.37	£124.93	£138.52
South West	Shared Room Rate	£53.39	£71.95	£76.57
South West	1 Bed Rate	£67.82	£82.08	£96.77
South West	2 Bed Rate	£85.00	£99.44	£106.18
South West	3 Bed Rate	£95.33	£105.34	£115.98
South West	4 Bed Rate	£107.58	£113.45	£122.99
South East	Shared Room Rate	£59.46	£65.23	£71.41
South East	1 Bed Rate	£83.53	£90.06	£104.81
South East	2 Bed Rate	£101.08	£112.57	£126.90
South East	3 Bed Rate	£114.93	£128.13	£141.13
South East	4 Bed Rate	£136.28	£166.41	£190.39
Lough Neagh Upper	Shared Room Rate	£60.47	£68.35	£76.52
Lough Neagh Upper	1 Bed Rate	£82.10	£85.75	£94.91
Lough Neagh Upper	2 Bed Rate	£93.41	£102.86	£114.91
Lough Neagh Upper	3 Bed Rate	£102.17	£109.60	£121.58
Lough Neagh Upper	4 Bed Rate	£110.52	£127.99	£148.50
Belfast	Shared Room Rate	£53.58	£63.46	£75.00
Belfast	1 Bed Rate	£98.42	£109.71	£134.57
Belfast	2 Bed Rate	£106.48	£119.77	£141.57
Belfast	3 Bed Rate	£120.91	£134.05	£153.01
Belfast	4 Bed Rate	£151.57	£160.16	£197.46

BRMA Boundaries and Postcode Districts



Email from NI Housing Executive dated 14.03.2022

Dear Stephen,

Members of your Council had previously expressed an interest in the Housing Executive research project into cavity wall insulation (CWI) and I am pleased to send you a copy of the final report and Action Plan.

The research report examined housing of all types and tenures across Northern Ireland.


An Action Plan has been developed in response to the report, with short and long term actions and which place a strategic focus on the need to improve cavity wall insulation across Housing Executive homes.

However, as with all our upgrade programmes, resource availability will impact on the speed and scope of delivery. As you are aware, we are currently working with the Department for Communities on the revitalisation of our organisation to invest sustainably in our homes and, over time, to add to new supply. This work is essential to providing a long term strategic asset management plan for Housing Executive stock.

I am happy for my team to engage with you and the council on the issue of CWI and if you would like to arrange a briefing, please feel free to contact us.

I am acutely aware of the public interest in this issue, and thank you for your commitment to the issue of improving house conditions.

Best wishes,



Grainia Long
Chief Executive

Housing
Executive

CAVITY WALL INSULATION ACTION PLAN:

FINAL DOCUMENT

MARCH 2022

Contents

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Background
- 3.0 BBA Report – Findings & Recommendations
- 4.0 Action Plan
- 5.0 Summary of Actions

Appendices

- A. Summary of the responses to the Draft Cavity Wall Insulation Action Plan
- B. Glossary of Terms & Definitions

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Cavity Wall Insulation Action Plan sets out the Northern Ireland Housing Executive's proposals for addressing issues related to Cavity Wall Insulation installations in its stock.
- 1.2 Specifically it is our response to:
 - The findings and recommendations of a research project that we commissioned into Cavity Wall Insulation in 2017 and that was published in 2019.
 - The initial consultation exercise that was undertaken on this research project's findings and recommendations with tenants' representatives, elected representatives and members of the insulation industry.
 - The responses to our Draft Cavity Wall Insulation Action Plan proposals that was issued for public consultation in December 2020.
- 1.3 A summary of the responses received to the Draft Cavity Wall Insulation Action Plan is at **Appendix A**. We wish to thank those who responded for their comments.
- 1.4 We acknowledge that there are a significant number of references and acronyms regarding technical issues, standards, guarantees and accreditation schemes that may not be familiar to those not involved in the construction/insulation industry. Accordingly a Glossary of Terms & Definitions is provided at **Appendix B**.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Most houses built from the late 1920s have been constructed with cavity walls. The cavity was originally planned to prevent rain that hits the external walls crossing to the internal walls of the dwelling and affecting the internal structure, but was also seen as a form of thermal insulation, though minor in its effectiveness.
- 2.2 Since the 1980s building regulations have required that new cavity wall constructed dwellings are built with insulation in the cavity and, as long as they are well constructed, this insulation should not compromise the structure's resistance to rain penetration.
- 2.3 Cavity wall insulation correctly installed can be an effective long-term investment in keeping the inner wall structure dry and warm, and reducing heat loss, energy use and, consequently, energy running costs.
- 2.4 In the 1980s the Housing Executive began installing cavity wall insulation in its new build schemes and also implemented a major cavity wall insulation retrofit programme in its other cavity wall constructed stock.
- 2.5 Years later, concerns began to be voiced regarding the condition of cavity wall insulation, not just in Northern Ireland but UK wide. In 2012/13 representatives of the insulation industry briefed the (then) Minister for Social Development and the N.I. Assembly that there was evidence emerging that CWI installed in dwellings in the 1980s and early 1990s was no longer performing due to degradation or poor installation. The cavity wall insulation industry was in its infancy in the 1980s and installation techniques, quality control, inspection methods and industry training were not as advanced as today. Inspectors would not have had ease of access to surveying equipment such as borescopes or thermal imaging cameras, and inspections would have been difficult without very costly, time consuming and intrusive measures.
- 2.6 As a consequence of this briefing, the Housing Executive appointed the South Eastern Regional College (SERC) in August 2013 to undertake research into the condition of cavity wall insulation in a sample of its dwellings.
- 2.7 A total of 206 properties were surveyed and SERC's report was published in 2014. The research found that *'the cavity wall insulation had deteriorated in many of these properties for a variety of reasons - ageing processes, stability, slumping, voids and air gaps, settling, weathering processes, disturbance by operatives or biological*

processes and that only 9% were deemed to have sufficient cavity wall insulation installed that was fit for purpose.

- 2.8 The report made a series of recommendations relating to: Quality Control (i.e. that the processes of surveying, design, remediation, installation needed to be formalised and quality assured to ensure best practice); Whole House Solutions; climate and weather consideration for materials; Industry Training; upskilling Housing Executive staff; and remedial action.
- 2.9 In 2014 Savills PLC was commissioned by the then Department for Social Development and the Housing Executive to undertake a Stock Condition Survey Report to determine the long term investment requirements for our stock. Savills report indicated a 30 year funding requirement of some £6.7 billion in order to achieve and maintain the modern standards expected of social housing.
- 2.10 While Savills did not intrusively inspect cavity wall insulation as part of its survey work, it included an estimated investment liability for future replacement of cavity wall insulation in the stock.
- 2.11 Given the SERC research report, continued concerns by tenants, elected representatives and the insulation industry about cavity wall insulation failure, and the need to assess the likely scale and urgency of cavity wall insulation remedial or replacement works against other investment needs that were identified by Savills, it was decided to commission a larger investigation in order to provide the Housing Executive with robust information on the extent, type and reasons for cavity wall insulation failures in the stock.
- 2.12 In August 2017 the Housing Executive commissioned the British Board of Agrément's Consultancy, Investigation and Training (BBA CIT) to undertake a much larger survey in order to inform any future strategy and associated programmes required to address CWI issues.
- 2.13 The BBA is an independent non-profit distributing organisation and is the UK's leading construction certification body, offering approval, certification, audit and test services to manufacturers of products and systems.
- 2.14 CIT was a subsidiary of the BBA that provides technical consultancy, property investigation and technical training services, and works predominantly in partnership with local authorities and housing associations, providing independent and impartial expertise focused on both cavity wall and external wall insulation systems.

3.0 BBA Report – Findings and Recommendations

- 3.1 The BBA CIT's report was published in May 2019 and is available on the Housing Executive's website¹. The following sets out a summary of its findings and recommendations.
- 3.2 The primary aims of the Cavity Wall Insulation Research were to establish:
1. The condition of the CWI in the Housing Executive's housing stock and the private sector, and
 2. The impact that this is having on the stock in terms of thermal efficiency and associated technical defects
- 3.3 A sample of 825 Housing Executive properties (representative of its cavity wall stock) and 100 privately owned homes was surveyed for the research.
- 3.4 The research project was overseen by an Insulation Performance Panel (IPP) comprised of senior staff from the Housing Executive and the Department for Communities, a tenant representative and academics from the two local universities.

Findings

- 3.5 BBA CIT and the IIP developed a classification framework - Class Recommendations - as a means of categorising the properties in terms of the condition of the CWI and external fabric and the recommended prioritisation of remedial works. The six categories and the percentage of Housing Executive properties in each are set out in the table below.

Class	Description	%
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building fabric is actively deteriorating. • CWI installation is non-compliant with industry standards, with defects such as voids and/or debris in the cavity • CWI has been compromised by excessive water ingress caused by the condition of the external façade and has allowed moisture to bridge across to the inner leaf, resulting in damp • Remediation works are required to the CWI and the external facade 	1.1%
2A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CWI installation is non-compliant with industry standards, with defects such as voids and/or debris in the cavity 	24.2%

¹ <https://www.nihe.gov.uk/getmedia/492a0403-2cb8-4482-bd7a-8e5df3f37d4b/2019-Cavity-Wall-Insulation-Research-report.pdf.aspx?ext=.pdf>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CWI has not been compromised • The building fabric has been compromised by defects and remedial works are required. • There is a high probability that the CWI will become compromised if remedial works are not undertaken 	
2B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CWI installation is compliant with industry standards • CWI has not been compromised • The building fabric has been compromised by defects and remedial works are required. • It is possible that the CWI could become compromised if remedial works are not undertaken 	8.0%
3A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CWI installation is non-compliant with industry standards, with defects such as voids and/or debris in the cavity • CWI has not been compromised • The building fabric is showing signs of minimal stress due to defects • It is possible that the CWI could become compromised if remedial works are not undertaken 	37.6%
3B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CWI installation is compliant with industry standards • CWI has not been compromised • The building fabric is showing signs of minimal stress due to defects 	13.7%
No Class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CWI installation is compliant with industry standards • The building fabric is showing no signs of stress 	15.4%

3.6 The key findings were as follows:

- 63% of the properties surveyed had cavity wall insulation installations that were non-compliant with current industry standards, containing voids and/or debris in the cavity.
- A major contributory factor to the condition of cavity wall insulation in the properties was the standard of maintenance of their external façades where defects - for example, deterioration of pointing and door/window seals - have allowed, or would potentially allow, water ingress into the cavity. This issue was identified in just over 84% of the properties.
- In only 1.1% of properties had the condition of the external façade and CWI compromised the internal fabric of the property causing damp (i.e. a Class 1 property)
- Just under 16% of the stock was found to be defect-free in both the CWI and the external fabric.

Recommendations

- 3.7 BBA CIT made a range of recommendations across a number of issues.
- 3.8 Remediation. BBA CIT recommended that remediation works should be prioritised as follows:
- Class 1 properties should be prioritised for action, with the condition of neighbouring properties also assessed.
 - Remediation for Class 2 & Class 3 properties should be delivered as part of planned cyclical maintenance programmes, with the condition of neighbouring properties also assessed.
- 3.9 Remediation/recompense from Guarantee Provider. BBA CIT recommended that if there is sufficient evidence that an existing CWI installation has not been completed in accordance with industry standards and with the system Agrément Certificate, the Housing Executive should seek remediation or recompense for the costs of the original CWI installation and associated property damage from the installer/ guarantee provider.
- 3.10 Monitoring. A system for monitoring and checking the accurate completion of remediation works arising from the action above should be set up and overseen by an independent monitoring group.
- 3.11 Installation overview. To ensure that remediation and new CWI installation work is carried out to the correct standard, all current and future CWI wall installation programmes should be closely overseen and monitored by the Housing Executive. It should be carried out in the following way:
- All properties proposed to receive new CWI installations must be independently verified through a valid and recognised industry process before installations take place.
 - Quality assurance assessments of CWI installations should be conducted during and after installation.
 - The Housing Executive should conduct appropriate reviews of the performance of organisations responsible for delivering CWI installations with a specific focus on data gathered on the quality assurance and compliance of CWI installations.
- 3.12 Competency and compliance system. To ensure the required CWI installation standards are met the Housing Executive should set up a new competency and compliance system that any entity responsible for delivering CWI installations must adhere to. This regime would make it mandatory for entities delivering CWI

installations to undertake relevant technical training and pass ongoing competency assessments approved by the Housing Executive.

3.13 Contracts and guarantees.

- The Housing Executive should review the suitability of installation guarantees issued for CWI installations to its housing stock. The review should assess the scope of the guarantees and, equally importantly, the full range of obligations they impose on the Housing Executive to maintain their properties to ensure they remain valid. Guarantees should be insurance-backed to ensure good governance and oversight.
- The Housing Executive should maintain an ongoing assessment of its CWI installation contracts to ensure their technical specifications and contractual requirements are in line with industry standards and best practice.
- The Housing Executive should maintain adequate records of all future CWI remediation and installation works undertaken to their housing stock (on a per property basis) on an asset management database that is accessible to all staff members responsible for overseeing housing maintenance programmes

3.14 Regular stock surveys. Housing stock should be inspected at regular intervals to gauge the condition of the external façade and performance of CWI installations. The inspection regime methodology should be modelled on that delivered for the research project.

3.15 Training. Housing Executive employees involved in delivering CWI installations and housing maintenance programmes should receive ongoing training. They should have access to appropriate expertise when assessing the suitability of properties for CWI installations and be able to assess the property fabric and identify defects on the external façade. They should also demonstrate the required competence to assess the compliance and performance of installations and have an understanding of the relevant industry standards and building regulations.

3.16 Advice for residents. Residents who have CWI installed should be given guidance on how to both maintain and manage their properties following installation and also have access to experts who can provide assistance with any matters relevant to this area. Additionally it is recommended that the Housing Executive puts in place a 'residents' voice' scheme that overtly (or in confidence) allows tenants to raise concerns about the condition or effects of CWI in their homes.

Consultation

- 3.17 Following the publication of the report the Housing Executive held briefings for its Central Housing Forum², elected representatives, and the insulation industry.
- 3.18 The key issues emerging from consultation with tenant, community and elected representatives were:
- The varying performance of CWI across the Housing Executive's stock.
 - Past practices of installation and the need for the Housing Executive to ensure that future remedial/replacement works were undertaken to a standard that would be specified and quality assured by the Housing Executive.
 - The impact that cavity wall insulation is having on the stock in terms of thermal efficiency and associated technical defects was raised as not been properly addressed in the BBA research.
- 3.19 A briefing event for the local insulation industry was held on 8th August 2019 and was well attended. In early 2020, individual meetings were undertaken with a number of system designers who operate in Northern Ireland.
- 3.20 In lieu of a formal agenda, questions were drafted to provide a structure to the meetings; however, from the discussions other queries and topics arose that were useful in terms of informing future direction and gauging the current status of the cavity wall insulation industry. The questions were to ascertain the companies' views and experiences, explore the findings of the BBA CIT research project and seek views in how to best move forward in a positive way to actively inform this CWI action plan.
- 3.21 The key issues that emerged from the meetings were as follows:
- Adherence to standards and specifications for the installation of energy efficiency works to existing dwellings such as PAS 2030:2017 and PAS 2035:2019 was discussed. The majority of the designers already adhere to PAS 2030 (or NZEB/ SEAI in ROI) but generally were not planning on attaining PAS 2035 accreditation in the near future due mainly to concerns such as increased costs to do so and the current lack of skillset within the workforce in order to achieve this (i.e. the low availability of qualified retrofit co-ordinators). It was noted that none of the organisations that provide the accreditation/oversight of PAS have a current presence in Northern Ireland and that adherence to PAS 2035 is not currently mandatory here.

² The Central Housing Forum is the top level of the Housing Executive's tenant and community consultation framework.

- The Designers' current cavity wall surveillance scheme methodology was requested with detail to be provided regarding 3rd party validation and if inspections are carried out in accordance with a UKAS accredited inspection body. Two of the Designers were KIWA accredited and the other two BBA. Two of the Designers have CIGA covering the regime of warranty, one has their guarantees provided by GDGC and one Designer has the system holder providing a 10 year guarantee based on the product and the contractor can provide up to 15 years. Two of the Designers either have Trustmark or are in the process of attaining it. With regards to cavity extraction/cleaning and associated guarantee, the majority of the Designers do not have a guarantee in place for this but one provided a copy of its own methodology.
- The Designers' knowledge and opinions on the BBA CIT Research was discussed along with how they would advise the Housing Executive with regards to addressing the BBA recommendations. One of the companies had already issued a detailed response, confirmed that there was very little content they would disagree with, but noted their concern that the report appeared to attribute the 63% non-compliant CWI installations to installation practices.
- They advised that the Housing Executive should specifically address the following points in our response:
 - The formation of a Housing Executive team specifically to roll out the CWI programme of works. It was agreed that the Housing Executive should be carrying out inspections before, during and after installation, and should set its own standard for fabric performance.
 - The Housing Executive should consider the period of time to be covered by guarantees.
 - That accreditation to KIWA or BBA should be specified as a requirement.
 - That a holistic approach is taken to improving the Housing Executive's properties that would cover fabric (including cavity wall insulation), heating and ventilating.
 - It was recommended that funding should be obtained to implement 'entire street' upgrading and not just the Housing Executive stock in the street.
 - Future survey schemes should be carried out to estimate how many Housing Executive properties have cavity wall construction and the nature of the CWI in them (i.e. have no insulation, have insulation installed that is beyond its lifespan, have been filled/topped up post construction).

3.22 In addition, a submission was received in April 2020 from the National Insulation Association of Ireland. This submission - *Cavity Wall Insulation Proposal for the*

Northern Ireland Housing Executive - noted many of the issues that had been discussed at the meetings with the system designers, and also proposed that the Housing Executive should prepare a planned CWI replacement programme for its stock.

4.0 Action Plan

- 4.1 This Action Plan builds on the proposals presented in the Draft Cavity Wall Insulation Action Plan and the responses from the consultation exercise. A summary of the actions and their timescales is in section 5.
- 4.2 We have structured our actions around the following issues:
- Remediation/Replacement programme
 - External Cyclical Maintenance
 - CWI Extraction/Installation Process
 - Stock Surveys and Data
 - Housing Executive Staffing and Training
 - Residents' Advice and Information
 - Research

Remediation/Replacement Programme

- 4.3 The findings of BBA CIT's research on the condition of CWI in our stock are obviously concerning. Although BBA CIT found that in only just over 1% of the properties it surveyed was the condition of the CWI having a detrimental impact on the internal structure and, for example, causing damp, the level of non-compliance with modern CWI installation standards was high and found in stock across all locations. We have also noted the findings of other research that have highlighted issues with CWI installations³.
- 4.4 Given the age of the CWI in our properties and the findings of both the SERC and BBA CIT research projects, it is clear that a CWI remediation/replacement programme will be required at some point for all of our cavity wall stock. Even setting aside some of the issues already noted that would lead to deterioration, CWI like other building components has a lifecycle at which point it will need to be replaced.
- 4.5 Addressing CWI aligns with the 'Fabric First' approach that the Housing Executive - as the Home Energy Conservation Authority (HECA) for Northern Ireland - promotes across all residential sectors for enhancing the energy efficiency and reducing the carbon footprint of dwellings i.e. first of all improve the external envelope's performance in heat retention, air tightness and ventilation in order to prepare the property for decarbonised services and renewable technologies.

³ For example, BRE's 2016 report for Constructing Excellence in Wales on the installation of retrofit wall insulation - *Post Installation Performance of Cavity Wall and External Wall Insulation*

- 4.6 A CWI remediation/replacement programme would, therefore, be an integral part of the Energy Efficiency Strategy/Programme that we will be preparing to improve the thermal performance of our stock in order to reduce heat loss and energy use in our properties. Not only will this strategy/programme help to address Fuel Poverty and improve our tenants' comfort, but it would also be a major part of our effort to contribute to decarbonisation and reducing carbon emissions to help meet the UK's 2050 Net Zero Carbon target.
- 4.7 However, such an Energy Efficiency Strategy/Programme will require very significant investment. Some 70,000 of our stock of 85,000 dwellings are of cavity wall construction. Applying average replacement costs for different types of properties suggests a CWI replacement programme funding requirement of some £150 million to £175 million.
- 4.8 In addition to cavity wall properties we would also have to address our 'single skin' properties⁴, almost all of which have no external wall insulation at all and whose energy ratings tend to be lower.
- 4.9 Unfortunately the level of investment that would be required for this Energy Strategy/Programme is currently not available to the Housing Executive. Our stock investment funding dilemma is well known. In summary, given our low rents, the level of funding available for investment in the stock from our income is not sufficient to meet its maintenance and improvement needs, and we are currently projecting a £1 billion shortfall over the next 10 years alone.
- 4.10 The Minister for Communities' statement to the NI Assembly on 3rd November 2020 provides a clear direction of travel to put the Housing Executive in a position to obtain the funding necessary to deliver the investment programme that would be required to achieve and maintain the standard of accommodation expected of modern social housing.
- 4.11 However, this will likely take a number of years to put in place and, therefore, securing the investment that would be needed for our Energy Efficiency Strategy's programme will only be possible in the medium-to-long term.
- 4.12 The Housing Executive and the Department for Communities have agreed a strategic stock investment approach for the interim short term period that is aimed at ensuring the best use of the funding that will be available to us in order to optimise

⁴ For example, properties with solid walls, Orbits, No Fines etc.

the provision of properties to meet growing housing need. This strategic approach focuses on our core landlord obligations i.e. Response Maintenance, Cyclical Maintenance and health & safety activities, Adaptations, External Cyclical Maintenance (ECMs) and addressing the significant backlogs in component replacements that were confirmed by Savills' stock condition survey in 2014/15.

- 4.13 The consequence of this is that in the absence of an injection of external funding to specifically address CWI - that we do not anticipate at present - we are not currently in a financial position, and will not be in such a position for a number of years, to deliver a province-wide CWI replacement programme for all of our cavity wall stock.
- 4.14 That does not mean that we will not take action on CWI until then, but it does mean that any action that we can or do take must be of sufficient priority compared to other investment imperatives and within our means to deliver. Although the BBA CIT report indicated that the condition of CWI in our properties is not having a widespread detrimental impact on their internal structures, both the SERC and BBA CIT research and our own experience demonstrate that there are already instances in which it is. These clearly need to be addressed.
- 4.15 Therefore, we will adopt the short term and medium-to-long term approaches as set out below.

Proposals

Short Term

Until our stock investment funding position is resolved and we are in a position to implement a full CWI replacement programme we will address CWI remediation/ replacement as follows.

- The Class 1 properties identified by BBA will be investigated and addressed (this is already underway).
- Instances of suspected CWI failure will be investigated and addressed on a case-by-case basis. They will be referred to a new specialist central Insulation Team (see below) if more detailed investigation is required. If there is a CWI failure and it is confirmed by investigation that this failure is having a detrimental impact on the property's structure - i.e. as per the BBA's Class 1 designation - then the issue will be addressed through remediation or replacement.
 - If only a single property or a small number of properties are affected this will be addressed through our Response Maintenance service.
 - If, however, further investigation suggests a local pattern of CWI failure then a planned scheme will be developed.

- We will implement a small annual programme of schemes to test the approach that we propose to take with the full replacement programme in the medium-to-long term.

Medium-to-Long term

We will develop and deliver a CWI replacement programme for our cavity wall properties as part of our future Energy Efficiency Strategy/Programme for our stock when the necessary funding to be able to do so is available.

An analysis of the BBA's report's findings did not suggest any particular pattern of non-compliance that would indicate targeted spatial action at this time. Therefore, we propose that the CWI replacement schemes will be programmed to follow the cycle of our External Cyclical Maintenance (ECM) schemes in order to ensure that any fabric defects in a property are remedied first to secure the external structure.

Consequently, in following the ECM cycle, we would anticipate that the full CWI programme would take some 7-8 years to complete at 9,000 to 10,000 properties per annum, requiring annual funding of £20 million to £25 million.

This would be a considerable undertaking and will, of course, be subject not only to the required funding being in place, but also to procurement and the necessary capacity being available in the insulation industry and supply chain. We are currently considering delivery options for this programme.

If there are any CWI schemes that need to be delivered in advance of the ECM cycle due to the urgency of the works that are required then such schemes will also include any works necessary to address any fabric defects in the relevant properties.

One of the suggestions raised in the discussions with the system designers was that CWI schemes should be carried out on a 'whole street' basis, not just for the Housing Executive properties in them. We are currently not able to fund such works to privately-owned properties. Given the extent of properties in our estates that have been sold under our House Sales Scheme the required investment funding implications would be significant. However, we will consider a proposal for a mixed tenure pilot project.

External Cyclical Maintenance

- 4.16 The report's findings in respect of the condition of the external facades of properties reflect our own concerns regarding the impact of our External Cyclical Maintenance (ECM) programme.
- 4.17 Originally undertaken on a 5-year cycle, the frequency in which we have been able to deliver schemes has reduced over recent years due to a combination of funding and delivery issues and consequently the average cycle has been around 10-11 years for much of the stock.

Proposal

We will increase our annual ECM programme in order to bring the cycle down to 8 years in the short term, and will aim to restore a 5 year cycle in the medium-to-long term when sufficient funding becomes available.

We will review our ECM Standards & Procedures to ensure that all of the types of external fabric issues highlighted by BBA CIT are addressed in our ECM schemes.

CWI Extraction/Installation Process

- 4.18 As noted in Section 3, BBA CIT made a number of recommendations regarding CWI installations concerning competency, compliance, guarantees and monitoring. Under this section the Housing Executive sets out its current position regarding the installation process generally, including the specification, surveying, guarantees and accreditations and overarching quality assurance systems in place from extracting and cleaning (if required) and refilling/new installations. Also included will be the proposals and recommendations regarding standards to be adhered to so as to enable the insulation industry to be able to provide a considered response.

4.19 Specification

Within the current CPI Specification, it is stated under Section P11 that the system is to be *"Installed in accordance with the BBA or comparable Surveillance Scheme. Insulation company to hold a current BBA or other comparable certificate approved by the Employer."* This is consistent with the M3 Specification that we use for our Response Maintenance contracts. However, our specification will be reviewed to reflect the current industry standards and include the scope to future proof which is specifically considered through the implementation of PAS 2035. It is, therefore,

intended that new cavity wall installations are to be carried out to PAS 2035 standard.

4.20 PAS 2030/ PAS 2035

In order to establish and uphold best practice in energy efficiency retrofit work, the UK government introduced a Retrofit Standards Framework that seeks to avoid piecemeal implementation of energy efficiency measures by requiring the characteristics of each property to be carefully assessed, and a medium term action plan created, before any measures are introduced. Central to this framework is PAS 2035, which clearly identifies the process of assessing a property, how energy efficiency measures should be chosen in response and outlines how long term monitoring can be carried out. It also clarifies the responsibilities and qualifications for individuals involved in the retrofit process.

This specification dovetails with an updated version of PAS 2030:2019, which now solely focuses on the installation, commissioning and handover of energy efficiency measures. Previously, the M3 had stipulated that *'The installation must be undertaken by persons with appropriate skill and experience, approved by the manufacturer and in accordance with PAS 2030.'* It is now the requirement to adhere to the PAS 2035 standard regarding retrofitting dwellings for improved energy efficiency in order to future proof any energy efficiency measures, taking account of all measures over the next 30 years to ensure what we do now will not have a detrimental impact on works we may do over the incoming years, prior to this standard becoming mandatory (NB. from 30 June 2021, it will become compulsory for all certification bodies and registered businesses under the TrustMark scheme to comply with it⁵) and also to provide a fabric first and whole house approach.

4.21 Pre-installation Survey and Suitability for CWI

Prior to any works, the Employer must receive evidence from the contractor/ installer that the building has been inspected in accordance with, and independently verified by, the BBA Cavity Assessment Surveillance Scheme (CASS), CIGA-ISA or another UKAS accredited inspection body equal and approved by the Employer.

When considering the suitability of a property to be insulated it is important that the physical condition, form of construction and exposure to wind driven rain is assessed properly at the point of survey see *'BRE Good Building Guide 44: part 2: Insulating masonry cavity walls - principal risks and guidance'* and also should be in accordance

⁵ <https://cpd.building.co.uk/courses/cpd-2-2020-understanding-pas-2035-and-pas-20302019/>

with the following from 'BRE Report 262 Thermal insulation: avoiding risks' regarding quality control checks for masonry cavity walls.

4.22 Guarantees and Accreditations

Similar to the current M3 specification, a 25 year third party, insurance-backed guarantee to cover the cavity wall assessment, insulation materials, system and installation is to be provided. According to BRE the cavity wall insulation systems have a standard lifetime of 42 years where an installation is accompanied by an appropriate guarantee. An appropriate guarantee is one which meets all of the following four criteria listed on page 55 of the ECO2 Guidance⁶:

- Financial assurance: there must be a mechanism that gives assurance that funds will be available to honour the guarantee
- Duration: lasts for 25 years or longer
- Coverage: results in the failed measure being replaced and covers costs of remedial and replacement works plus materials, and
- Quality Assurance Framework: there must be an assurance framework for the quality of the installation and the product used in the installation. We will assess the suitability of this framework and we may require verification through independent assessment by an independent UKAS-accredited organisation or other appropriate body.

The insulation company should be signed up to a code of professional practice and that the installation is guaranteed for 25 years by CIGA, GDGC or through an independent insurance-backed guarantee from a UKAS recognised body.

There should also be evidence of a quality assurance framework in place whereby the quality of the system and its installation are independently assessed by a UKAS accredited body.

4.23 Cavity Wall Extraction/ Cleaning

Cleaning of cavity walls may only be carried out by a contractor currently registered with the BBA Cavity Cleaning Company Scheme, CIGA, or other UKAS accredited body equal and approved by the Employer, that includes for clearing rubble and other material from the cavity in addition to the extraction of insulation.

⁶ https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/sites/default/files/docs/volume_1.1_guidance_update_delivery_final.pdf

Proposal

We will undertake a review of the currently utilised specifications, agreed systems and guarantees regarding the CWI installation process for our stock in order to ensure contractor competency and the required performance standard. Guarantees, accreditations and cavity extraction/cleaning works should be in keeping with the requirements of UKAS accredited inspections bodies only.

We will introduce an installation process methodology that will include, inter alia, the cavity wall surveillance scheme, pre and post inspection photographs, the agreed accreditation requirements, PAS 2035 and the complete digital records within a Health & Safety File to be handed over post completion.

Stock Surveys and Data

- 4.24 BBA recommended that our housing stock should be inspected at regular intervals to gauge the condition of the external façade and performance of CWI installations, and that the inspection regime methodology should be modelled on that delivered for the research project.
- 4.25 The Housing Executive already undertakes a rolling stock condition survey programme with the aim of inspecting all of our properties every five years. The construction type of a property is assessed and recorded as part of the survey. These surveys also inspect the external façade of a property.
- 4.26 However, our stock condition survey does not currently include a detailed investigation of the condition of cavity wall insulation. The logistics and cost implications of replicating the BBA CIT's CWI inspection methodology and programme on a regular basis would be considerable.

Proposal

We will undertake a small random sample of CWI investigations each year involving an invasive review using borescope and thermal imaging technology in order to provide the most complete picture of the dwelling as possible.

We will introduce a CWI mapping database to our GIS system in order to aid our monitoring of patterns of failure and remediation works across our stock, and better inform future programmes.

Housing Executive Staffing and Training

- 4.27 BBA recommended that, in summary, the Housing Executive should develop its relevant staff's expertise and competence in respect of CWI.
- 4.28 The Housing Executive has already a core of expertise in its Asset Management Division with staff trained in CWI issues and two qualified Retrofit Coordinators. A number of staff were trained in CWI issues as part of BBA CIT's commission.

Proposal

We will establish a specialist team in our Asset Management Division that will have responsibility for quality assurance, inspection, compliance and monitoring activities for all insulation types.

As already noted, the team will carry out detailed investigations where these are deemed necessary by local Maintenance staff, and will assist and advise staff responsible for Response Maintenance and Planned Maintenance on CWI matters.

We will consider which staff will require specific CWI training and what that training needs to be.

Residents' Advice and Information

- 4.29 BBA advised that residents who have CWI installed should be given guidance on how to both maintain and manage their properties following installation and have access to experts who can provide assistance with any matters relevant to this area, and that the Housing Executive puts in place a 'residents' voice' scheme that allows tenants to raise concerns about the condition or effects of CWI in their homes.
- 4.30 We have a range of guidance leaflets for our tenants on the use and maintenance of their homes, but we do not have any that specifically deals with cavity wall insulation.
- 4.31 The Housing Executive is not of the view that a 'residents' voice' scheme specifically for CWI issues is required. Our preference would be that tenants should continue to report any suspected CWI issues that arise via our Response Maintenance service.
- 4.32 The Housing Executive's Housing Community Network enables issues to be raised with managers at all levels. Following the publication of BBA CIT's report a CWI Forum was established with the assistance of SCNI with the aim of retaining the

'tenants' voice' that had been represented on the Insulation Performance Panel by one of the members of the Central Housing Forum. The CWO Forum comprises representatives of the Central Housing Forum, SCNI and the Housing Executive. Although it has not met since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic it is our intention to retain it as our Action Plan is developed.

Proposal

We will develop guidance for tenants on how to maintain their homes following CWI installations.

We will consider with our HCN's Central Housing Forum how best to obtain and reflect tenants' views and concerns regarding CWI going forward.

Research

- 4.34 We believe that further research needs may arise as our Action Plan and future programme develops and are open to discussion with the insulation industry and other interested parties on what these might be. We will also continue to engage with research bodies on CWI issues.
- 4.35 We have already initiated a small project to complement the findings of BBA CIT's research. This is aimed at determining the impact that current Cavity Wall Insulation (CWI) is having on stock in terms of thermal fabric performance of the dwelling and associated heat loss and thermal transmittance to determine the U Value at the following stages:
- Of existing cavity wall insulation
 - After removing the insulation and cleaning the cavity
 - After refilling cavity with grey bead to industry standards
- Ulster University is to independently verify the results and disseminate as research.

Proposal

We will engage with the insulation industry, research bodies and other interested parties on potential future research needs regarding CWI and bring forward projects as necessary.

Reporting and Review

- 4.36 We will report annually on the implementation of the Action Plan.
- 4.37 We will review the Action Plan in 2026/27 (or earlier if required).

5.0 Summary of Actions

ITEM	ACTION	TIMESCALE
1. Remediation/Replacement		
1a	We will complete the investigation and resolution of the Class 1 properties.	To be completed by end of 2021/22.
1b	We will investigate and address any instances of cavity wall insulation failure that have a detrimental impact on the structure of a property.	Already commenced. To be actioned as required.
1c	We will develop and deliver a small annual programme of schemes to test the new extraction/installation process to be developed.	From 2022/23
1d	In the medium to long term we will develop and deliver a CWI replacement programme for our cavity wall properties.	To be confirmed when sufficient funding is available.
1e	We will consider the development of a pilot project to consider a mixed tenure approach.	2022/23
2. External Cyclical Maintenance		
2a	We will increase our annual ECM programme in order to bring the cycle down to 8 years in the short term.	By 2024/25.
2b	We will bring the ECM cycle further down to 5 years in the medium-to-long term.	To be confirmed when sufficient funding is available
2c	We will review our ECM Standards & Procedures to ensure that all of the types of external fabric issues highlighted by BBA CIT are addressed in our ECM schemes.	By the end of 2021/22.
3. CWI Extraction/Installation Process		
3a	We will undertake a review of the currently utilised specifications, agreed systems and guarantees regarding the CWI installation process for our stock in order to ensure contractor competency and the required performance standard.	2022/23
3b	We will introduce a new extraction/installation process methodology.	By the end of 2022/23
4. Stock Surveys and Data		
4a	We will undertake a small random sample of CWI investigations each year.	From April 2022

4b	We will introduce a CWI mapping database to our GIS system.	From April 2022
5. Housing Executive Staffing and Training		
5a	We will establish a specialist team in our Asset Management Division that will have responsibility for quality assurance, inspection, compliance and monitoring activities for all insulation types.	2022/23
5b	We will consider which staff will require specific CWI training and what that training needs to be.	By the end of 2021/22.
6. Residents' Advice and Information		
6a	We will develop guidance for tenants on how to maintain their homes following CWI installations.	2022/23
6b	We will consider with our HCN's Central Housing Forum how best to obtain and reflect tenants' views and concerns regarding CWI going forward.	Ongoing – to be completed in 2022/23
7. Research		
7a	We will undertake a project to determine the thermal fabric performance of the existing insulation in the dwelling and associated heat loss.	Completed by the end of 2021/22.
7b	We will engage with the insulation industry, research bodies and other interested parties on potential future research needs regarding CWI and bring forward projects as necessary.	Ongoing

Appendix A

Summary of the responses to the Draft Cavity Wall Insulation Action Plan

Subject	Summary of Responses
Remediation/ Replacement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was overwhelming support for a Cavity Wall Insulation remediation /replacement programme. • There was recognition that very little has been spent on insulation as stated in the HECA Report 2019 so hence the need for a major retrofitting campaign to make homes energy efficient and contribute to meeting environmental commitments. • There was a call for Government to invest in a programme of retrofitting in order to address housing quality, fuel poverty and climate commitments. • It was noted that although replacing cavity wall insulation would be in compliance with Building Regulations, these replaced insulated cavity walls would have an insulation standard that is markedly below what a modern newly constructed cavity wall would achieve. • A failure to carry out cavity wall insulation would likely result in not achieving climate related goals and should be done in the context of an integrated investment approach in improving and climate-proofing existing housing stock.
External Cyclical Maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The intention of the Housing Executive to get the External Cyclical Maintenance cycle to every 8 years in the interim period while moving towards every 5 years is welcomed. • The need to address poor maintenance in the Housing Executive's housing stock and its relevance to tackling fuel poverty and delivering sustainable housing is key.
CWI Extraction and Installation Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The report sets out credible recommendations to positively influence successful installation of cavity wall insulation. • It is probable to assume that the action plan proposed by the Housing Executive will have the dual benefits of tackling fuel poverty and mitigation of CO₂ emissions beyond the influence of their building stock. • The Housing Executive needs to invest more in cavity wall insulation as part of these efforts. • The Housing Executive's ambition to adopt the PAS 2035:2019 approach was seen as representing the gold standard in terms of work quality • PAS 2035 takes a 'whole house' risk-based approach - as opposed to a fabric first approach - as part of ongoing commitments to raising standards and promoting best practice in quality management in the construction industry. • PAS certification must be mainstreamed into the construction industry. With this there needs to be Government support to encourage the uptake of PAS. This could be in the form of subsidised training for existing installers and dedicated training programmes in FE colleges.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consideration should be given to reviewing what percentage of properties have had built-in cavity wall insulation as carrying out effective remedial work and upgrade to this type of cavity wall would be much more difficult to achieve. • There was also strong support that the UKAS accreditation body should be suitably qualified, respected and independent as it would give confidence to consumers and certainty to installers. • There was general consensus that the issues around quality and compliance is important. • There needs to be the proper testing and certification of the cavity wall product that is being manufactured and consideration given to Fire Retardant Additives (FRA) being used.
Stock Surveys & Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was support from the responses around the BBA recommendations that the housing stock be inspected at regular intervals to gauge the condition of the external façade and performance of CWI installations.
Housing Executive Staffing & Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was strong consideration given in relation to the inspection and verification process. • There was also recognition of the importance of well-trained staff to identify the potential problems and dangers caused by defects including heat loss, condensation, damaged external façade and particularly internal damp and mould. • It was noted there was potential benefit of a specialist insulation team in the Housing Executive. • The construction sector needs to continue to increase in skills and the quality of its work to avoid a repeat of the past failings. • Setting out the requirement for PAS certification would align trades people working in this sector in Northern Ireland with the requirements made by a range of GB programmes including ECO and the Warm Homes grant scheme.
Residents' Advice and Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tenants should be made aware of their rights to request an inspection of their properties, particularly if they have noticed any of the issues outlined in the BBA research and be advised of the dedicated next steps they can follow to seek support in terms of remediation/recompense. • There was welcomed consideration given by the Housing Community Network's Central Housing Forum on how best to obtain and reflect tenants' views and concerns regarding CWI going forward. • The consultees who commented agreed with the calls for the inclusion of a tenants' voice element to the work of the CWI Forum as a matter of priority, in order to enable tenants to raise their concerns and report any suspected CWI issues. • The recommendations and suggestions made by residents who know their properties should be acted upon and taken seriously. • Any additional engagement and communication between residents and the Housing Executive is welcome.
Recompense/remediation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whilst there was general support in principle of the idea of accessing guarantees for previously installed cavity wall insulation, it was

regarding past installations	recognised that the lifetime of these guarantees may have elapsed and that the Housing Executive will likely have to look at other options.
Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There was a positive response to the proposal for continued engagement between the Housing Executive, the insulation industry, academics, research bodies and other interested parties on potential future research needs regarding CWI.

Appendix B

Glossary of Terms & Definitions

Term	Definition
BBA	British Board of Agrément.
CIT	Consultancy, Investigation and Training, a subsidiary of the British Board of Agrément (BBA).
CASS	BBA's Cavity Assessment Surveillance Scheme.
CIGA	Cavity Insulation Guarantee Agency. It provides independent 25 year guarantees for Cavity Wall Insulation fitted by registered installers in the UK and Channel islands.
CIGA – ISA	CIGA's Independent Surveillance of Assessment Scheme.
CPI	Co-ordinated Project Information specification.
CWI	Cavity Wall Insulation.
Designers' CW Surveillance Scheme Methodology	The method by which insulation companies that are classed as system designers propose to carry out the insulation design, installation and monitoring process in a pre-approved system, in line with existing standards. This would include how the surveys are carried out, the method of pre-installation checks, the inclusion of other factors that affect the whole house such as ventilation and heating system, equipment used to survey (e.g. borescopes, thermal imaging cameras), inspections during installation (e.g. machine calibration, actual volume of product installed etc.) and post completion monitoring.
ECM	External Cyclical Maintenance.
EWI	External Wall Insulation.
GDGC	This is a specialist deposit protection and insurance backed guarantee provider for the home improvement sector.
IPP	Insulation Performance Panel
KIWA	European institution for testing, inspection and certification
NZEB	Net zero or nearly zero energy. Buildings designed to this standard are highly efficient with extremely low energy demand. Such buildings produce as much energy as they consume, accounted for annually.
PAS 2030:2017	Publicly Available Specification for the installation of energy efficiency measures in existing buildings. The 2017 updated PAS () specifies requirements for the installation of energy efficiency measures (EEM) in an existing building, applicable whether the building is used for commercial or residential purposes.
PAS 2035:2019	Publicly Available Specification for Retrofitting dwellings for improved energy efficiency.

	<p>PAS 2035 essentially provides a specification for the energy retrofit of domestic buildings, and details best practice guidance for domestic retrofit projects. This PAS embraces quality retrofit work eliminating problems associated with defects, shallow retrofit, accountability, poor design and performance gap. PAS 2035 delivers a whole building approach to the retrofit process, considering the home, environment, occupancy and the householders' improvement objectives when determining the most suitable measures to install. This eliminates the issue of retrofit work being considered in isolation which can unintentionally damage the overall building performance. Moreover, five new retrofit roles have also been introduced within the PAS 2035 process, with clear responsibilities and accountabilities established to ensure that individuals deliver quality throughout. Elmhurst currently runs training and schemes for two of these new roles, including the Retrofit Assessor and Retrofit Coordinator.</p>
TrustMark	<p>This is the Government Endorsed Quality Scheme covering work a consumer chooses to have carried out in or around their home. It has been established as the new quality mark within the retrofit standards framework. TrustMark and PAS 2035 is supported by an Industry Code of Conduct, a Consumer Charter and a framework of technical standards for retrofit. Users of the TrustMark Government endorsed quality scheme will be required to comply with PAS 2035 when undertaking any domestic retrofit work. Those who hold the TrustMark can demonstrate to consumers that they have the skills and knowledge to deliver the best practice standards and trading practices in the sector.</p>
SEAI	Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland.
SERC	South Eastern Regional College.
UKAS	UK Accreditation Service. This is the body responsible for determining, in the public interest, the technical competence and integrity of organisations such as those offering testing, calibration and certification services.



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7th March 2022

Dear Mr Reid

I am delighted to share Community Development and Health Network's (CDHN) Strategic Plan 2021-24 and update you on our work within your Council area.

CDHN is a regional, voluntary organisation supporting a wide and diverse membership to address health inequalities using a community development approach. The Covid-19 pandemic has exposed and amplified inequalities in our society and the ways in which they impact on people's lives.

As you will know, it is vital to act now and drive forward work programmes that reduce inequalities, prevent poor health and improve people's opportunities. The structural inequalities in our society such as unemployment, overcrowded housing and a lack of green space must be tackled as changes at the root cause that will reduce health inequalities in the long term.

CDHN is already working with communities and statutory partners in your Council area to address these wider social issues through our Building the Community-Pharmacy Partnership (BCPP) and Elevate programmes. (See Map 1 & 2 for investment figures.) We are pleased to also inform you of our new Training and Development Hub. The organisation has a long history of developing and delivering high quality training and CDHN has been commissioned by Councils, HSC Trusts, Government Departments as well as Community and Voluntary Organisations to deliver bespoke programmes which raise awareness and develop understanding of these issues.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss how we can work together to tackling health inequalities. We are aware of the importance of health and wellbeing to Community Planning and will be in touch with your Community Planning team shortly to discuss how we might best engage with them.

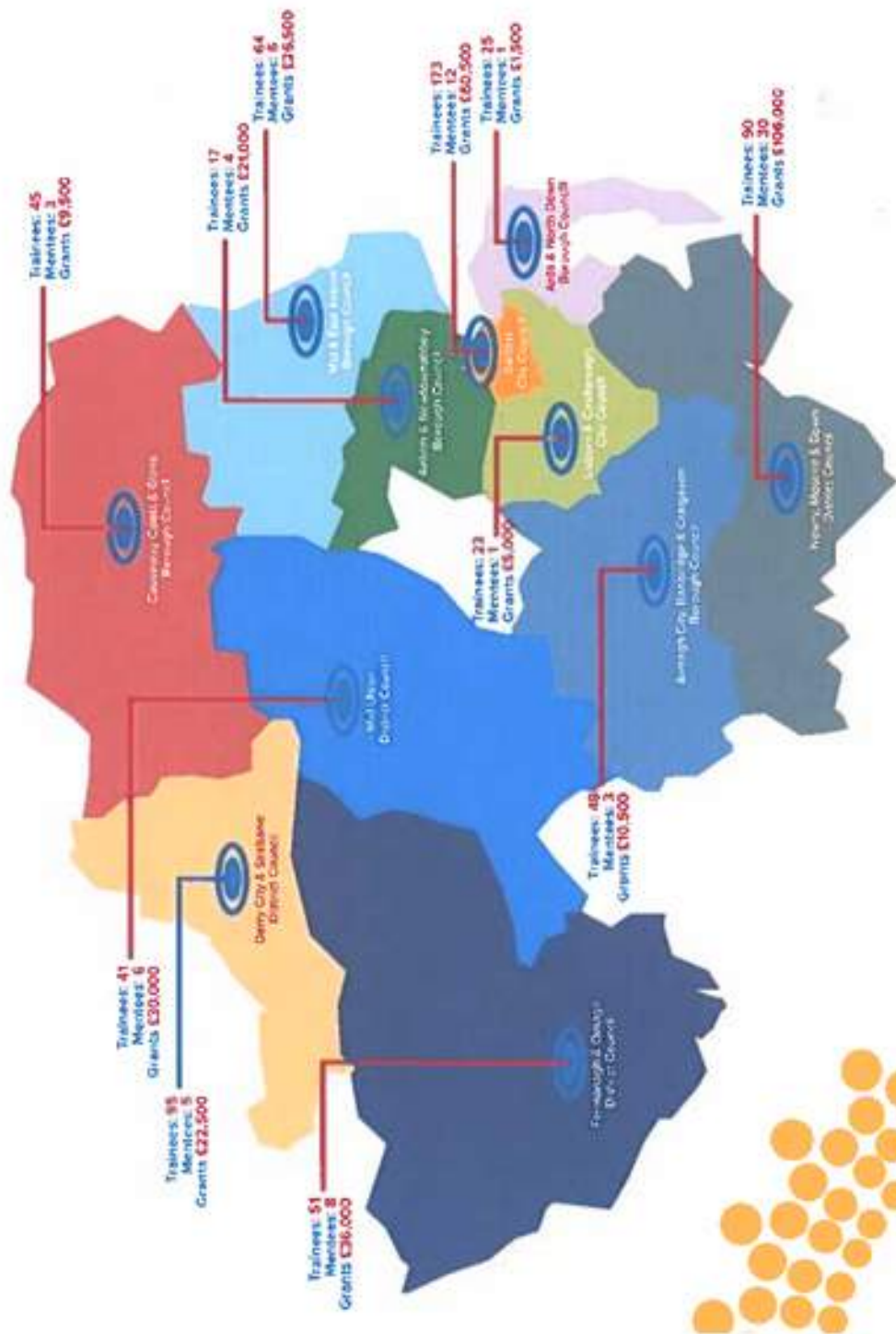
Yours sincerely

Joanne Vance

Director

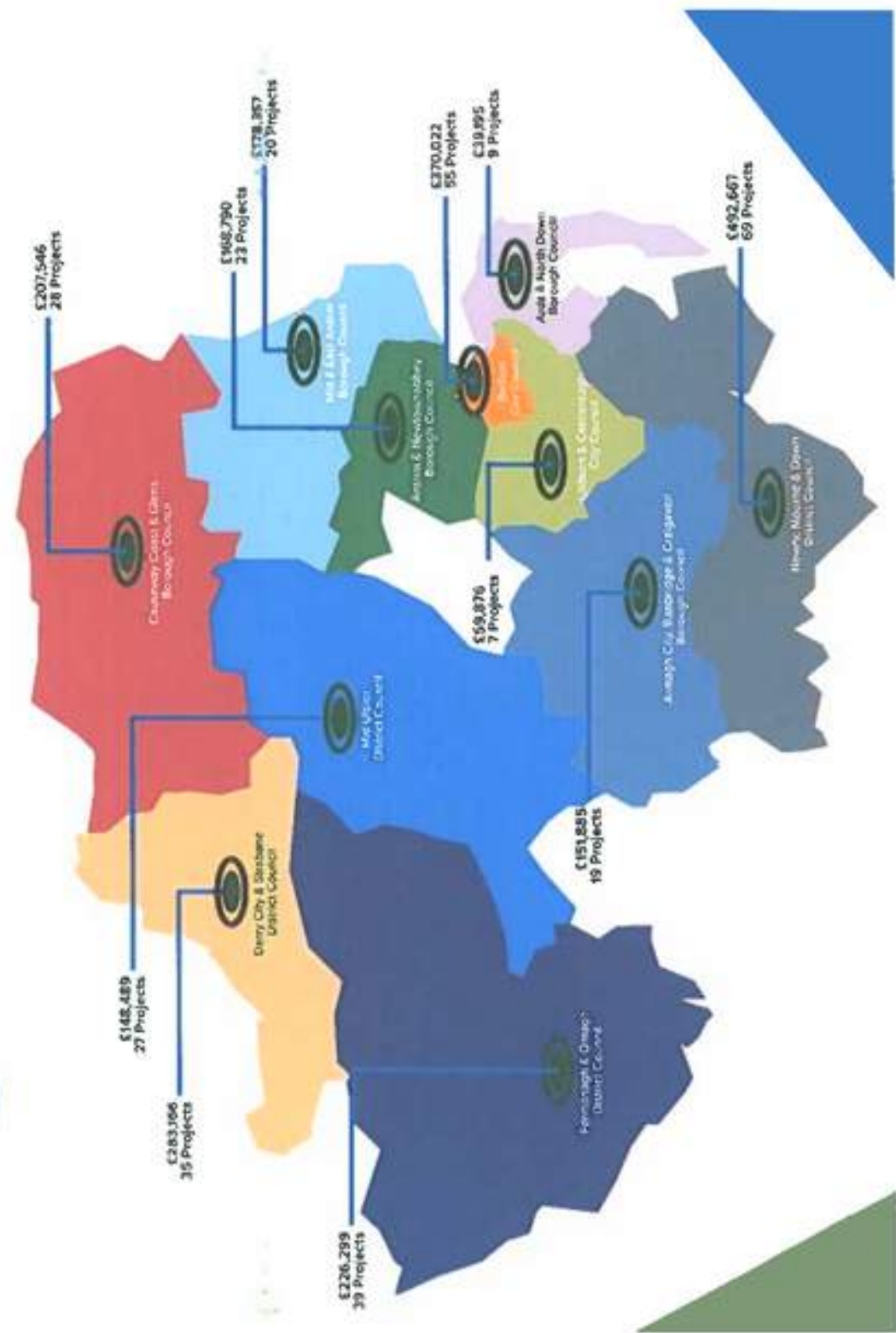


Elevate Community Investment from 2019-2022





BCPP Community Investment from 2015 - 2021





**Community Development
& Health Network**

Strategic Plan

2021 – 2024

Introduction

Community Development and Health Network (CDHN) is Northern Ireland's leading organisation working to empower communities, improve health and wellbeing and reduce health inequalities using a community development approach. With over 2,200 members supporting tens of thousands of people, CDHN raises awareness of the root causes of poor health and health inequalities.

The organisation highlights the structural causes of health inequalities and encourages collaborative action across the social determinants of health. Through its work, communities and decision makers are supported to recognise and utilise assets, to work together to develop solutions, take action to improve lives, health and wellbeing and create a fairer, more equal society.

Our new Strategic Plan will shape our work into 2024 and is underpinned by our Mission, Vision and our Values. It is the result of a strategic planning process with staff and our Board of Directors and has been developed in the context of the wider policy arena as well as insights and experiences we have gathered from our membership base.

We expect the next three years to be very challenging. Inequality gaps have been steadily worsening over the past decade and COVID-19 has widened

those gaps even further. The pandemic has had an unequal effect on people and communities across the range of social determinants – including housing, education, income, employment, social isolation, access to services, health literacy and others.

The work of CDHN has always been important but now it is crucial. Our focus for the next three years is to ensure that the voice of people and communities, the lived experience, becomes and remains the central point for policy makers, decision makers and within local communities themselves.

CDHN is managed by a voluntary Board of Directors and employs a team of full time and part time staff with expertise in areas such as health inequalities, social determinants of health, participatory research, policy development and local Government.

Mission

Using community development to end health inequalities.

Vision

A fair and equal society where everyone experiences their best health and wellbeing.

Values

CDHN is committed to living the following values in all aspects of its work:

Social Justice

We believe in a society based on fairness, where everyone is considered equal and our health and wellbeing is not determined by where we are born, live or work. We are committed to creating the social, economic and environmental conditions where people can have more control of their own health and wellbeing and have a voice in decisions that affect them.

Diversity

We are committed to celebrating diversity and equality across the organisation and in the communities we serve.

Integrity

We believe in being open, honest and accountable in all our interactions and building relationships based on trust and mutual respect.

Collaboration

We believe that working in partnership to promote social justice and equality is the best way of ending health inequalities and poverty.

Core Aims

Aim 1

Community Development

To support communities as a catalyst for change in ending health inequalities.

Aim 2

Policy & Practice

To influence policy and practice to support the ending of health inequalities.

Aim 3

Evidence

To build and use the evidence base which supports community-based approaches to end health inequalities and poverty.

**Aim
1**

Communications

To engage with all stakeholders to increase awareness of CDHN and its unique expertise.

**Aim
2**

Governance

To ensure the governance of CDHN complies with the requirements of the law and best practice.

Supporting Aims

**Aim
3**

Financial & Physical Resources

To ensure that CDHN is sustainable and accountable.

**Aim
4**

Human Resources

To ensure that CDHN has the staff it requires to achieve its aims and priorities and these staff are effectively supported, managed and given the opportunity to develop.

Core Aims

Priorities for 2021 - 2024

Aim 1:

Community Development

To support communities as a catalyst for change in ending health inequalities.

Priorities

- Enhance the knowledge, skills and capacity of communities to identify their assets, develop their communities and advocate a social determinants of health approach to tackle health inequalities.
- Innovate, test, evaluate and embed concepts to address health inequalities.
- Convene communities to network, learn from, and support, each other.
- Embed a culture of critical reflection within CDHN and its members to promote best practice.
- Grow and develop the membership of CDHN.
- Develop CDHN's internal capacity to respond to the need for collective action at local and regional level.

Aim 2:

Policy & Practice

To influence policy and practice to support the ending of health inequalities.

Priorities

- Support communities to articulate their lived experience and work collectively to ensure it is at the heart of decision-making.
- Encourage policy-makers, decision-makers and practitioners to understand inequality as experienced in communities.
- Influence policy-makers, decision-makers and practitioners to use evidence to inform their work.
- Build relationships with policy-makers and decision-makers.
- Engage our members in initiatives to develop policy and practice.
- Promote and support health literacy policy and practice across all sectors.

Core Aims

Priorities for 2021 - 2024

Aim 3:

Evidence

To build and use the evidence base which supports community-based approaches to end health inequalities and poverty.

Priorities for 2021 – 2024

- Build the evidence base on community-based approaches around health inequalities and the social determinants of health.
- Communicate and disseminate research literature on community-based approaches to reduce health inequalities.
- Promote the use of evidence-based research in the development of services and cross-sectoral actions in community settings.
- Promote the role of community based participatory approaches in health inequalities research.
- Ensure CDHN measures its impact and supports CDHN members to demonstrate the difference they make.

Supporting Aims

Priorities for 2021 - 2024

Supporting Aim 1:

Communications

To engage with all stakeholders to increase awareness of CDHN and its unique expertise.

Priorities

- Review and implement a communications strategy to ensure effective internal and external communication.
- Build and activate a membership engagement strategy, targeted to serve all stakeholders.
- Grow public awareness and audience engagement on the Social Determinants of Health and causes of Health Inequalities.
- Embed Health Literacy by communicating in simple, accessible, and appropriate language.
- Investigate and invest in online and digital infrastructure for all communications and engagement.

Supporting Aim 2:

Governance

To ensure that the governance of CDHN complies with the requirements of the law and best practice.

Priorities

- Ensure the board reflects the communities it serves and has the skills required to govern effectively.
- Regularly review governance performance and develop and implement a governance improvement plan.
- Effectively manage risk.
- Ensure CDHN complies with its legal requirements and has the appropriate organisational policies and they are effectively implemented and regularly reviewed.
- Approve and monitor the achievement of the Strategic Plan and annual Operational Plan.
- Manage and support the Director.

Supporting Aims

Priorities for 2021 - 2024

Supporting Aim 3:

Financial & Physical Resources

To ensure that CDHN is sustainable and accountable.

Priorities

- Develop, implement and review an income generation strategy.
- Continuously improve financial planning, management and reporting.
- Ensure CDHN has the physical resources it requires to adapt to the changing context and achieve its aims and priorities and these are effectively managed.
- Review current ICT infrastructure and develop and implement a digital strategy to underpin the organisation's strategic priorities.
- Develop environmentally sustainable work practices, activities, processes and facilities to improve ways of working (in line with our values).

Supporting Aim 4:

Human Resources

To ensure that CDHN has the staff it requires to achieve its aims and priorities and these staff are effectively supported, managed and given the opportunity to develop.

Priorities

- Ensure CDHN has the appropriate HR policies and procedures.
- Ensure that CDHN has the staff, skills and structure it requires.
- Ensure all staff receive regular supervision and appraisal.
- Ensure staff have the opportunity to learn and develop and work effectively as a team.

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Children's Social Care Services Northern Ireland An Independent Review

MARCH 2022 NEWSLETTER

The [Independent Review of Northern Ireland's Children's Social Care Services](#) was launched by Robin Swann, the Minister of Health, at the beginning of [February 2022](#).

The Review is being undertaken by [Professor Ray Jones](#) as the independent Lead Reviewer who will be assisted by an Advisory Panel and a Secretariat. It is planned that the Review will be completed within 16 months with the first 12 months of 'fieldwork' largely spent meeting with and listening to those involved with children's social care across Northern Ireland.

ADVISORY PANEL

[Professor Pat Dolan](#), [Marie Roulston M.A. CQSW. O.B.E.](#) and [Her Honour Judge Patricia Smyth](#) have been appointed as the 'standing members' of the Advisory Panel, and the Advisory Panel has already had one meeting.

At all future meetings of the Advisory Panel (which are likely to be held every two months), two children / young people and two parents and carers will join the meeting as Panel members.

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE, PARENTS AND CARERS

The Voice of Young People in Care (VOYPIC) are undertaking a region-wide exercise to recruit to a Reference Group of children and young people who have personal experience of children's social care services. The Reference Group will decide which two members will attend each of the Advisory Panel meetings.

Children in Northern Ireland (CiNI) are linking with existing groups and forums of parents and carers to arrange engagement with the Review and will identify two parents/ carers to attend meetings of the Advisory Panel. As with children and young people, it is intended that different parents/ carers will attend each Advisory Panel meeting to ensure that a breadth of experience and advice from parents/ carers is available to the Review.

In addition, opportunities across the region will be organised for children and young people, and for parents and carers to contribute to the Review and to meet with Ray Jones.

SOCIAL CARE WORKERS, SERVICES AND PARTNERS

Plans are already being made for Ray Jones to visit services, meet with social workers and other professionals, and with social care's partner agencies across Northern Ireland.

Over the coming months Professor Jones will be visiting services across the region and meeting with front-line practitioners, managers and senior leaders in children's social care services. He will also be seeking to meet with, amongst others, teachers, health workers, police officers, and those working within children's social care services provided by independent, voluntary and community services.

This programme has already started. Professor Jones has had two days in the Western HSC Trust area meeting with frontline children's social care teams, workers and managers and another two days in the Belfast HSC Trust area. In the Western HSC Trust area, there has been an initial meeting with a 'parents' forum and in both Trusts' areas there have been visits to children's homes. Initial two day visits are being arranged for visits to the remaining three HSC Trust areas.

During February and early March, Professor Jones has also had initial meetings with, for example, the Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance (NIPSA), the British Association of Social Workers – Northern Ireland (BASWNI), the Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY), the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA), the Public Health Agency (PHA), and the Northern Ireland Guardian Ad Litem Agency (NIGALA) as well as VOYPIC and CiNI.

The programme of meetings and engagements will continue until February 2023 with many more organisations/professionals/groups/individuals to be invited to participate in the Review. For example, meetings/engagement events are being planned with foster carers and others who have had direct participation within children's social care, with universities and their social work educators, researchers and students, and with the judiciary within the family courts.

If not already contacted or named in this Newsletter please do not feel or anticipate being ignored or excluded. This Newsletter has been prepared within the first few weeks of the Review and much more engagement is being planned and arranged for the coming months.

OTHER IMMEDIATE ACTIVITIES

The Secretariat which is supporting the Review's activities is set to expand and recruitment is currently underway and our April Newsletter will include an update on progress.

We intend to have the Review's website up and running by April. It will include information about how to contact the Review, key documents and latest news. The

website will serve as a platform to connect with you and to seek your views. It is intended that there will be a range of ways in which to contribute to the Review and to share experiences and advice. In the meantime you can contact the Review Team by email at: Contact@CSCSReviewNI.net.

Professor Jones and the Review Team very much look forward to engaging with you throughout the next twelve months and will continue to share news and updates on progress.