

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council

Assessment of Performance 2025-26

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Overall Assessment of Performance 2025-26

The Council remained steadfast in delivering high-quality services for everyone across the district. Residents and visitors alike continued to prioritise their health and wellbeing, with more than 930,000 paid visits to our leisure centres. Attendance at our cultural venues also improved, welcoming nearly 100,000 visits to our museums and arts centres.

We achieved 6 green flag and 3 blue flag accreditations for our beaches and parks, supported 100% of all community clean up requests and increased the number of issued fixed penalty notices to address environmental crime.

We continued to progress a number of key priorities, including the start of construction of the new Theatre and Conference Facility. Through the BRCD (Belfast City Region Deal) a number of skills and employability initiatives were carried out to meet the needs of the local community.

However, whilst much has been achieved, there is still more to do. We recognise where we need to improve and are committed to delivering further improvements. There was a slight decrease in the percentage of Council fleet younger than 8 years, and no EV charging points were installed during 2025-26, however the Council did establish its carbon baseline emissions footprint. We will continue to focus on what matters most to you - improving the quality of our leisure facilities and services, contributing to growing the local economy, improving the cleanliness of our District and continuing to support recycling, reducing our impacts in relation to climate change by improving the efficiency of our fleet and buildings, and improving the performance of our Planning Service.

As we look forward to 2026-27, we will continue to bring more opportunities as our ambition remains for Newry, Mourne and Down to be one of the best places to live, work, invest in and visit.

Introduction

Part 12 of the Local Government (NI) Act 2014 sets out a General Duty of Improvement for local government, whereby all District Councils must put in place arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of their functions. As part of the Act, District Councils are required to:

- Produce and publish an annual Performance Improvement Plan, setting out the performance improvement objectives, which should be aligned to the Community Plan. It should however be noted that, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Councils were not required to publish a Performance Improvement Plan 2020-21.
- Produce and publish an annual Assessment of Performance, outlining the 5 planned improvements that have been achieved, analysing year on year performance trends and comparisons with the performance of other Councils, where possible.

The Assessment of Performance 2025-26 provides an overview of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council's progress in delivering the following:

General Duty of Improvement

As set out in the Local Government (NI) Act 2014

Performance Improvement Objectives

All five performance improvement objectives 2025-26 have been carried forward from 2024-25, as they remain relevant and meaningful, enabling the Council to use this Assessment of Performance to further establish a baseline and trends to monitor and report progress against the majority of the 'measures of success' which underpin the performance improvement objectives 2025-26.

1. We will support the health and wellbeing of local people by improving our leisure facilities and services
2. We will contribute to growing the economy by supporting local businesses and job creation
3. We will improve the cleanliness of our District by continuing to promote recycling and addressing littering, fly tipping and dog fouling incidents
4. We will improve our sustainability and reduce our impacts in relation to climate change
5. We will improve the processing times of planning applications and enforcement cases by implementing the Planning Service Improvement Programme

Statutory Performance Indicators and Standards

As set out in the Local Government (Performance Indicators and Standards) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015:

- The number of jobs promoted through business start-up activity
- The average processing time of major planning applications

- The average processing time of local planning applications
- The percentage of planning enforcement cases processed within 39 weeks
- The percentage of household waste collected by District Councils that is sent for recycling (including waste prepared for reuse)
- The amount (tonnage) of biodegradable Local Authority Collected Municipal Waste that is landfilled
- The amount (tonnage) of Local Authority Collected Municipal Waste arisings

Self-Imposed Performance Indicators

The Council has developed a baseline to monitor and report progress against the 'measures of success' which are set out in the Corporate Plan 2024-27.

Corporate Objective	Measure of Success
Support the continued growth and development of our local economy	Number of jobs created and businesses supported through Council programmes
	Number of jobs promoted through business start-up activity
	Amount of investment secured by Council
Improve the health and wellbeing of everyone in the District	Number of people participating in targeted health programmes
	Number of attendances at Council indoor leisure facilities
	Number of users of community trails
Protect and enhance our environment to secure a sustainable future	Level of street cleanliness across the District (Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful Street Cleanliness Index)
	Level of compliance with Sustainable Development Duty
	Percentage of waste recycled
	Percentage of EV charging points
Support regenerative forms of tourism opportunities which promote our culture, heritage and environment	Level of visitor spend
	Number of overnight stays
	Level of visitor satisfaction
	Number of visitors to Council's Arts Centres and Museums
Empowering communities to play an active part in civic life	Percentage of residents who agree that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together
	Percentage of residents who agree that the Council consults with and listens to the views of local people
	Percentage of residents who feel they can have a say on how services are delivered in their local area
	Number of financial assistance projects funded
	Number of people accessing the Ethnic Minority Support Office Services

Develop and revitalise our district	Number of BRCD projects delivered
	Number of small settlement schemes delivered
	Number of new/upgraded public conveniences
Deliver sustainable services	Level of citizen satisfaction
	Compliance with the Duty of Improvement
	Number of users registered to Council corporate social media channels
	Number of visits to Council's corporate website
Represent the voice of the district with our partners	Compliance with the duty of Community Planning
	Percentage of residents who are satisfied with their local area as a place to live
	Number of training events provided to elected members

Where possible, progress in delivering the 'measures of success' within the Performance Improvement Plan 2025-26 and Corporate Plan 2024-27 has been aligned to the Community Plan, in order to demonstrate how the Council is contributing to the achievement of community planning outcomes. The golden thread that exists between the Community Plan, Corporate Plan 2024-27 and Performance Improvement Plan 2025-26 is highlighted further in Appendix 2.

All people in Newry, Mourne and Down enjoy good health and wellbeing	
All people in Newry, Mourne and Down benefit from prosperous communities	
All people in Newry, Mourne and Down benefit from a clean, quality and sustainable environment	

Progress has been tracked against targets, trends over time, and where possible, compared with the performance of local authorities across Northern Ireland, using the legend below. It should however be noted that comparisons with previous years should be considered within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent impact on Council service provision. The Assessment of Performance is instrumental in helping the Council to review progress and identify the key objectives and areas of improvement in the year ahead.

Legend

Status		Trend	
	Target or objective achieved / on track to be achieved		Performance has improved since the previous year
	Target or objective substantially achieved / likely to be achieved / subject to delay		Performance is similar to the previous year*
	Target or objective not achieved / unlikely to be achieved		Performance has declined since the previous year

*Where appropriate, a 10% variance when compared to the previous year's performance has been applied.

Our District, Our Organisation, Our Performance

Our District, Our Organisation, Our Performance



District

Population: 183,115
Households: 68,397
7 District Electoral Areas
41 Elected Members
1,000+ employees
88% of residents are satisfied with the Council



Community

Life expectancy:
Male: 79.0 years /
Female: 82.9 years

Age Profile: Based on NISRA Mid-Year Estimates.
0-15 years: 21.7%
65+ years: 18%

87% of residents agree that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together

100% of residents feel safe during the day, 78% of residents feel safe after dark

55 Neighbourhood Watch Schemes

£14.27m awarded through the Financial Assistance Scheme since 2015



Tourism

In 2025:

Numbers of overnight stays 427,157

Level of visitor spend -
£60,817,412

Three Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

6 'green flag' parks and
3 'blue flag' beaches



Health and Wellbeing

82% of residents feel they are in very good or good health

83% of residents are physically active at least once a week for 30mins

73.5% of customers are satisfied with the Council's six leisure facilities

Over 930,000 paid attendances recorded across our 6 leisure centres during 2025-26

£225,000 of financial assistance funding allocated to sports clubs across the District in 2025-26



Economy

Employment rate: 78.2%

9,525 VAT Registered Businesses

23.1% of the population aged 16 years and over have no qualifications

236 new jobs promoted through business start activity

215 existing businesses supported to progress growth and scaling ambitions



Environment

Recycling is important to 91% of residents

Top perceived problem for residents: Dog mess and fouling

Recycling rate: 48.3%

100% of Community Clean up requests supported

Fifth lowest level of waste to landfill across all NI Councils



A snapshot of 2025-26

Performance Improvement Objective	Progress	Status Trend
 We will support the health and wellbeing of local people by improving our leisure facilities and services	26.7% increase in paid attendances at Council leisure centres.	😊 △
	39% increase in the number of people participating in targeted health programmes.	😊 △
	£225,000 worth of financial assistance funding was allocated to sports clubs across the District.	😊
	11.4% increase in the number of Council leisure centre memberships.	😊 △
	4 capital leisure projects progressed.	😊
	7 play parks upgraded across the District.	😊
 We will contribute to growing the economy by supporting local businesses and job creation	236* new jobs promoted through business start activity.	😊 △
	12 new social enterprise businesses supported, and 16 new social enterprise jobs created.	😊 ▶
	188* new enterprises created as a result of support.	😊 △
	215* existing businesses supported to progress growth and scaling ambitions.	😞 ▶
	4,719 participants engaged across all 'Go Succeed' activity in 2025-26.	😊 △
 We will improve the cleanliness of our District by continuing to promote recycling and addressing	35 fixed penalty notices issued and 32 paid.	😞 △
	91% of all fixed penalty notices issued have been paid.	😊
	100% of community clean up requests supported.	😊
	Decrease in the rate of recycling, to 48.3%*.	😞 ▶
	Increase in the amount of biodegradable Local Authority Collected Municipal Waste that is landfilled.	😊 ▼

littering, fly tipping and dog fouling incidents	10 'Live Here, Love Here' environmental projects supported.	▽
 We will improve our sustainability and reduce our impacts in relation to climate change	1 vehicle within the Council fleet that has an alternative fuel source.	☹️
	0 Council supported EV charging points installed in 2025-26.	☹️
	78% of Council fleet younger than 8 years.	😐 ▶️
	The Baseline Emissions Footprint for Newry Mourne and Down was established and is 5,246 tCO2e (Tonnes of CO2 equivalent).	😊
	2,800 trees planted on Council managed estate.	😊 △
 We will improve the processing times of planning applications and enforcement cases by implementing the Planning Service Improvement Programme	During 2025-26, the Council received the second highest number of planning applications across the 11 Councils, behind Belfast City Council.	😊
	The processing time for local planning applications increased from 45.2 weeks in 2024-25 to 45.8 weeks in 2025-26.	☹️ ▶️
	The processing time for major planning applications increased from 29.6 weeks in 2024-25 to 58.8 weeks in 2025-26.	☹️ ▽
	The percentage of enforcement cases progressed within the statutory timescale increased by 10.4% from 47.6% in 2024-25 to 58.0% in 2025-26	☹️ △
	The number of planning applications in the system for 12 months or more increased from 408 by year end 2024-25 to 519 by year end 2025-26.	☹️ ▽
	The number of enforcement cases in the system for 12 months or more increased from 574 by year end 2024-25 to 644 by year end 2025-26.	☹️ ▽

* The 2025/26 figures are in draft, to be finalised following monitoring and verification of data by Go Succeed lead BCC

**The 2025-26 data in relation to the statutory performance indicators for waste management remains provisional, as the end of year validated data will not be published by DAERA until Q3 2026-27.

General Duty of Improvement

The Council recognises improvement to mean activity that enhances the sustainable quality of life and environment for ratepayers and communities. During 2025-26, the Council continued to strengthen and embed the arrangements it has put in place to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of functions, in order to improve the quality of life for all local communities.

Following the Performance Audit and Assessment 2025-26, the Local Government Auditor concluded that:

Improvement planning and publication of improvement information

'As a result of my audit, I believe the Council has discharged its duties in connection with (1) improvement planning and (2) publication of improvement information in accordance with Section 92 of the Act and has acted in accordance with the Department for Communities' guidance sufficiently.'

Improvement assessment

'As a result of my assessment, I believe the Council has discharged its duties under Part 12 of the Act and has acted in accordance with the Department for Communities' guidance sufficiently.
In my opinion, the Council has demonstrated a track record of ongoing improvement and I believe that the Council is likely to comply with Part 12 of the Act during 2025-26.'

Arrangements to secure continuous improvement

The Council's Business Planning and Performance Management Framework drives and provides assurance that community planning outcomes, corporate priorities and performance improvement objectives are being delivered. By demonstrating the alignment that exists between the Community Plan, Corporate Plan, Performance Improvement Plan, Directorate Business Plans, Service Plans and Individual Performance, the framework provides a mechanism to manage performance at all levels of the organisation, and ensure the necessary steps are taken to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of functions.

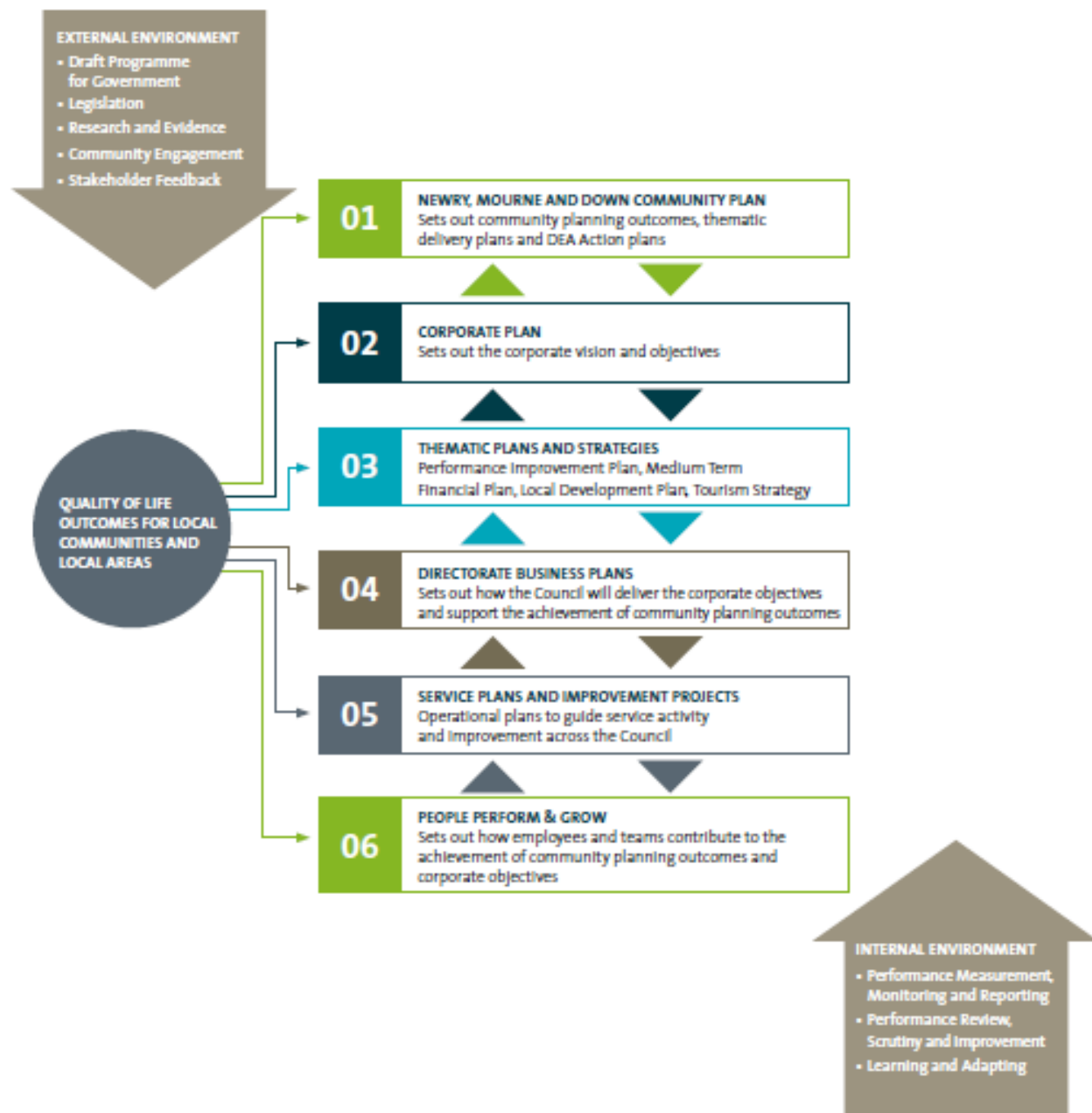
Over the past nine years, the Council has continued to implement and embed the Business Planning and Performance Management Framework:

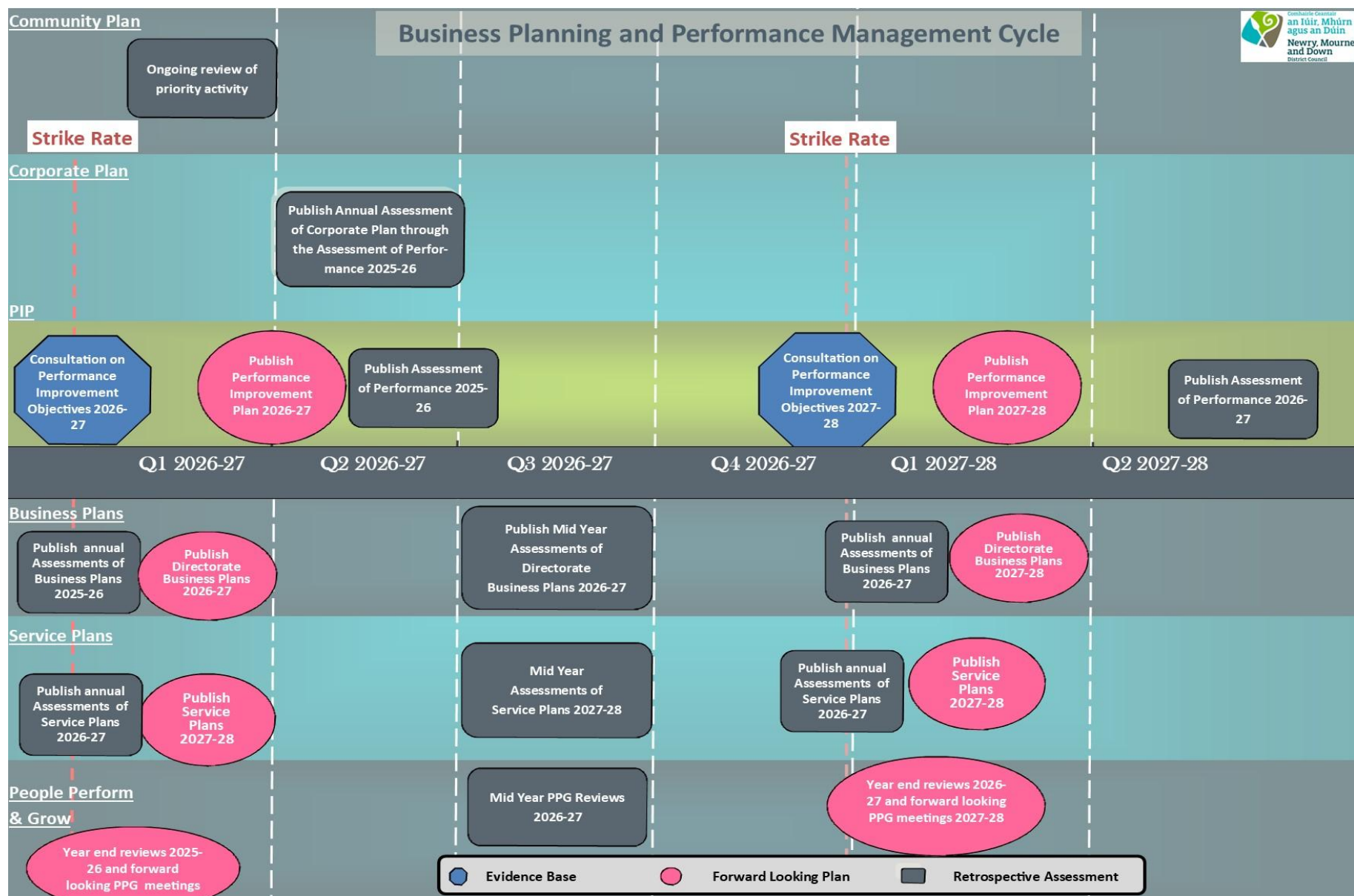
- The Council has developed and agreed integrated planning, monitoring and reporting cycles, which have been aligned to ensure everyone in the organisation is working towards shared objectives, with progress being monitored and reported on a regular basis. This integrated timeline of activity is outlined in the Business Planning and Performance Management Cycle.

- The governance arrangements at all levels of the Business Planning and Performance Management Framework continue to strengthen and embed, with the delivery of the Performance Improvement Plan and Directorate Business Plans being monitored and reported to the Committees of Council and the Senior Management Team on a bi-annual and annual basis.
- The Chief Executive organised a business planning day with senior and corporate management tiers in 2025 - 26 to engage Directors and Assistant Directors in reviewing performance during 2025-26, setting direction in 2026-27 and communicating the objectives within the Corporate Plan.
- Similarly, all Directorates also organised business and service planning sessions to engage officers in reviewing performance during 2025-26, setting direction for 2026-27 and communicating the objectives within the Corporate Plan.
- All departments produced Service Plans in 2025-26, outlining core operational activity and improvement activity which will support the achievement of the objectives within the Corporate Plan and Directorate Business Plans.
- Individual Performance has been progressed through the 'People Perform Grow' initiative, which seeks to link and align the contribution of employees with strategic objectives. All employees have now had an opportunity to participate in People Perform Grow and performance management arrangements have been introduced to support and monitor the effective implementation and roll-out of People Perform Grow across the organisation. The effective implementation of People Perform Grow is monitored through the Corporate Performance Dashboard.
- Through the Corporate Performance Dashboard, progress continues to be monitored and reported against a suite of 18 key performance indicators on a quarterly basis to the Senior and Corporate Management Teams. The performance indicators are aligned to both the Corporate Plan and Corporate Risk Register.
- The Council continues to secure greater alignment across the business planning, performance and risk management arrangements, with the Corporate Risk Register now being directly aligned to the Corporate Plan 2024-27 and Directorate Risk Registers being aligned to Directorate Business Plans.
- The Performance Improvement Plan demonstrates the Council's commitment to secure continuous improvement in the delivery of services, and the objectives seek to bring about improvement across the seven areas outlined in the Local Government Act (NI) 2014.
- The Council has also completed the second Residents Survey to identify and understand perceptions of the Council and the local area as a place to live. The findings from the survey build a robust and reliable evidence base to inform future Corporate Plans, PIP's and Directorate Business Plans ensuring the strategic direction of the organisation is focused on the needs and aspirations of residents. Development and delivery of a third residents survey is currently underway to be completed by year end 2026-27.

Further information on the Council's arrangements to secure continuous improvement and progress in implementing the 'proposals for improvement', which have been put forward by the Northern Ireland Audit Office, is outlined in Appendix 1.

Business Planning and Performance Management Framework and Cycle





Performance Improvement Objectives 2025-26



Linked to and Supporting:

Performance Improvement Objective 1

We will support the health and wellbeing of local people by improving our leisure facilities and services

- Community Planning Objective – All people in Newry, Mourne and Down enjoy good health and wellbeing
- Corporate Objective – Improve the health and wellbeing of everyone in the District

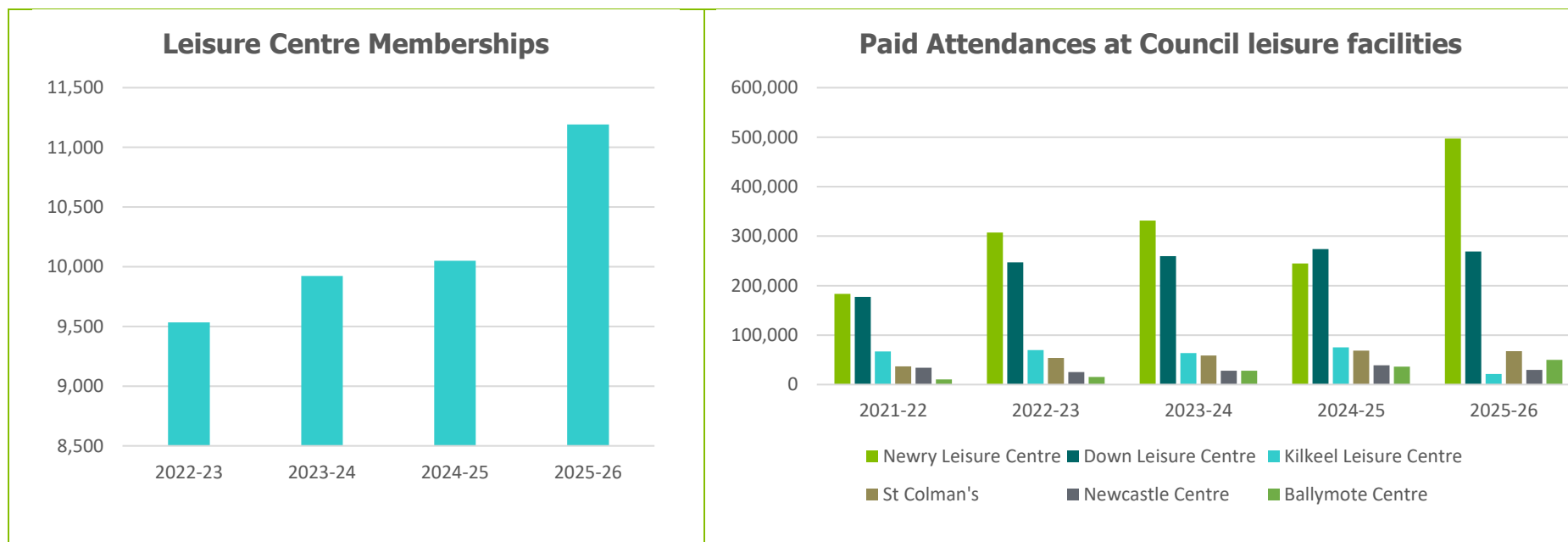
Key action	Status	Update
Leisure-Safe Accreditation being worked towards for all indoor leisure facilities	Target Progress	Sep 25 march 2026 Amber * 1 Mar 28 Amber * 2
	Notes:	1 management met with DS ni and have completed major works to date to meet standards with a new list compiled and works programmed in next 6 months 2 Progress ongoing
'Mystery Visitor' Programme implemented and baseline established	Target Progress	Sep 25 1 1 * 1 Mar 28 Amber * 2
	Notes:	1 external provider appointed and a customer survey questionnaire agreed and compiled to be carried out mid nov and mystery shopper complete end of nov 2 Programme to complete in July 2026.

Works to be commenced on Kilkeel centre upgrade	Target Actual	Sep 25 Yes Yes * 1	Mar 26 Yes Yes * 2
	Notes:	1 Kilkeel Leisure Centre has now closed and works are in progress. 2 Works in progress and on track as per programme	
Planning permission and contract tender agreed for Jennings park upgrade	Target Progress	Sep 25 Green * 1	Mar 26 Amber * 2
	Notes:	1 Jennings Park work is now progressing. 2 Project progressing through the planning process.	
Sustain the number of paid attendances at indoor leisure facilities	Target Actual	Mar 26 Yes Yes * 1	
	Notes:	1 The number of paid attendances for 2025-26 exceeded those achieved during 2024-25	
Continue to deliver a range of targeted, sustainable health programmes to encourage participation in physical activity	Target Actual	Mar 26 Yes Yes * 1	
	Notes:	1 Council has supported and delivered targeted health and wellbeing programs including the Exercise Referral and Be Active for Life schemes, along with cancer-specific and inclusive one-to-one sessions for individuals with autism, to encourage participation in physical activity.	

Measure of success	2021-22 Actual	2022-23 Actual	2023-24 Actual	2024-2025 Actual	2025-26 Actual	Status Trend	Explanatory note
Number of paid attendances at:		698,864	768,842	737,439	934,517 (Target: 757,500)	 	A total of 934,517 paid attendances were recorded in 2025-26. This is 23% above the target set for 2025-26 of 757,500. An overall increase across all leisure facilities of 26.7% between 2024-25 and 2025-26 in the number of paid attendances was recorded. This is largely in part due to the full re-opening of the pool at Newry Leisure Centre in March 2025.
Newry Leisure Centre	183,224	306,802	331,546	244,929	497,295		

					(Target: 335,000)		Across the sites, increases in paid attendances were recorded for Newry Leisure Centre and Ballymote Sports and Wellbeing Centre of 103% and 40% respectively. Both Down Leisure Centre and St. Colmans Sports Complex experienced a slight decline in paid attendances of approximately 2% each, while the Newcastle Centre recorded a decrease in paid attendances of 24%. This decrease was in part due to poor summer 2025 weather which resulted in lower than expected attendances for the Newcastle Centre and Tropicana Outdoor Swimming Complex. Kilkeel Leisure Centre experienced a significant decrease between 2024-25 and 2025-26 of 72%, however this was expected as the site was closed for a complete refurbishment at the start of September 2025.
Down Leisure Centre	177,496	227,156	259,473	273,783	268,839 (Target: 275,000)		
Kilkeel Leisure Centre	66,987	69,797	63,811	74,988	21,208 (Target: 15,000)		
St. Colmans Sports Complex	36,717	54,024	58,491	68,662	67,376 (Target: 68,700)		
Newcastle Centre & Tropicana Outdoor Swimming Complex	33,801	25,517	27,765	39,128	29,649 (Target: 27,800)		
Ballymote Sports and Wellbeing Centre	10,309	15,365	27,756	35,949	50,150 (Target: 36,000)		There has been an increase of 39% in the number of people participating in targeted health programmes increasing from 20,421 in 2024-25 to 28,399 in 2025-26 and exceeds the target set by over 29%.
Number of people participating in targeted health programmes	322*	9,309	10,805	20,421	28,399 (Target: 22,000)		
Value of financial assistance funding	New measure				£225,000		During 2025-26, £225,000 worth of financial assistance funding was given out to successful sports clubs for minor capital funding works.

allocated to sports clubs					(Target: £225,000)		
Number of leisure centre memberships	New Measure	9,534	9,923	10,050	11,192 (Target: 10,100)		Between 2024-25 and 2025-26 the number of leisure centre memberships increased by 11.4% from 10,050 in 2024-25 to 11,192 whilst also exceeding the target set of 10,100 by 10.8%.
Number of capital leisure projects progressed	New Measure		5	4	4 (Target: 2)		During 2025-26, Council continued to progress the delivery of key capital projects, including Newry City Park (planning permission submitted and tender launched for a contractor award), Year 1&2 complete and year 3 commenced of the Play Strategy upgrades, and the refurbishment works at Kilkeel Leisure Centre are underway. The Newcastle Rock Pool and Newcastle Centre projects have secured approval to appoint design and ICT teams, ICT team appointed for Newcastle centre and the multi-Sports Hub project continues to advance.
Number of play parks upgraded	New Measure				7 (Target: 2)		Council has completed the initial five-year Play Strategy and delivered Year 1 of the current review, with Year 2 works now completed and year 3 works well underway. During 2025-26, 7 upgrades were carried out at: Derrybeg, Newry Ardross, Crossmaglen Rathview, Crossmaglen Whitecross Slievegullion Bishop Court, Downpatrick Bridge Street, Downpatrick Island Park, Mournes



*The 'Be Active for Life' programme, which forms part of this measure, was only getting established when Covid-19 occurred and therefore participation rates were restricted.



Performance Improvement Objective 2

We will contribute to growing the economy by supporting local businesses and job creation

Linked to
and
Supporting:

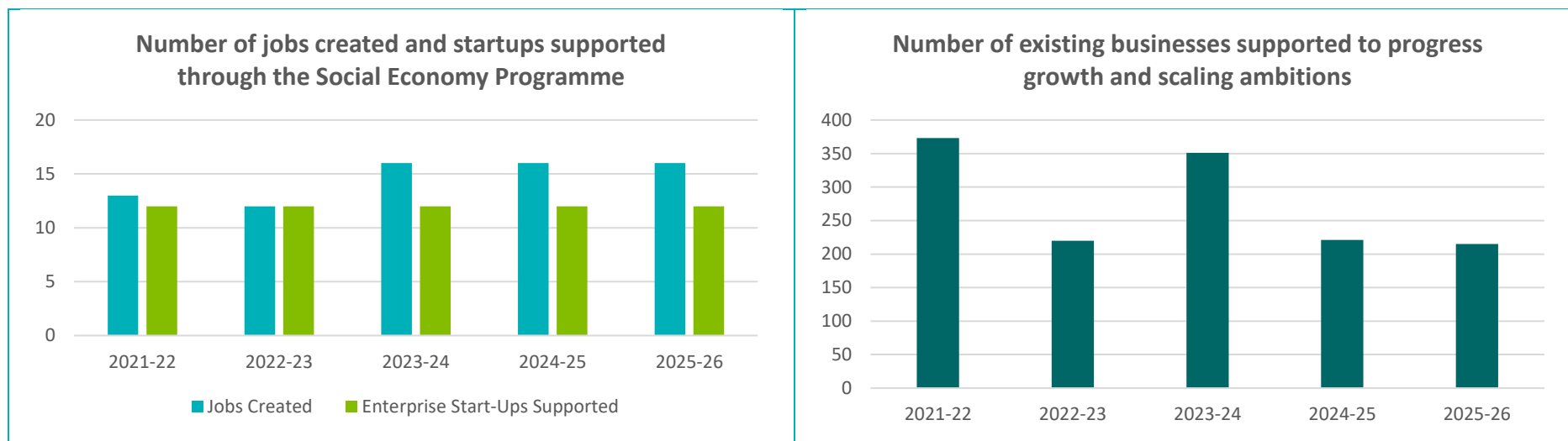
- Community Planning Outcome – All people from Newry, Mourne and Down benefit from prosperous communities
- Corporate Objective – Support the continued growth and development of our local economy

Key action	Status	Update
Invest in employability and skills through the implementation of a Labour Market Partnership Action Plan		Target Progress Sep 25 Green * 1 Mar 26 Green * 2
		Notes: 1 LMP initiatives are underway. Progress to date includes: • Get Work Ready pre-employment programme launched with 27 participants enrolled. • HGV Employment Academy launched with 32 participants enrolled. • Employment Pathway Job Fair event on 19th June with 50 employers; 16 support organisations; and 388 attendees, over 450 jobs were on offer and 63% of attendees were aged 19-44. 2 Approval from DfC for additional funding of £142,626.36 • Labour Market Partnership meetings conducted x 4 • Get Work Ready pre-employment programme concluded with 67 participants completing of 68 enrolled • Enterprise Pathway Programme concluded with 40 completers of 41 enrolments • Employability Academies concluded with 40 completers of 70 enrolments • Three "Place to Work" events held with 276 attendees • Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity Masterclass held with 10 local employers • Disability Employment Programme delivered to 10 participants • Upskilling for Growth initiatives delivered to 113 participants • Employment Pathway events delivered to 2217 attendees • Apprenticeship events held with 973 attendees • Promotion of Employability and Skills Events delivered to 150 attendees • To date a total of 96 participants have gained employment as a result of participating in an NMD LMP initiative. Skills conference hosted with 150 people in attendance.

Invest in the creation of good jobs, productivity growth, decarbonisation and regional balance through the implementation of a Local Economic Partnership Action Plan	Target Progress Sep 25 Green * 1 Mar 26 Green * 2
	Notes: 1 LEP Established LEP Action plan agreed by Partnership - Sept 2025 LEP Action plan approved by Council - Oct 2025 LEP Action plan submitted to DfE for consideration - Oct 2025 2 LEP LoO received in November 2025 following Council approval of the action plan. Officer appointed in November, Manager in February 2026. LEP meetings hosted in November, January and March. 2 AI Workshops delivered, officers are progressing with procurement and UK Subsidiy registration.
Invest in the social economy through the Social Enterprise programme	Target Actual Mar 26 Yes Yes * 1
	Notes: 1 The Council achieved all targets set through the Social Economy programme, supporting the creation of 12 new start-up businesses, 16 new jobs as well as 30 new volunteering roles created.

Measure of success	2021-22 Actual	2022-23 Actual	2023-24 Actual	2024-25 Actual	2025-26 Actual	Status Trend	Explanatory Note
Number of social enterprise start-ups supported	12	12	12	12 (Target: 12)	12 (Target: 12)	 	Since 2017-18, the Council has consistently met and exceeded the targets set for the number of new social enterprise start-ups supported and jobs created. During 2025-26, the Council supported 12 new social enterprise start-ups, created 16 new social enterprise jobs, as well as 30 new volunteering roles.
Number of social enterprise jobs created	13	12	16	16 (Target: 12)	16 (Target: 12)	 	
Number of participants engaged across all 'Go Succeed' activity	New measure			839 (Target: 712)	4,719* (Target: 712)	 	There was a total of 4,719 participants engaged across all 'Go Succeed' activity during 2025-26.
Number of business plans created for start-up businesses and employer enterprises	358	361	151	332 (Target: 361)	393* (Target: 289)		The number of business plans created for start-up businesses and employer enterprises increased by 18.4% compared to 2024-25, rising from 332 in 2024-25 to 393

							in 2025-26. The target set of 289 was also exceeded during this period by 36%.
Number of jobs promoted via business start-up activity	215	187	90 (Target: 155)	206 (Target: 170)	236* (Target: 173)	 	During 2025-26, Newry, Mourne and Down promoted 236 jobs through business start-up activity. This is an increase of 14.6% when compared to the 2024-25 figure of 206. This figure also exceeds the target set of 173 for 2025-26 by 36.4%. In 2025-26, Newry, Mourne and Down ranked 2/11 for the number of jobs promoted across NI, behind Belfast City Council. Newry, Mourne and Down also approved 393 business plans in 2024-25 placing the Council 2/11 across NI for business plan approvals again behind Belfast City Council.
Number of new enterprises created as a result of support	215	187	90	175 (Target: 195)	188* (Target: 119)	 	During 2025-26, 188 new enterprises were created as a result of support. This is an increase of 7.4% when compared to the 175 new enterprises supported during 2024-25. This figure also exceeds target set for 2025-26 of 119, by 58% in 2025-26.
Number of existing businesses supported to progress growth and scaling ambitions	373	220	351	221 (Target: 220)	215* (Target: 220)	 	The number of existing businesses supported to progress growth and scaling ambitions decreased slightly between 2024-25 and 2025-26 falling from 221 to 215 which represents a decrease of 2.7%. The target set for 2025-26 of 220 was marginally missed during this period, with the Council achieving 97.7% of the target.



*The 2025/26 figures are in draft, to be finalised following monitoring and verification of data by Go Succeed lead BCC

**Updated 'Go Succeed' programme target for the number of jobs promoted in Newry Mourne and Down: 173. An amendment to the standard set out in the Local Government (Performance Indicators and Standards) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 is awaiting legislative passage and approval. Methodology for calculating based on business and enterprise action plans * 0.6.



Performance Improvement Objective 3

We will improve the cleanliness of our District by continuing to promote recycling and addressing littering, fly tipping and dog fouling incidents

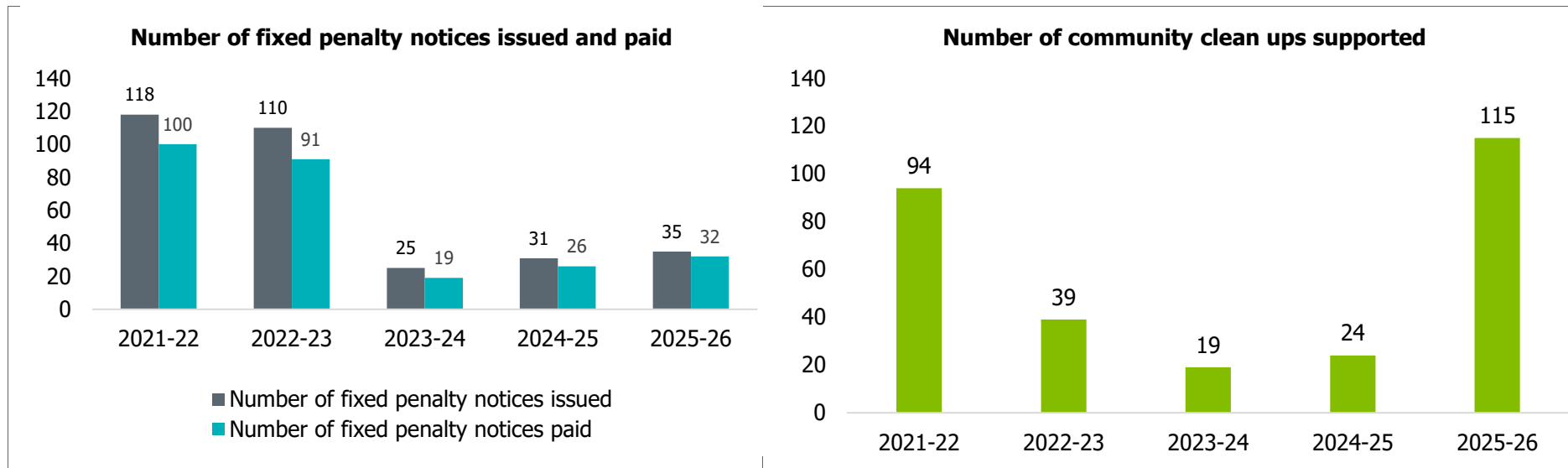
**Linked to
and
Supporting:**

- Community Planning Outcome – All people from Newry, Mourne and Down benefit from a clean, quality and sustainable environment
- Corporate Objective – Protect and enhance our environment to secure a sustainable future

Key action	Status	Update
Rollout of environmental awareness campaign displayed on Council fleet highlighting simple messages on recycling, littering and dog fouling		Target Progress Sep 25 Green * 1 Mar 26 Green * 2
		Notes: 1 Complete. 2 The rollout of environmental awareness campaign displayed on Council fleet highlighting simple messages on recycling, littering and dog fouling was completed by 31.03.2025.
Exploring options to determine levels of street cleanliness and identify emerging issues and hotspots		Target Progress Sep 25 Green * 1 Mar 26 Green * 2
		Notes: 1 Introduction of LAMS app approved at ITPG, meeting with APSE for demonstration in November 25. 2 The Council is at the final stages of a cleansing review and part of this will be the implementation of the LAMS (Land Audit Management System) APP. It is a simple and effective performance measuring system that monitors street cleansing for a total street scene quality score.

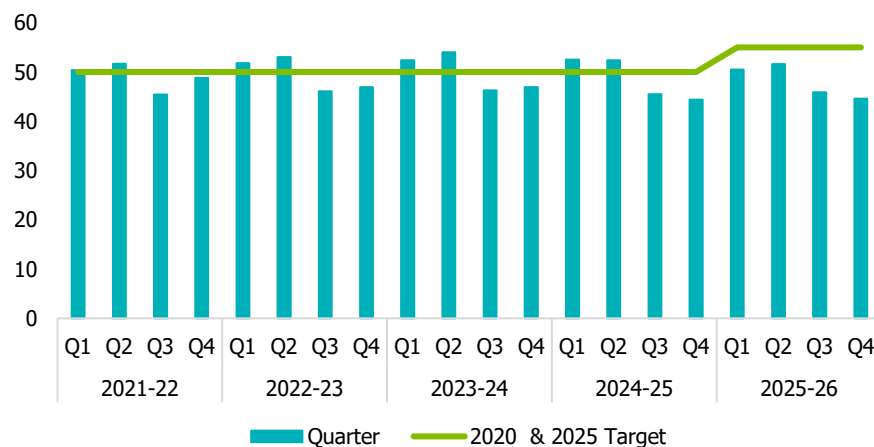
Continued implementation of a Paint Re-Use Scheme at a further 2 Household Recycling Centres	Target Progress	Sep 25 Red * 1	Mar 26 Red * 2
	Notes:	1 Extension of scheme to two further HRCs to be initiated 2 No progress has been made on the roll out of the Paint Re-Use Scheme at a further 2 Household Recycling Centres within the District.	
Continuing to implement the Enforcement Improvement Plan	Target Progress	Sep 25 Red * 1	Mar 26 Green * 2
	Notes:	1 Development and implementation of Enforcement Improvement Plan is linked with the successful recruitment to the post of Education and Enforcement Manager. Further recruitment exercise to take place in Q3. 2 This is ongoing and forms part of the recently launched three-year education and enforcement action plan activities.	
Promoting responsible dog ownership through publicity and social media campaigns	Target Progress	Sep 25 Green * 1	Mar 26 Green * 2
	Notes:	1 Responsible dog ownership promoted through publicity and social media campaigns. Online reporting form being developed to enable dog fouling incidents to be reported, resolved and mapped to target future action. 2 This is ongoing and forms part of the recently launched a three-year education and enforcement action plan activities.	
Encouraging residents to bring properly sorted surplus recyclable waste to our Household Recycling Centres	Target Progress	Sep 25 Green * 1	Mar 26 Green * 2
	Notes:	1 Information provided on website to inform residents what they can bring to the HRC sites. HRC attendants actively encouraging residents attending sites to properly sort surplus waste. 2 This is ongoing and forms part of the recently launched a three-year education and enforcement action plan activities. additionally, information is provided on the Council website to inform residents what they can bring to the HRC sites. HRC attendants actively encouraging residents attending sites to properly sort surplus waste.	

Measure of success	2022-23 Actual	2023-24 Actual	2024-25 Actual	2025-26	Status Trend	Explanatory Note
Number of fixed penalty notices issued	110	25	31 (Target: 120)	35 (Target:100)	 	Between 2024-25 and 2025-26 the number of illicit dumping incidents reported to Council increased by 4.6%, from 647 to 677 incidents, whilst the number of littering and dog fouling incidents reported also increased from 212 to 328 during this period, resulting in an increase of 54.7%.
Number of fixed penalty notices paid	91	19	26 (Target: 96)	32 (Target:80)	 	The number of fixed penalty notices issued increased by 12.9% in the past year, from 31 in 2024-25 to 35 in 2025-26. 32 of the fixed penalty notices issued were paid in 2025-26, an increase of 23% from the number paid last year. This accounts for 40% of the target set.
Percentage of fixed penalty notices issued that are paid	New Measure			91% (Target: 80%)		During 2025-26, 32 of the 35 fixed penalty notices (FPN) issues were paid. This equates to 91% of all issued FPN's being paid which exceeds the 80% target set.
Percentage of community clean ups supported	New measure		100% (Target: 90%)	100% (Target: 90%)		The Council actively supports clean ups which are carried out by local community groups and residents. Between 2018-19 and 2025-26, the Council supported 518 clean ups across the District, including 115 during 2025-26. The Council supported 100% of all community clean up requests during 2025-26.
Number of 'Live Here Love Here' environmental projects	10	9	15	10		Since 2018-19, the Council has supported 145 'Live Here Love Here' environmental projects, including ten during 2025-26. Successful projects used their funding for numerous projects involving recycling, planting flowers and installing picnic tables.



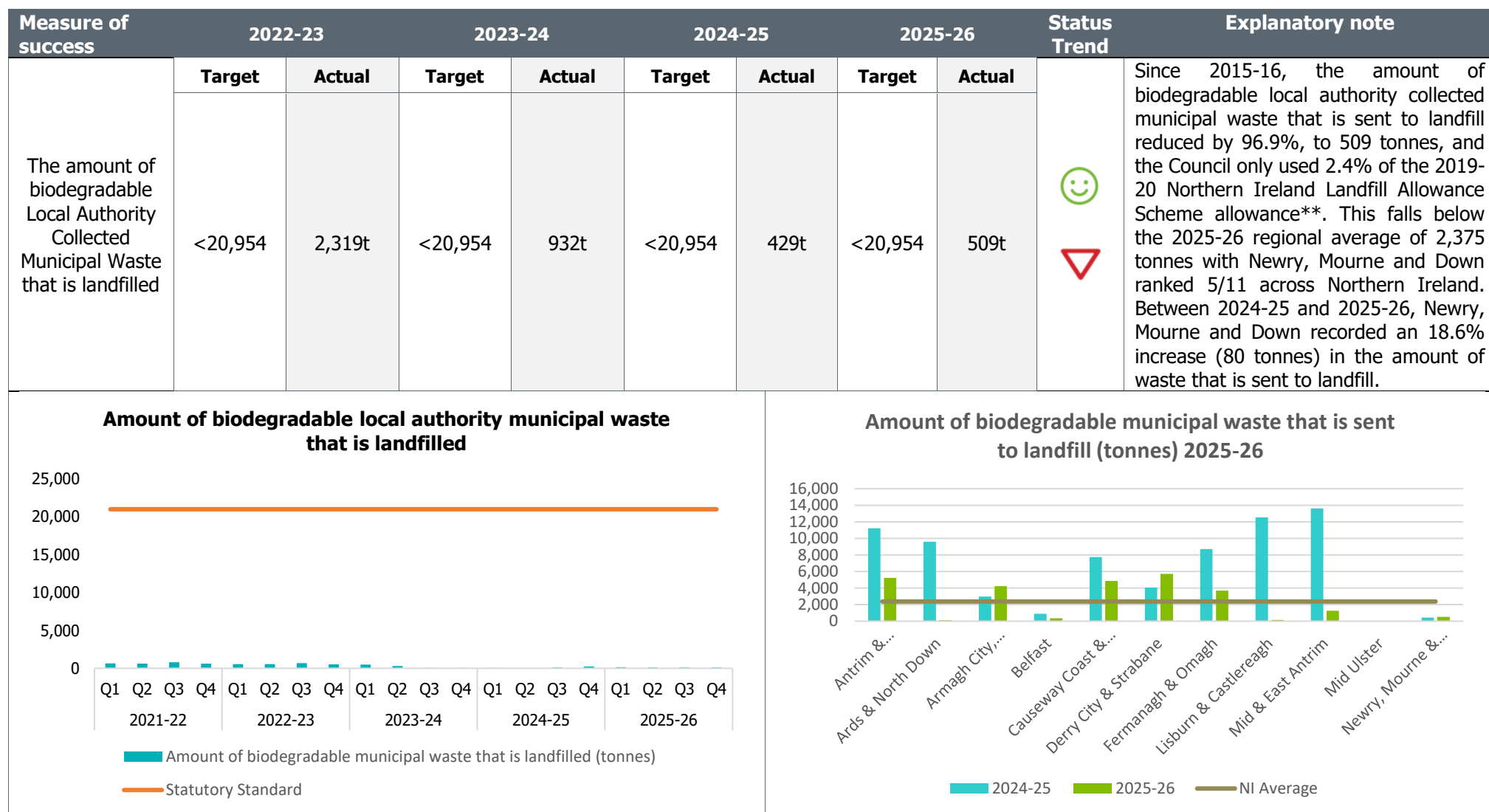
Measure of success	2022-23		2023-24		2024-25		2025-26		Status Trend	Explanatory note
	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual		
The percentage of household waste collected by District Councils that is sent for recycling	50% by 2020	49.6%	50% by 2020	50.1%	50% by 2020	48.7%	55% by 2025	48.3%	 	Since 2017-18, the Council has increased the overall rate of recycling by 2.2% to 48.3%, however it falls below the 2025 target of 55%. It is also below the 2025-26 regional average of 51.3% and ranks the Council joint 9/11 across Northern Ireland alongside Derry City and Strabane District Council. Between 2024-25 and 2025-26, the overall rate of recycling in the District decreased by 0.4%. This is in contrast to the overall regional increase of 0.3% that was experienced between 2024-25 and 2025-26.

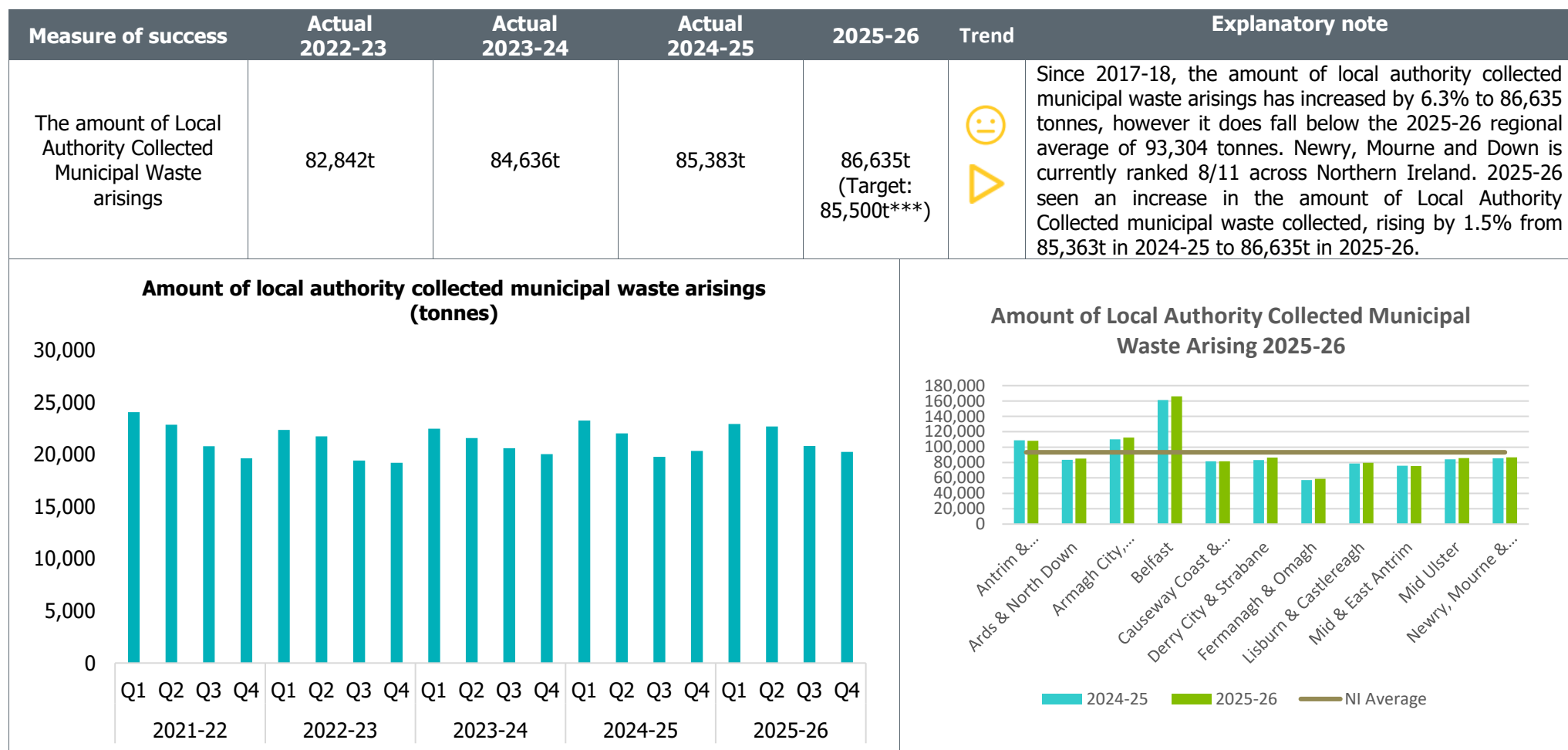
Percentage of household waste collected by the Council that is sent for recycling



Percentage of household waste that is sent for recycling 2025-26







*The 2025-26 data in relation to the statutory performance indicators for waste management remains provisional, as the end of year data is currently being validated by DAERA and will not be published until Q3 2026-27. There are slight variances between the quarterly figures and the rolling 12-month figures, as outlined in the DAERA reports.

**The 2019-20 NI Landfill Allowance Scheme (NILAS) target has been included as the Council awaits more up to date targets from DAERA

***2019-20 Target.



Performance Improvement Objective 4

We will improve our sustainability and reduce our impacts in relation to climate change

Linked to and Supporting:

- Community Planning Outcome – All people from Newry, Mourne and Down benefit from a clean, quality and sustainable environment
- Corporate Objective – Protect and enhance our environment to secure a sustainable future

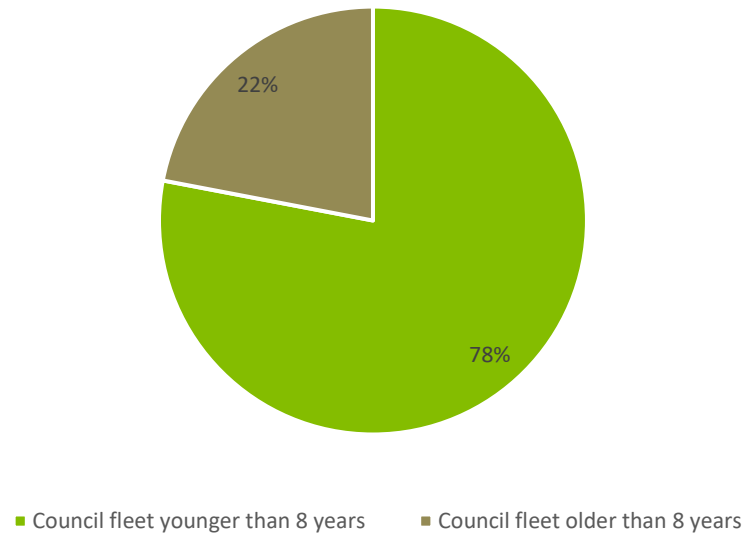
Key action	Status	Update
Publication of the Council's Climate Change and Sustainable Development strategy		Target Progress Sep 25 Mar 26 Green Amber * 1 * 2
	Notes:	1 Completed the Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy in draft which was presented to elected members at the SE Working group in September 2025. Approval to be sought at SE Committee in October 2025 for launch of public consultation. 2 Strategy reviewed and rewritten and went to SMT Committee and public consultation and design is complete and final draft to go to S&E in May – launch in June
Publication of the Council's Climate Change Adaption Plan		Target Progress Sep 25 Mar 26 Green Amber * 1 * 2
	Notes:	1 Work has commenced on the Climate Adaptation Report which is due to be submitted to DAERA by 31 March 2026. 2 Draft climate adaptation plan has been developed

Complete and Implement the Council's Tree Strategy		Target Progress	Sep 25 Green * 1	Mar 26 Green * 2
	Notes:	1 Ongoing 2 Council have now included trees under a theme within the Biodiversity Strategy, where actions will be updated as part of the Biodiversity Annual Action Plan.		
Implementing the newly published Biodiversity Strategy 2024-30		Target Progress	Sep 25 Green * 1	Mar 26 Green * 2
	Notes:	1 Progressed the action plan contained within the development of the Newry, Mourne and Down Biodiversity Strategy (2024-30) 2 Internally the Biodiversity Officer worked closely with other departments and teams across Council to improve how we manage our own green spaces for biodiversity through tree planting, changing our mowing regimes, wildflower planting and managing invasive species. Work also continued with local community groups to support their efforts and raise awareness among schools and the public of the importance of our environment. There have been several successful projects and actions benefitting biodiversity achieved in the past year including the Castlewellan HLF project, the Geopark and AONB projects, as well as the huge pots of funding successfully secured through PEACEPLUS for CMAP, Peat+ and Bloom and Branch (biodiversity PEACE funding for communities). A Review of the Biodiversity Action Plan was undertaken and presented to S&E Committee in March 2026.		
Preparing the Climate Change Mitigation Report in accordance with The Climate Change (Reporting Bodies) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024		Target Progress	Sep 25 Green * 1	Mar 26 Green * 2
	Notes:	1 Climate Mitigation report (which includes carbon baseline reporting) currently being finalised for submission to DAERA by 31 October 2025 2 Report submitted to DAERA by 31/10/25		
Continue to implement Council's fleet replacement programme		Target Progress	Sep 25 Green * 1	Mar 26 Green * 2
	Notes:	1 Continued to implement the Fleet Replacement Programme. Fleet modernisation will deliver a significant reduction in CO2 emissions particularly with the procurement of 13 no. electric battery vehicles by the Council before the end of 2025-26. 2 Ongoing		

Measure of success	2022-23 Actual	2023-24 Actual	2024-25 Actual	2025-26	Status Trend	Explanatory Note
Carbon footprint of Council estate	To be established			5,246 tCO2e		The Baseline Emissions Footprint for Newry Mourne and Down is 5,246 tCO2e (Tonnes of CO2 equivalent).
Renewable energy generation	To be established			154,684kWh		The Council has 21 Solar PV sites across the District. The Baseline figure for Generation of renewable energy is 154,684 kWh which is currently how much renewable electricity we produce from our solar systems.
Energy consumption baseline	To be established			- Electricity: 4,584,089 kWh - Mains Gas: 4,996,994 kWh - Heating Oil (Kerosene): 12,499,723 litres - Fleet Use (Diesel): 837,901 litres. - Fleet Use (Unleaded Petrol): 4,995 litres		The Baseline energy usage which was established using 2024-25 data is as follows: Electricity - 4,584,089 kWh Mains Gas - 4,996,992 kWh Heating Oil (Kerosene) - 449,723 litres Fleet Use (Diesel) - 837,901 litres Fleet Use (Unleaded Petrol) - 4,995 litres
Percentage of Council fleet younger than 8 years	New measure	75%	79% (Target: 85%)	78% (Target: 85%)	 	In 2025-26, 153 of the Council's 197 vehicles were eight years or younger, representing 78% of the total. This represents a 1% decrease on the figure recorded in 2024-25 and is 7% below the target set by Council.
Number of vehicles within the Council	New measure	1 (Target: 10)	1 (Target: 10)	1 (Target: 10)		Currently, Council still only has one vehicle within its fleet that has an alternative fuel source. This car is used within the enforcement section and is due to be replaced with a new EV

fleet that have an alternative fuel source						vehicle. Approval has been granted for the replacement of a proportion of existing small and medium sized diesel vans with electric vehicles which are due to be delivered in Q2/Q3 2026-27. Plans are also progressing for the transition of all Council diesel vehicles to HVO (Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil).
Number of trees planted on Council managed estate	New measure	2,800	257 (Target: 2,800)	2,800 (Target: 2,800)		In 2025-26, 2,800 trees were planted across the Council managed estate achieving the target set for the year.
Number of Council supported EV charging points	New measure	20	0 (Target: 18)	0 (Target: 18)		Council currently supports 19 EV charging points across its estate. Another 18 were due to be installed as part of the ORCS (On street residential charge point scheme) during 2025-26, however due to delays this is now due to be completed in 2026-27. A further 12 EV charge points are currently in the process of being stalled at 3 Council facilities for Council fleet operations

% Breakdown of Council Fleet by Age 2025-26





Performance Improvement Objective 5

We will improve the processing times of planning applications and enforcement cases by implementing the Planning Service Improvement Programme

Linked to and Supporting:

- Community Planning Outcome – All people in Newry, Mourne and Down benefit from prosperous communities
- Corporate Objective – Deliver sustainable services

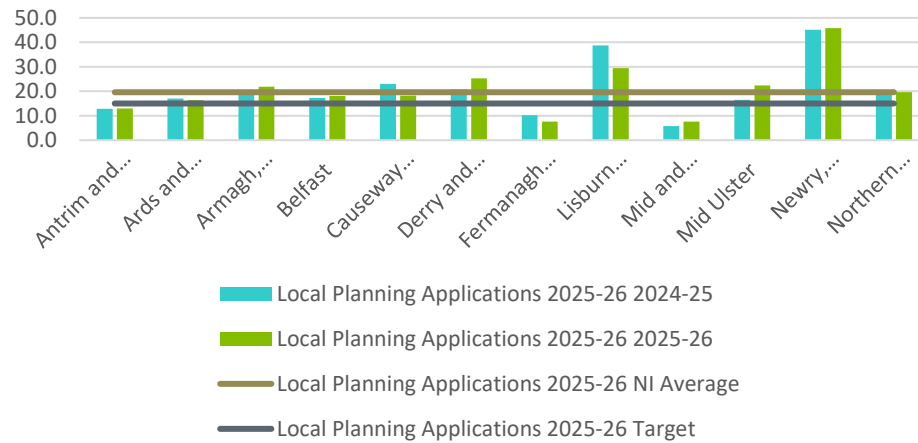
Key action	Update		
Launch of the Council's Draft Plan Strategy	Target Progress	Sep 25 June 2025 Green * 1	Mar 26 Green * 2
Notes:		1 Council's Draft Plan Strategy launched in June 2025 2 Representations made and reviewed and responses now out to consultation	

Ongoing work with agents and architects to improve the standard of planning application submissions	Target Progress	Sep 25 Green * 1	Mar 26 Green * 2
Notes: - Ongoing - This remains ongoing. Validation Check List (VCL) due to be launched in June 2026			
Support employees to deliver service improvements through ongoing training, capacity building and 'planning surgeries'.	Target Progress	Sep 25 Green * 1	Mar 26 Green * 2
Notes: - Ongoing - Ongoing training on Validation Check List (VCL) planned for May 2026 for staff. Forward training plan for 2026-27 being developed.			

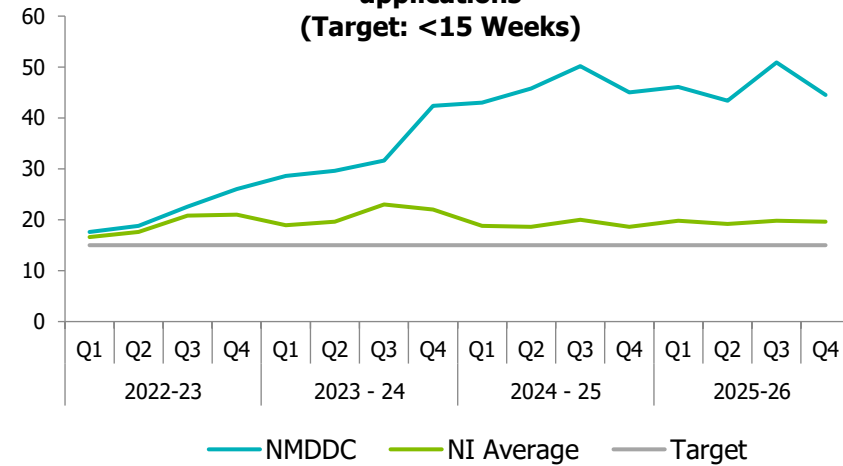
Measure of success	2022-23 Actual	2023-24 Actual	2024-25 Actual	2025-26	Status Trend	Explanatory Note
Average processing time for local planning applications (weeks)	21.6	33.7 (Target: <15 weeks)	45.2 (Target: <15 weeks)	45.8 (Target: <15 weeks)	 	During 2025-26, Newry, Mourne and Down received 1,110 local planning applications which represents a 1.5% decrease when compared to the 1,127 applications received in 2024-25. The processing time for local planning applications increased from 45.2 weeks in 2024-25 to 45.8 weeks in 2025-26, which is above the 2025-26 regional average of 19.6 weeks and exceeds the statutory standard of <15 weeks. Newry, Mourne and Down processed 5.1% of local planning applications within the statutory standard for 2025-26, an increase of 0.7% compared to the 4.4% processed in 2024-25. Based on the 2025-26 annual finalised results, Newry, Mourne and Down is ranked 11/11 across Northern Ireland for processing local planning applications.
Average processing time of major planning applications (weeks)	89.0	154.8	29.6	58.8	 	During 2025-26, Newry, Mourne and Down received 24 major planning applications, the second highest number received across all Councils and 10 more than the 14 applications received during 2024-25. The processing time for major planning applications increased from 29.6 weeks in 2024-25 to 58.8 weeks in 2025-26.

		(Target: <30 weeks)	(Target: <30 weeks)	(Target: <30 weeks)		It is above the 2025-26 regional average of 41.4 weeks and is above the statutory standard of <30 weeks. 14.3% of major planning applications were processed within the statutory standard, a decrease of 39.6% compared to 2024-25. Based on the 2025-26 annual finalised results, Newry, Mourne and Down is ranked 9/11 across Northern Ireland for processing major planning applications.
Percentage of planning enforcement cases progressed within 39 weeks	58.6%	60.0% (Target: 70%)	47.6% (Target: 70%)	58.0% (Target: 70%)	 	Within Newry, Mourne and Down in 2025-26 there were 294 enforcement cases opened, representing an increase of 11.8% compared to the 263 cases opened in 2024-25. The percentage of enforcement cases progressed within the statutory timescale increased by 10.4% from 47.6% in 2024-25 to 58.0% in 2025-26 however it remains below the statutory target of 70% and below the 2025-26 regional average of 75.1%. Based on the 2025-26 annual finalised results, Newry, Mourne and Down is ranked 10/11 across Northern Ireland for the percentage of enforcement cases progressed.
Number of planning applications in the system for 12 months or more	228	352 (Target: 150)	408 (Target: 150)	519 (Target: 150)	 	Between 2024-25 and 2025-26, the number of planning applications in the system for 12 months or more increased by 27.2% from 408 in 2024-25 to 519 in 2025-26. Currently NMD has the highest number of planning applications in the system for 12 months or more across Northern Ireland.
Number of planning applications in the system for 12 months or less	934	1,154 (Target: 700)	1,118 (Target: 700)	977 (Target: 700)	 	Between 2024-25 and 2025-26, the number of planning applications in the system for 12 months or less decreased by 12.6% from 1,118 in 2024-25 to 977 in 2025-26. Newry, Mourne and Down currently has the highest number of planning applications in the system for 12 months or less across Northern Ireland.
Number of enforcement cases in the system 12 months or more	500	599 (Target: 450)	574 (Target: 450)	644 (Target: 450)	 	Between 2024-25 and 2025-26, the number of enforcement cases in the system for 12 months or more increased by 12.2%. Newry, Mourne and Down currently has the second highest number of live enforcement cases in the system (888) behind Belfast City Council, 53% of which have been in the system for two years or more.

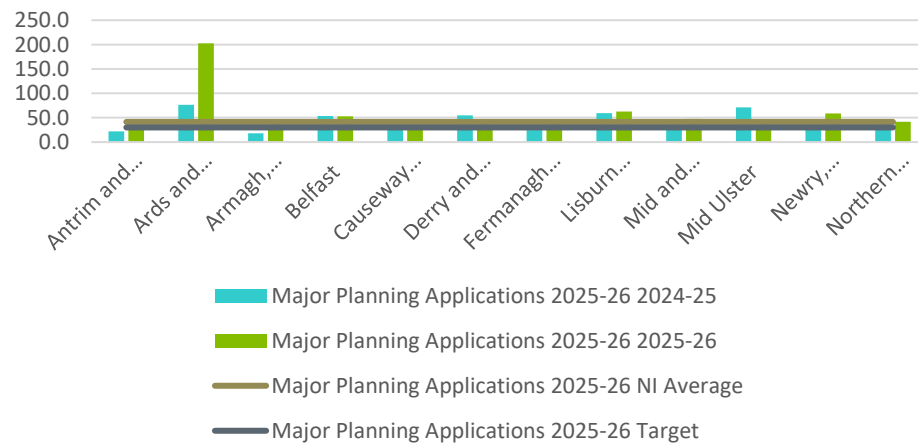
**Average processing time of local planning applications
2025-26**



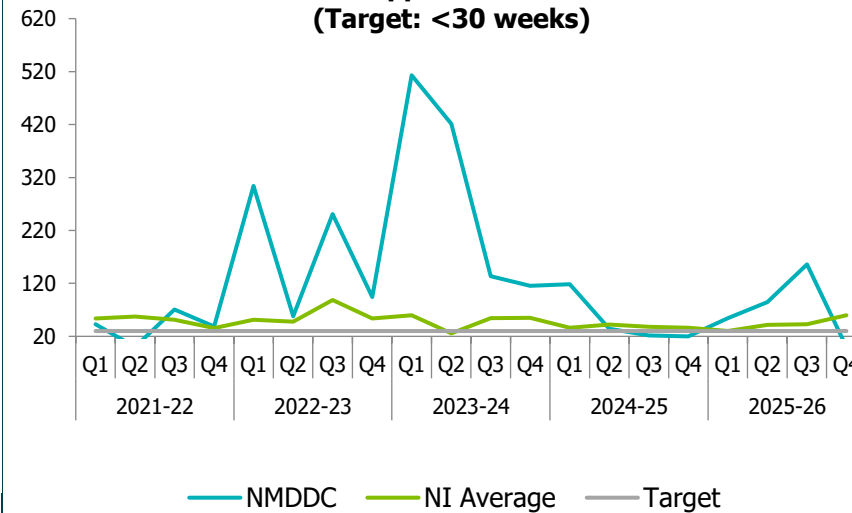
**Average processing time of local planning applications
(Target: <15 Weeks)**



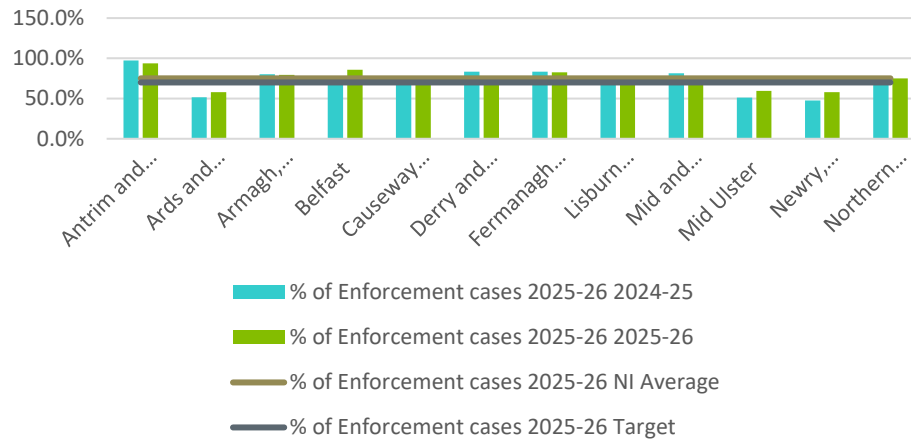
**Average processing time of major planning applications
2025-26**



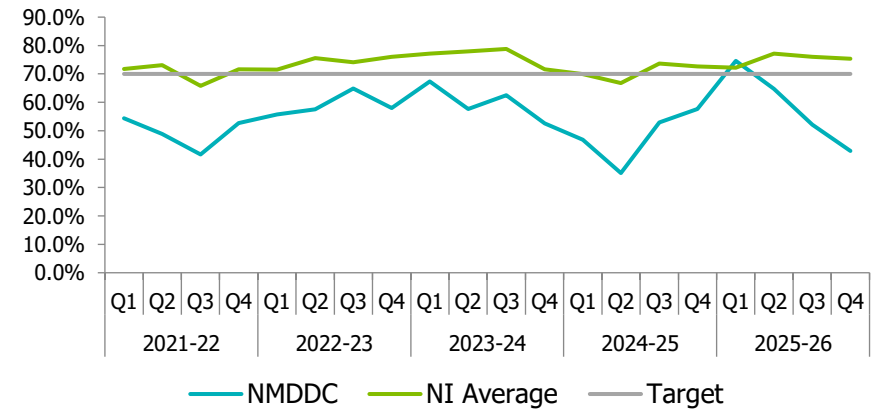
**Average processing time of major planning applications
(Target: <30 weeks)**



Percentage of planning enforcement cases progressed within 39 weeks 2025-26



Percentage of planning enforcement cases that are processed within 39 weeks (Target: 70%)



Corporate Plan 2024-27: Self-imposed performance indicators

Corporate Objective

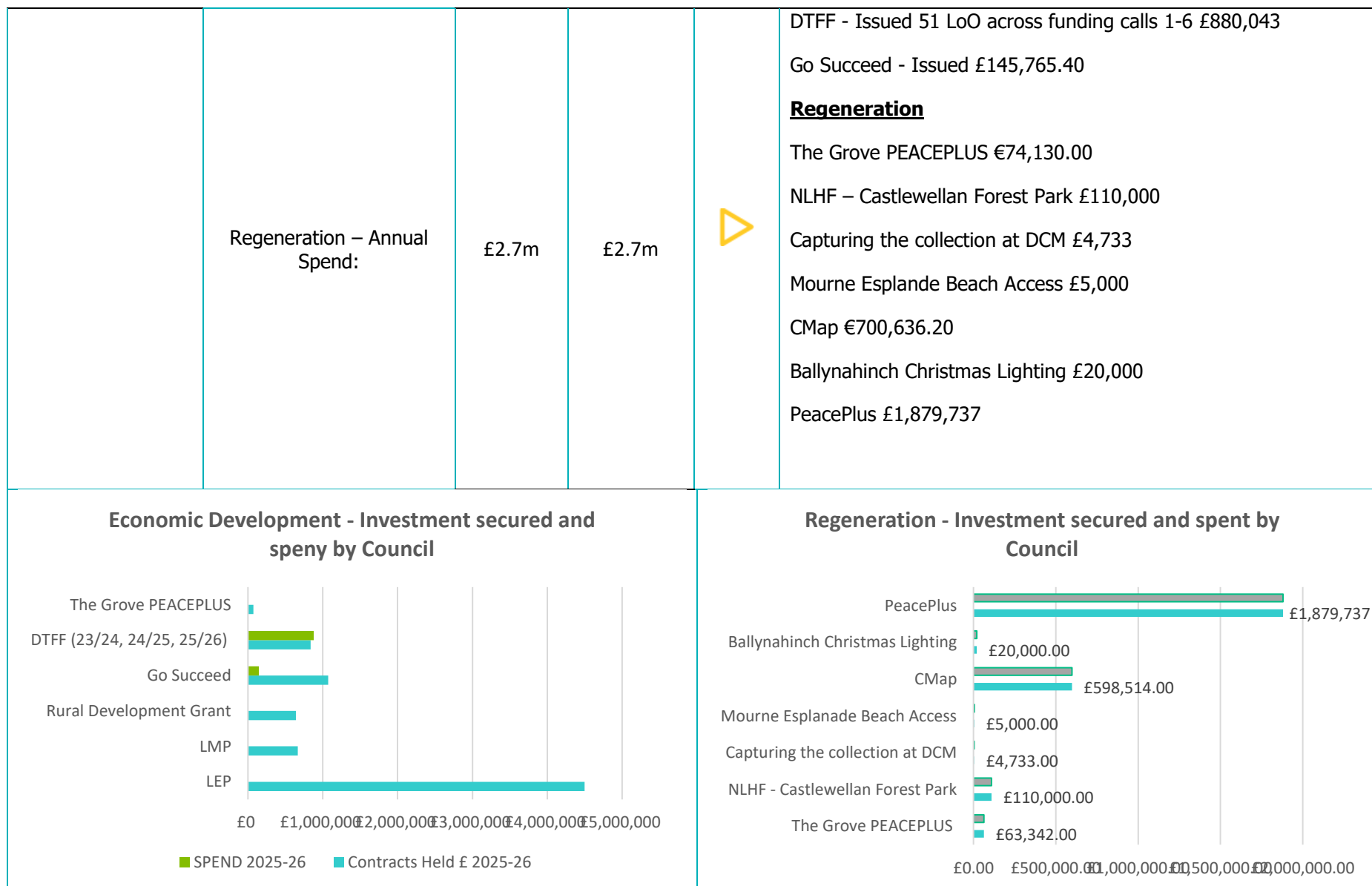
Support the continued growth and development of our local economy

Key action		Update	
Principal Project: Belfast Region City Deal Projects including skills and innovation		Target Progress	Jun 26 Amber * 1
		Notes:	1 Theatre & Conference Facility: Contractor appointed; pre-construction period completed June 2026; Construction underway summer 2026. Grade A Office Accommodation: Open for applications May - November 2026 Civic Hub: Progression remains subject to Judicial Review
Implement a programme of support that will increase growth and investment for new and established businesses and social enterprises across the district.		Target Progress	Jun 26 Green * 1
		Notes:	1 Go Succeed is a business support initiative led by Northern Ireland's eleven local councils, the services provide expert advice and resources to entrepreneurs at Engage and Growth stages of their business journey. Go Succeed issued £145,765.40 of grants in 25/26. Council supports NMEA to deliver Innovate Accelerate and Social Enterprise start up support via NMD SE programme. Council supports Down Business Centre deliver a programme for Women Networking.

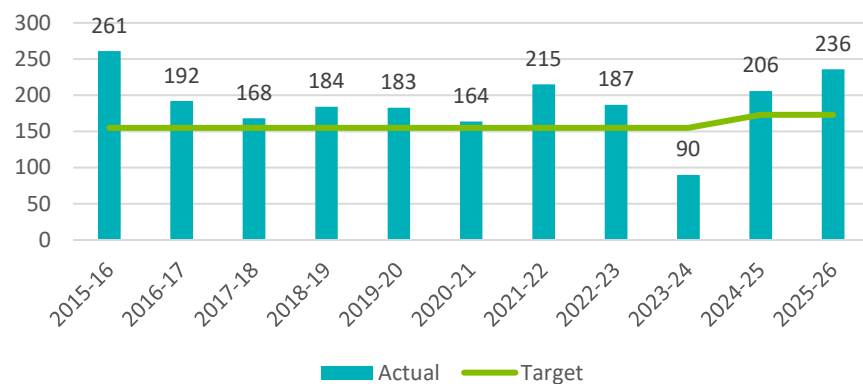
Through the Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) partnership, and other programmes, implement a range of skills and employability initiatives that meets the needs of local economy	Target Progress	Jun 26 Green * 1
Notes:	1 The following is a range of LMP initiatives: Get Work Ready pre-employment programme concluded with 67 participants completing of 68 enrolled • Enterprise Pathway Programme concluded with 40 completers of 41 enrolments • Employability Academies concluded with 52 completers of 99 enrolments • Three "Place to Work" events held with 291 attendees • Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity Masterclass held with 10 local employers • Disability Employment Programme delivered to 10 participants • Upskilling for Growth initiatives delivered to 113 participants • Employment Pathway events delivered to 2217 attendees • Apprenticeship events held with 973 attendees • Promotion of Employability and Skills Events delivered to 257 attendees • To date a total of 118 participants have gained employment as a result of participating in an NMD LMP initiative. Skills conference hosted with 150 people in attendance.	
Support the growth of new and existing businesses through the delivery of innovative and digital focused initiatives.	Target Progress	Jun 26 Green * 1
Notes:	1 NMDDC is the lead Council on the Digital Transformation Flexible Fund, the programme is delivering digitally driven innovation which is a shared ambition across the NI City and Growth Deals. The Digital Transformation Flexible Fund has been developed to assist small and micro businesses and social enterprises to be active in digital transformation, supporting inclusive growth. DTFF has awarded funding to 36 applicants in the district to the value of £600,947.53 across funding calls 1-5.	

Through Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor (DBEC) and other cross-border linkages, maximise the district's location as a cross-border gateway to Great Britain, EU, Ireland and international markets	Target Progress	Jun 26 Green * 1
	Notes:	1 DBEC have created an Industry Advisory Panel which enables DBEC to listen directly to industry and understand industries point of view to what is required to ensure DBEC achieves our aim of becoming a leading economic corridor in Europe. The Industry Advisory Panel have three strategic priorities. 1. Enhancing DBEC placemaking and corridor branding. 2. Advocate for improved infrastructure, including enabling infrastructure, along DBEC. 3. Collaboration as a cross-cutting theme necessary to achieve all DBEC priorities. The Industry Advisory Panel meet quarterly, organised and facilitated by DBEC. DBEC have been successful with a Peace Plus application for funding, exploring cross-border skills and equivalence of qualifications in Ireland and Northern Ireland, including linking cross border apprenticeships. DBEC are a partner in the process which is led by Belfast Metropolitan College. DBEC continue to promote the region and have entered a contract with a communication provider who promotes DBEC and the activities of DBEC. Included in this is the production of a Communication Plan with a key aspect being the production and distribution of a quarterly DBEC newsletter.
Continued growth of our area's infrastructure through a responsive planning system	Target Progress	Jun 26 Amber * 1
	Notes:	1 Planning targets remain a challenge however the department still receives and processes the second highest number of applications across the 11 Planning Authorities. A number of initiatives are ongoing via the planning improvement programme to deal with challenges within the service and Council has recruited external providers to provide support and increased mentoring for staff. Work remains ongoing to work with developers and agents to improve the service and react to priority projects that address key corporate priorities namely Economic Development, Tourism and Health and Wellbeing .

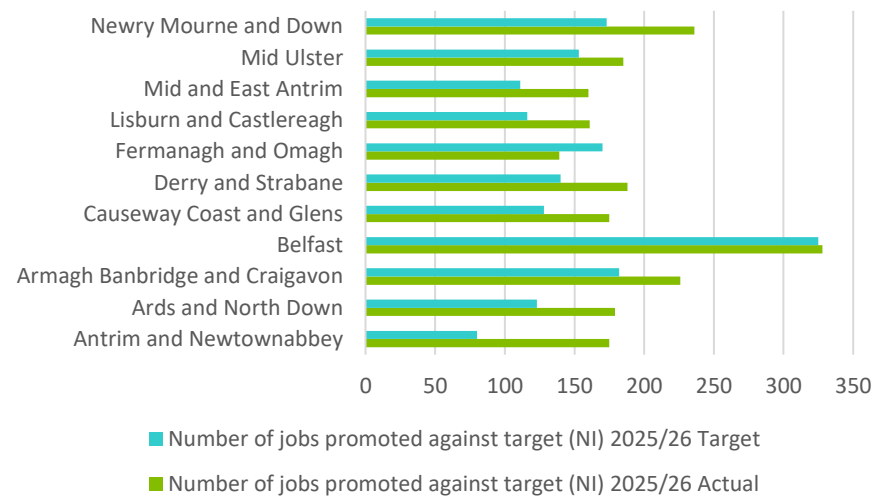
Measure of Success	2024-25		2025-26		Status Trend	Explanatory Note
Number of jobs created and businesses supported through Council programmes	Jobs created	Businesses supported	Jobs created	Businesses supported		Through the new NI 'Go Succeed' programme and the Social Economy programme 252 jobs were created with 317 businesses supported. This represents an increase of 13.5% in relation to the number of jobs created and an increase of 37.2% in the number of business supported. During 2025-26, the Social Economy programme supported 12 social enterprises while 16 new social enterprise jobs were created. Go Succeed supported the creation of 307 Business Plans and 86 Enterprise Action plans which equates to 236 jobs promoted. 81 Foundation businesses, 215 Growth businesses, 2 Scaling businesses and 7 businesses supported via Innovate Accelerate were supported through the programme.
	222	231	252*	317*	 	
Number of jobs promoted through business start-up activity	Target	Actual	Target	Actual		During 2025-26, Newry, Mourne and Down promoted 236 jobs through business start-up activity. This is an increase of 14.6% when compared to the 2024-25 figure of 206. This figure also exceeds the target set of 173 for 2025-26 by 36.4%. The Council recorded the second highest number of actual jobs promoted across all the Council areas, ranking it 2/11 across Northern Ireland behind Belfast City Council.
	173	206	173	236*	 	
Amount of investment secured and distributed by the Council	Investment		2024-25	2025-26		<u>Economic Development Investment -</u> LEP £4.5m LMP £522,963.29 plus an additional £142,626.36 Rural Development Grants £641,178 Go Succeed £1,071,861.92 Grants issued -
	Economic Development - Total Value of Funding Contracts Held:		£1.8m	£6.3m		
	Economic Development – Annual Spend:		£775,283	£1,025,808.40		
	Regeneration – Total Value of Funding Contracts Held:		£2.7m	£2.7		



Number of new jobs promoted through the business start programme



Number of Jobs Promoted against Target 2025-26



*The 2025/26 figures remain in draft, to be finalised following monitoring and verification of data by Go Succeed lead BCC

Corporate Objective

Improve the health and wellbeing of everyone in the district

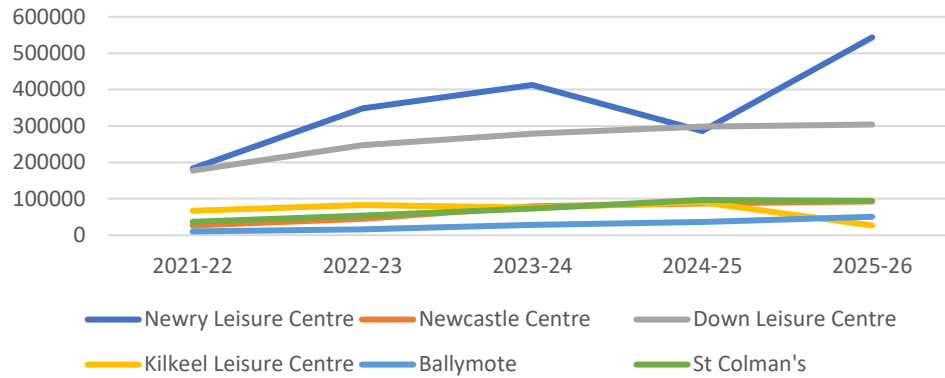
Key Action	Update	
Principal Project: Progress Warrenpoint Health and Wellbeing Centre	Target Progress	Jun 26 Green * 1
Notes:	1 In progress - planning approval obtained	
Continue to implement our Active Travel Masterplan	Target Progress	Jun 26 Green * 1
Notes:	1 The Carlingford Greenway was completed in 2025-26 and is now open. There are 5 greenways across the District currently being developed with several active travel shared walking/cycle paths in progress.	
Continue to implement our Age Friendly Strategy 2021-2031	Target Progress	Jun 26 Amber * 1
Notes:	1 This work continues through the Age Friendly Co-ordinator and yearly action plans that align to PHA funding.	
Continue to implement our Sports Facilities Strategy	Target Progress	Mar 26 Green * 1
Notes:	1 We continue to implement our Sports Facilities Strategy, noting that we are progressing through the facilities plan and carrying out works in each area as funding and budgets become available.	

Continue to implement our Play Strategy	Target Progress	Jun 26 Green * 1
Notes:	1 We continue to implement our Play Strategy (2024–2029), with all Year 1 and Year 2 actions completed and approximately 80% of Year 3 works now delivered.	
Continue to implement our Community Trails Development Plan	Target Progress	Jun 26 Green * 1
Notes:	1 We continue to implement our Community Trails Development Plan, noting that the core trails are now complete and a prioritised list of potential future routes has been identified, subject to external funding opportunities.	
Carry out initiatives to tackle health inequalities across the district	Target Progress	Jun 26 Green * 1
Notes:	1 We are carrying out initiatives to tackle health inequalities across the district, through continued delivery of a range of health programmes and low-intensity classes, currently exceeding our targets for the GP referral funded program while participation in our Be Active for Health program continues to grow.	

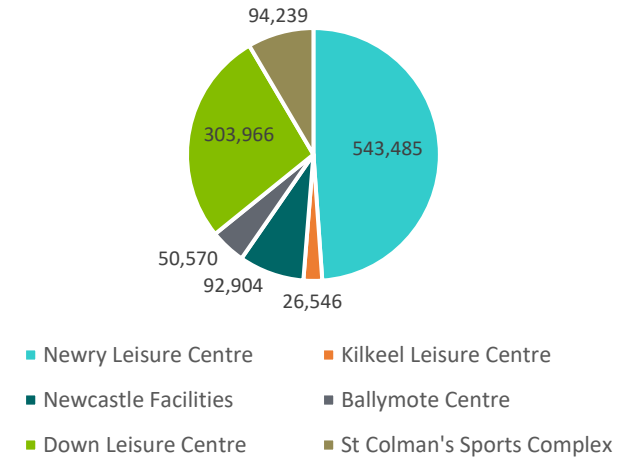
Establish an Open Spaces Strategy		Target Progress	Jun 26 Green * 1
	Notes:	1 The LDP Open Space Strategy sets out the Council's approach to the protection, enhancement and management of open space in the district. The Council commissioned a review of existing open space as part of preparing the Plan Strategy. The review not only identifies existing facilities but highlights future needs in terms of the provision of quality open space, sport and outdoor recreational facilities in the council area. The review includes an audit of existing open space and provides a draft Open Space Strategy. The open space strategy forms part of the Draft Plan Strategy which was launched in June 2025 and was open for 12 weeks consultation period via on line submissions and district wide workshops. All views have been taken on board and counter representations have been consulted on also ahead of final strategy being submitted to DfI for independent examination.	
Delivery of projects within the PeacePlus Action Plan addressing wellbeing, social prescribing and opening of shared spaces.		Target Progress	Jun 26 Green * 1
	Notes:	1 Tender documentation for social prescribing were issued and awarded. Work has commenced. PEACEPLUS projects for shared spaces capital projects are currently undergoing procurement and site work will commence at the end of June 2026	

Measure of Success	2022-23		2023-24		2024-25		2025-26		Status Trend	Explanatory note
Number of people participating in targeted health programmes	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	 	There has been an increase of 39% in the number of people participating in targeted health programmes increasing from 20,421 in 2024-25 to 28,399 in 2025-26. This figure exceeds the target set for this measure by 29%. This figure includes all health programmes and Be Active camps.
	1,950	9,309	9,400	10,805	20,000	20,421	22,000	28,399		
Number of attendances at Council leisure facilities	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual		There has been an increase of 23% in the number of attendances at Council Leisure facilities between 2024-25 and 2025-26. The figure increased from 903,717 in 2024-25 to 1,111,386 in 2025-26. This increase can be primarily attributed to the re-opening of Newry swimming pool in March 2025.
	-	803,517	-	954,912 (Paid Attendances: 768,842)	-	903,717 (Paid attendances: 737,439)		1,111,386 (Paid attendances (934,517))		
Number of users of community trails	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual		The Council no longer records figures for community trails as this was part of the 4-year funding supporting evidence which has now concluded.
	120,000	225,795	225,000	263,364	265,000	196,333	-	-		

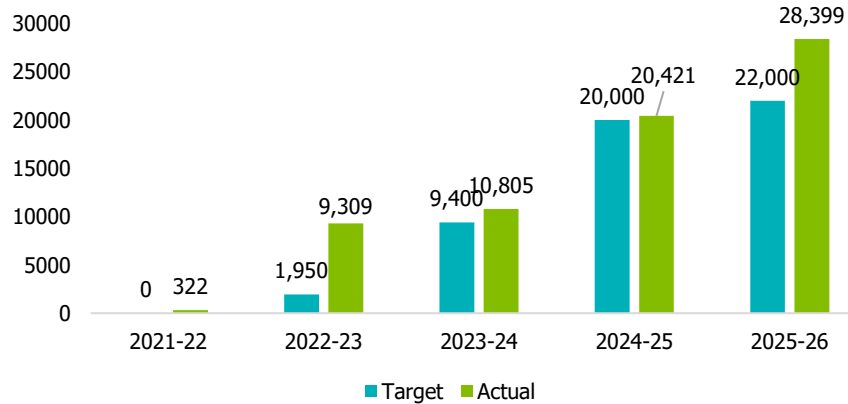
Attendances at Council Leisure Facilities



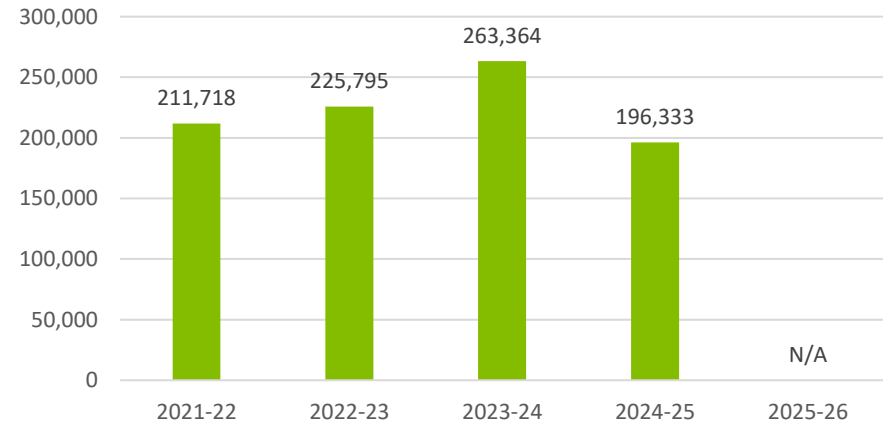
Leisure Centre attendances 2025-26



Targeted Health Programmes



Number of users of community trails



Corporate Objective

Protect and enhance our environment to secure a sustainable future

Key action		Update	
Principal Project: Progress the Local Development Plan Strategy		Target Progress	Jun 26 Green * 1
	Notes:	1 Local Development plan Draft strategy was launched in June 2025 and a 12 week consultation was held with online feedback and a series of workshops. Representations were made and reviewed and counter representations then consulted on. The plan strategy will be submitted to DfI for Independent Examination by end of 2026 as per the timetable agreed by Council and submitted to DfI	
Develop and implement a Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy		Target Progress	Jun 26 Green * 1
	Notes:	1 Completed the Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy in draft which was presented to elected members at the SE Working group in September 2025. Approval was sought at SE Committee in October 2025 for launch of public consultation. Strategy reviewed and rewritten and went to SMT Committee and public consultation and design is complete and final draft to go to S&E in August with a view to launch in September.	
Develop and implement a Local Climate Change Adaptation Plan		Target Progress	Jun 26 Amber * 1
	Notes:	1 Work has commenced on the Climate Adaptation Report which was submitted to DAERA by 31 March 2026. Draft climate adaptation plan is currently being developed.	

Develop and implement a Biodiversity Strategy		Target Progress	Jun 26 Green * 1
	Notes:	1 The Biodiversity strategy was published and launched in January 2025. Within Council the Biodiversity Officer worked closely with other departments and teams across Council to improve how we manage our own green spaces for biodiversity through tree planting, changing our mowing regimes, wildflower planting and managing invasive species. Work also continued with local community groups to support their efforts and raise awareness among schools and the public of the importance of our environment. There have been several successful projects and actions benefitting biodiversity achieved in the past year including the Castlewellan HLF project, the Geopark and AONB projects, as well as the huge pots of funding successfully secured through PEACEPLUS for CMAP, Peat+ and Bloom and Branch (biodiversity PEACE funding for communities). A Review of the Biodiversity Action Plan was undertaken and presented to S&E Committee in March 2026.	
Develop and implement a Tree Strategy		Target Progress	Jun 26 Green * 1
	Notes:	1 Council has now included trees under a theme within the Biodiversity Strategy, where actions will be updated as part of the Biodiversity Annual Action Plan.	
Undertake a baseline assessment of the Council's carbon footprint and set targets to reduce our carbon emissions.		Target Progress	Jun 26 Green * 1
	Notes:	1 Baseline has been completed with the Climate Mitigation Report submitted to DAERA in October 2025 which included the baseline assessment of carbon emissions and associated targets for carbon reduction.	
Support the implementation of new Electric Vehicle (EV) charging points.		Target Progress	Jun 26 Green * 1
	Notes:	1 Council currently supports 19 EV charging points across its estate. A further 18 points are due to be installed as part of the regional ORCS project. 12 EV charge points are currently in the process of being stalled at 3 Council facilities for Council fleet operations.	

Keep under review the actions to address sustainability and the climate change emergency declared by Council.		Target Progress	Jun 26 Green * 1
	Notes:	1 Council has now completed the Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy in draft which was presented to elected members at the Sustainability and Environment (SE) Working group in September 2025. Approval was then granted to launch a public consultation which took place for 12 weeks ending in March 2026. Following the public consultation the strategy has been reviewed and rewritten with a final draft to go to S&E in August with a view to launch in September.	
Contribute to the delivery of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Management Action Plans and the Marine Protected Area Management Plans.		Target Progress	Jun 26 Green * 1
	Notes:	1 Significant progress has been made in delivering the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Management Action Plans and the Marine Protected Area (MPA) Management Plans through a wide range of conservation, access, habitat restoration, community engagement, education and partnership initiatives. Delivery has included biodiversity enhancement, invasive species control, path and access improvements, volunteer programmes, coastal and marine awareness activities, and collaborative projects with statutory agencies, local communities and environmental organisations. This work continues to protect and enhance the district's internationally and nationally important landscapes and seascapes, while supporting biodiversity recovery, sustainable access, climate resilience and community wellbeing in line with Council priorities.	

Develop and implement a District Enforcement Action Plan for controlling environmental crime and reducing littering, fly tipping and dog fouling incidents.		Target Progress	Jun 26 Green * 1
	Notes:	1 Newry, Mourne and Down District Council has launched a three-year education and enforcement action plan to address key issues of fly-tipping, littering and dog fouling aimed at protecting the environment for future generations. A recommendation to implement the action plan was agreed at a meeting of the Council's Sustainability and Environment Committee on 17 June and was approved by the full Council in July 2026.	
Develop and implement the Local Development Plan.		Target Progress	Jun 26 Green * 1
	Notes:	1 LDP is developing as per agreed timetable and will be submitted to DfI by end of 2026 for IE	
Implementation of Building Regulations and licensing obligations in partnership with our customers and stakeholders.		Target Progress	Jun 26 Green * 1
	Notes:	1 This work remains ongoing as per agreed regulations which are reviewed and agreed by relevant departments with performance reported to Council bi annually	

Measure of Success	2022-23		2023-24		2024-25		2025-26		Status Trend	Explanatory Note
	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual		
Level of street cleanliness across the District (KNIB street cleanliness score)	-	Data unavailable	64	Data unavailable	64	Data unavailable	64	Data unavailable	-	The Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful (KNIB) Cleaner Neighbourhoods Report for 2024-25 was published in Q4 2024-25. While a new regional average of 73 has been provided for 2024-25, which is a decrease of 2% on the 2023-24 score of 75%, an individual Council LEAMS score has not been provided within the report. Contact has been made with KNIB asking if this information can be made available and we are currently awaiting a response. Council has however been exploring other options to determine levels of street cleanliness and have had a LAMS (Land Area Management System) app through APSE (Association for Public Service Excellence) approved for use through the Council's IT Performance Group.
Percentage of waste recycled	50% by 2020	49.6%	50% by 2020	50.1%	70% by 2030 55% by 2025	48.7%	70% by 2030 55% by 2025	48.3%	 	Since 2017-18, the Council has increased the overall rate of recycling by 2.2% to 48.3%, however it falls below the 2025 target of 55%. It is also below the 2025-26 regional average of 51.3% and ranks the Council joint 9/11 across Northern Ireland alongside Derry City and Strabane District Council. Between 2024-25 and 2025-26, the overall rate of recycling in the District decreased by 0.4% This is in contrast to the overall regional increase of 0.3% that was experienced between 2024-25 and 2025-26.
Percentage of EV charging points	New measure						-	0%		Council currently supports 19 EV charging points across its estate. A further 18 points are due to be installed as part of the regional ORCS project during 2026-27. 12 EV charge points are currently in the process of being

					installed at 3 Council facilities for Council fleet operations.
Level of compliance with sustainable development duty		Council continues to make significant progress in addressing the impact of climate change locally. The Council's Climate Change Strategy has been through public consultation with a target date for launch in September 2026. The Council is involved in several projects to increase the availability of EV charging points across the District, including the installation of 12 EV charging points for Council fleet at 3 Council facilities across the District. Council has also established its carbon emissions baseline and developed associated targets for carbon reduction. Council are also working towards a transition to zero emission vehicles for small and medium fleet with 16 vehicles ordered and due to be delivered in 2026/27.			

Corporate Objective

Support regenerative tourism opportunities which promote our culture, heritage and environment

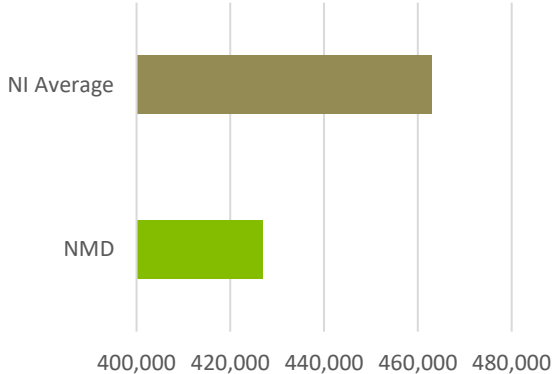
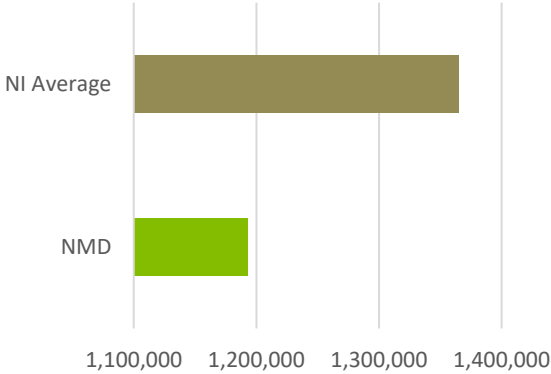
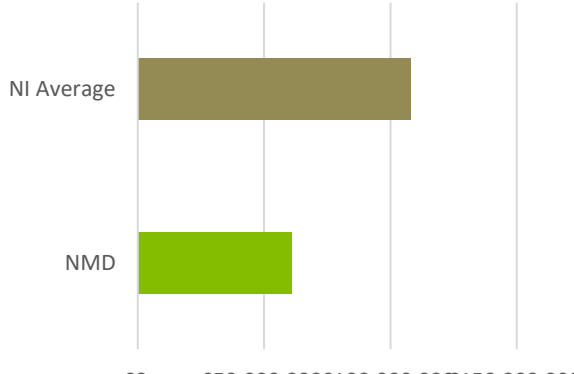
Key Action		Update	
Principal Project: Newcastle tourism and recreation facilities		Target Progress	Jun 26 Green * 1
	Notes:	1 Feasibility Study completed on active travel routes Concept proposal underway on active travel hub / park and ride facility Active Travel route being progressed for Tipperary Woods and Castle Park	
Deliver the Council's Tourism Strategy.		Target Progress	Jun 26 Green * 1
	Notes:	1 Significant progress has been made in delivering the Tourism Strategy through the launch of the new destination brand, Mourne Gullion Strangford – Ireland's True Nature, alongside enhanced destination marketing, interpretation and signage improvements. Council continues to strengthen collaboration with tourism businesses and communities through the development of a Sustainable Tourism Network and the appointment of a dedicated facilitator approved. New tourism experiences have been introduced, including a Food and Drink Experience in Warrenpoint and a Mindfulness Experience within the Forest Parks. New events such as Restaurant Week Newcastle and The Garden Sessions at Slieve Gullion have further enhanced the district's tourism offering. Major investment continues across Council's Forest Parks and beaches, improving visitor infrastructure and accessibility. These initiatives are supporting sustainable tourism growth, strengthening the visitor economy and enhancing the district's profile as a leading tourism destination	

Develop the tourism proposition for the district and new visitor experiences with industry in line with Tourism Experience Brands	Target Progress Jun 26 Green * 1
Notes:	1 Significant progress has been made in raising the profile of the district through the launch of the new destination brand, Mourne Gullion Strangford – Ireland's True Nature, providing a unified identity for tourism promotion across the district. 4 new experiences have been delivered and 2 existing experiences reviewed
Continue to progress the Mourne Mountains Gateway Project as part of the BRCD investment programme, and other major tourism capital projects throughout the district.	Target Progress Jun 26 Green * 1
Notes:	1 Following decision by National Trust not to grant a lease, NMDDC working with key stakeholders to explore an alternative tourism proposition. Grade A Hotel Accommodation grant for £1 million was launched 19th September and 3 projects have been successful. Council approved the Outline Business Case for the Castlewellsan Treetop Walk Project, representing an investment of approximately £6.8 million by Council, alongside a proposed £5 million investment from EAK. Progress is continuing on lease and legal agreements, together with the development of ancillary infrastructure required to support the project. Complementary investment is also being delivered through the National Lottery Heritage Fund's and Council of circa £7million investment in Castlewellsan Forest Park, which has facilitated the reopening of the Annesley Arboretum and Walled Garden, while restoration works at the Grange Yard are nearing completion. Visitor improvement works have also been completed at Tyrella Beach Amenity Building, with the Mae Murray Accessible Beach facility now fully operational, improving accessibility and inclusivity for residents and visitors alike.

Implement the Mourne Gullion Strangford UNESCO Global Geopark Masterplan 2020–2023 and Business Plan 2021–2025.		Target Progress	Jun 26 Green * 1
	Notes:	1 Significant progress has been made in implementing the Mourne Gullion Strangford UNESCO Global Geopark Strategy, Management Plan and Action Plan. Delivery has included a broad programme of biodiversity conservation, climate resilience initiatives, heritage interpretation, education and youth engagement, sustainable tourism development, volunteer programmes, research, and community participation activities across the district. This work continues to deliver against Council objectives by enhancing biodiversity, increasing community participation, strengthening partnerships and supporting sustainable economic growth through the UNESCO Global Geopark designation.	
Continue to deliver the Council's Arts, Culture & Heritage Strategy to grow our audiences, increase engagement and enhance our Arts, Museums and Events' offering.		Target Progress	Jun 26 Green * 1
	Notes:	1 Successful delivery of Giant Adventures and community events programme, schools engagement programme at the museums, and comprehensive Arts programme at Down Arts Centre.	

Measure of Success	2018	2019	2023	2024	2025	Trend	Explanatory Note
Number of overnight stays	449,953	455,876	482,585	443,776	427,157	▶	There was a break in tourism statistics between 2020 and 2023 due to the unprecedented impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. While 2023 data shows an increase in the number of overnight stays of 5.9% from 2019, NISRA has advised that the data wouldn't be directly comparable as there have been methodological changes in the surveys (including a change in source). Between 2024 and 2025 there was approximately a 3.7% decrease in the number of overnight stays recorded in Newry, Mourne and Down. Newry, Mourne and Down was one of 5 Council areas to experience a decrease during this period.

Level of visitor spend	£69,345,336	£67,983,191	£79,139,615	£73,277,005	£60,817,412	▽	There was a break in tourism statistics between 2020 and 2023 due to the unprecedented impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. While 2023 data shows an increase in the level of visitor spend of 16.4% from 2019, NISRA has advised that the data wouldn't be directly comparable as there have been methodological changes in the surveys (including a change in source). Between 2024 and 2025 there was approximately a 17% decrease in the level of visitor spend recorded in the District. Newry, Mourne and Down was one of only 3 Councils to record a decrease in expenditure between 2024 and 2025.
Measure of Success	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Trend	Explanatory Note
Number of visitors to Council's Arts Centres and Museums	New measure			75,244	97,866	△	During 2025-26 there was a total of 97,866 visitors recorded across all Council's Arts Centres and Museums. This is an increase of 30% on the 75,244 visitors recorded in 2024-25. The breakdown of visitors across all the Council sites is as follows: Down Arts Centre: 28,096 Down County Museum: 14,378 Newry & Mourne Museum: 9,121 Newry Townhall: 32,099 Warrenpoint Townhall: 14,172

Measure of Success	2020	2021	2023	2024	2025	Trend	Explanatory Note
Level of visitor satisfaction		Satisfaction with Parks 83% (Baseline)	Satisfaction with Parks 76%	-	-	😐	A Visitor satisfaction survey was developed and deployed on the Council website in 2025 however but there was no response to the survey. To ensure this does not happen again the Council is re-launching the survey in Q2 2026/27, placing posters with QR codes at all relevant sites and issuing officers with mobile devices to complete face to face surveys.
		Satisfaction with Beaches 67% (Baseline)	Satisfaction with Beaches 52%		-		-
Overnight Trips - 2025			Number of Nights - 2025			Expenditure (£ Millions) - 2025	
							

Corporate Objective

Empowering communities to play an active part in civic life

Key action		Update
Development and delivery of the District Electoral Area Action Plans		Target Progress Jun 26 Green * 1
	Notes:	1 Programme delivery complete as per the 2025/26 DEA Action Plans
Development and delivery of the Policing & Community Safety Partnership Action Plan		Target Progress Jun 26 Green * 1
	Notes:	1 Programme delivery complete as per the 2025/26 PCSP Action Plan
Development and delivery of the Good Relations Programme Action Plan		Target Progress Jun 26 Programme delivery complete Green
Development and delivery of the Downpatrick and Newry Neighbourhood Renewal Areas Action Plan		Target Progress Jun 26 Green * 1
	Notes:	1 Programme delivery complete as per the 2025/26 Downpatrick & Newry NR Action Plans

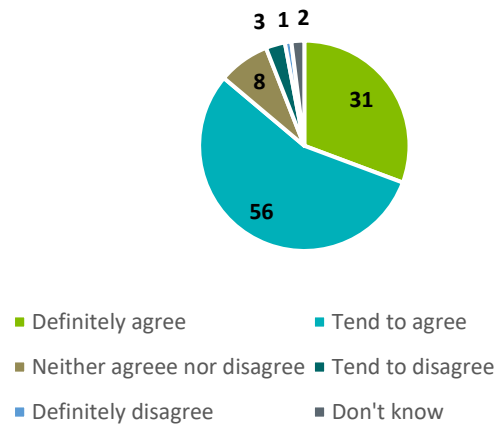
Development and delivery of the Social Inclusion Action Plan including the delivery of the Ethnic Minority Support Centre	Target Progress	Jun 26 Green * 1
Notes:	1 Social Inclusion Action Plan completed.	
Development and delivery of the PeacePlus Action Plan	Target Progress	Jun 26 Green * 1
Notes:	1 The programme is on target for delivery with delays on capital expenditure accounted for and a plan in place to ensure timely delivery in line with the action plan	
Development and delivery of the Community Wealth Building Action Plan	Target Progress	Jun 26 Green * 1
Notes:	1 Community Wealth Building actions have been mainstreamed within Directorate Services Plans as a cross-cutting theme.	

Implementation of the Community Plan		Target Progress Jun 26 Green * 1
	Notes:	1 Implementation of the Community Plan continued in 2025-26 including progressing the priorities within the Health and Wellbeing Action Plan; delivery of Rural Housing Workshops; DEA based Participatory Budgeting events and the publication of the Community Planning Statement of Progress.
Development of a Community Facilities Strategy		Target Progress Jun 26 Amber * 1
	Notes:	1 Community Facilities being considered as part of Community Development Strategy which is currently being drafted
Delivery of the Financial Assistance Programme		Target Progress Jun 26 Green * 1
	Notes:	1 All calls were completed and claims finalised with the new site verification visits undertaken by budget holders

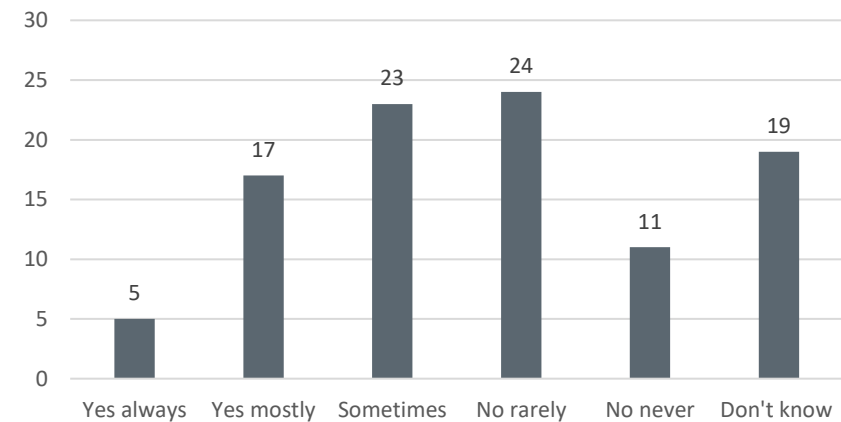
Measure of Success	2018 Actual	2022 Actual	Status	Explanatory Note
Percentage of residents who agree that the local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together	72%	87%	△	In September 2018 and again in September 2022, the Council commissioned a Residents Survey to establish and track a robust and reliable evidence base in relation to resident perceptions about their local area, the performance of the Council and key priorities for improvement in the future. A representative sample of 764 residents were surveyed and revealed that: 87% agree that the area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together, representing a significant increase on the 2018 figure of 72%.
Percentage of residents who agree that the Council consults with and listens to the views of local people	62%	65%	△	

Percentage of residents who feel that they can have a say on how services are delivered in their local area	59%	45%		• 65% agree that the Council consults with and listens to the views of local people, which is an increase of 3% on the 2018 figure of 62%. The percentage of residents that disagree with this statement however has increased from 11% to 13% during the four-year period. • 45% feel that they can have a say on how services are delivered in their local area. This represents a significant decrease from the 59% recorded in 2018. Feedback and comparative analysis from the two Residents Survey has been used to inform the development of future plans and strategies, including the Corporate Plan and Performance Improvement Plan.
Measure of Success	2024-25 Actual	2025-26 Actual	Status	Explanatory Note
Number of financial assistance projects funded	391 projects awarded funding	361		During 2025-26, The Council awarded £1.97 million in funding to 361 successful applications for financial assistance. This was done through 5 different funding calls run throughout the year. This represented a success rate of 61% from a total of 588 applications made throughout the year.
Number of people accessing the Ethnic Minority Support Office services	2343 (Target: 2000)	2212 (Target: 2000)	 	There were 2,212 contacts recorded through the Ethnic Minority Support Centre during 2025-26, exceeding the target set.

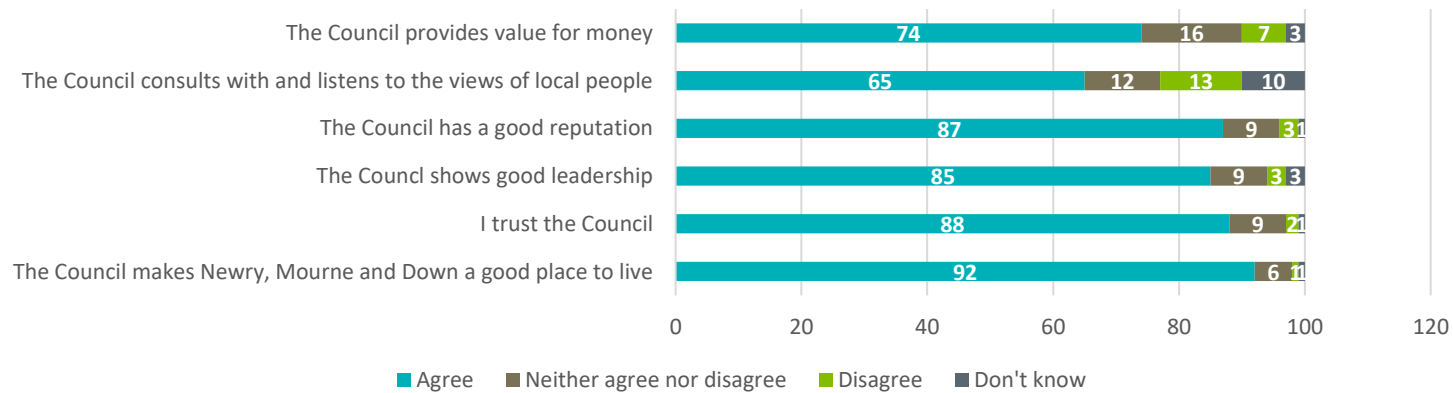
To what extent do you agree or disagree that your local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together? (%) (2022)



Do you feel you are able to have a say on things happening or how services are run in your local area? (%) (2022)



Thinking about Newry, Mourne and Down, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (2022)



Corporate Objective

Develop and revitalise our district

Key action	Update
Principal Project: Newry City Centre Regeneration	Target Progress Jun 26 Amber * 1
Notes:	1 Full Business Case approved by DfC. Planning Approval in place. Civic Centre delayed following receipt of Pre Action Protocol Newry City Centre Regeneration Theatre/Conference Project- The theatre received planning permission 18 December 2024 and listed building consent August 2025. Woodvale Construction appointed, additional funding secured from Shared Island. Contractor due to mobilise in June 2026. Grade A Office Accommodation grant £3 Million Office accommodation grant was launched 19th September however with nil applications received. Development grant to reopen in 26/27. Hotel Accommodation grant £1 Million Office accommodation grant was launched 15th September with 4 applications submitted and now under assessment. Regional Innovation Hub MoU created and signed between Newry, Mourne and Down District Council and Queens University Innovation Oversight Board as an academic partner on the Regional Innovation Hub project. Potential partnership opportunities being explored with Digital Catapult that could also support the operation of a regional innovation hub in Newry City
Principal Project: Downpatrick Regeneration	Target Progress Jun 26 Green * 1
Notes:	1 PSNI/Irish Street marketing brief prepared. Outline Business Case with DfC's economist. Council has committed capital funding to the regeneration of Irish Street. DRWG meet monthly to progress projects identified in the Living High Streets action plan. Following the launch of the Urban Park in Dunleath, additional funding was secured from DfC for linkages to open up Dunleath to St. Patrick's Avenue. Following engagement with DfI there is no funding available for a traffic survey, alternative sources of funding are being investigated. Engagement with NI Water regarding purchase of lands to enable development of toilets in Market Street. Letter of Offer received for Church Street & DeCourcy Place Public Realm from DfC. Pre-contract works ongoing with utilities. Contractor appointed following procurement (McQuillan Contracts), task and finish meetings continue along with monthly meetings with key stakeholders.

Implement a Small Settlement regeneration scheme in partnership with Government Departments.		Target Progress	Jun 26 Green * 1
	Notes:	1 Small Settlements Scheme completed EI Schemes in Rostrevor, Castlewellan, Saintfield and Bessbrook. 7 seven revitalisation schemes in the villages of Annalong, Dundrum, Hilltown, Killyleagh, Meigh, Newtownhamilton, Strangford and Killoogh. Several of these regeneration projects, including shop front and dereliction enhancement schemes, and Make it Local campaigns.	
Implement regeneration initiatives across urban centres and develop forward work programme for future regeneration initiatives.		Target Progress	Jun 26 Green * 1
	Notes:	1 Quarterly meetings with DfC on urban centre development for Ballynahinch, Downpatrick, Kilkeel, Newry, Newcastle, and Warrenpoint. Kilkeel River Walk EI Scheme progressing through RIBA Stage 2.	
Progress the Belfast Region City Deal.		Target Progress	Jun 26 Amber * 1
	Notes:	1 Theatre & Conference Facility: Contractor appointed; pre-construction period completed June 2026; Construction underway summer 2026. Grade A Office Accommodation: Open for applications May - November 2026 Civic Hub: Progression remains subject to Judicial Review	
Update existing masterplans and village plans in line with the emerging Local Development Plan.		Target Progress	Jun 26 Green * 1
	Notes:	1 Officers undertake Master Plan reviews bi annually. Village plans were reviewed in October 2025 on projects complete, project relevance and suitability for Shaping Sustainable Places. Crossmaglen Improvement Plan complete in March 2026.	
Implement our Public Convenience Strategy		Target Progress	Jun 26 Green * 1
	Notes:	1 Implementation of the public convenience strategy continues. 50% of the condition surveys have been completed. The outcome of these surveys will be used to prioritise which facilities will be refurbished or replaced through the Council's capital programme.	

Measure of success	2024-25	2025-26	Status Trend	Explanatory Note
Number of BRCD projects delivered	Progress underway	2		Grade A Office Accommodation launched and open for applications. Theatre and Conference Facility commenced, with contractor appointed and commencement of construction Q2 2026/27
Number of small settlement schemes delivered	4 complete	11	△	Small Settlements Scheme completed EI Schemes in Rostrevor, Castlewellan, Saintfield and Bessbrook. 7 seven revitalisation schemes in the villages of Annalong, Dundrum, Hilltown, Killyleagh, Meigh, Newtownhamilton, Strangford and Killough
Number of new/upgraded public conveniences	4	0	▽	6 public conveniences have been refurbished/upgraded thus far however no new build or upgraded public conveniences were carried out in 2025-26. 50% of the condition surveys have now been completed and the outcome of these surveys will be used to prioritise which facilities will be refurbished or replaced through the Council's capital programme.

Corporate Objective

Deliver sustainable services

Key action		Update	
Principal Project: Organisational transformation and delivery of sustainable services		Target Progress	Jun 26 Green * 1
		Notes:	1 Resources, funded from the Extended Producer Responsibility for packaging (pEPR) payments scheme, have been approved to be utilised within the Sustainability and Environment Directorate (S&E) to support the Council in proactively improving the effectiveness and efficiency of its Waste Collection and Recycling Services, as required by the funding scheme. Introduction of a new HR system is progressing with final business case approved and work on system project implementation plan progressing. Procurement policy reviewed and updated and staff trained in implementation of the Procurement Act 2023.
Develop a robust and reliable evidence base to inform decision making, policy development and service provision.		Target Progress	Jun 26 Green * 1
		Notes:	1 Council ran a number of public engagements including the draft performance improvement objectives and draft Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy. Community Planning indicator data has been updated and published as part of the Community Planning Statement of Progress 2026.

Effectively manage performance and align individual contribution with corporate objectives and better outcomes for all.	Target Progress	Jun 26 Green * 1
	Notes: 1 The Council continues to mainstream and embed the Business Planning and Performance Management Framework. During 2025-26, the performance officer presented two sessions on the framework and the significant contribution of employees in achieving the corporate objectives to staff taking part in ILM Levels 2 and 3. An SMT/CMT Business Planning Day was also organised in April 2025 which involved the development of new Directorate Business Plans and how they would contribute to the achievement of the overall corporate plan objectives and better outcomes for all. These were agreed by Committee in June along with the Assessment of the 2024-25 Directorate Business Plans and published on the Council's website. The Performance Improvement Plan was developed and published before the statutory deadline of 30 June 2025 and the Council's Assessment of Performance was formulated and published before the statutory deadline of 30 September 2025.	
Establish accurate data collection arrangements to inform actions related to sustainability and climate change.	Target Progress	Jun 26 Green * 1
	Notes: 1 Assessment of the carbon baseline has been completed through the collection of Council's energy data. This will be carried out on an annual basis for benchmarking purposes. Further investigations are underway into the potential procurement of an energy management system.	

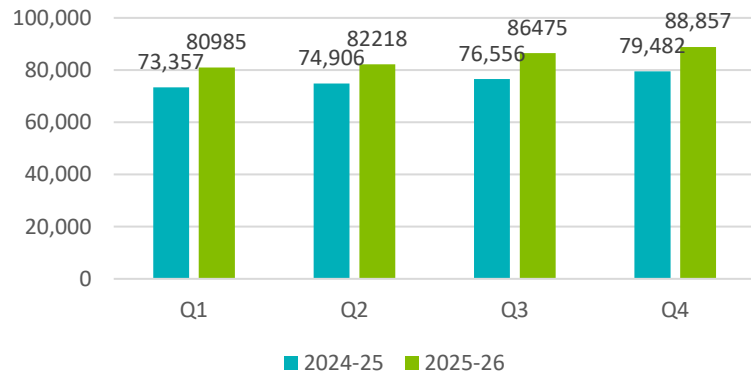
Implementation of People Perform Grow (PPG).	Target Progress	Jun 26 Green * 1
Notes:	1 People Perform Grow introduced across all services, with comprehensive training and support provided to managers, employees and teams. 25/26 PPG initiatives included: • PPG chat refresher campaign launched with new updates to simplify the process and make it easier to focus on key areas. New updates included: o New PPG Form o New PPG Tracker o New PPG Hub with resources/videos to support the PPG process • PPG eLearning module promoted as mandatory for all employees, to date over 735 skillgate users have completed this module. • PPG Leaders Coaching Workshops promoted as mandatory for line managers, workshops are designed to support managers to have effective, structured and supportive PPG conversations, this is now part of the corporate training programme • L&D collaboration with Business Support Managers to promote and support completion of PPG conversations in each directorate.	
Utilise our website and digital channels to enhance service delivery.	Target Progress	Jun 26 Green * 1
Notes:	1 Expanded website and digital channel use to improve accessibility, information clarity and self-service supporting enhanced service delivery. Key achievements: • 1,083,166 visits to corporate website. • 340 significant content updates on the corporate website • Launch of new Council LinkedIn Channel • Delivery of fully accessible Council website achieving WCAG 2.2 AA compliance in January 2026 • 88,857 users registered to the Council's corporate social media, an increase of 11.8% by comparison with 2024-25. • 3,261 social media notifications issued during 2025-26, an increase of 19.1% compared with 2024-25.	

To embed a digital culture across the organisation.		Target Progress	Jun 26 Green * 1
	Notes:	1 Demonstrated progress in embedding a digital-first culture through targeted staff engagement initiatives, structured training programmes, and increased adoption of digital tools to enable modern ways of working. • Established a Managed Security Operations Centre (SOC) to provide continuous monitoring, protection, and rapid response to emerging cyber threats and security incidents. • Successfully deployed Windows 11, alongside the replacement and modernisation of end-user computing devices. • Implemented a new endpoint security platform to enhance device-level protection and strengthen the overall security posture. • Achieved improved compliance with cybersecurity eLearning programmes, reinforcing organisational awareness and resilience. • Introduced a Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) framework to support flexible and agile working practices. • Developed and implemented a comprehensive suite of IT policies and procedures to underpin governance and operational excellence. • Maintained zero downtime throughout the year, despite the execution of significant platform upgrades and technology changes.	
Implement our Equality Action Plan		Target Progress	Jun 26 Green * 1
	Notes:	1 Ongoing implementation of actions during the period including preparation and submission of annual progress report to Equality Commission for Northern Ireland by 31 August 2025, Quarterly Policy Screening reports considered by Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee, forwarded to equality consultees and all screening reports made available online.	
Implement our Disability Action Plan		Target Progress	Jun 26 Green * 1
	Notes:	1 Ongoing implementation of actions during the period which were recorded and reported in the annual progress report submitted to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland by 31 August 2025..	
Implement our Irish Language Strategy		Target Progress	Jun 26 Green * 1
	Notes:	1 Ongoing implementation of positive actions within the strategy. Six-monthly report on progress tabled at Irish Language Strategy Cross Party Working Group meeting 3 March 2026.	

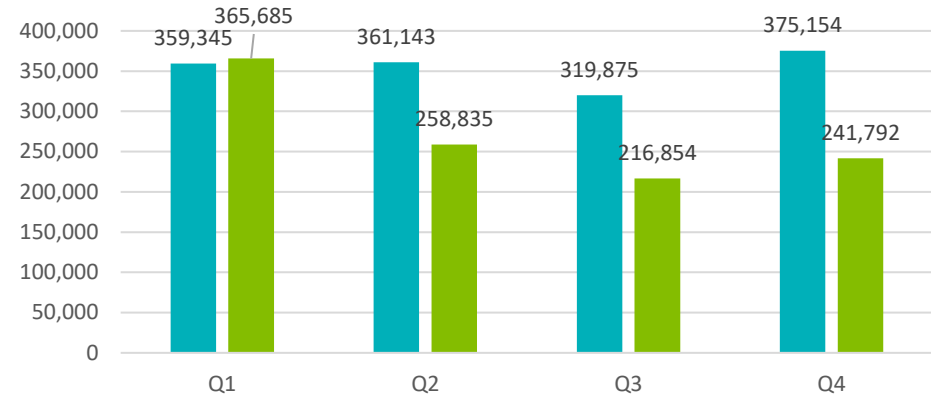
Measure of Success	Status Trend	Explanatory Note
Level of citizen satisfaction		The 2022 Residents Survey revealed that: • 88% are satisfied with the Council overall, an increase of 1% on the 87% figure recorded in 2018. • 92% agree that the Council helps to make Newry, Mourne and Down a good place to live, an increase of 17% on the 75% recorded in 2018. • 88% trust the Council, an increase of 15% on the 73% recorded in 2018. • 74% believe the Council provides good value for money, which is above the GB average of 51% and is an increase of 13% on the 61% recorded in 2018.
Compliance with Duty of Improvement		The certificate of Compliance was received from the Local Government Auditor in relation to the Duty of Improvement 2025-26. The Council is currently progressing the implementation of the 'proposals for improvement' which were put forward by the NI Audit Office, to help improve the arrangements in place to secure continuous improvement and facilitate a performance improvement culture.
Number of users registered to Council corporate social media channels		By the end of 2025-26, there were 88,857 users registered to the Council's corporate social media. This is an increase of 11.8% on the 79,482 users registered by the end of 2024-25. Council issued 3,261 social media notifications during 2025-26 which is an increase of 19.1% from the 2,739 notifications sent in 2024-25.
Number of visits to Council's corporate website		During 2025-26, the Council recorded 1,083,166 visits to the corporate website. This represents a decrease of 23.5% when compared to the 1,415,517 visits recorded in 2024-25. It should be noted however that due to a new legal requirement under the Digital Marketing Act (DMA) adopted in late 2024, websites must now give users a clearer choice about whether they want to be tracked by cookies (which is how GA4 collects its data). Instead of automatically tracking visitors, users must now 'opt in' to allow cookies. Therefore, if people click "No" or ignore the cookie banner, their visits are not recorded in GA4 - even though they may still be using the site. Between June and August 2025, the Council reviewed and updated its Cookie Policy and introduced a more visible cookie pop-up that complies with the new law. This change went live in August 2025, so from that point onward, GA4 is reporting lower numbers, simply because fewer visitors are giving consent for tracking.

Level of absenteeism	▽	During 2025-26, Newry, Mourne and Down recorded an average of 24.93 days lost per full time equivalent employee. This is an increase of 3.43 days lost from the 21.5 days lost during 2024-25. Long term absence increased from 18.15 days in 2024-25 to 21.46 days per employee in 2025-26, while short term absence remained similar to last year at 3.47 days last per employee in 2025-26. 47% of the workforce had no recorded absence during 2025-26 which represents a decrease when compared to the 51% of employees with no recorded absence in 2024-25.	Absenteeism - Days lost per full time employee <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>Long term (days)</th> <th>Short term (days)</th> <th>Total (days)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2019-20</td> <td>11.66</td> <td>4.12</td> <td>15.78</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2020-21</td> <td>11.77</td> <td>2.37</td> <td>14.14</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2021-22</td> <td>15.62</td> <td>5.04</td> <td>20.66</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2022-23</td> <td>18.24</td> <td>5.02</td> <td>23.26</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2023-24</td> <td>20.53</td> <td>3.33</td> <td>23.86</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2024-25</td> <td>18.15</td> <td>3.38</td> <td>21.53</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2025-26</td> <td>21.46</td> <td>3.47</td> <td>24.93</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> ■ Days lost per full time employee (short term) ■ Days lost per full time employee (long term)	Year	Long term (days)	Short term (days)	Total (days)	2019-20	11.66	4.12	15.78	2020-21	11.77	2.37	14.14	2021-22	15.62	5.04	20.66	2022-23	18.24	5.02	23.26	2023-24	20.53	3.33	23.86	2024-25	18.15	3.38	21.53	2025-26	21.46	3.47	24.93
Year	Long term (days)	Short term (days)	Total (days)																																
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Percentage of payments paid:		The percentage of payments made within 10 working days has decreased by 15% from 46% in 2024-25 to 31% in 2025-26 and was the lowest across all regional councils in 2025-26, ranking NMD 11/11 across Northern Ireland. The number of payments made within 30 calendar days has decreased by 5% between 2024-25 and 2025-26 falling from 94% to 90%. This is below the NI average of 93% of invoices paid within 30 calendar days and ranks Newry, Mourne and Down 8/11 across Northern Ireland. The Council has however, achieved the statutory target set of 90%. The percentage of payments paid outside 30 days has increased during this period from 6% in 2024-25 to 10% in 2025-26. This is above the regional average of 7% for payments paid outside 30 days with the Council ranked 8/11 across Northern Ireland.																																	
Within 10 working days	▽																																		
Within 30 calendar days	😊 ▶																																		
Outside 30 calendar days	▶																																		

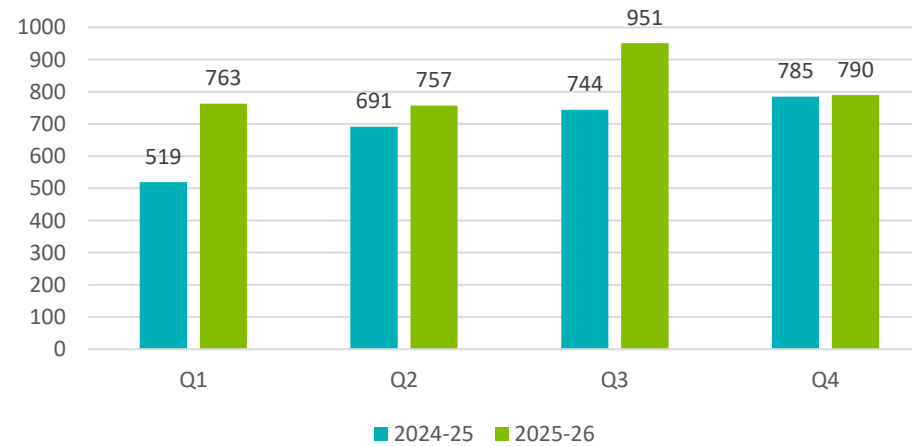
Number of users registered to the Council's corporate social media 2025-26

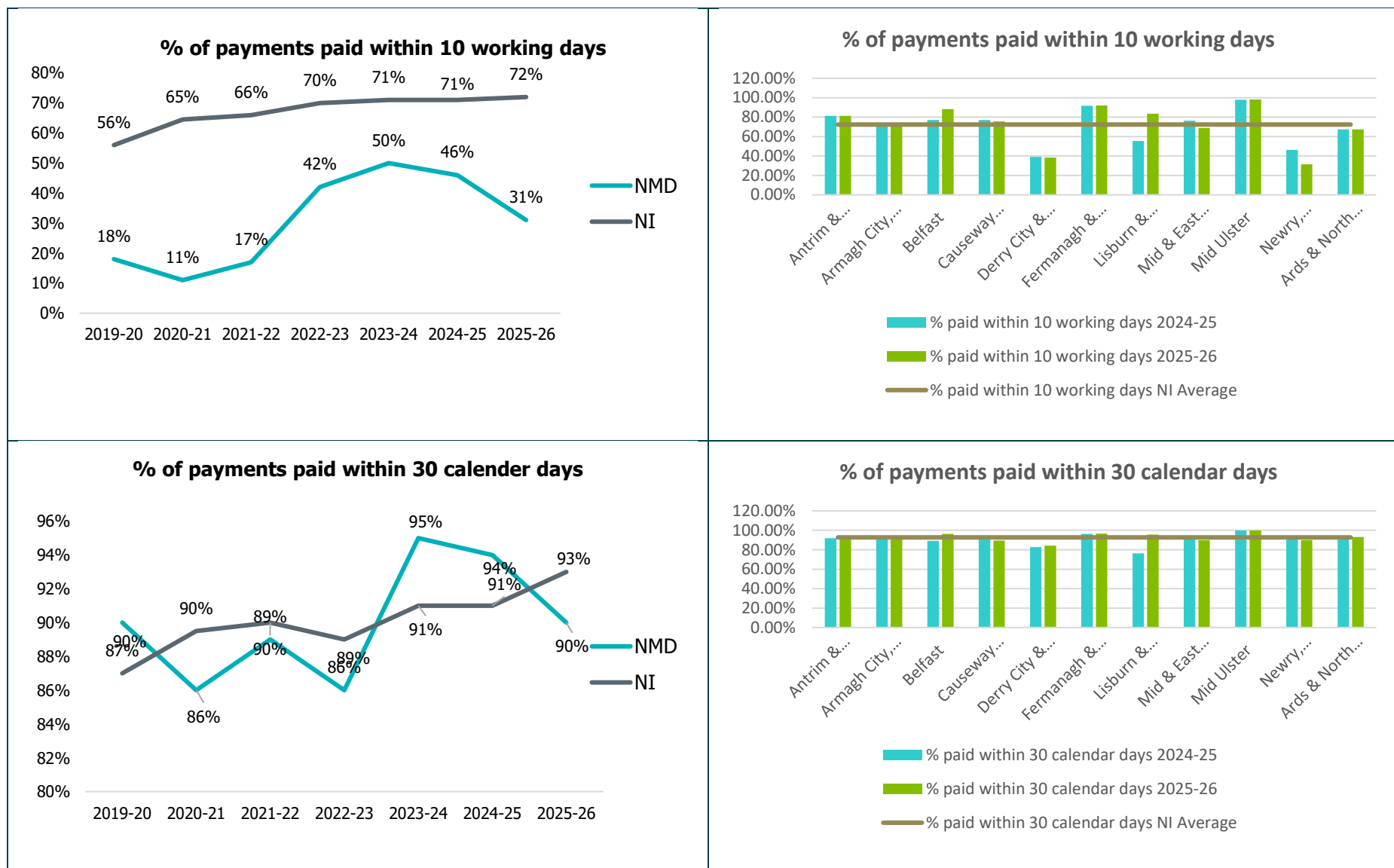


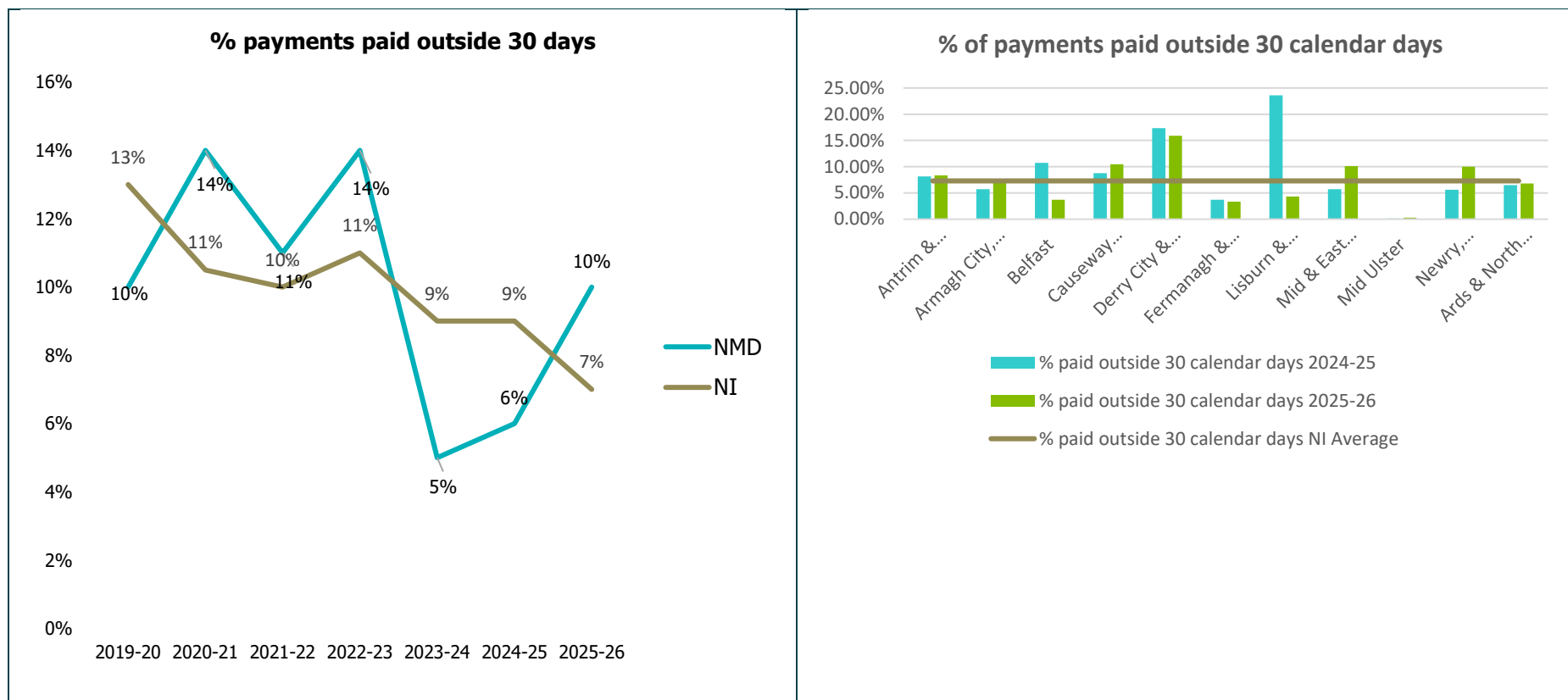
Number of recorded visits to the Council's corporate website 2025-26



Number of social media notifications to users via the Council's corporate social media 2025-26







Corporate Objective

Represent the voice of the district with our partners

Key action		Update
Continue to work with key stakeholders and our statutory partners to improve the health and wellbeing across the district.	Target Progress	Jun 26 Green * 1
	Notes:	1 All of the priorities within the Community Planning Health and Wellbeing Action Plan have been progressed, including priorities addressing Isolation and Loneliness, promoting Physical Activity amongst young people, Place Based approaches to Health and Wellbeing (led by the Strategic Stakeholder Forum) and Participatory Budgeting. Under Communities Leading Change Participatory Budgeting project, a pooled budget of £98,000 was distributed to 98 local community and voluntary groups to deliver health and wellbeing events in their communities. The Council continue to support Health and Wellbeing activity of our Statutory and CV partners, including supporting the Integrated Care Systems (AIPB) and the projects of the Strategic Stakeholder Forum.
Continue to work with key stakeholders and our statutory partners to identify appropriate actions in relation to the climate change emergency	Target Progress	Jun 26 Green * 1
	Notes:	1 The Council's Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan has been finalised, which included a number of workshops with key stakeholders. The target date for launch of the strategy and associated action plan is Q2 26/27. Council also continues to work with other Councils and stakeholders through various forums including: Sustainable NI, SOLACE, NILGA, NIE and APSE.

Collaborate and engage with key tourism & hospitality sector stakeholders to reinforce a strong partnership approach to tourism growth and leadership – including tourism business clusters & industry associations		Target Progress	Jun 26 Green * 1
	Notes:	1 Collaboration with tourism businesses, community organisations and key stakeholders continues to be a central focus. A Sustainable Tourism Network has been established with 29 businesses across the tourism sector. To work with the Network and the wider tourism and community sector Council has agreed the appointment of a dedicated facilitator. This initiative will strengthen partnerships, encourage sustainable tourism practices and support collaborative destination development. Engagement with local businesses has also facilitated the introduction of new tourism experiences and events, helping to build local capacity and support year-round tourism activity.	
Work with partners to implement the Community Plan and deliver better outcomes / improve the quality of life for all		Target Progress	Jun 26 Green * 1
	Notes:	1 Priority Activity continues to be carried out through the delivery of actions from the PB action plan and the Health and Wellbeing Action Plan. The CPP continue to support Partner Led Projects such as the NMD Youth Voice, Community Support Partnership, LMPs and LEPs.	
Support elected members in their advocacy role around key local actions		Target Progress	Jun 26 Green * 1
	Notes:	1 By ensuring councillors are informed, resourced, and procedurally supported, Democratic Services helps them champion local priorities, hold decision-makers to account, and represent their communities effectively within and beyond the council	
Implementation of Elected Member Development programme		Target Progress	Jun 26 Green * 1
	Notes:	1 Initial consideration was given to commencing preparations for the re-attainment of the Elected Member Development Charter. Discussions were held with Party Leaders to review the value and timing of pursuing re-accreditation. Following these discussions, it was recommended by Party Leaders that the Council would not proceed with re-attainment at this stage. Despite this decision, I have continued to ensure that the principles of the Charter remain embedded within our approach to Elected Member development, particularly around identifying training needs, maintaining training records, and promoting continuous learning opportunities.	

Measure of Success	Status	Explanatory note
Compliance with the duty of Community Planning		During 2025-26, the Council continued to comply with the statutory duty of community planning. The Community Planning Partnership met three times during the past year.
Percentage of residents who are satisfied with their local area as a place to live		The 2022 Residents Survey revealed that 91% of residents are satisfied with their local area as a place to live, which is well above the GB average of 81% and is an increase of 1% on the figure recorded in the 2018 Residents Survey. 99% of residents in the Slieve Croob DEA are satisfied with their local area as a place to live, compared to just 59% in the Newry DEA. Older residents are also more likely to be satisfied with their local area as a place to live than younger residents. The top perceived problems identified by residents are dog mess and fouling and rubbish or litter lying around.
Number of training events provided to elected members		There were two training events run for elected members during 2025-2026 and included: Code of Conduct Training Audit Committee Training There were also numerous workshops held for Elected Members including: Corporate Presentation Local Development Plan Planning

In addition to the performance measures within the Corporate Plan, the Council continues to develop and agree suites of self-imposed performance measures at all levels of the organisation, in line with the Business Planning and Performance Management Framework. This is evidenced through the:

- Agreed suites of performance measures within Directorate Business Plans.
- Agreed suites of performance indicators for Arts and Heritage, Building Control, Corporate Services, Community Development, Economic Development, Environmental Health, Environmental Services, Leisure and Planning, through the Association of Public Service Excellence (APSE).

As the Council's performance management arrangements continue to mature and embed, the self-imposed performance indicators will be used to manage performance at all levels of the organisation, thereby facilitating a performance improvement culture and delivering sustainable improvements for local communities.

Appendix 1: Progressing the 'proposals for improvement'

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council

Performance Audit and Assessments: Proposals for Improvement - Progress Report

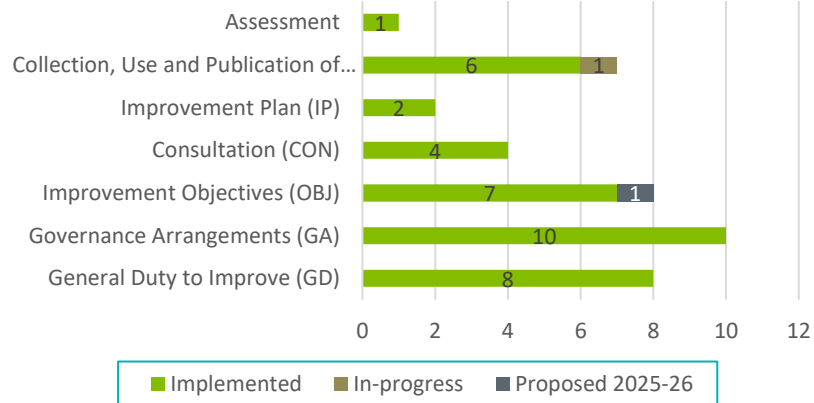
For the past seven years, the Local Government Auditor has put forward 'proposals for improvement' as part of the annual Performance Audit and Assessments which are carried out by the Northern Ireland Audit Office. The purpose of the 'proposals for improvement' is to support the Council in putting in place arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of functions. The 'proposals for improvement' are categorised under the seven themes outlined below. This report provides an overview of progress to date in implementing the 'proposals for improvement', using the following legend.

Themes:

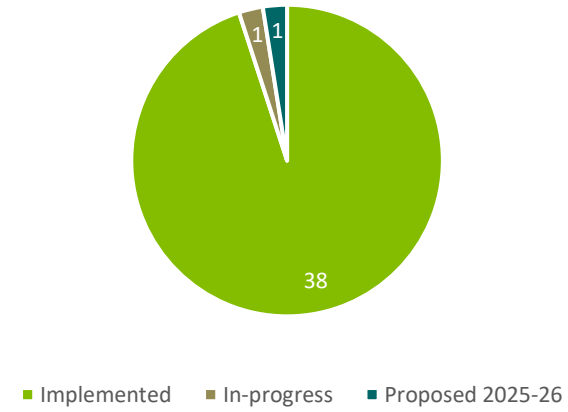
1. General duty to improve
2. Governance arrangements
3. Improvement objectives
4. Consultation
5. Improvement Plan
6. Arrangements to improve
7. Collection, use and publication of performance information

Legend	
Proposal implemented / on track to be implemented	
Proposal partially implemented / likely to be implemented	
Proposal not implemented	

Proposals for Improvement - Progress to Date



Proposals for Improvement - Progress to Date



Theme, Proposal and Progress to Date	
THEME: Improvement Objectives	
PROPOSAL FOR IMPROVEMENT: The Council should: • consider the format of the future Self-Assessment Reports to ensure the Performance Improvement results are prominent and readily identifiable. • ensure targets and comparatives are in place for all measures of success, where this would be appropriate; and, • review how visuals are presented in the Self-Assessment Report.	
Since 2016, the Council has provided its self-assessment in the same format, and this has not been raised as an issue. The indicators and measures within the Council's current corporate plan 2024-27, which we assess as part of the Council's self-imposed indicators for the Assessment of Performance, have not been prescribed targets and where visuals have been provided, where possible, the explanatory note makes the reader aware of why it has been presented as such.	
PROGRESS TO DATE	
Following the proposal for improvement from the 2025-26 Audit and Assessment, the Council has altered the layout of this year's self-assessment to make it more reader friendly and ensure a better flow. The Performance Improvement Objectives will now be assessed first in the report, followed by the self-imposed indicators which encompass the 8 corporate objectives from the Council's Corporate Plan 2024-27. Whilst no targets have been set for the measures within the corporate plan, where the measures are the same as those within the Performance Improvement Plan, the same targets have been imposed. Similarly, where one of the seven statutory indicators of economic development, waste and planning has been included as a measure within the corporate plan the statutory target has been assigned. Where there is a comparative analysis available for a corporate plan measure from the previous year this has been included with an arrow used to indicate improvement or otherwise in performance. Where a visual has been provided the explanatory note will, where possible, explain why that specific visual has been prescribed.	

THEME: Collection, use and publication of performance information	
PROPOSAL FOR IMPROVEMENT: The Council should ensure that its improvement plan and self-assessment report are approved in line with the Council's governance framework before publication	
Since 2015, the Council has requested through the Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee, authority to publish the Performance Improvement Plan before 30 June every year, ahead of full Council ratification. This issue has never been brought up by the Northern Ireland Audit Office in any previous self-assessments.	
PROGRESS TO DATE	
The 2026-27 Performance Improvement Plan was agreed by the Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee in May 2026 following a 9-week public consultation. This was then ratified by full Council at the start of June 2026 before being published on the Council's website before the 30 June 2026 in line with our statutory obligation and the Council's governance framework. The 2024-25 Self-Assessment was agreed by the Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee in August 2025 followed by ratification of full Council at the start of September and was published by 30 September 2025 in line with the Council's governance framework.	
THEME: Collection, use and publication of performance information	
PROPOSAL FOR IMPROVEMENT: Targets set out in the Improvement Plan should also be included within the Self-Assessment Report to enable the Self-Assessment report to be used as a standalone document	
In the self-assessment, targets, where set, have always been provided for the measures within the corporate plan. There is also a legend provided at the start of the document that indicates that if a green face is under the status column, then the target has been achieved/on track to be achieved and similarly if a red face is under the status of the measure, it indicates that the target was not achieved or is unlikely to be achieved.	
PROGRESS TO DATE	
Targets, where set, have now been included since 2024-25 and sit below the actual figure recorded for the assessment year in question. This will also be carried forward for all future Assessment of Performance reports.	

THEME: Assessment	
PROPOSAL FOR IMPROVEMENT: Council should consider enhancing transparency of the self-assessment report by providing more detailed narrative to allow the reader to better understand how Council has determined the ratings of the trends in performance. Furthermore, where there are downward trends in performance or the Council has assessed targets are not likely to be achieved, appropriate explanations should be included as to how Council intends to address this	
The Residents Survey provides robust and reliable datasets for the Council to understand and track resident perceptions of the Council and its services. It is directly aligned to and influences the content of the Corporate Plan and PIP. Best practice indicates that Residents Surveys should be carried out every 3-4 years, as resident perceptions are unlikely to change on an annual basis, and the baseline data is therefore considered 'live' for this period of time. A legend is also provided in all performance reports indicating whether a target has been achieved/partially achieved or not achieved at all and where there has been an upward or downward trend in the figures year on year.	
PROGRESS TO DATE	
A second Residents survey was carried out in September 2022 which allows a comparative and trend analysis with the previous Residents Survey and provides clear transparency in how we are performing as a Council. A status and narrative are provided against every action and measure within the Assessment of Performance and where downward trends are experienced an explanation on how this has occurred is provided where possible. You will see in this Assessment Report that where applicable, a more detailed narrative has been included to allow better understanding of the Council's performance and where targets have not been achieved an explanation of what perhaps contributed to that is also included as well as what Council are doing to bring about improvement.	
THEME: General duty to improve	
PROPOSAL FOR IMPROVEMENT: An electronic performance management system would help to achieve long term continuous improvement as it would provide the basis for a more reliable system for identifying and monitoring improvements, as well as creating efficiencies in the process that could free up time to spend on value adding activities	
Implementation of a new electronic performance system through 'OneAdvanced' has taken place. It came online in Q4 2023-24, and work has been carried out to ensure all the objectives, actions and measures across the whole suite of the Council's performance	

framework has been included from the Community Plan, Corporate Plan, Performance Improvement Plan, Directorate Business Plans down to Service Plans. Training has also been provided to all relevant staff, and this training has been recorded for continuous reference. Reports have now begun to be completed on the system and sent to committee for approval.

The performance management system is available for relevant employees to access on the Council's managed favourites

PROGRESS TO DATE

The Council has continued to embed the Business Planning and Performance Management Framework, to facilitate the effective cascade of strategic objectives across the organisation. The Framework features within the Corporate Plan, Performance Improvement Plan and Directorate Business Plans, as well as the guidance for Service Plans and People Perform Grow, demonstrating how employees contribute to the achievement of community planning outcomes and strategic objectives. The Performance Improvement Policy continues to provide the content for mainstreaming the Business Planning and Performance Management Framework, and was updated in Q3 2022, in line with the 4-year policy review cycle.

The Business Planning and Performance Management Cycle has also been updated to demonstrate the integrated timeline of activity required to strengthen the alignment across the Framework and facilitate the development, implementation and review of the Community Plan, Corporate Plan, Performance Improvement Plan, Directorate Business Plans, Service Plans and People Perform Grow. The monitoring, reporting and review arrangements at each level of the Framework continue to be mainstreamed and a standard, consistent approach has been developed for performance reporting, using the red/amber/green status. Performance reports are available to a range of stakeholders through the Council's website and Committee reporting arrangements.

Community Plan

The Community Planning team facilitated the continued implementation of the Community Plan in 2025/26 which included:

Participatory Budgeting events carried out in each of the 7 District Electoral Areas (DEA's).

Targeting Isolation and Loneliness Workshops held across the District.

Rural Housing Workshops held in each of the 7 DEA's.

Other partnership priorities

Corporate Plan

The Council's Corporate Plan 2024-27 was approved through the Council's committee structure in August 2024. Implementation has continued, and this is the second assessment of the objectives, actions and measures through the Council's Assessment of Performance report 2025-26.

Performance Improvement Plan

The Council published the Performance Improvement Plan 2026-27 ahead of the statutory deadline and after full ratification of Council. Three of the Performance Improvement Objectives were carried forward from 2025-26, while the wording of the economic development and climate change objectives has been refined to make them more succinct, meaningful, and better reflect the evolving work taking place across these areas. A number of new measures and supporting actions have also been included across the objectives following consultation with relevant officers and the public consultation. All were developed and updated in close liaison with officers, approved by the Senior Management Team and Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee, and subject to a public consultation process between February-April 2026.

Directorate Business Plans

Four Directorate Business Plans 2026-27 were developed and approved by the Senior Management Team and relevant Council Committees. Each Business Plan also includes objectives, key actions and measures for success which are aligned to the corporate objectives. All Directorates are very proactive in engaging employees in reviewing and developing the Business Plan, organising workshops and business planning sessions.

Service Plans

During 2019-20, the Council agreed a corporate approach to developing and mainstreaming Service Plans, as a tool to enable departments to turn plans into action, monitor performance and strengthen the effective cascade of strategic objectives to departments, teams and employees. Service Plans were subsequently introduced in 2021-22 to provide an overview of the operational activity and key improvements that are planned for the year ahead, helping to ensure that teams and employees are working towards shared and agreed objectives. All departments developed a Service Plan during 2025-26, and some departments, particularly the Sustainability and Environment Department were very proactive in engaging employees in the development of the 2026-27 Service Plan.

Individual Performance

During 2019-20, the Council developed Individual Performance through the 'People Perform Grow' pilot, which seeks to align the contribution of employees to the corporate objectives and community planning outcomes, as demonstrated through the Business Planning and Performance Management Framework. However, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, People Perform Grow was suspended and was subsequently launched during 2021-22 for tier four employees and above. During 2022-23, 'People, Perform, Grow' was rolled out to employees at tier 5 with People Perform Grow templates linked to individual performance objectives with the relevant Service Plan, to strengthen the cascade of corporate objectives to all employees across the organisation. An e-learning module and brochure was developed to support the effective implementation of People Perform Grow, and performance management arrangements have been introduced, through the 'PPG Tracker', to monitor progress in employee participation in People Perform Grow. Progress is reported through the Corporate Performance Dashboard on a quarterly basis.

People Perform Grow has now been introduced across all services, with comprehensive training and support provided to managers, employees and teams. During 25/26 PPG initiatives included:

- **PPG chat refresher campaign** launched with new updates to simplify the process and make it easier to focus on key areas. New updates included:
 - **New PPG Form**
 - **New PPG Tracker**
 - **New PPG Hub** with resources/videos to support the PPG process
- **PPG eLearning module** promoted as mandatory for all employees, to date over 735 skillgate users have completed this module.
- **PPG Leaders Coaching Workshops** promoted as mandatory for line managers, workshops are designed to support managers to have effective, structured and supportive PPG conversations, this is now part of the corporate training programme
- **L&D collaboration with Business Support Managers** to promote and support completion of PPG conversations in each directorate.

The Corporate Performance Dashboard continues to provide an overview of the overall organisational health of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council, using a suite of statutory and self-imposed performance measures across a range of key functions. The Corporate Performance Dashboard is also aligned to the objectives within the Corporate Plan 2024-27 and risks within the Corporate Risk Register.

It provides a platform to monitor performance on a quarterly basis, identify areas of good performance, address areas of under-performance and secure continuous improvement in the delivery of key functions. The Corporate Performance Dashboard 2025-26 is made up of 18 performance measures, including the seven statutory performance indicators for economic development, waste management and planning. These performance measures may change on an annual basis and will continue to be aligned to specific organisational objectives, risks and areas for improvement.

THEME: Governance Arrangements	Status
PROPOSAL: The Council should consider using Internal Audit to review the performance improvement arrangements.	

The Council views the annual audit carried out by NIAO around the current Performance Management arrangements to be more than sufficient. However, the Council does recognise the value of engaging the Internal Audit function to identify and deliver improvements, specifically those which do not necessarily fall within the scope of NIAO audit, such as around data validation and monitoring. To this end, in 2018, an Internal Audit of the APSE Performance Indicators was carried out and all recommendations were implemented. An Internal Audit of the Corporate Plan's Performance Indicators took place in Q4 2022-23, and the Council also agreed a 4-year Internal Audit plan in April 2023 with an audit of Performance included for two of those four years with an option to increase if necessary.

PROGRESS

The Performance section had another 'Performance Data and Validations' audit take place in Q4 2025-26 which looked at a number of measures within the Performance Improvement Plan 2025-26. The review looked specifically at three measures which included:

- the number of people participating in targeted health programmes – performance improvement objective 1;
- the percentage of Council fleet younger than 8 years – performance improvement objective 4;
- the average processing time of major planning applications (weeks) (statutory performance indicator) – performance improvement objective 5.

Whilst the audit identified some improvements which could be incorporated into the Council's systems for the performance data and validation process the Council did receive a **satisfactory** level of assurance regarding the effective and efficient achievement of the Council's objectives.

The Performance section had a 'Performance Data and Validations' audit take place in Q4 2024-25, which looked at a number of measures within the Performance Improvement Plan 2024-25. The review looked specifically at the validation processes for certain measures including statutory indicators as well as internally collected data and measures. Whilst the audit identified some improvements which could be incorporated into the Council's systems for the performance data and validation process, the Council did receive a **satisfactory** level of assurance regarding the effective and efficient achievement of the Council's objectives.

In Q4 2022-23, the Council worked with ASM to agree the Terms of Reference for an audit of specific measures of success within the Corporate Plan 2021-23. The audit identified a number of improvements which could be incorporated within the Council's systems in relation to the performance measures in the 2021-23 Corporate Plan which have been implemented where possible within the new Corporate Plan 2024-27. Based on the information they reviewed however, they considered that the existing systems in place for recording and validating data for performance measures in the 2021-23 Corporate Plan were basically sound and provided a **satisfactory** level of assurance regarding the effective and efficient achievement of the Council's objectives. This process provides assurance that the necessary data collation processes are in place to ensure robust, reliable and accurate datasets are reported in the public domain, ahead of the publication of the new Corporate Plan 2024-27.

Performance management training took place for members of the Audit Committee in January 2021, exploring the role of Elected Members in building high performing organisations. Performance and improvement is a standing item on the agenda of the quarterly Audit Committee meetings and has featured as a regular agenda item at the monthly Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee meetings. In addition, all Standing Committees of Council consider performance information in relation to their specific functions on an ongoing basis, which is supplemented by the mid-year and annual reviews of their respective Directorate Business Plan. Elected Members have also been actively engaged in identifying key local issues and informing the development of the Corporate Plan 2024-27 and Performance Improvement Plan 2026-27.

THEME: Improvement Objectives	Status
PROGRESS	

Three of the 2025-26 performance improvement objectives have been carried forward to 2026-27 whilst the wording of our economic development and climate change objectives have been refined to make them more succinct, meaningful, and better reflect the evolving work taking place across these areas. These performance improvement objectives are based on set criteria and are aligned to the outcomes within the Programme for Government and Community Plan for Newry, Mourne and Down, as well as the strategic objectives within the Corporate Plan 2024-27. The five performance improvement objectives were endorsed through the public consultation and engagement process which was carried out during Q4 2025-26 and Q1 2026-27. These objectives are considered to be specific, focused and measurable, and were approved by the Senior Management Team and Strategy Policy and Resources Committee in May 2026 and ratified by full Council in June 2026 and published before 30 June 2026, in order to meet the statutory deadline.

1. We will support the health and wellbeing of local people by improving our leisure facilities and services
2. We will contribute to growing the economy by supporting local businesses, job creation and pathways to employment
3. We will improve the cleanliness of our District by continuing to promote recycling and addressing littering, fly tipping and dog fouling incidents
4. We will reduce our contribution to climate change by cutting carbon emissions and improving the efficiency of our fleet and buildings.
5. We will improve the processing times of planning applications and enforcement cases by implementing the Planning Service Improvement Programme

The NI Audit Office has confirmed that the performance improvement objectives carried over are legitimate, clear, robust, deliverable and demonstrable, covering a range of Council services that relate to improving Council functions or improving services for communities.

As part of the process to redefine the current suite of performance improvement objectives, the Council reviewed the 'supporting actions' and 'measures of success' which underpin each objective, in order to ensure they remain meaningful and that their achievement can demonstrate improvement. Where possible and appropriate, baseline data for each 'measure of success' has been included in the Performance Improvement Plan 2026-27, to demonstrate performance trends over time and targets for improvement have also been agreed.

THEME: Consultation	
PROGRESS	
The Council continues to implement a robust and inclusive consultation and engagement process in relation to the development of the annual performance improvement objectives. Overall, the 2026-27 consultation and engagement process resulted in 54 completed surveys and engagement with 68 stakeholders through the Crotlieve DEA Forum, Downpatrick DEA Forum, Slieve Croob DEA Forum, Rowallane DEA Forum and The Mournes DEA Forum as well as Section 75 groups, including Newry, Mourne and Down Youth Voice and the Age Friendly Alliance. This consultation and engagement process was launched through the Council's website, under its consultations page, publicised through public notices in local newspapers and through the Council's social media channels and supplemented by the 764 responses to the Residents Survey in 2022. The majority of consultees agreed with the proposed performance improvement objectives 2026-27.	
THEME: Improvement Plan	
PROGRESS	
The Council published the Performance Improvement Plan 2026-27 ahead of the statutory timescale of 30 June 2026. The Council has also published the summary document 'Our Performance Looking Back Going Forward', to provide a user-friendly overview of retrospective performance during 2025-26 and the forward-looking performance objectives for 2026-27.	
THEME: Arrangements to Improve	
PROGRESS	
The Council continues to progress, implement and embed its arrangements to achieve the objectives, key actions and measures of success within the Corporate Plan, Performance Improvement Plan, Directorate Business Plans, Service Plans and People Perform Grow. The arrangements to deliver the performance improvement objectives continue to evolve and are supported by Objective Delivery Plans which provide a detailed overview of how the objectives and associated actions are managed, monitored and reported, under the direction of the Senior Responsible Officer.	
THEME: Collection, Use and Publication of Performance Information	Status
PROGRESS	
The Business Planning and Performance Management Framework demonstrates the alignment that exists between the Community Plan, Corporate Plan, Directorate Business Plans, Service Plans and People Perform Grow. It has been supplemented by an agreed cycle of activity required to embed the Framework across the organisation. All elements of the Business Planning and Performance Management Framework are currently being progressed and embedded across the organisation.	

In addition to the statutory performance indicators and standards, the Council has developed and agreed suites of self-imposed performance indicators which underpin the Corporate Plan, Performance Improvement Plan and Directorate Business Plans. These plans provide the strategic and operational context for the work of the organisation, and year on year progress against the indicators is monitored and reported through the annual Assessment of Performance, as well as the annual and bi-annual assessments of the Performance Improvement Plan and Directorate Business Plans. The Council has also developed Performance Profiles for each Directorate to present baseline performance information in a meaningful and consistent way, to facilitate a performance led approach to business planning and embed a culture of improvement.

The Council continues to form part of APSE Performance Networks and has collated benchmarking data across a range of services since 2016-17. This information has been analysed and reported to the Senior Management Team and Corporate Management Team through the Performance Profiles as well as specific APSE Reports, ensuring a performance led approach to business planning, specifically in relation to Directorate Business Plans and Service Plans. An internal audit of APSE performance indicators was carried out by ASM in November 2018, to assess the reliability of the existing benchmarking arrangements and validate the accuracy and integrity of selected APSE performance indicators. The internal audit confirmed that the existing systems in place to validate performance indicators can provide satisfactory assurance regarding the effective and efficient achievement of the Council's objectives and all recommendations have now been implemented.

Through the Assessment of Performance, the Council continues to benchmark performance with other Councils, specifically in relation to economic development, planning, waste management and prompt payments. The Councils also compares year on year performance across a broad range of performance measures within the Corporate Plan and Performance Improvement Plan.

Appendix 2: The Golden Thread

NMD Community Planning Outcomes

All people in Newry, Mourne and Down get a good start in life and fulfil their potential

All people in Newry, Mourne and Down enjoy good health and wellbeing

All people in Newry, Mourne and Down benefit from prosperous communities

All people in Newry, Mourne and Down benefit from a clean, quality, sustainable environment

All people in Newry, Mourne and Down live in respectful, safe and vibrant communities

NMDDC Corporate Objectives

Deliver sustainable services

Improve the health and wellbeing of everyone in the district

Support the continued growth and development of our local economy

Protect and enhance our environment to secure a sustainable future

Represent the voice of the district with our partners

Empowering communities to play an active part in civic life

Develop and revitalise our district

Support regenerative tourism opportunities which promote our culture, heritage and environment

NMDDC Performance Improvement Objectives

We will support the health and wellbeing of local people by improving our local facilities and services

We will contribute to growing the economy by supporting local businesses, job creation and pathways to employment

We will improve the cleanliness of our District by continuing to promote recycling and addressing littering, fly tipping and dog fouling incidents

We will reduce our contribution to climate change by cutting carbon emissions and improving the efficiency of our fleet and buildings

We will improve the processing times of planning applications and enforcement cases by implementing the Planning Service Improvement Programme