

July 30th, 2026

Notice Of Meeting

You are requested to attend the meeting to be held on **Thursday, 30th July 2026** at **2:00 pm** in **Mourne Room, Downshire Civic Centre.**

Committee Membership 2026-27

Ms Brona Slevin **Independent Chairperson**

Councillor Callum Bowsie

Councillor Pete Byrne

Councillor Jim Brennan

Councillor Laura Devlin

Councillor Mark Gibbons

Councillor Oonagh Hanlon

Councillor Tierna Howie

Councillor Cathal King

Councillor Kate Murphy

Councillor Siobhan O'Hare

Agenda

1.0 Apologies and Chairperson's Remarks

2.0 Declarations of Interest

3.0 Action Sheet of Audit Committee Meeting held 7 May 2026

Attachment: Audit Committee Action Sheet 2026_05_07.pdf

Page 1

4.0 Audit Committee Annual Report

Attachment: Cover Rpt re B Slevin Annual Report 2025-26.pdf

Page 5

Attachment: Chairpersons Annual Report 2025-26.pdf

Page 8

Performance (OPEN SESSION)

5.0 Performance Improvement Plan 2026/27

Attachment: 5 - Audit Committee Cover Report PIP 2026-27 (2).pdf

Page 18

Attachment: 5 - Appendix 1 - Performance Improvement Plan 2026-27.pdf

Page 21

Attachment: 5 - Appendix 2 - Consultation and Engagement Report 2026-27.pdf

Page 59

Attachment: 5 - Appendix 3 - Draft Objective Delivery Plans 2026-27.pdf

Page 72

Corporate Services (OPEN SESSION)

6.0 Directorate Risk Register - AHC

Attachment: AHC Risk Register Report - July AC - vf.pdf

Page 88

Attachment: Appendix 1 - AHC Risk Register Summary .pdf

Page 90

Attachment: Appendix 2 - AHC Risk Register - 7 May 2026 - vf.pdf

Page 91

7.0 Prompt Payment Statistics

Attachment: 7 - Prompt Payments Report Q1 - 202627.pdf

Page 103

8.0 NMMDC Assurance Framework and Code of Governance

Attachment: 8 - Assurance Framework and Annual Governance Statement.pdf

Page 106

9.0 Update of Members Interests

Attachment: Update of Members Interests.pdf

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Corporate Services (CLOSED SESSION)

10.0 Draft Annual Governance Statement and Statement of Accounts

This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information) and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.

Attachment: 10 - Annual Governance Statement and Statement of Accounts
202526.pdf

Not included

Attachment: 10 - Appendix 1 - Draft Statement of Accounts - 31 March 2026.pdf

Not included

Attachment: 10 - Appendix 2 - Ig-07-2026-covering-letter.pdf

Not included

11.0 Direct Award Contracts

This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information) and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.

Attachment: 11- Direct Award Contracts Audit Committee Cover Report for Q1 for
review.pdf

Not included

Attachment: 11 - Appendix 1 DACs Processed in Q1 5k .pdf

Not included

12.0 Procurement Action Plans

This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information) and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.

Attachment: 12 - PAP Cover Report - 2627 Q1.pdf

Not included

Attachment: 12 - Directorate Procurement Action Plans - June 2026 - Q1.pdf

Not included

13.0 Update on Fraud and Raising Concerns

This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information) and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.

Attachment: 13 - Fraud and Raising Concerns update new.pdf

Not included

Attachment: 13 - Appendix 1 - Fraud and Raising Concerns Register Sept 2025.pdf

Not included

14.0 Cybersecurity and Digital Risks – Presentation

This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information) and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.

Attachment: 14. Cyber - AC 2026-07-30 v1.pdf

Not included

15.0 An Assessment of Climate Change

This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information) and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.

Attachment: Audit Committee Report - NMDDC Climate Change Assessment.pdf

Not included

16.0 Update on Concern Raised to NIAO / AC Chair

This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information) and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.

Attachment: 16. Update on Concern Raised.pdf

Not included

Attachment: Appendix 1 -letter 18.06.26 to Chairperson.pdf

Not included

Attachment: Appendix 2 - SPR Report Sheet - Closed session - Kilbroney Forest Park and Castlewellan Forest Park - Copy.pdf

Not included

Internal Audit (CLOSED SESSION)

17.0 SUMER NI Summary Report

This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information) and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.

Attachment: NMDDC Summary report - July 2026 to Audit Committee for issue.pdf

Not included

Invitees

Cllr Terry Andrews

Cllr Callum Bowsie

Mr Caolain Boyd

Mr Padraig Brady (SumerNI)

Fionnuala Branagh

Cllr Jim Brennan

Lorraine/Emma Burns/McParland

Cllr Pete Byrne

Cllr Philip Campbell

Cllr William Clarke

Cllr Laura Devlin

Cllr Cadogan Enright

Cllr Killian Feehan

Cllr Doire Finn

Ms Joanne Fleming

Cllr Conor Galbraith

Cllr Mark Gibbons

Christine Hagan (SumerNI)

Cllr Oonagh Hanlon

Ms Kathryn Hanna

Cllr Glyn Hanna

Cllr Valerie Harte

Mr Conor Haughey

Cllr Martin Hearty

Cllr Roisin Howell

Cllr Tierna Howie

Ms Catherine Hughes

Cllr Jonathan Jackson

Ms Aileen Jones

Ms Suzanne Jones NIAO

Cllr Geraldine Kearns

Miss Veronica Keegan

Mrs Sheila Kieran

Cllr Cathal King

Cllr Aurla King

Ms Elaine Kirk

Cllr Mickey Larkin

Cllr Niall Lawlor

Cllr David Lee-Surginor

Cllr Alan Lewis

Cllr Oonagh Magennis

Mr Conor Mallon

Cllr Aidan Mathers
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Cllr Declan McAteer
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Shona McConville
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Jonathan McGilly
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Mr Colm McGrath
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Mr Martin McKibbin
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Ms Tracie McLoughlin
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Sinead Murphy
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Cllr Kate Murphy
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Cllr Selina Murphy
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Cllr Declan Murphy
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Ms Patricia Murtagh
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Ms Catherine O'Hagan NIAO
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Cllr Siobhan O'Hare
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Mr Andy Patterson
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Cllr Áine Quinn
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Cllr Henry Reilly
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Cllr Michael Rice
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Ms Alison Robb
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Ms Maria Rogan
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Cllr Michael Ruane
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Mr Conor Sage
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Ms Brona Slevin (Audit)
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Mrs Amanda Smyth
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Conor Smyth
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Donna Starkey
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Sarah Taggart
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Cllr David Taylor
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Mr David Telford
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Cllr Jarlath Tinnelly
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Ms Sinead Trainor
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Cllr Jill Truesdale
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Mrs Marie Ward
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Cllr Helena Young
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AUDIT COMMITTEE MEETINGActions arising from Audit Committee Meeting – 19 September 2024

Minute Ref	Subject	Decision	Lead officer	Action taken / progress to date	Remove from action sheet Y/N
AC/071/2024	Action sheet of Audit Committee from 31/07/2024	It was agreed that any training opportunities for Members be considered and tabled at a future committee meeting	S Taggart	Training will take place in March/April – awaiting availability of trainer.	N

Actions arising from Audit Committee Meeting –7 May 2026

Minute Ref	Subject	Decision	Lead officer	Action taken / progress to date	Remove from action sheet Y/N
AC/025/2026	Action sheet of meeting held 29/01/2026	It was agreed to note the action sheet	M Ward	Noted	Y
AC/026/2026	To agree date and start times for 2026/27	It was agreed to approve the date and start times for Audit Committee meetings for 2026/27	M Ward	Complete	Y
AC/027/2026	Audit Committee Terms of Reference and timetable for 2026/27	It was agreed to approve the Audit Committee Terms of Reference and to note the timetable for the year ahead	M Ward	Complete	Y
AC/028/2026	Audit Committee Self Assessment	It was agreed to note the contents of the report	M Ward	Noted	Y

AC/029/2026	Draft Performance Improvement Objectives 2026/27	It was agreed to note the following: •The five draft performance improvement objectives 2026-27, as outlined in appendix 1. •The proposed approach and timetable for publishing the Performance Improvement Plan 2026/27, as outlined in appendix 2, including approval to commence the consultation and engagement process on 13 February 2026.	G Byrne	Noted	Y
AC/030/2026	Corporate Risk Register – Corporate Services Directorate Risk Register also tabled	The following was agreed: •To approve the updates to the Corporate Risk Register highlighted within the summary at Appendix 1. Full Corporate Risk Register can be evidenced at Appendix 2. •To note the revised Corporate Services Directorate Risk Register summary at Appendix 3 and detailed Corporate Services Directorate Risk Register at Appendix 4. •Report to be brought to a future Audit Committee regarding timeline of responses to media enquiries.	G Byrne M Ward	Completed	Y N
AC/031/2026	Prompt Payment Statistics Q4 25/26	It was agreed to note the Quarter 4 2025/26 and the financial year 2025/26 Prompt Payment Statistics.	G Byrne	Noted	Y
AC/032/2026	Update of Audit Recommendations	It was agreed to note the following: • The progress in implementing both internal and external audit recommendations.	G Byrne	Noted	Y

		The 2024/25 Follow Up by SUMER NI tabled today will also be considered as part of this report going forward.			
AC/033/2026	Direct Award Contracts Report	It was agreed to note the following: - The 2025/26 Q4 update in relation to Direct Award Contracts. - The Direct Award Activity 2025/26 year in review totals - The Active Direct Award Contracts as of 31/03/2026	C Mallon	Noted	Y
AC/034/2026	Procurement Action Plans	It was agreed to note the Directorate Procurement Action Plans	C Mallon	Noted	Y
AC/035/2026	Update on Fraud and Raising Concerns	It was agreed to note the following: - The update in relation to fraud and raising concerns cases as detailed at Appendix 1 - The progress on actions arising from the NIAO Internal Fraud Risk self-assessment	G Byrne	Noted	Y
AC/036/2026	Internal Audit Contract Extension	It was agreed to agree the second one-year extension period in order that work can commence on the final year of the four-year Internal Audit Plan.	G Byrne	Complete	Y
AC/037/2026	Audit Strategy 2025/26	It was agreed to note the contents of the Audit Strategy 2025/26	C O'Hagan	Noted	Y
AC/038/2026	SUMER NI Summary Report	It was agreed to note the Sumer NI Summary Report, including: - Performance Data and Validations - Estates Management and Security - Labour Market Partnership - Review of Local Economic Partnership - Follow up of 2025/26 Recommendations	P Brady	Noted	Y
AC/039/2026	Internal Audit Plan 2026/27	It was agreed to approve the Internal Audit Plan 2026/27	P Brady	Complete	Y

AC/040/2026	Annual Assurance Report	It was agreed to approve the Annual Assurance Report 2025/26	P Brady	Complete	Y
AC/041/2026	Accounts Direction to District Councils 2025/26 – LG07/2026	It was agreed to note the circular	M Ward	Noted	Y
AC/042/2026	District Council Rate Statistics – LG08/2026	It was agreed to note the circular	M Ward	Noted	Y
AC/043/2026	NI Audit Office – Raising Concerns in the NI Public Sector – March 2026	It was agreed to note the circular	M Ward	Noted	Y
AC/044/2026	NI Audit Office – Code of Audit Practice 2026	It was agreed to note the circular	M Ward	Noted	Y

Report to:	Audit Committee
Date of Meeting:	30 July 2026
Subject:	Audit Committee Annual Report 2025-26
Reporting Officer (Including Job Title):	Brona Slevin Independent Chair of Audit Committee
Contact Officer (Including Job Title):	Brona Slevin Independent Chair of Audit Committee

Confirm how this Report should be treated by placing an x in either:-

For decision	☒	For noting only	☐
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Members are asked to consider and approve the contents of this report prior to Reporting to Council.

1.0	Purpose and Background The Annual Report summarises the key activities and highlights any key issues arising throughout the year. This Report will inform the Governance Statement contained within the Council's Annual Accounts.
2	Key Issues The Annual Report of the Newry Mourne and Down Audit Committee for 2025-26 is attached.
3.0	Recommendations Members are asked to consider and approve the Annual Report of the Audit Committee 2025-26. The approved Annual Report of the Audit Committee 2025-26 to be reported to Council.
4.0	Resource implications None.
5.0	Due regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations (complete the relevant sections)
5.1	<i>General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes</i>

	It is not anticipated the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations	☒
5.2	<i>Proposal relates to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision</i> Yes ☐ No ☒ If yes, please complete the following: The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) has been equality screened	☐
	The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) will be subject to equality screening prior to implementation	☐
5.3	<i>Proposal initiating consultation</i> Consultation will seek the views of those directly affected by the proposal, address barriers for particular Section 75 equality categories to participate and allow adequate time for groups to consult amongst themselves	☐
	Consultation period will be 12 weeks	☐
	Consultation period will be less than 12 weeks (rationale to be provided)	☐
	Rationale:	
6.0	Due regard to Rural Needs (please tick all that apply)	
6.1	Proposal relates to developing, adopting, implementing or revising a policy / strategy / plan / designing and/or delivering a public service Yes ☐ No ☒ If yes, please complete the following: Rural Needs Impact Assessment completed	☐
7.0	Appendices	
	Appendix 1 – Audit Committee Annual Report for 2025-26	
8.0	Background Documents	

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Newry, Mourne and Down District Council
Audit Committee
Annual Report for 2025/2026

1. Overview

1.1 This Annual Report provides an overview of the Audit Committee activities for the Financial Year 2025/26 and demonstrates how the Committee has met its key responsibilities.

1.2 The Audit Committee met on 4 occasions during the year; on 31 July 2025, 25 September 2025, 29 January 2026, 07 May 2026. A programme of work had been agreed by the Audit Committee and was allocated over the schedule of meetings during the year.

1.3 The role of the Audit Committee is to support the Chief Executive (Accounting Officer) and Council by reviewing the comprehensiveness and reliability of assurances on governance, risk management, the control environment and the integrity of the financial statements.

2. Attendance

2.1 Members' attendance at committee meetings were as follows:

	ATTENDANCE NARRATIVE – AUDIT COMMITTEE MEETINGS (July 2025 – June 2026)						
COUNCILLOR NAME	AUDIT COMMITTEE 31 July 2025		AUDIT COMMITTEE 25 September 2025	AUDIT COMMITTEE 29 January 2026	AUDIT COMMITTEE 07 May 2026		TOTAL Meetings Attended
Indp Chair Ms B Slevin	✓		✓	✓	✓		4/4
Cllr C Bowsie	✓		✓	✓	✓		4/4
Cllr A Mathers	✓		N/A	N/A	N/A		1/1
Cllr L Devlin	N/A		✓		✓		2/3
Cllr T Howie (nee Kelly)							0/4
Cllr K Murphy	✓		✓	✓	✓		4/4
Cllr O Hanlon	✓		✓	✓	✓		4/4
Cllr C King							0/4
Cllr S O' Hare	✓				✓		2/4
Cllr G Sharvin	✓		N/A	N/A	N/A		1/1
Cllr J Brennan	N/A		✓	✓			2/3
Cllr P Byrne			✓	✓	✓		3/4
Cllr M Gibbons							0/4
<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>7/11</u>		<u>7/11</u>	<u>6/11</u>	<u>7/11</u>		

2.2 Ms Brona Slevin was appointed as an Independent Member of the Audit Committee in March 2019 and in accordance with the Committee's terms of reference took up the role of Chairperson in July 2019. The appointment was extended to July 2024. Ms Brona Slevin was reappointed to the position of Chair of the Audit Committee after a recruitment process, in July 2024.

2.3 The Audit Committee meetings requires the attendance of the Chief Executive, the Director of Corporate Services and the Internal Auditors. The Assistant Director of Finance and Performance and NIAO representatives also usually attend and the Senior Management Team and other Senior Officers attend by invitation.

3. Performance Evaluation

3.1 In accordance with best practice, the Audit Committee self-assessed its performance. This year the NIAO Good Practice Guide 'Effective Audit and Risk Assurance Committee' was used again after being published in March 2025. This is a very comprehensive checklist which was issued to Members for comments. Based on this document the Audit Committee has been found to be operating effectively for 2025/26.

The results were presented to the meeting on 07 May 2026. The Committee agreed the following actions/recommendations to build further effectiveness:

- (a) As in prior years political parties to be asked to give consideration to appointing Elected Members for a term greater than one year where possible which will enable knowledge and skills to be built up in this area. Generally, there is little change in the Audit Committee make up which shows the Council is committed to keeping the experience and knowledge of Members on the Audit Committee.
- (b) training for all Members on the Audit Committee to be progressed.
- (c) Officers continue to strive to ensure Internal Audit reports are completed and reported on a timely basis to the Audit Committee.
- (d) Officers continue to strive to ensure that all papers are provided on a timely basis to Democratic Services so that papers are issued in compliance with standing orders so that Members have sufficient time to review them

Members will see from consideration of the NIAO checklist that the following requires further work which would add to the effectiveness of the Committee:

- (e) The Audit Committee to understand how cyber and digital risks impact on the Council. A presentation on this was given to the July 2026 Audit Committee.
- (f) An assessment of Climate Change/Net Zero. A report on this was presented to the Audit Committee in July 2026.
- (g) The Audit Committee should have oversight of how controls are evaluated so it can understand how effectively fraud and error risks are being addressed
- (h) The Audit Committee should consider ways in which to obtain feedback from the executive and other key stakeholders eg Internal and External Audit in order to strengthen the effectiveness of the Audit Committee. The Chair of the Audit Committee met with Christine Hagan of Sumer NI on 18 March 2026. Sumer NI provide the Internal Audit service to the Council. This was to discuss specific responsibilities under the Global Internal Audit Standards among other matters. As Sumer NI is a key stakeholder this feedback was very useful.
- (i) For Audit Committee members unfamiliar with the operations of the public sector, special focus should be given to this as part of their induction, focusing in particular on regularity (use of funds in the way intended)

3.2 An appraisal of the Chairperson's performance was also completed by the Chief Executive. This report will be presented to the Audit Committee in July 2026.

4. Terms of Reference

4.1 A review of the Audit Committee's Terms of Reference was undertaken and approved by Council on 5 March 2019 as part of the review of the terms of references of all Committees of Council. The Audit Committee noted the approved Terms of Reference at its meeting on 15 April 2019. The Audit Committee's Terms of Reference was again approved at the Audit Committee Meeting in July 2020, in April 2021, April 2022, April 2023 and May 2024, 8 May 2025 and 7 May 2026 ie on an annual basis.

5. 2024/25 Financial Statements and External Audit

5.1 The Council's Audited Financial Statements for 2024/25 including the Annual Governance Statement were reviewed by the Audit Committee on 25 September 2025. The Committee also reviewed the draft Report to Those Charged With Governance.

5.2 The Audit Committee was pleased to note that the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) had certified the financial Statements with an unqualified audit opinion and the Audit Committee approved the Accounts for signing.

5.3 The Audit Committee noted the contents of the final Report To Those Charged With Governance with management responses and the Annual Audit Letter at its meeting on 29 January 2026.

6. Risk Management

6.1 The Committee welcomed the continued good progress made by Officers on Risk Management and the structure put in place to ensure ownership and management of risk at all levels of the organisation.

6.2 The Council has a Corporate Risk Register which identifies the key corporate level risks faced, and to be managed. Each corporate risk is linked to specific priorities set out by the Council in its Corporate Plan. The Corporate Risk Register and mitigating actions are scrutinised at each Audit Committee meeting. Risk management is also a standing agenda item at monthly meetings of the SMT.

6.3 There were 12 corporate risks on the Corporate Risk Register at 07 May 2026 and the corporate risks with the highest residual scores (shown in brackets) were as follows:

- CR. 01 Failure to deliver the capital investment programme for the District (20)
- CR.02 Non-compliance with legislative requirements, including Procurement Act 2023 (20)
- CR. 03 Failure to effectively manage waste (20)
- CR. 04 Failure to provide robust and timely planning decisions (20)
- CR.05 Failure to adequately deliver future efficiencies and improvements (16)
- CR. 07 Failure to implement an economic development programme to drive growth within the District (16)
- CR. 08 Failure to manage sickness absence resulting in delays and an inability to deliver Council services (20)
- CR. 09 Risk to the long term financial stability of Council in relation to the delivery of Council Services (20)
- CR. 10 Failure to effectively plan for and manage a cyber security attack (20)
- CR. 11 Risk of Industrial Action impacting on Service Delivery (15)
- CR. 12 Insufficient staff resources to deliver Council services in an effective and efficient manner (16)

7. Internal Audit

7.1 Sumer NI (previously ASM Limited) were reappointed in 2023.

7.2 From the Internal Audit Plan 2025/26, 10 Internal Audit Reports were reported to the Audit Committee during the year, 8 of which received a satisfactory assurance rating. Two service areas, received a limited assurance rating. These included the following :

- a) Planning – management of planning applications
- b) Estates Management and Security

7.3 All, with the exception of one area of the Internal Audit assurance work, as detailed in the final Internal Audit Plan 2025/26, as approved by the Audit Committee, was completed. With the exception of the review of Waste Management Contracts which due to the absenteeism of senior responsible staff, at the request of the Chief Executive and approved by the Audit Committee was deferred to 2026/27. The work carried out during the year included 1 Advisory Report, a HR Policy review. A final report for this review was issued on 23 September 2025 containing a total of 8 recommendations.

7.4 Sumer NI, the Council's Internal Auditors, raised significant control issues in their Annual Report dated 06 May 2026. Sumer NI stated that the Global Internal Audit Standards ("GSIAS") requires that they bring to the Council's attention those significant control issues which may be relevant to the preparation of the Governance Statement for the year ended 31 March 2026. On this basis, they highlighted

- a) the limited assurance provided in the review of the Management of Planning Enforcement Applications and
- b) the limited assurance provided in the review of Estates Management and Security

Internal Audit Annual Assurance Opinion

7.7 The Committee reviewed the Annual Internal Audit Assurance Report for 2025/26 at its meeting on 07 May 2026 and noted the Auditor's overall opinion of Satisfactory assurance.

7.8 The Audit Committee expressed their reassurance with the overall opinion of Satisfactory Assurance. The Committee will be provided with progress updates on the actions taken to address the significant control issues referred to in the Internal Audit Annual Assurance Report 2025/26.

Follow up Review of Internal Audit Recommendations

7.9 The Committee also reviewed on 07 May 2026 a follow up report from Internal Audit on the Implementation of Prior Year Internal Audit Recommendations for 2024/25. The review

identified that, out of the 96 accepted recommendations, 52 (54%) recommendations were fully implemented, 27 (28%) recommendations were partially implemented, 8 (9%) recommendations were not implemented. 3 of these recommendations were unable to be tested, 2 recommendations were closed as they were superseded by a current year finding and 2 recommendations had not yet passed their date for implementation.

7.10 The Assistant Director of Finance and Performance also reported during the year the progress on the implementation of the Internal Audit Recommendations in the years prior to 2024/25. This included an update on the movement and progress being made on these outstanding recommendations which enabled the Audit Committee to have a fuller understanding of the implications of these recommendations not being in place. Progress is being made on these outstanding recommendations and the Audit Committee encouraged this progress to continue.

7.11 The Audit Committee is committed to ensuring the prior year Internal Audit recommendations are completed and reported to the Audit Committee.

Tender for Internal Audit Services

7.12 Newry Mourne and Down District Council procured the services of SUMER NI (previously known as ASM) as its Internal Audit Services provider from 01 April 2023 having been reappointed. The contract was for two years with the options of two one-year extensions. The Audit Committee agreed to approve the second one year extension period which will be utilised to work on the third year of the four year Internal Audit Plan, i.e. 2026/27.

Approval of Internal Audit Plan 2026/27 and Internal Audit Strategy

7.13 The Annual Internal Audit Plan for 2026/27 was brought to the Audit Committee Meeting on 07 May 2026 for approval.

7.14 The Internal Audit Plan will be kept under review throughout the year and will be considered against any emerging risks identified as part of the Council's wider risk management processes. Any future proposed changes will be brought to the Audit Committee for consideration.

8. External Audit Strategy

8.1 The NIAO presented their Annual Audit Strategy for the Year Ending 31 March 2026 to the Audit Committee on 07 May 2026.

8.2 The Audit certification deadline for certifying local government bodies' accounts is 30 September 2026 and to ensure compliance, a meeting has been scheduled for September 2026 to review and approve the audited accounts so they can be signed by the deadline.

9. Performance Improvement Arrangements

9.1 Every year the LGA is required to report on whether each Council has discharged its duties in relation to improvement planning, the publication of improvement information and the extent to which each Council has acted in accordance with the Department's Guidance.

9.2 The LGA proposed an unqualified audit and assessment opinion, with no statutory recommendations being made. An Audit and Assessment certificate of compliance has been received.

9.3 The LGA has certified that the Council has discharged its duties in connection with improvement planning and the publication of improvement information in accordance with section 92 of the Act and has acted in accordance with the Department for Communities guidance sufficiently.

9.4 The LGA stated that in their opinion the Council has demonstrated a track record of ongoing improvement and that the Council is likely to comply with Part 12 of the Act during 2025/26.

9.5 Strengthening existing performance management arrangements and embedding a culture of performance and improvement has gained momentum within Newry Mourne and Down District Council. It is vital that performance is used as a key driver to identify improvements and facilitate the delivery of effective, efficient and value for money services.

10. Acknowledgments

As Chair of the Audit Committee, I wish to extend my thanks to the Members for their support during the year and to the political parties for ensuring continuity of membership on the Committee from year to year. On behalf of the Audit Committee, I wish also to thank officers, the Internal and External Auditors for their hard work, also their open engagement with the Committee, thereby allowing it to meet its responsibilities. I would like to wish the previous Director of Corporate Services, Josephine Kelly, who left in December 2025 and the Assistant Director of Finance & Performance, Gerard Byrne, who left in July 2026 the very best in their future careers and I look forward to working with their replacements when they take up their posts.

Brona Slevin
Independent Chairperson
30 July 2026

Report to:	Audit Committee
Date of Meeting:	30 July 2026
Subject:	Performance Improvement Plan 2026-27
Reporting Officer (Including Job Title):	Marie Ward – Chief Executive
Contact Officer (Including Job Title):	Catherine Hughes – Head of Performance and Improvement (Acting)

Confirm how this Report should be treated by placing an x in either:-

For decision	For noting only	X
1.0	Purpose and Background	
1.1	The purpose of this report is to recommend the final version of the Performance Improvement Plan 2026-27. This plan is supported by the Consultation and Engagement Report 2026-27 and Delivery Plans which have been developed for each Performance Improvement Objective 2026-27. The Performance Improvement Plan was approved by the Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee on 14 May 2026, followed by ratification of full Council on 1 June 2026 and published on the Council’s website before 30 June 2026, in order to meet the statutory timescale.	
1.2	Part 12 of the Local Government (NI) Act 2014 sets out a General Duty of Improvement for local government, whereby all District Councils are required to put in place arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of their functions. Each financial year, Councils are required to set performance improvement objectives for the services they provide. The guidance states that performance improvement is more than quantifiable gains in service output or efficiency, or in the internal effectiveness of an organisation. Improvement should focus on activity that enhances the sustainable quality of life and environment for communities.	
1.3	The Performance Improvement Plan is a key strategic document which drives all improvement activity across the organisation. It features within the Business Planning and Performance Management Framework and is directly aligned to the Community Plan, Corporate Plan and Directorate Business Plans.	
2.0	Key issues	
2.1	In accordance with statutory requirements, the Council is required to publish the Performance Improvement Plan by 30 June 2026. The Performance Improvement Plan 2026-27 is attached at Appendix 1, and includes the following information: • Performance improvement objectives 2026-27 • Statutory performance indicators and standards for economic development, planning and waste management • Self imposed performance indicators, as outlined in the Corporate Plan 2024-27	

	Public Consultation and Engagement 2026-27
2.2	The development of the performance improvement objectives 2026-27 is based on a robust and reliable evidence base which includes: 764 responses to the Residents Survey (September 2022) This was supplemented by a nine week public consultation and engagement process around the proposed performance improvement objectives 2026-27, which took place between 13 February – 17 April 2026 and consisted of the following elements: 54 responses to the survey on the draft performance improvement objectives, published on the consultation section of the Council's website - Engagement with 68 stakeholders through the Crotlieve DEA Forum; Downpatrick DEA Forum; Rowallane DEA Forum; Slieve Croob DEA Forum; The Mournes DEA Forum; Age Friendly Alliance and Newry, Mourne and Down Youth Voice. Overall, the feedback from the consultation and engagement process revealed that the majority of respondents support the proposed performance improvement objectives, as outlined in Appendix 2.
	Objective Delivery Plans 2026-27
2.3	Delivery plans for each performance improvement objective have been developed, as outlined in Appendix 3. They seek to demonstrate how the Council will manage the effective delivery of each objective, in terms of resources, risk management and governance arrangements. These plans are a 'work in progress' and will be reviewed and updated on a continuous basis to support the delivery of each performance improvement objective.
3.0	Recommendations
3.1	To note: The Performance Improvement Plan 2026-27 (including the five performance improvement objectives), Consultation and Engagement Report 2026-27 and Objective Delivery Plans 2026-27.
4.0	Resource implications
4.1	There are no financial resource implications within this report.
5.0	Due regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations (complete the relevant sections)
5.1	<i>General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes</i> It is not anticipated the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations ☒
5.2	<i>Proposal relates to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision</i>

	Yes ☒ No ☐ If yes, please complete the following: The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) has been equality screened ☒ The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) will be subject to equality screening prior to implementation ☐
5.3	<i>Proposal initiating consultation</i> Consultation will seek the views of those directly affected by the proposal, address barriers for particular Section 75 equality categories to participate and allow adequate time for groups to consult amongst themselves ☐ Consultation period will be 12 weeks ☐ Consultation period will be less than 12 weeks (rationale to be provided) ☒ <i>Rationale:</i> At the Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee meeting in February 2026, it was agreed to implement a nine week consultation and engagement process, in order to meet the statutory deadline of 30 June 2026 for publishing the Performance Improvement Plan.
6.0	Due regard to Rural Needs (please tick all that apply)
6.1	Proposal relates to developing, adopting, implementing or revising a policy / strategy / plan / designing and/or delivering a public service Yes ☒ No ☐ If yes, please complete the following: Rural Needs Impact Assessment completed ☒
7.0	Appendices • Appendix 1 – Performance Improvement Plan 2026-27 • Appendix 2 – Consultation and Engagement Report 2026-27 • Appendix 3 – Objective Delivery Plans 2026-27
8.0	Background Documents Performance Improvement Plans 2020-21, 2022-23, 2023-24, 2024-25 and 2025-26

Performance Improvement Plan 2026-27



Comhairle Ceantair
**an Iúir, Mhúrn
agus an Dúin**
**Newry, Mourne
and Down**
District Council

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An Cathaoirleach
Chairperson TBC



An
Príomhfheidhmeannach
Chief Executive
Marie Ward

Foreword

Welcome to Newry, Mourne and Down District Council's Performance Improvement Plan 2026-27. After engaging and listening to our residents and communities we have retained our core themes for the year ahead. However, we have refined the wording of our economic development and climate change objectives to make them more succinct, meaningful, and better reflect the evolving work taking place across these areas. We have also introduced several new measures and actions designed to strengthen delivery and ensure our priorities continue to benefit both our people and our place.

As we continue the revitalisation of our district, it is important to recognise the progress that has been made. Over the past year, the Council remained focused on delivering essential services and advancing our performance improvement objectives.

Our residents and visitors continued to prioritise their health and wellbeing, with our leisure centres recording over 930,000 paid attendances and nearly 30,000 people participating in targeted health programmes. We responded to every community clean-up request received and continued to take action

against environmental crime.

Through our economic development initiatives, we provided support to 227 local businesses and social enterprises, contributing to the creation of 254 local jobs. We also made progress in addressing our sustainability and climate change through the establishment of our carbon footprint baseline.

While these achievements are encouraging, we recognise that there is still more to be done to ensure Newry, Mourne and Down remains a great place to live, work, visit and invest in. This year's performance improvement objectives will continue to focus on the issues that matter most to our communities: enhancing the quality of our leisure facilities and services, supporting the growth of the local economy and pathways to employment, improving the cleanliness of our district and promoting recycling, reducing our contribution to climate change, and strengthening the performance of our Planning Service.

We remain committed to working collaboratively with our communities, partners and stakeholders to deliver high-quality, efficient and effective services. Together, we will continue striving to improve quality of life for all and to build a district that everyone can take pride in.

Introduction

Part 12 of the Local Government Act (NI) 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. The Council is required to set annual improvement objectives for the services it provides and to have in place arrangements to achieve these objectives. The Council recognises 'improvement' to mean activity that enhances the sustainable quality of life and environment for ratepayers and communities.

The performance improvement objectives do not describe every improvement the Council plans to make during 2026-27. Alternatively, they provide an overview of how the Council will address the issues which matter most to local communities. The Performance Improvement Plan outlines the Council's objectives for improvement, how performance will be measured and what positive outcomes stakeholders can expect as a result of improvement activity. It represents the Council's commitment to achieving continuous improvement in the delivery of key services.

Performance Improvement Objectives 2026-27

- 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**

These objectives have been developed within the context of the Business Planning and Performance Management Framework. They are:

✓	Linked to the Community Plan, Corporate Plan and Directorate Business Plans
✓	Based on a robust and reliable evidence base, including performance trends
✓	Aligned to the seven strategic aspects of improvement
✓	Legitimate, clear, robust, deliverable and demonstrable

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 2024:

Numbers of overnight stays 443,776

Level of visitor spend - £73,277,005

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

238.2 new jobs promoted through business start-up activity

215 existing business 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: 49.3%

100% of Community Clean Up Requests Supported

Fifth lowest level of waste to landfill across all NI Councils



Performance Improvement Objective 1

We will support the health and wellbeing of local people by improving our leisure facilities and services	
Why this matters	You told us that: - One of the top priorities for improving your local area was 'Improving people's health and wellbeing (and reducing health inequalities). 17% of our residents are not active for a single day each week. - The third most important health and wellbeing opportunity you would like to see more of was 'physical activity opportunities such as leisure centres, gyms and sports facilities'. - Between 2018 and 2022 there has been an increase in the number of residents satisfied with the leisure centres across the District. 62% of respondents to our 2026-27 survey agreed with this objective. We know that keeping fit and active can help improve a person's health and wellbeing both physically and mentally and the provision of leisure facilities is key to achieving this. Newry, Mourne and Down District Council plays a key role in helping local communities to live long and healthy lives. The Council remains committed to promoting physical, mental and emotional well-being and encouraging residents to make healthy and informed lifestyle choices and as part of this we need to always be striving to improve our leisure facilities and offerings.
Looking Back: What we did in 2025-26	 934,517 paid attendances across the 6 leisure facilities
	 28,399 people participating in targeted health programmes
	 11,192 memberships across the indoor leisure facilities
	 £225,000 in capital funding allocated to sports clubs across the District
	 7 play parks upgraded across the District
	
Looking Forward: What we will do in 2026-27	- Sustain the number of paid attendances at indoor leisure facilities. - Continue to deliver a range of targeted, sustainable health programmes to encourage participation in physical activity. - Progress the leisure projects agreed within the Capital Programme. - Provide funding through financial assistance for capital projects for sports clubs. - Upgrade a number of play parks across the District. - Continue to monitor customer satisfaction. - Record usage of Donard Park Multisport Hub.

	Work towards achieving disability accreditation across identified tier 1 sites.					
How we will measure success	2022-23 Actual	2023-24 Actual	2024-25 Actual	2025-26 Actual	Status Trend	2026-27 Target
Number of paid attendances recorded at:	698,864	768,842	737,439	934,517 (Target: 757,500)	 	898,000
Newry Leisure Centre	307,153	331,546	244,929	497,295 (Target: 335,000)	 	450,000
Down Leisure Centre	246,978	259,473	273,783	268,839 (Target: 275,000)	 	270,000
Kilkeel Leisure Centre	69,797	63,811	74,988	21,208* (Target: 15,000)	 	21,000
St. Colmans Sports Complex	54,024	58,491	68,662	67,376 (Target: 68,700)	 	60,000
Newcastle Centre & Tropicana Outdoor Swimming Complex	25,517	27,765	39,128	29,649 (Target: 27,800)	 	27,800
Ballymote Sports and Wellbeing Centre	15,365	27,756	35,949	50,150 (Target: 36,000)	 	40,000
Number of people participating in targeted health programmes	9,309	10,805	20,421	28,399 (Target: 22,000)	 	16,500
Number of attendances recorded at Donard Park Multisport Hub	New measure				-	30,000
Value of Financial Assistance funding allocated to sports clubs	New measure			£225,000 (Target: £225,000)		£225,000
Number of leisure centre memberships	9,534	9,923	10,050	11,192 (Target: 10,100)	 	9,500**
Number of capital leisure projects progressed	New measure	3	4	4 (Target:2)	 	7
Number of Play parks upgraded	New Measure			7 (Target:2)		2
What you will see by March 2027	898,000 paid attendances at our six leisure centres by the end of 2026-27. 16,500 people participating in targeted health programmes across the District. 9,500 leisure centre memberships recorded. 2 play parks upgraded. 7 new build and/or upgraded capital leisure projects progressed including Kilkeel Leisure Centre, Newry City Park, Newcastle Centre, Rowallane Multisport hub, Crotlieve Multisport hub, Newry Multisport hub and Newcastle rock pool.					

	- Financial assistance allocated for sports clubs to the value of £225,000 for capital projects. - Disability accreditation achieved in an identified tier 1 site. 30,000 recorded visits to Donard Park Multisport hub.			
Alignment				
Corporate Plan 2024-27	Improve the health and wellbeing of everyone in the District			
Community Plan	All people in Newry, Mourne and Down enjoy good health and wellbeing			
Programme for Government	Cut health waiting times			
7 aspects of improvement	Strategic effectiveness	Service quality	Service Availability	Fairness
Responsible Officer	Director: Active and Healthy Communities			

*Substantial decrease due to closure of KLC during 2025-26

** Decrease in Target due to 6 month closure of KLC

Performance Improvement Objective 2

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

Why this matters

You told us that:

- 'Improving skills, employability and job prospects' was your top priority for improving the local area in the 2022 residents survey.
- 'Supporting local businesses, attracting investment and jobs' is in your top three priorities for improvement.
- Investment to grow the economy, create jobs and attract tourists is the most important form of investment.
- 63% of respondents to our 2026-27 survey agreed with this objective.

Continuing to support and grow the economy of Newry, Mourne and Down remains a key priority for the Council. Council continues to support the growth of both new business start-ups and the growth of existing businesses through the collaborative delivery of the Go Succeed Programme. 'Go Succeed' is Northern Ireland's go-to source for free expert business advice focusing on the three pillars of starting, growing and scaling your business or business idea.

The NMD Labour Market partnership (LMP) is vital for delivery against skills and employability, addressing economic inactivity, and supporting the up-skilling and re-skilling of residents in line with the demand for skills. The LMP has delivered a range of employment academies, careers fairs and jobs fairs, working closely with key stakeholders across the private and public sector.

Delivery against the Belfast Regional City Deal investment areas continues, with ambitions for job creation and the stimulation of private sector investment across the district.

Council is leading on the implementation of a DfE "Regional Balance Fund" establishing a Local Economic Partnership which will develop an action plan and deliver £4.5 million of investment over a 3-year period, which will drive the creation of good jobs, productivity growth, sustainability and decarbonisation.

Looking Back:

What we did in 2025-26



188 new enterprises created as a result of support and 238.2 new jobs promoted through business start-up activity



12 new social enterprise start-ups supported, and 16 new social enterprise jobs created



Over 4,700 participants engaged across all 'Go Succeed' activity



Delivered a range of Make it Local campaigns to support "Giant Adventures"

Looking Forward:

- Invest in the social economy through the Social Enterprise programme.

What we will do in 2026-27	- Support the establishment of new businesses through the 'Go Succeed' Programme. - Support the growth of existing businesses and creation of new jobs through the 'Go Succeed' Programme. - Directly support participants on employment pathway initiatives. - Invest in employability and skills through the implementation of the LMP Action Plan. - Invest in the creation of good jobs, productivity growth, decarbonisation and regional balance through the implementation of a Local Economic Partnership action plan.					
How we will measure success	2022-23 Actual	2023-24 Actual	2024-25 Actual	2025-26 Actual	Status Trend	2026-27 Target
Number of social enterprise start-ups supported	12	12	12	12 (Target: 12)	 	12
Number of social enterprise jobs created	12	14	16	16 (Target: 12)	 	12
Number of participants engaged across all 'Go Succeed' activity	New measure		839	4,719* (Target: 712)	 	712
Number of business plans created for start-up businesses and employer enterprises	361	150	334	397* (Target: 289)	 	279***
Number of jobs promoted via business start-up activity	155	90	206	238.2* (Target: 173)	 	173**
Number of new enterprises created as a result of support	195	90	175	188* (Target: 119)	 	119
Number of existing businesses supported to progress growth and scaling ambitions	220	351	221	215* (Target: 220)	 	188***
Number of participants directly supported on employment pathway initiatives	New measure				-	250
What you will see by March 2027	279 business plans created for Start-Up businesses and employer enterprises. - Over 700 participants engaged across all Go Succeed activity. - Support provided to 188 existing businesses to progress growth and scaling ambitions. 173 new jobs promoted via business start-up activity. 12 social enterprise start-ups supported, and 12 social enterprise jobs created. 250 directly supported participants on employment pathway initiatives. - Continued support for new and established local businesses. - Continued support for the growth of new employment opportunities. - Continued support to grow a labour market that is economically active and prosperous.					
Alignment						
Corporate Plan 2024-27	Support the continued growth and development of our local economy					

Community Plan	• All people from Newry, Mourne and Down benefit from prosperous communities			
Programme for Government	• Grow a Globally Competitive and Sustainable Economy			
7 aspects of improvement	Strategic effectiveness	Service quality	Service availability	Innovation
Responsible Officer	Director: Economy, Regeneration and Tourism			

*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

*** Targets have been revised downwards as the funding package for 'Go Succeed' has been reduced for 2026-27.

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	
Why this matters	You told us that: • Dog mess and dog fouling and rubbish or litter lying around are your top two perceived problems in your local area. • 6% of the residents surveyed were dissatisfied with the cleansing service provided by the Council. • 91% of residents said recycling is important to them, an increase of 5% on the 2018 residents survey figure. • 63% of respondents to our 2026-27 survey agreed with this objective. Issues around street cleanliness continue to escalate largely as a result of the increased number of illicit dumping, littering and dog fouling incidents reported to the Council. To improve the overall cleanliness of the District, the Council is currently reviewing cleansing operations to design a more effective model of service provision. The Council also remains committed to collaborating with partner organisations and local communities to promote responsible dog ownership, address issues around littering and illicit dumping and generate local pride in having a cleaner, greener District for everyone to enjoy.
Looking Back: What we did in 2025-26	 Issued 35 fixed penalty notices, 32 of which were paid
	 Supported 100% of community clean-up requests
	 10 environmental projects funded through the NI 'Live Here Love Here' Scheme with a total of £14,822 awarded to local groups
	 Anti-littering and responsible dog ownership campaigns rolled out
	 Slight increase in the average rate of recycling, to 49.3%, but below the set target. 
Looking Forward: What we will do in 2026-27	Address issues around recycling, littering, illicit dumping and dog fouling by: • Reviewing and implementing the Enforcement Improvement Plan. • Promoting responsible dog ownership through publicity and social media campaigns. • Encouraging residents to bring properly sorted surplus recyclable waste to our Household Recycling Centres. • Supporting local community clean ups. • Continued implementation of a Paint Re-Use Scheme at a further 2 Household Recycling Centres. • Implementing a new system to determine levels of street cleanliness and identify emerging issues and hotspots. • Embedding the new online reporting tool for dog fouling.

	- Continuing to implement the rollout out of compactable street litter bins. Work in partnership with Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful to: - Promote the 'Live Here Love Here' campaigns. - Encourage community groups to 'Adopt a Spot'. - Highlight the impact of littering on the marine environment.					
How we will measure success	2022-23 Actual	2023-24 Actual	2024-25 Actual	2025-26 Actual	Status Trend	2026-27 Target
Number of fixed penalty notices issued	110	25	31	35 (Target: 100)	 	100
Number of fixed penalty notices paid	91	19	26	32 (Target: 80)	 	80
Percentage of fixed penalty notices issued that are paid	New measure			91% (Target: 80%)		80%
Percentage of community clean up requests supported	New measure		100%	100% (Target: 90%)		100%
Number of 'Live Here Love Here' environmental projects	10	9	15	10		No target
The percentage of household waste collected by District Councils that is sent for recycling	49.6%	50.1%	48.7%	49.3% (Q1-Q3)	 	70% by 2030 (55% by 2025)
The amount of biodegradable Local Authority Collected Municipal Waste that is landfilled	2,319t	932t	429t	380t (Q1-Q3)	 	<20,954 tonnes (2019-20)
The amount of Local Authority Collected Municipal Waste arisings	82,842t	84,636t	85,383	66,395t (Q1-Q3)	 	85,500 tonnes * * (2019-20 target)
What you will see by March 2027	- Increase in the number of fixed penalty notices issued and paid. - Responsible dog ownership and reduced levels of dog fouling, littering and illicit dumping. - Improved opportunities to report dog fouling and identify hotspots for enforcement patrols. - Reduction in the disposal of paint from our Household Recycling Centre sites. - Opportunities to engage in community clean ups. - Increased awareness of environmental messaging including recycling, dog fouling and littering. - Decrease in overflowing bins and reduction of street bin collections. - A cleaner, greener District, with improved civic and community pride.					
Alignment						

Corporate Plan 2024-27	Protect and enhance our environment to secure a sustainable future			
Community Plan	All people from Newry, Mourne and Down benefit from a clean, quality and sustainable environment			
Programme for Government	Protecting Lough Neagh and the Environment			
7 aspects of improvement	Strategic effectiveness	Service availability	Innovation	Sustainability
Responsible Officer	Director: Sustainability and Environment			

*The Q1-Q3 2025-26 data for the statutory waste management performance indicators remains provisional and will be finalised when the year-end data is validated and published by DAERA. The trend is based on a comparative analysis with the same period last year to ensure effective comparability.

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

Performance Improvement Objective 4

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

Why this matters

You told us that:

- Managing waste, reducing climate change, investing in renewable energy etc. was important to you.
- Green technology skills were the second most important training support needed to improve the growth of resident employability.
- 57% of respondents to our 2026-27 survey agreed with this objective.

Climate change is arguably the most serious threat we face today to our way of life. Climate change is the long-term shift in average weather patterns across the world. Since the mid-1800s, humans have contributed to the release of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases into the air mainly through burning fossil fuels such as coal, oil and gas. This causes global temperatures to rise, resulting in long-term changes.

In October 2019 Newry, Mourne and Down District Council declared a 'Climate Emergency'.

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council are developing a Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy. This process is led by a Cross-Departmental Officer Working Group who are reviewing all our operations and considering our impacts on climate change.

The Strategy will include positive action to reduce our impacts on climate change (Mitigation) and increase our resilience to deal with its impacts (Adaptation).

Looking Back:

What we did in 2025-26



Established the baseline for the Council's carbon footprint



Established the baseline for the Council's renewable energy generation and overall energy consumption



Progressed the action plan contained within the Newry, Mourne and Down Biodiversity Strategy (2024-30)



78% of Council fleet younger than 8 years



Planted 2,800 trees across the District

Looking Forward:

What we will do in 2026-27

- Publish and launch Sustainability and Climate Change strategy.
- Publish the Council's Climate Change Adaptation Plan.
- Support the continued implementation of new Electric Vehicle (EV) charging points.
- Undertake the annual assessment of the Council's carbon footprint and renewable energy output.
- Continue to implement the Council's fleet replacement programme.
- Procure new electric vehicles for Council fleet.
- Begin the transition of Council vehicles to HVO.

How we will measure success		2022-23 Actual	2023-24 Actual	2024-25 Actual	2025-26 Actual	Status Trend	2026-27 Target
Reduction in carbon footprint of Council estate		To be established			5,246 tCO2e	-	50% reduction by 2040
- Electricity		New measure			4,584,089 kWh	-	
- Mains Gas		New measure			4,996,994 kWh	-	
- Heating Oil (Kerosene)		New measure			12,449,723 litres	-	
- Fleet Use (Diesel)		New measure			837,901 litres	-	
- Fleet Use (Unleaded Petrol)		New measure			4,995 litres	-	
- HVO Use		New measure			-	-	
Increase in Renewable energy generation		To be established			154,684 kWh	-	5% increase
Percentage of Council fleet younger than 8 years		New measure		79%	78% (Target: 85%)		75%
Number of electric vehicles within the Council fleet		New measure		1	1 (Target: 10)		16
Number of Council supported EV charging points		New measure		20	0 (Target: 18)		12
What you will see by March 2027	- Council's Climate Change and Sustainable Development strategy launched and published. - Council's Climate Change Adaptation Plan published. - Annual assessments of the Council's carbon footprint and renewable energy output completed and reported. - Reduction in Council's carbon footprint. - Increase in Council's renewable energy generation. - Continues implementation of Council's fleet replacement programme. - Reduction in vehicle emissions from Council fleet through transition to HVO. - New electric vehicles operating within Council fleet. - New EV charging points installed across the District.						
Alignment							
Corporate Plan 2024-27	- Protect and enhance our environment to secure a sustainable future - Deliver sustainable services						
Community Plan	All people from Newry, Mourne and Down benefit from a clean, quality and sustainable environment						
Programme for Government	Protecting Lough Neagh and the Environment						
7 aspects of improvement	Strategic effectiveness	Efficiency	Innovation	Sustainability			
Responsible Officer	Director: Sustainability and Environment						

Performance Improvement Objective 5

We will improve the processing times of planning applications and enforcement cases by implementing the Planning Service Improvement Programme		
Why this matters	Delivering a more efficient and effective Planning Service for customers is a key priority for improvement for the Council. Planning plays a significant role in promoting sustainable development, regeneration, economic prosperity, investment and job creation for present and future generations of our District. 59% of respondents to our 2026-27 survey also agreed with this objective. The new portal, which launched in December 2022, allowing customers to submit applications online and track live planning applications, is now fully operational and amendments and changes remain ongoing as per agreed structures. Work continues on the Planning Improvement Programme and following discussions with SOLACE and DFI, the programme has been reviewed for 2025-26 and a new work programme is in place. Staff retention and recruitment remain challenging, however as of January 2026 all vacant posts have been filled. Additionally, as part of the Performance Improvement Programme two Higher Level Apprenticeship officers commenced employment in January 2026. Performance against the statutory targets remains a challenge and continues to be reviewed by SMT and SPR Committees.	
Looking Back: What we did between April-December 2025		64.7% of enforcement cases concluded within 39 weeks which is below the regional average of 75.2%
		Average processing time of 46.0 weeks for local planning applications, which is above the regional average of 19.6 weeks
		Average processing time of 58.8 weeks for major planning applications, which is above the regional average of 38.6 weeks
		Received 869 local planning applications, which is the second highest number of applications received behind Belfast City Council
Looking Forward: What we will do in 2026-27	• Reduce the number of live planning applications and enforcement cases which have been in the system for over 12 months. • Improve the average processing time for validating application forms through the introduction of the validation checklist. • Ongoing work with agents and architects to improve the standard of planning applications submitted. • Support employees to deliver service improvements through ongoing training, capacity building and 'planning surgeries.' • Review and consult on representations made during the consultation period after the launch of the Draft Plan Strategy. • Explore the development of a training programme for staff and members in collaboration with the Department of Infrastructure (DfI) as part of the Council's performance improvement programme for planning. • Review and agree Council's Enforcement Strategy.	

How we will measure success		2022-23 Actual	2023-24 Actual	2024- 25 Actual	Q1-Q3* 2025-26	Status Trend	2026-27 Target
Average processing time for local planning applications (weeks)		21.6	33.7	45.2	46.0 (Target: 15 weeks)	 	<15 weeks
Average processing time of major planning applications (weeks)		89	154.8	29.6	58.8 (Target: 30 weeks)	 	<30 weeks
Percentage of planning enforcement cases progressed within 39 weeks		58.6%	60.0%	47.6%	64.7% (Target: 70%)	 	70%
Average processing time for validating application forms		New measure					6 weeks
Number of planning applications in the system for 12 months or more		228	352	408	561 (Target: 170)	 	170
Number of planning applications in the system for 12 months or less		934	1,154	1,118	981 (Target: 870)	 	870
Number of enforcement cases in the system 12 months or more		503	599	574	648 (Target: 580)	 	580
What you will see by March 2027	• A more efficient and effective planning service. • Improved processing times for local and major planning applications. • Improved processing times for planning enforcement cases. • Reduction in the number of live planning applications and enforcement cases in the system. • Validation checklist introduced and processing time for validating planning applications improved. • An empowered and motivated workforce. • Increased confidence in the Planning system. • Sustainable development and regeneration of the District. • A review of representations made during the consultation period for the Draft Plan Strategy. • A training course developed for Council staff and members in collaboration with DfI. • Council's enforcement strategy reviewed and agreed.						
Alignment							
Corporate Plan 2024-27	• Deliver sustainable services						
Community Plan	• All people in Newry, Mourne and Down benefit from prosperous communities						
Programme for Government	• Provide More Social, Affordable and Sustainable Housing • Reform and Transformation of Public Services						
7 aspects of improvement	Strategic effectiveness	Service availability		Service quality		Efficiency	
Responsible Officer	Director: Economy, Regeneration and Tourism						

*Annual planning figures will be validated by the Department for Infrastructure and published through the Annual Report 2025-26.

Strategic Alignment

Performance Improvement Objective	Corporate Objective(s)	Community Planning Outcome(s)	Duty of Improvement
We will support the health and wellbeing of local people by improving our leisure facilities and services	Improve the health and wellbeing of everyone in the district	All people in Newry, Mourne and Down enjoy good health and wellbeing	Strategic effectiveness Service quality Service availability Fairness
We will contribute to growing the economy by supporting local businesses, job creation and pathways to employment	Support the continued growth and development of our local economy	All people from Newry, Mourne and Down benefit from prosperous communities	Strategic effectiveness Service quality Service availability Innovation
We will improve the cleanliness of our District by continuing to promote recycling and addressing littering, fly tipping and dog fouling incidents	Protect and enhance our environment to secure a sustainable future	All people from Newry, Mourne and Down benefit from a clean, quality and sustainable environment	Strategic effectiveness Service availability Innovation Sustainability
We will reduce our contribution to climate change by cutting carbon emissions and by improving the efficiency of our fleet and buildings	Protect and enhance our environment to secure a sustainable future	All people from Newry, Mourne and Down benefit from a clean, quality and sustainable environment	Strategic Effectiveness Efficiency Innovation Sustainability
We will improve the processing times of planning applications and enforcement cases by implementing the Planning Service Improvement Programme	Deliver sustainable services	All people in Newry, Mourne and Down benefit from prosperous communities	Strategic effectiveness Service availability Service quality Efficiency

Statutory Performance Indicators and Standards

Section 89 of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014 requires the Council to publish the results of the performance indicators and standards that are set by central government around economic development, planning and waste management.

The seven statutory performance indicators and standards, as outlined in the Local Government Performance Indicators and Standards Order (2015), are set out below:

Ref	Statutory Performance Indicator	Annual Standard
Economic Development		
ED1	The number of jobs promoted through business start-up activity	>155 173* (updated target)
Planning		
P1	The average processing time of major planning applications	<30 weeks
P2	The average processing time of local planning applications	<15 weeks
P3	The percentage of enforcement cases processed within 39 weeks	70%
Waste Management		
W1	The percentage of household waste collected by District Councils that is sent for recycling (including waste prepared for reuse)	70% by 2030 Interim: 55% by 2025
W2	The amount (tonnage) of biodegradable Local Authority Collected Municipal Waste that is landfilled	<20,954** tonnes (2019-20 target)
W3	The amount (tonnage) of Local Authority Collected Municipal Waste arisings	85,500 tonnes**

*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.

** These targets are 2019-20 NI Landfill Allowance Scheme (NILAS) target which have not yet been updated.

The Council has put in place the following arrangements to monitor progress against the standards set for the statutory performance and indicators:

- Inclusion within the Performance Improvement Plan, with progress being monitored on a bi-annual basis by the Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee and Audit Committee.
- Inclusion within Directorate Business Plans, with progress being monitored on a bi-annual basis by the relevant Council Committee.
- Data submissions to Government Departments, with reports being issued to monitor the performance of each Council, outlining regional trends and comparisons.

Self-Imposed Performance Indicators

The Council has identified the following self-imposed performance indicators to measure progress in delivering the Corporate Plan 2024 - 27.

Draft Corporate Objective	Draft 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 and distributed 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 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 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.

Represent the voice of the District with our partners	Number of users registered to Council corporate social media channels.
	Number of visits to Council's corporate website.
	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

The Council has put in place the following arrangements to monitor progress against the self-imposed performance indicators:

- Inclusion within the Performance Improvement Plan, with progress being monitored by the Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee and Audit Committee through the annual Assessment of Performance.
- Some performance indicators are included within Directorate Business Plans, with progress being monitored on a bi-annual basis by the relevant Council Committee.

These performance indicators are aligned to community planning outcomes. This will ensure the Council continues to address the needs and aspirations of local communities and deliver sustainable outcomes for all, now and in the future.

Identifying the Performance Improvement Objectives 2026-27

Three of the five performance improvement objectives 2026-27 have been carried forward from 2025-26 as they remain relevant and meaningful. We have however, refined the wording of our economic development and climate change objectives to make them more succinct, meaningful, and better reflect the evolving work taking place across these areas. A number of changes and additions have been made to the actions and measures that support all the objectives. They have been developed, reviewed and updated in close liaison with Elected Members, Senior Management Team, Corporate Management Team and employees across the organisation. Each objective is underpinned by a suite of 'supporting actions', 'measures of success' and outcomes for stakeholders. They are clearly aligned to the Community Plan and Corporate Plan 2024-27, as well as other regional and local plans, particularly the Council's Business Plans which have been developed by each Directorate. These plans influence and guide the overall direction of travel for the organisation.

- Programme for Government 2024-2027
- Community Plan for Newry, Mourne and Down 2017-2030, Priority Action Areas and District Electoral Area (DEA) Action Plans
- Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Corporate Plan 2024-27
- Thematic plans and strategies, including the IT Strategy and Regeneration and Economic Development Strategy
- Annual Directorate Business Plans 2026-27

The Council has also taken into consideration performance information from the following sources to support the development of the performance improvement objectives:

- The Northern Ireland Audit Office Audit and Assessment Reports and 'proposals for improvement', which are currently being progressed
- The Assessment of Performance 2024-25, including progress against performance improvement objectives, measures of success within the Corporate Plan 2024-27 and statutory performance indicators and standards for economic development, planning and waste management.

The reasons for objectives being carried forward and/or amended are detailed in the table below:

PIO's -2025-26	PIO's 2026-27	Progress / Rationale	Status Proposed
PIO 1: We will improve the health and wellbeing of local people by improving our leisure facilities and services	PIO 1: We will improve the health and wellbeing of local people by improving our leisure facilities and services	During 2025-26 progress was made against a number of key actions under this objective including: • Increase in the number of paid attendances at some of Council's 6 main leisure centres. • Increase in the number of people participating in targeted health programmes. • Increase in the number of leisure centre memberships However, there is still improvements to be made, and the 2022 residents survey ranked 'Improving people's health and wellbeing (and reducing health inequalities) as a high priority for improving the local area.	Retain This performance improvement objective to be carried forward to 2026-27.
PIO 2: We will contribute to growing the economy by supporting local businesses and job creation	PIO 2: We will contribute to growing the economy by supporting local businesses, job creation and pathways to employment	During 2025-26 progress was made against a number of key actions including: • Number of business plans created for start-up businesses and employer enterprises. • Number of jobs promoted via business start-up activity. • Number of new enterprises created as a result of support However, there is still improvements to be made and there is a focus on pathways to employment going forward. The 2022 residents survey ranked 'improving skills, employability, and job prospects' and 'supporting local businesses, attracting investment and jobs' as the 1st and 3rd highest priorities for improving the local area.	Amend This performance improvement objective to be amended for 2026-27.

PIO 3: We will improve the cleanliness of our district by continuing to promote recycling and addressing littering, fly-tipping and dog fouling incidents	PIO 3: We will improve the cleanliness of our district by continuing to promote recycling and addressing littering, fly-tipping and dog fouling incidents	During 2025-26 progress was made against some key actions under this objective including: • Promoting responsible dog ownership through publicity campaigns and dog licences • Promoting the 'Live Here, Love Here' campaign through the funding of 10 environmental projects. However, improvement is still needed in a number of areas including increasing the Council's recycling rate and decreasing the level of municipal waste arising. The 2022 residents survey ranked 'dog mess and fouling' and rubbish or littering lying around' as the top two perceived problems in their local areas by residents.	Retain This performance improvement objective to be carried forward to 2026-27.
PIO 4: We will improve our sustainability by reducing our impacts in relation to climate change	PIO 4: We will reduce our contribution to climate change by cutting carbon emissions and improving the efficiency of our fleet and buildings	During 2025-26 progress was made against a number of key actions and measures including: • Establishing the carbon footprint of the Council Estate and • Establishing the Energy Consumption baseline for the Council Now that these have been established however, work will commence on ways to reduce these and work towards the Council's net zero obligations.	Amend This performance improvement objective to be amended for 2026-27.

Feedback from the consultation also highlighted the need for the objective to be more measurable and achievable, hence the amendment to the objective.			
PIO 5: We will improve the processing times of planning applications and enforcement cases by implementing the Planning Service Improvement Programme.	PIO 5: We will improve the processing times of planning applications and enforcement cases by implementing the Planning Service Improvement Programme	During 2025-26 progress continued to be made against a number of key actions including: • Working with agents and architects to improve the standard of planning applications submitted. • Supported employees to deliver service improvements through ongoing training, capacity building and 'planning surgeries'. • Increase in the percentage of enforcement cases concluded within 39 weeks. However, much improvement is still required as the statutory standards for the average processing times of major and local planning applications and enforcement cases is still not being met.	Retain This performance improvement objective to be carried forward to 2026-27

Community Plan for Newry, Mourne and Down

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The Community Plan has been developed and agreed by the Community Planning Partnership Board. Entitled 'Living Well Together', the Community Plan provides a framework for collaborative working to deliver positive change for our communities, and sets out the following long term overarching vision for the District:

'Newry, Mourne and Down is a place with strong, safe and vibrant communities where everyone has a good quality of life and access to opportunities, choices and high quality services which are sustainable, accessible and meet people's needs'.

The Community Plan sets out the following five positive outcomes:

Our Outcomes

These are the positive outcomes we all wish to see in our community.



Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Corporate Plan 2024-27

The Corporate Plan 2024-27 sets out the following mission statement and eight strategic objectives:

Council Mission Statement

'To deliver sustainable services and empower our communities through transparent governance and collaboration.'

Council Strategic Objectives

 Support the continued growth and development of our local economy	 Improve the health and wellbeing of everyone in the district
 Protect and enhance our environment to secure a sustainable future	 Support regenerative tourism opportunities which promote our culture, heritage and environment
 Empowering communities to play an active part in civic life	 Develop and revitalise our district
 Deliver sustainable services	 Represent the voice of the district with our partners

Alignment with the Strategic Aspects of Improvement

In accordance with the Local Government Act (NI) 2014, each performance improvement objective seeks to bring about improvement in at least one of the following aspects:

- Strategic effectiveness
- Service quality
- Service availability
- Fairness
- Sustainability
- Efficiency
- Innovation

The table below outlines how Newry, Mourne and Down District Council's performance improvement objectives 2026-27 are aligned with the seven specified aspects of improvement:

Performance Improvement Objective	Seven Aspects of Improvement						
	Strategic Effectiveness	Service Quality	Service Availability	Fairness	Sustainability	Efficiency	Innovation
We will support the health and wellbeing of local people by improving our leisure 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 reducing littering, fly tipping and dog fouling	✓		✓		✓		✓
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	✓	✓	✓			✓	

The Council has also assessed the performance improvement objectives against the following criteria, and considers them to be:

- Legitimate
- Clear
- Robust
- Deliverable
- Demonstrable

Equality Screening and Rural Needs Impact Assessment

In accordance with the Section 75 requirements of the Northern Ireland Act (1998), whereby the Council must carry out its functions having due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and regard for the desirability to promote good relations, the Performance Improvement Plan has been subject to an equality screening. The outcome of the equality screening process determined that the Performance Improvement Plan 2026-27 is not subject to an equality impact assessment, with no mitigating measures required.

In accordance with the Rural Needs Act Northern Ireland (2016), the Council has given due regard to rural needs by carrying out a Rural Needs Impact Assessment of the Performance Improvement Plan 2026-27.

Consultation and Engagement

The Council is committed to listening to local people and taking on board their views. Since 2017, the Council has carried out extensive consultation and engagement, inviting key stakeholders, including Elected Members, residents, local businesses and community planning partners to put forward their views on the proposed performance improvement objectives.

The Council website was host to the consultation and engagement process. Under the consultations section of the website, an electronic survey in relation to the draft performance improvement objectives 2026-27 was published and promoted. The consultation and engagement process was promoted further through the Council's social media channels and circulated to key internal and external stakeholders.

The overall consultation and engagement process resulted in 54 completed surveys and engagement with 68 stakeholders through the Crotlieve DEA Forum, Downpatrick DEA Forum, Mournes DEA Forum, Slieve Croob DEA Forum and Rowallane DEA Forum as well as Newry, Mourne and Down Youth Voice and Age Friendly Alliance. These responses have been supplemented by the input of 764 respondents to the Residents Survey in 2022.

Electronic documentation, survey on the draft performance improvement objectives 2026-27 on the consultation section of the Council website	Survey: 54 responses
Engagement with the: Section 75 groups, including Age Friendly Alliance and Newry, Mourne and Down Youth Voice	32 consultees
Engagement with: 5 DEAs across the District	36 members
Residents Survey (September 2022)	764 respondents

The consultation responses revealed support for the proposed performance improvement objectives, with the majority of respondents agreeing with each of the five objectives.

Agreement on Performance Improvement Objectives 2026-27



The areas for improvement and issues raised through the overall consultation and engagement processes are clearly aligned to the five performance improvement objectives 2026-27, and will be addressed through the Performance Improvement Plan, and as part of the Council's business planning process.

Achieving Continuous Improvement

Transforming and improving how the Council delivers services is a key objective within the Corporate Plan. Newry, Mourne and Down District Council is committed to developing a 'can do' culture, where managing performance and achieving improvement is everyone's responsibility. In pursuing the corporate vision and objectives, the Council has identified the following five core values:

What this means:	
Respect	We will demonstrate respect for all people in our attitudes, behaviours and working relationships.
Transparency	We will be transparent in how we make decisions.
Excellence	We will take pride in our work and be passionate about the standards we strive to achieve.
Integrity	We want the people of our district to trust us to do the right thing.
Accountability	We will be accountable to the public for our decisions and actions. We will be accountable for how we plan and use resources sustainably.

The Council has put in place a number of frameworks and systems to drive forward continuous improvement and facilitate a performance improvement culture. These include the Business Planning and Performance Management Framework, Policy Development Framework, Equality Scheme, Governance Framework and Risk Management Policy.

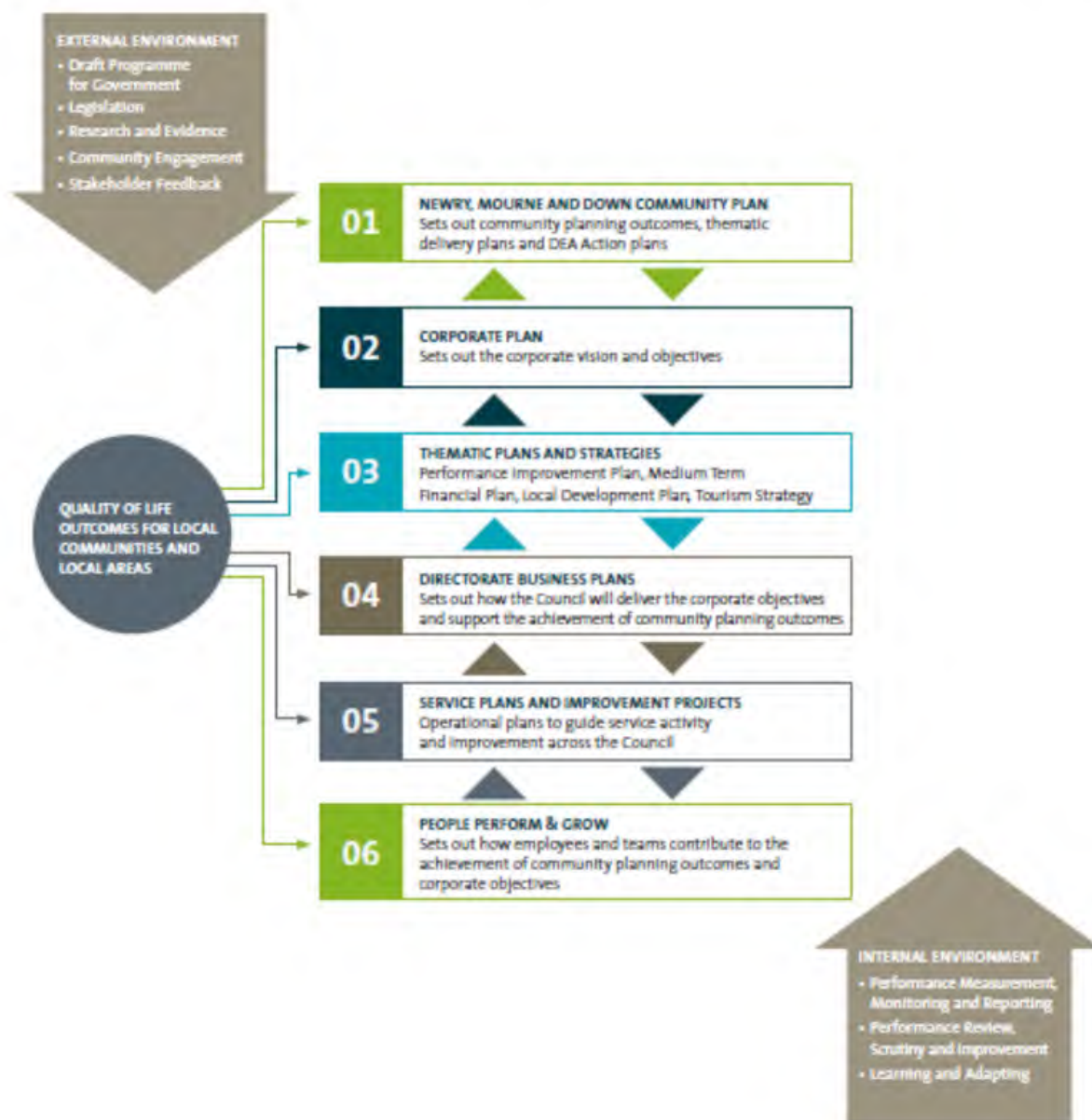
The Council also assesses how performance compares with other Councils. Newry, Mourne and Down District Council is working with the Association of Public Service Excellence to benchmark performance against the performance of Councils across Northern Ireland and other jurisdictions. This information is being used to collate a robust and reliable evidence base, to help identify and address future areas for improvement.

The Performance Improvement Plan underpins the Council's overall approach to effective performance management. It supports the Council in identifying more efficient and effective ways of working to facilitate the achievement of community planning outcomes, corporate objectives and Directorate objectives, which together support the continued implementation of the Business Planning and Performance Management Framework.

Business Planning and Performance Management Framework

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The Council's Business Planning and Performance Management Framework drives and provides assurance that community planning outcomes, corporate objectives and performance improvement objectives are being delivered, with the primary goal of making life better for our citizens.



The Community Plan and Corporate Plan sit within a hierarchy of plans that informs the Council's overall direction of travel and guides all activity within the organisation. Community planning outcomes and corporate objectives are cascaded across the organisation through thematic plans and strategies and Directorate Business Plans. Performance indicators continue to be developed at all levels across the Business Planning and Performance Management Framework, in order to ensure performance is measured, monitored and evaluated on a continuous basis.

During 2026-27, the Council will continue to progress and mainstream the development, implementation and review of Service Plans and roll out of Individual Performance (People Perform Grow), both of which seek to demonstrate the 'line of sight' between the work of employees and how they contribute to the achievement of community planning outcomes and corporate objectives.

Through the Business Planning and Performance Management Framework, the Council will manage performance at all levels across the organisation, in order to ensure the necessary steps are taken to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of functions. Each level of the Business Planning and Performance Management Framework is, and will be, accompanied by a relevant set of performance measures to monitor and assess the Council's progress in improving the quality of life for local communities.

The table below provides a description of the various plans and strategies that form part of the Council's Business Planning and Performance Management Framework.

Community Plan	The Community Plan for Newry, Mourne and Down sets out the long-term vision for improving the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the District. Developed in collaboration with partners across the statutory, business and voluntary sectors, the Community Plan is underpinned by Priority Actions Areas and seven DEA Action Plans, which seek to deliver the five community planning outcomes at a local level. Progress in implementing the Community Plan is reviewed on a biennial basis.
Corporate Plan	The Corporate Plan 2024-27 sets out the proposed vision, values and strategic objectives for the Council. Each strategic objective is underpinned by 'supporting actions' and 'measures of success'. Progress in delivering the Corporate Plan is reported annually through the Assessment of Performance.
Thematic Plans and Strategies	The Council has put in place a number of Thematic Plans and Strategies to support the implementation of the Community Plan and Corporate Plan, including the Performance Improvement Plan, Medium Term Financial Plan and Regeneration and Economic Development Strategy. These plans provide the strategic context for multiple programmes of work across the organisation.
Directorate Business Plans	Business Plans are developed annually to demonstrate how Directorates contribute to the achievement of community planning outcomes, corporate objectives and performance improvement objectives. Directorate Business Plans include suites of key performance measures to

	measure progress and drive continuous improvement, with performance being monitored and reviewed bi-annually by the relevant Committee.
Service Plans and Improvement Projects	Service Plans and Improvement Projects are operational and set out the direction for service areas across the Council. They outline how each service contributes to the delivery of community planning outcomes, corporate objectives and performance improvement objectives, include key performance measures and provide a mechanism to manage performance consistently across the organisation.
People Perform Grow	The Council recognises the significant role employees play in contributing to the achievement of the Community Plan, Corporate Plan, Thematic Plans and Strategies, Directorate Business Plans and Service Plans. People Perform Grow demonstrates the link between the work of employees and how they contribute to the achievement of key plans and strategies, as well as the outcomes experienced by local communities.

The Business Planning and Performance Management Framework is complemented by the integrated cycle of activity outlined in the diagram below.

Governance Arrangements

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Reviewing performance and reporting progress to Elected Members and other key stakeholders is very important, as it facilitates transparency, accountability and improvement in everything the Council does. The governance arrangements to develop, monitor, report and review the Council's progress in implementing the Performance Improvement Plan 2026-27 are outlined below:



The Council must publish an Assessment of Performance by 30 September 2026 which will provide an overview of how the Council has performed during 2025-26. The Assessment of Performance will be published on the Council's website and is supplemented by the Mid-Year Progress Report for the Performance Improvement Plan 2026-27.

The arrangements the Council has put in place to secure continuous improvement are subject to an annual audit and assessment by the Northern Ireland Audit Office. Subject to the General Duty of Improvement being met, the Northern Ireland Audit Office will issue a Letter of Assurance to both the Council and Department for Communities.

How to Propose New Performance Improvement Objectives

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Newry, Mourne and Down District Council welcomes your ongoing feedback on the performance improvement objectives 2026-27, as well as any suggestions you may have on how services can be improved in the future.

The Council can be contacted in the following ways:

In writing:

Head of Performance and Improvement
Newry, Mourne and Down District Council
O'Hagan House
Monaghan Row
Newry
Co Down
BT35 8DJ

Telephone: 0300 013 2233

Email: performance@nmandd.org



Ag freastal ar an Dún agus Ard Mhacha Theas Serving Down and South Armagh



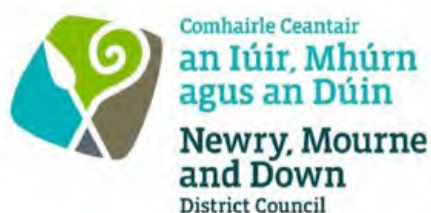
0330 137 4000 (Council)
council@nmandd.org
www.newrymournedown.org

Oifig an Iúir
Newry Office
O'Hagan House
Monaghan Row
Newry BT35 8DJ

Oifig Dhún Pádraig
Downpatrick Office
Downshire Civic Centre
Downshire Estate, Ardglass Road
Downpatrick BT30 6GQ

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council

Consultation and Engagement Report on the Performance Improvement Objectives 2026-27



Introduction

The Local Government Act (NI) 2014 sets out a General Duty of Improvement, whereby all District Councils must put in place arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of their functions and set performance improvement objectives for each financial year. Each Council also has a statutory duty to consult key stakeholders on the proposed performance improvement objectives.

The five draft performance improvement objectives were considered and approved by the Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee in February 2026. This was followed by an extensive consultation and engagement process which encouraged key stakeholders, including residents, Elected Members and partner organisations to have their say on the proposed performance improvement objectives.

This report provides an overview of the consultation and engagement methodology and an analysis of the responses which were received.

Consultation and Engagement Activity

Between 13 February – 17 April 2026, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council carried out a nine-week consultation and engagement process with key stakeholders on the draft performance improvement objectives 2026-27 through the following mechanisms:

- Electronic survey and documentation on the consultations section of the Council website, which was promoted through the Council's social media channels
- Public Notices in local newspapers
- Engagement with the following stakeholders:
 - Crotlieve DEA
 - Mournes DEA
 - Slieve Croob DEA
 - Downpatrick DEA
 - Rowallane DEA
 - Newry and Mourne and Down Youth Voice
 - Age Friendly Alliance

This process was further supplemented by the consultation and engagement which was carried out to support the development of the Corporate Plan 2024-27.

- Residents Survey (September 2022)
- Consultation and engagement on the Corporate Plan 2024-27 (March – May 2024)
- Consultation and engagement on the draft Performance Improvement Objectives 2025-26

Analysis Methodology

A total of 54 surveys were received in response to the consultation and engagement on the Council's draft performance improvement objectives 2026-27. Respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the draft performance improvement objectives and if they had any comments to make regarding each objective. Respondents were also asked to put forward their suggested priorities for future improvement.

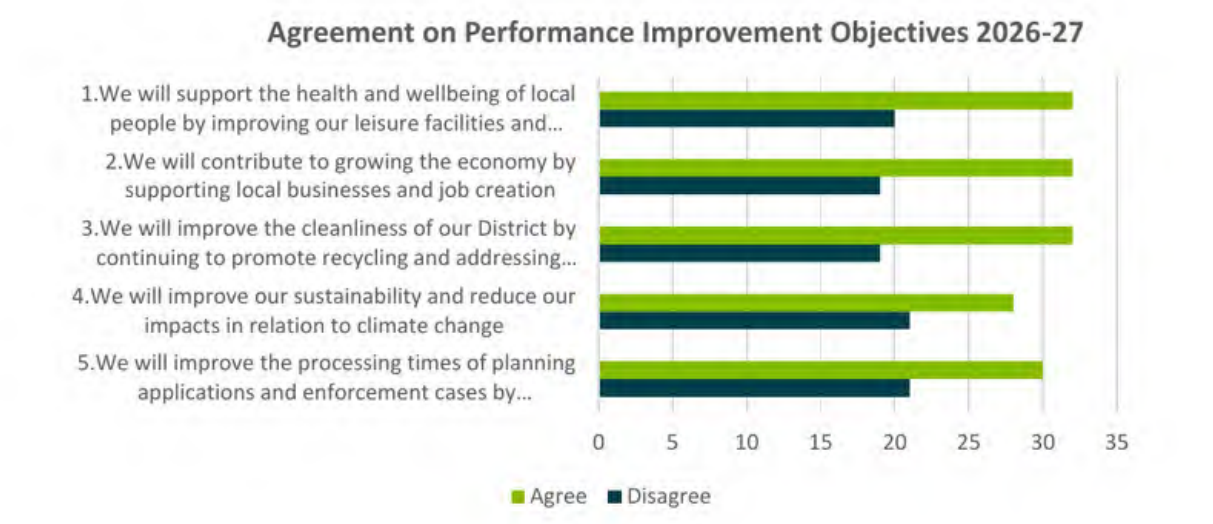
In carrying out the quantitative and qualitative consultation and engagement, a structured process was used to capture responses around each of the five draft performance improvement objectives 2026-27. This was supplemented by an engagement process with 68 key stakeholders, as outlined below:

Consultation and Engagement	Details
Mournes DEA Forum	10 participants – 24 March 2026
Crotlieve DEA Forum	11 participants – 14 March 2026
Downpatrick DEA Forum	7 participants – 14 April 2026
Rowallane DEA Forum	5 participants – 14 April 2026
Slieve Croob DEA Forum	3 participants – 24 February 2026
Age Friendly Alliance	15 participants – 27 February 2026
Newry and Mourne and Down Youth Voice	17 participants – 14 April 2026
Residents Survey (September 2022)	764 residents aged 16+ with quotas applied for age, gender, social class and District Electoral Area

Consultation and Engagement Findings

Analysis of Findings

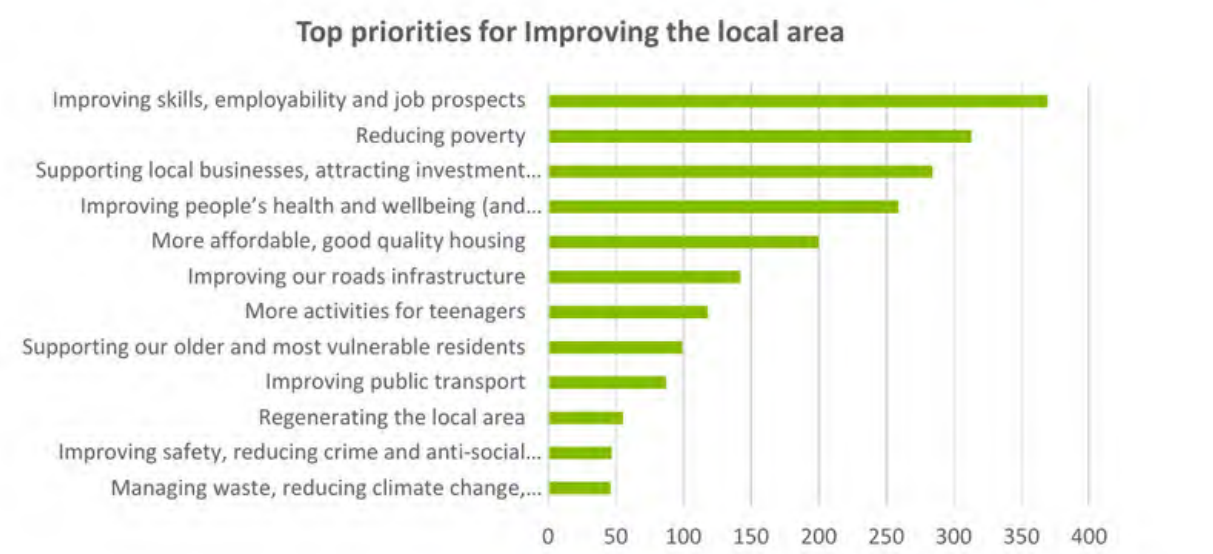
Responses to the draft performance improvement objectives 2026-27 have been received from residents, elected members, local community organisations, statutory organisations and others including those that work in and visit the district. There has been a positive response to the five proposed performance improvement objectives, with the majority of respondents agreeing with each objective.



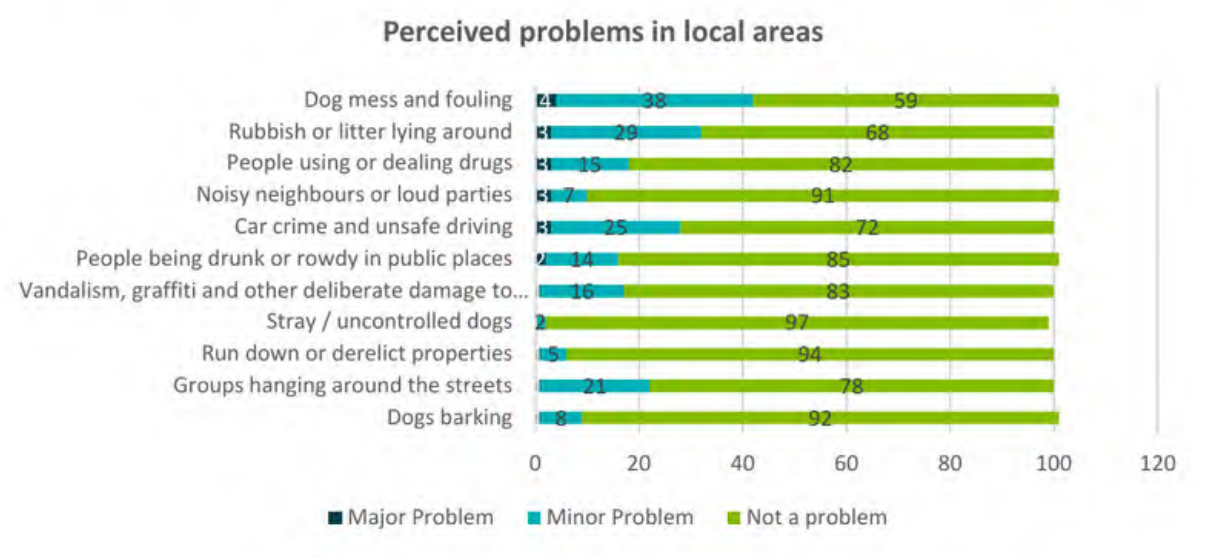
Residents Survey (2022)

These findings are further endorsed by the results of the Residents Survey which indicate that the performance improvement objectives broadly address the top improvements identified to make somewhere a good place to live.

- The local economy, health and wellbeing, housing, infrastructure, public transport, protecting the environment, climate change and managing waste are amongst the top priorities for improvement.
- Supporting communities, educational provision, accessible leisure centres, accessible arts centres/theatres and museums and opportunities for volunteering are amongst the lesser priorities for improvement.



These findings are further reinforced by the fact that residents identify dog mess and littering as the top perceived problems in the local area.



You Said, We Did - Overview of Consultation Feedback

Performance Improvement Objectives

An analysis of the consultation and engagement findings indicates that the issues raised will be addressed through the proposed 2026-27 performance improvement objectives, 'supporting actions' and 'measures of success', or as part of the Council's business planning process. An overview of the amendments and revisions that have been made to the performance improvement objectives, throughout the consultation and engagement process are highlighted below.

	You Said	We Listened	We Did
Consultation Survey	Survey layout is quite biased towards agreement of objectives and should be changed.	Council will review the consultation layout and present a different format for next year.	
We will support the health and wellbeing of local people by improving our			Included a new measure on 'Number of attendances

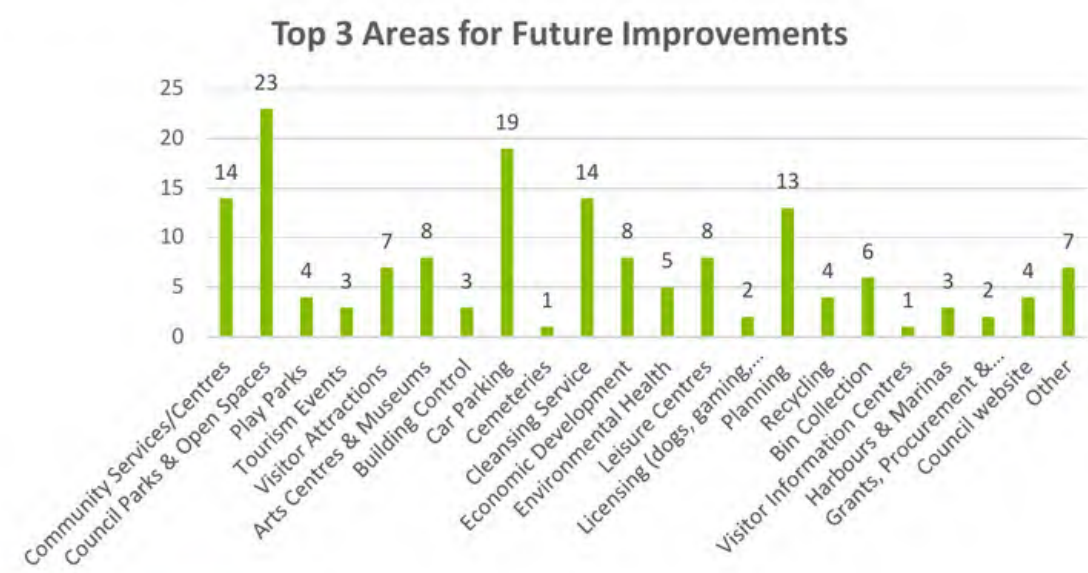
leisure facilities and services			recorded at Donard Park multisport hub' Included an action on working towards achieving disability accreditation at a Tier 1 site.
We will contribute to growing the economy by supporting business growth, job creation and pathways to employment			Targets for economic development programmes have been revised due to the reduction in the budget from DFI
We will improve the cleanliness of our District by continuing to promote recycling and addressing littering, fly tipping and dog fouling incidents	The target for supporting clean ups should be 100%.		To further address the issue of cleansing, the Council has included an action on the rollout of compactable street litter bins. An online dog fouling tool has also been developed. Target has been changed to 100%.

We will improve our sustainability and reduce our impacts in relation to climate change	'Again, too vague. How will this be achieved? What measurable steps will be taken?' 'Please state objectives in a way that this can be measured Meaningless, generalised statement.'		Council has set a target for the reduction of its carbon footprint. Council have now reviewed and amended this objective to make it clearer what we are trying to achieve and how we are going to achieve it.
We will improve the processing times of planning applications and enforcement cases by implementing the Planning Service Improvement Programme	'Applications for both minor and major developments take far too long,		Council will review its Enforcement Strategy In conjunction with DFI, the Council will explore the development of a training programme for staff and members as part of the Council's performance improvement programme. Council have now introduced a validation checklist to improve the

	often exceeding reasonable timeframes.'		processing times of validating applications and have set a target of 6 weeks.
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Suggested Areas for Improvement

As part of the survey, and similar to previous years, respondents were asked to put forward their suggested areas for improvement. 'Council parks and open spaces', 'Car Parking', 'Community Services/Centres' and 'Cleansing Services' are the top priorities for improvement in 2026-27.



Next Steps

Based on the feedback obtained through the consultation and engagement process, as well as the ongoing developmental work around each performance improvement objective 2026-27, there has been an amendment to the climate change and sustainability objective as well as changes to a number of 'supporting actions' and 'measures of success', as outlined in the Performance Improvement Plan 2026-27.

The Consultation and Engagement report will be published on the Council's website by 30 June 2026, alongside the Performance Improvement Plan 2026-27. It will also be circulated to key stakeholders to support the business planning process.

A summary of the consultation and engagement feedback is provided below.

Summary of Consultation and Engagement Feedback

Performance Improvement Objective 1

- Strong dissatisfaction with perceived ineffectiveness and delays (e.g. Newry pool reopening), and lack of progress on long-promised projects like Warrenpoint Baths and the Newry park.
- Particular frustration that places like Warrenpoint lack basic amenities such as a community centre, despite smaller areas having them.
- Existing leisure centres, parks, trails, and attractions are not being properly maintained, with closures and deterioration risking reduced visitor numbers and revenue.
- A lack of facilities and activities for young people—especially beyond traditional sports—as well as a call to cater for all age groups, not just families with children.
- Mixed views on whether leisure services should be publicly funded, with some arguing they should be left to the private sector.
- Concerns that poor transport links and accessibility barriers prevent people, particularly those with disabilities, from using leisure facilities.
- Perception that areas like Newry are deteriorating (e.g. potholes, lack of attractions), with calls for investment to boost footfall, economic activity, and community wellbeing.

Performance Improvement Objective 2

- Frustration that there are too many vape shops, nail bars, and similar businesses, with calls for better checks and more support for genuine local businesses.
- Views that excessive regulation and costs (e.g. National Insurance increases) are harming employers, leading to job losses and reduced business activity.
- Many feel economic development should sit with central government, questioning why the council is involved and how rates are being spent.
- Strong perception that Newry is deteriorating, with empty buildings, poor cleanliness, and lack of investment making it unattractive for businesses and visitors.
- Concerns that developments like the Newry Civic Centre could negatively impact the city, and that external contractors are used instead of local firms.
- Calls for initiatives such as a nighttime economy strategy, attracting independent retailers and multinationals, improving tourism infrastructure, and increasing footfall.

- Support for bringing derelict buildings back into use, improving infrastructure, and focusing council spending on visible benefits for local ratepayers and job creation.

Performance Improvement Objective 3

- Give 100% as a target for community clean ups
- Advertise what the Council can provide for community groups in terms of clean ups.
- More frequent road sweeping, drain clearing, and general maintenance of public spaces is needed.
- Hire more cleansing staff, improve productivity of existing workers, and better advertise vacancies.
- Roadsides, rural areas, and key routes are heavily affected by rubbish, including fly-tipping and waste from local businesses.
- Lack of action on dog fouling and fly-tipping, with calls for stricter monitoring, enforcement and prosecution.
- Public toilets, amenity sites, and key roads are poorly maintained or inadequate.
- Dirty streets and littered landscapes harm the area's appeal compared to neighbouring regions.
- Greater investment, community pride and cross-border collaboration to address litter, waterways, and biodiversity issues.

Performance Improvement Objective 4

- Some view climate change initiatives as ineffective, politically driven, or a misuse of public funds.
- Fears that sustainability measures (e.g., Net Zero) will place financial strain on households.
- Doubts about the council's ability to deliver meaningful or effective climate action.
- Perceived contradiction in supporting sustainability while allowing waste-related activities (e.g., Re-Gen operations).
- Feedback that plans are too vague, with calls for tangible solutions like better public transport and cycling infrastructure.
- Support for climate initiatives if they are realistic, sensible, and cost-effective.

Performance Improvement Objective 5

- Bat survey issues and biodiversity issues that are being requested to be carried out has significantly increased the financial implications of submitting an application. These surveys /issues used to be at the discretion of the planning officer and now they appear to be mandatory.
- The whole system needs to be looked at. Blanket approach to planning.
- Applications for both minor and major developments take far too long, often exceeding reasonable timeframes.
- Decisions appear inconsistent, with unclear or shifting requirements and poor communication throughout the process.
- Strong criticism of the council's track record, with doubts about its ability to improve or deliver effectively.
- Calls for earlier clarification of issues, and faster handling of straightforward applications.
- Concerns that existing infrastructure (e.g., water systems) cannot support development, and that enforcement and decision-making need to be stronger and more effective.

Other comments

- Re-do consultation form to make it less biased – hard to disagree.
- Strong demand to focus on roads, healthcare, housing, rivers, and essential services rather than broader or global issues.
- Widespread perception that money is being wasted on "vanity projects" instead of practical improvements residents value.
- Residents want reduced rates bills, and clearer evidence of value for money.
- Significant dissatisfaction with council leadership, including calls for accountability and leadership change.
- Support for parks, cycling paths, improved public transport, and refurbishment of existing assets over new developments.
- Strong desire for the council to listen more closely to residents and reflect their priorities in decision-making.
- Need for better support for rural areas, improved connectivity, and more services for vulnerable groups, including people with disabilities.

Other improvements

- Strong demand to fix roads, improve waste collection, maintain waterways, and address flood management issues.
- Criticism of “vanity projects” (e.g., civic buildings, gondolas) and calls to reduce costs, reuse existing buildings, and lower rates.
- Ongoing issues with litter, poor maintenance, and lack of green spaces, including calls for more parks and better upkeep of public areas.
- Residents want meaningful consultation, clearer communication, and more openness in decision-making processes.
- Need for affordable, reliable public transport and better connectivity, especially for non-drivers and people with additional needs.
- Greater emphasis on local needs, including community events, inclusive services, and balanced investment across all areas.
- Calls to reduce political influence, improve leadership accountability, and ensure decisions reflect the priorities and consent of local residents.

Objective Delivery Plans 2026-27

Delivery Plans have been developed to demonstrate the arrangements which have been put in place to support the effective implementation of each performance improvement objective. They provide an overview of:

- Responsible Officers
- Alignment with the Community Plan and Draft Corporate Plan
- Governance arrangements for the Performance Improvement Plan
- Meeting the seven legislative criteria
- 'Supporting actions' and 'measures of success'
- Links to existing plans and strategies
- Resources
- Governance arrangements

In recognition of the dynamic nature of the information included within the Objective Delivery Plans, they should be considered as a 'work in progress', subject to change to a continuous basis.

Performance Improvement Objective 1

We will improve the health and wellbeing of local people by improving our leisure facilities and services					
Responsible Officers	Director: Activity and Healthy Communities Assistant Director: Leisure and Sport				
Link to Community Plan	All people in Newry, Mourne and Down enjoy good health and wellbeing	Link to Corporate Plan 2024-27	Improve the health and wellbeing of everyone in the District		
Governance: Performance Improvement Plan 2026-27	- Mid Year Progress Report of the Performance Improvement Plan 2026-27 to the Senior Management Team, Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee and Audit Committee. - Annual Assessment of Performance to the Senior Management Team, Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee and Audit Committee.				
Meeting the legislative criteria	Strategic Effectiveness: Aligned to community planning outcomes and corporate objectives. Achieving this objective will deliver real benefits and outcomes for local communities and other key stakeholders. Service Quality: The quality of services will continue to improve through the planned increase in the number and variety of classes being offered, as well as health promotions taking place. Service Availability: The continued progression and delivery of Council leisure projects will improve access to and availability of key leisure services and contribute towards the improvement of people’s health and wellbeing. Fairness: Includes opportunities for people across Section 75 categories to access the Council’s leisure centres.				
What we are going to do					
Supporting Action	Link to existing Plan/Strategy	Measures of Success	Resources	Governance Arrangements	Responsible Officers
Progress the leisure projects agreed within the capital programme	AHC Business Plan 2026-27 Capital Works Programme	7 new build and/or upgraded capital projects progressed in 2026-27	Amount agreed under the capital plan.	Annual and bi-annual assessments of the AHC Business Plan 2026-27 Ongoing monitoring of projects within the Capital Plan	Assistant Director Healthy Living Assistant Director Capital and Procurement
Sustain the number of paid attendances at indoor leisure facilities	AHC Business Plan 2026-27	Target set at 898,000 across the 6 leisure sites for 2026-27	Within the resources of the AHC Directorate	Annual and bi-annual assessments of the AHC Business Plan 2026-27	Assistant Director Healthy Living Head of Indoor Leisure

Continue to deliver a range of targeted, sustainable health programmes to encourage participation in physical activity.	AHC Business Plan 2026-27	Target of 16,500 people to be participating in targeted health programmes	In partnership with the Southern and South Eastern Health Trusts	Annual and bi-annual assessments of the AHC Business Plan 2026-27 Reporting back to Health Trusts	Assistant Director Healthy Living Head of Indoor Leisure Sports Development Officer
Provide funding through financial assistance for capital projects for sports clubs.	AHC Business Plan 2026-27 Healthy Living Service Plan	Target of £225,000 allocated to sports clubs across the District	Within the resources of the AHC Directorate	Annual and bi-annual assessments of the AHC Business Plan and Service Plan 2026-27	Assistant Director Healthy Living Head of Programmes
Upgrade a number of play parks across the District	AHC Business 2026-27 Healthy Living Service Plan	Target of 2 play parks to be upgraded	Within the resources of the AHC Directorate	Annual and bi-annual assessments of the AHC Business Plan and Service Plan 2026-27	Assistant Director: Healthy Living Head of Outdoor Leisure
Work towards achieving disability accreditation across identified tier 1 sites	AHC Business Plan 2026-27 Healthy Living Service Plan	Disability accreditation at a tier 1 site achieved	Within the resources of the AHC Directorate	Annual and bi-annual assessments of the AHC Business Plan and Service Plan 2026-27	Assistant Director: Healthy Living Head of Indoor Leisure
Continue to monitor customer satisfaction	AHC Business Plan 2026-27	Customer satisfaction monitored	Within the resources of the AHC Directorate	Annual and bi-annual assessments of the AHC Business	Assistant Director: Healthy Living

	Healthy Living Service Plan			Plan and Service Plan 2026-27	Head of Indoor Leisure
Record usage of Donard Park Multisport Hub	AHC Business Plan 2026-27 Healthy Living Service Plan	Target of 30,000 recorded visits to Donard Park Multisport Hub			
Risk Management					
Risks		Actions to Mitigate Risks			
Leisure facilities do not achieve the projected paid attendance levels		Targeted promotional and publicity campaigns including online campaigns are being carried out.			
Targeted groups do not engage in physical activity programmes		Programmes are managed, monitored and publicised effectively across the District.			
Capital Projects do not go ahead		Budgets have been set to include the leisure centre capital projects.			

Performance Improvement Objective 2

We will contribute to growing the economy by supporting local businesses, job creation and pathways to employment					
Senior Responsible Officer	Director: Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Assistant Director: Economy, Growth and Tourism				
Link to Community Plan	All people in Newry, Mourne and Down benefit from prosperous communities	Link to Corporate Plan 2024-27	Support the continued growth and development of our local economy		
Governance: Performance Improvement Plan 2026-27	- Mid Year Progress Report of the Performance Improvement Plan 2026-27 to the Senior Management Team, Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee and Audit Committee. - Annual Assessment of Performance to the Senior Management Team, Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee and Audit Committee.				
Meeting the legislative criteria	Strategic Effectiveness: Aligned to community planning outcomes and corporate objectives, and will deliver tangible benefits to citizens, local businesses and social enterprises. Service Quality: The quality of services available to businesses and stakeholders will improve through the broad range of economic development programmes available. Service Availability: The continued roll-out of programmes to businesses, social enterprises and fishing dependent communities will improve access to and availability of key services, as well as the overall quality of life in the District. Innovation: Implicit within this objective are innovative, forward looking ways to promote / create new jobs and support businesses / social enterprises across the District.				
What we are going to do					
Supporting Action	Link to Thematic Plan/Strategy	Measures of Success	Resources	Governance Arrangements	Responsible Officers
Support the creation of new businesses, support existing businesses, and promote new jobs through the new 'Go Succeed' programme	Corporate Plan 2024-27 Regeneration and Economic Development Strategy 2020-25 ERT Business Plan 2026-27	Number of participants engaged across all 'Go Succeed' activities Number of business plans created for start-up businesses and employer enterprises	NMD contribution: £168k Regional programme led by Belfast City Council	Monthly meetings of the regional Management Team Annual and bi-annual assessments of the ERT Business Plan 2026-27	Assistant Director: Economy, Growth and Tourism Head of Regeneration and Business Development

	EGT Service Plan 2026-27	Number of new jobs promoted through business start-up activity Number of new enterprises created as a result of support Number of existing businesses supported to progress growth and scaling ambitions			
Invest in the social economy through the Social Enterprise programme		Number of social enterprise start ups supported Number of social enterprise jobs created	Social Enterprise Programme: £51k	Quarterly meetings with Newry Enterprise Agency Annual and bi-annual assessments of the ERT Business Plan 2026-27	Assistant Director: Economy, Growth and Tourism Head of Regeneration and Business Development Enterprise Development Officers
Invest in employability and skills through the implementation of the LMP Action Plan.	ERT Business Plan 2026-27 EFT Service Plan 2026-27	Implementation of the LMP Action Plan	Waiting on Letter of Offer for 2026-27	Annual and bi-annual assessments of the ERT Business Plan 2026-27	Assistant Director: Economy, Growth and Tourism Head of Regeneration and Business Development
Invest in the creation of good jobs, productivity growth, decarbonization and regional balance through the	ERT Business Plan 2026-27 EFT Service Plan 2026-27	Implementation of a Local Economic Partnership Action Plan	Within NMD Resources	Annual and bi-annual assessments of the ERT Business Plan 2026-27	Assistant Director: Economy, Growth and Tourism

implementation of a Local Economic Partnership action plan.					Head of Regeneration and Business Development
Directly supporting participants on employment pathway initiatives.	ERT Business Plan 2026-27 EFT Service Plan 2026-27	Number of participants directly supported on employment pathway initiatives	Within NMD Resources	Annual and bi-annual assessments of the ERT Business Plan 2026-27	Assistant Director: Economy, Growth and Tourism Head of Regeneration and Business Development
Risk Management					
Risks		Actions and Controls to Mitigate Against Risks			
Failure to deliver the economic development programmes to support the economic recovery of the District		All programmes to be in place with robust management and governance arrangements.			
The impact of reduced funding from Central Government on delivering the various economic development programmes and achieving targets		Ongoing discussions and engagement with Central Government as well as monitoring of key influences and economic development support adjusted to meet local demand and Council resources.			
Lack of interest in and applications made to participate in programmes		Publicity campaigns delivered through online and social media platforms. Signposting service in place.			

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.					
Senior Responsible Officer	Director: Sustainability and Environment Assistant Directors: Environment / Sustainability				
Link to Community Plan	All people in Newry, Mourne and Down benefit from prosperous communities	Link to Corporate Plan 2024-27	Protect and enhance our environment to secure a sustainable future		
Governance: Performance Improvement Plan 2026-27	- Mid Year Progress Report of the Performance Improvement Plan 2026-27 to the Senior Management Team, Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee and Audit Committee - Annual Assessment of Performance to the Senior Management Team, Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee and Audit Committee				
Meeting the legislative criteria	Strategic Effectiveness: Aligned to community planning outcomes and corporate objectives and will deliver real benefits and outcomes to local citizens. Service Availability: The availability of key services will improve, through support for community led initiatives and access to funding through 'Live Here Love Here' campaigns. Innovation: The Council has introduced innovative ways to improve civic and community pride across the District, as evidenced through support for Community Clean ups, Enforcement Improvement Plan, continued engagement with Keep NI Beautiful and the development of mobile apps to report and record environmental crime, identify emerging issues and address 'hotspots' across the District. Sustainability: Initiatives to encourage public participation in key campaigns, promote responsible dog ownership and reduce levels of littering, fly tipping and dog fouling will empower residents and support the delivery of a more sustainable service and cleaner District in the future.				
What we are going to do					
Supporting Action	Link to Thematic Plan/Strategy	Measure of Success	Resources	Governance Arrangements	Responsible Officers
Address issues around littering, fly tipping and dog fouling by:	Corporate Plan 2024-27	Number of fixed penalty notices issued (littering and dog fouling)	Within existing resources	Annual and bi-annual assessments of the Sustainability and Environment Directorate Business Plan 2026-27	Assistant Director: Environment
	Enforcement Action Plan	Number of fixed penalty notices paid (littering and dog fouling)		Ongoing assessments of the Dog Fouling Strategy and	Head of Waste Processing
Reviewing and implementing the Enforcement Improvement Plan	Sustainability and Environment Directorate Business Plan 2025-26				Head of Waste Management

Promoting responsible dog ownership through publicity and social media campaigns Embedding the new online reporting tool for dog fouling Continuing to implement the rollout of compactable street litter bins Working with Louth County Council to raise awareness of the impact of fly tipping along the border area Encouraging residents to bring properly sorted surplus recyclable waste to our Household Recycling Centres	Environment Service Plan 2025-26	Percentage of issued fixed penalty notices that are paid The percentage of household waste collected by District Councils that is sent for recycling The amount of biodegradable Local Authority Collected Municipal Waste that is landfilled The amount of Local Authority Collected Municipal Waste arisings		Enforcement Action Plan	
Continued implementation of a Paint Re-Use Scheme at a further 2 Household Recycling Centres	SE Directorate Business Plan 2026-27 Environment Service Plan 2026-27	Reduction in the disposal of paint from our Household Recycling Centre sites.	Within existing resources	Annual and bi-annual assessments of the SE Directorate Business & Service Plan 2026-27	Assistant Director: Environment Head of Waste Processing
Support local community clean ups, Participate in the Keep NI Beautiful 'Live Here Love Here' campaign	Sustainability & Directorate Business Plan 2026-27	100% of community clean up requests supported	Within existing resources	Annual and bi-annual assessments of the SE Directorate Business & Service Plan 2026-27	Assistant Director: Sustainability Head of Sustainability

Encourage community groups to 'Adopt a Spot'	Environment Service Plan 2026-27	Number of 'Live Here Love Here' environmental projects Number of community groups to 'Adopt a Spot'			
Implementing a new system to determine levels of street cleanliness and identify emerging issues and hotspots.	SE Directorate Business Plan 2026-27	A system has been identified for carrying out cleanliness inspections Work commenced in relation to littering and the marine environment	Within existing resources	Annual and bi-annual assessments of the SE Directorate Business & Service Plan 2026-27	Assistant Director: Environment Head of Waste Processing
Highlight the impact of littering on the marine environment	Environment Service Plan	New compactable bins installed across areas of the District			
Increased awareness of environmental messaging including recycling, dog fouling and littering.	SE Directorate Business Plan 2026-27 Environment Service Plan	A number of bin lorries painted with environmental and recycling messages to carry out bin collections	Within existing resources	Annual and bi-annual assessments of the SE Directorate Business & Service Plan 2026-27	Assistant Director: Environment Head of Waste Processing
Risk Management					
Risks			Actions to Mitigate Against Risks		
Stakeholders do not get involved in community clean up's and 'Live Here Love Here' campaigns			All initiatives are promoted and publicised across the District, through social media, website, liaison with Council employees and word of mouth.		
Failure to improve the level of street cleanliness and reduce the level of littering, dog fouling and fly tipping			The Council has several initiatives in place to encourage civic pride in the local area, promote responsible dog ownership, report littering and use enforcement action. Council has now identified a cleanliness monitoring systems due to lack of data from the LEAMS survey and will be looking to implement that this year.		
Failure to achieve the statutory targets for waste management			Programmes are in place to increase the rate of recycling and reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill.		

Performance Improvement Objective 4

We will reduce our contribution to climate change by cutting our carbon emissions and improving the efficiency of our fleet and buildings.					
Senior Responsible Officer	Director: Sustainability and Environment Assistant Director: Sustainability				
Link to Community Plan	All people in Newry, Mourne and Down benefit from a clean, quality and sustainable environment	Link to Corporate Plan 2024-27	Protect and enhance our environment to secure a sustainable future		
Governance: Performance Improvement Plan 2026-27	Mid Year Progress Report of the Performance Improvement Plan 2026-27 to the Senior Management Team, Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee and Audit Committee				
Meeting the legislative criteria	Strategic Effectiveness: Aligned to community planning outcomes and corporate objectives and will deliver real benefits and outcomes to citizens. Efficiency: The procurement and availability of younger, less polluting cars as well as cars with alternative fuel sources will provide a more efficient and effective service to our customers as well as working towards protecting our environment. Innovation: Innovative mechanisms to allow more people access electric cars by providing more electric charging points will hopefully assist in the increase of cars with alternative fuel sources Sustainability: Implementing the Council's fleet replacement programme to ensure younger, less polluting cars as well as cars with alternative fuel sources are within our fleet which allows for the delivery of a more sustainable service across the District.				
What we are going to do					
Supporting Action	Link to Thematic Plan/Strategy	Measure of Success	Resources	Governance Arrangements	Responsible Officers

Continue the implementation of the Council's Fleet Replacement Program	Sustainability and Environment Directorate Business Plans 2026-27 Sustainability Service Plan 2026-27	% of Council fleet younger than 8 years Number of electric vehicles in the Council fleet	Within existing resources	Annual and Bi-annual assessment of the SE Directorate Business Plan & Service Plans 2026-27 Reports considered and approved by the SE Committee	Director: Sustainability and Environment Assistant Director: Sustainability
Publication of the following strategies and plans: - Climate change and sustainable development strategy - Climate Change Adaptation Plan	Sustainability and Environment Directorate Business Plans 2026-27 Sustainability Service Plan 2026-27	All strategies and plans published		Annual and Bi-annual assessments of the SE Directorate Business Plan & Service Plans 2026-27 Reports considered and approved by the SE Committee	Director: Sustainability and Environment Assistant Director: Sustainability
Support the continued implementation of Electric Vehicle (EV) charging points	Sustainability and Environment Directorate Business Plans 2026-27 Sustainability Service Plan 2026-27	Number of Council supported EV charging points		Annual and Bi-annual assessments of the SE Directorate Business Plan & Service Plans 2026-27 Reports considered and approved by the SE Committee	Assistant Director: Sustainability
Undertaking the annual assessment of the Council's carbon footprint and renewable energy output	Sustainability and Environment Directorate Business Plans 2026-27 Sustainability Service Plan 2026-27	Baselines established and increase / reduction achieved		Annual and Bi-annual assessments of the SE Directorate Business Plan & Service Plans 2026-27	Director: Sustainability and Environment Assistant Director: Sustainability

				Reports considered and approved by the SE Committee	
Risk Management					
Risks			Actions to Mitigate Against Risks		
Delivery issues with vehicles ordered			Getting approval for vehicles in time and ordering early to mitigate against time delays on delivery		
Too many plans and strategies to be complete and not getting done on time			Timetabling the process and adding additional resources when required.		
Carbon footprint and energy baselines not improving			Implementing agreed actions and measures within the climate change strategy and action plan		

WORK IN PROGRESS

Performance Improvement Objective 5

We will improve the processing times of planning applications and enforcement cases by implementing the Planning Service Improvement Programme					
Senior Responsible Officer	Director: Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Assistant Director: Regeneration Chief Planner				
Link to Community Plan	All people in Newry, Mourne and Down benefit from prosperous communities	Link to Corporate Plan 2024-27	Deliver sustainable services		
Governance: Performance Improvement Plan 2026-27	- Mid Year Progress Report of the Performance Improvement Plan 2026-27 to the Senior Management Team, Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee and Audit Committee - Annual Assessment of Performance 2025-26 to the Senior Management Team, Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee and Audit Committee				
Meeting the legislative criteria	Strategic Effectiveness: Aligned to community planning outcomes and corporate objectives and will deliver real benefits to citizens. Service Quality: The implementation of the Planning Service Improvement Programme and the new planning portal has, and will continue to improve the quality of the service provided by reducing the processing times of applications. Service Availability: Improved availability of the Planning Service, focused on reducing processing times, will contribute to the sustainable development of Newry, Mourne and Down. Efficiency: The purpose of the Planning Service Improvement Programme is to improve the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the service, by seeking to make better use of the resources available.				
What we are going to do					
Supporting Action	Link to Thematic Plan/Strategy	Measure of Success	Resources	Governance Arrangements	Responsible Officers
Reduce the number of live planning applications and enforcement cases which have been in the system for over 12 months	ERT Business Plan 2026-27 Regeneration Service Plan 2026-27	Average processing time for local planning applications (weeks) Average processing time of major planning applications (weeks)	Within existing resources	Annual and bi-annual assessments of the ERT Business Plan & Service Plans 2026-27	Assistant Director: Regeneration Chief Planner
Reduce the average processing time for		Percentage of planning enforcement cases			

validating application forms through the introduction of a validation checklist Work with agents and architects to improve the standard of planning applications submitted Support employees to deliver service improvements through ongoing training, capacity building and 'planning surgeries'		progressed within 39 weeks Number of planning applications in the system for 12 months or more Number of planning applications in the system for less than 12 months Number of enforcement cases in the system 12 months or more Average processing time for validating application forms			
Review and consult on representations made during the consultation period after the launch of the Draft Plan Strategy.	ERT Business Plan 2026-27 Regeneration Service Plan 2026-27	Revised Draft Plan Strategy	Within existing resources	Annual and bi-annual assessments of the ERT Business Plan & Service Plans 2026-27	Assistant Director: Regeneration
Explore the development of a training programme for staff and members in collaboration with the Department of Infrastructure (DfI) as part of the Council's performance	ERT Business Plan 2026-27 Regeneration Service Plan 2026-27	A new training programme developed for staff and members	In collaboration with DfI	Annual and bi-annual assessments of the ERT Business Plan & Service Plans 2026-27	Assistant Director: Regeneration

improvement programme for planning.					
Risks Management					
Risks			Actions to Mitigate the Risks		
Failure to meet the statutory performance standards for processing planning applications, enforcement cases.			The Planning Service Improvement Programme outlines the key areas for improvement, with progress being monitored and reported on a regular basis.		
The Council does not reduce the number of live planning applications and enforcement cases in the system			The Planning Service Improvement Programme outlines the key areas for improvement, with progress being monitored and reported on a regular basis.		

WORK IN PROGRESS

Report to:	Audit Committee
Date of Meeting:	30 July 2026
Subject:	Directorate Risk Register - AHC
Reporting Officer (Including Job Title):	Andy Patterson, Director AHC
Contact Officer (Including Job Title):	Andy Patterson, Director AHC

Confirm how this Report should be treated by placing an x in either:-

For decision	For noting only	X
1.0	Purpose and Background	
1.1	The Risk Reporting section of the Risk Strategy states that Directorate Risk Registers will be presented to the Audit Committee on a rotational basis. The Risk Register summary for the Active and Healthy Communities Directorate is attached at Appendix 1. The Risk Register was reviewed and updated with the Assistant Directors and AHC Director in May 2026.	
2.0	Key issues	
2.1	Within the AHC Directorate Risk Register, 6 risks have been identified. The 6 risks have an amber residual risk rating. These risks cover a range of service areas and functions. The AHC Risk Register is updated quarterly by the AHC Directorate Management Team and considered by the Audit Committee annually.	
3.0	Recommendations	
3.1	To note the revised AHC Directorate Risk Register summary at Appendix 1 and detailed AHC Directorate Risk Register at appendix 2.	
4.0	Resource implications	
4.1	There are no resource implications.	
5.0	Due regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations (complete the relevant sections)	
5.1	<i>General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes</i> It is not anticipated the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations	



5.2	<i>Proposal relates to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision</i> Yes ☐ No ☒ If yes, please complete the following: The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) has been equality screened ☐ The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) will be subject to equality screening prior to implementation ☐
5.3	<i>Proposal initiating consultation – N/a</i> Consultation will seek the views of those directly affected by the proposal, address barriers for particular Section 75 equality categories to participate and allow adequate time for groups to consult amongst themselves ☐
	Consultation period will be 12 weeks ☐ Consultation period will be less than 12 weeks (rationale to be provided) ☐ <i>Rationale:</i> Consultation not required.
6.0	Due regard to Rural Needs (please tick all that apply)
6.1	Proposal relates to developing, adopting, implementing or revising a policy / strategy / plan / designing and/or delivering a public service Yes ☐ No ☒ If yes, please complete the following: Rural Needs Impact Assessment completed ☐
7.0	Appendices
	Appendix 1: Summary Sheet – AHC Directorate Risk Register – May 2026 Appendix 2: AHC Directorate Risk Register – May 2026
8.0	Background Documents
	None

NMDDC AHC Risk Register Cover Sheet - May 2026

Risk	Description	Risk Owner(s)	Gross Risk Score	Jan-26	May-26		Comments
				Revised Residual Risk Score	Revised Residual Risk Score		
AHC01	Failure to comply with relevant statutory and legislative requirements in AHC Council facilities	Andy Patterson Alison Robb Conor Haughey	25	15	15	↔	Risk score remains unchanged. Actions have been updated.
AHC02	Fraud, theft and mismanagement of money, property and assets	Andy Patterson Alison Robb Conor Haughey	20	12	12	↔	Risk score remains unchanged. Actions have been updated.
AHC03	Failure to enforce and comply with legislative requirements and statutory functions	Andy Patterson Alison Robb Conor Haughey	25	16	16	↔	Residual risk remains unchanged - actions have been updated.
AHC04	Reduction in funding and/or income has an impact on service delivery	Andy Patterson Alison Robb Conor Haughey	20	16	16	↔	Residual risk remains unchanged - actions have been updated.
AHC05	Failure to safeguard children/adults from the risk of harm including failing to comply with our statutory responsibilities	Andy Patterson Conor Haughey Gary Scott	25	12	12	↔	Residual risk remains unchanged - actions have been updated.
AHC06	Reduced participation in Community Engagement Programmes may have a negative impact on community cohesion across the District.	Andy Patterson Alison Robb	20	12	12	↔	Residual risk remains unchanged - actions have been updated.

Risk

01. Failure to comply with relevant statutory and legislative requirements in AHC Council facilities

Consequence	5			R		G	Risk Categories Business operational/reputational Impact on individuals (staff or public) Statutory Duty (Legal/Regulatory) Risk Description This can include community centres / outstations / leisure centres (including swimming pools) / pitch facilities Potential Root Cause Inadequate safety arrangements and non compliance with statutory requirements - eg fire, legionella and asbestos Lone working Lack of training / failure to follow operating procedures Confrontation with public / threat of violence / aggression Lack of supervision Lack of awareness of policy and procedures Lack of awareness/knowledge of the environment Vehicle accident Unforeseen event, eg. drowning Consequence Impact of death/injury on those involved and employees Reputational damage for the Council Negative PR Services not being delivered if Council facilities are closed for a period of time Non compliance with statutory requirements / legislation and potential financial penalty Potential litigation Risk Owners Conor Haughey; Andy Patterson; Alison Robb Gross/Inherent Risk Red 25 Last Review 07/05/2026 Residual Risk Amber 15 Next Review 30/07/2026 Target Risk Level Yellow 8 Risk Appetite Risk Averse
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Probability							

Objectives

1. Promote increased levels of activity and develop targeted programmes to support improved health and wellbeing outcomes.
- 3.Create a strong base to engage, empower and build the capacity of local communities.

Key Controls Identified

- Accident Reporting Procedures in place
- Appropriate clothing for certain sites
- Assurance Statements
- Business Continuity Procedures
- Compliance Scorecards in place for all leisure facilities
- Corporate Health and Safety Policy and dedicated unit within the Council
- COSHH
- Departmental Health and Safety Working Groups
- Facility Checklists
- Incident book maintained
- Leisure safe audits for independent reviews of facilities
- Licence and insurance details kept for casual and essential vehicle users
- Lone working arrangements / Remote Working Policy
- NOPs/EAP's/PSOP/PTOP
- PPE
- Risk assessments of Council facilities
- SSOW
- Training for all employees

Action Plans

	Action Plan Description	Action Plan Type	Action Plan Owner	Action Plan Action Date	Comments
Health and safety training	Continued delivery of the rolling programme for employees and volunteers at local community centres.	In Progress	Alison Robb	8/31/2026	The programme continues to be delivered, offering a range of courses including fire warden, first aid and defibrillator training. Quarterly meetings established between FMA Groups and Community Facilities Managers. Two year cycle for Leisure Safe accreditation which were completed at Newry, Down, Newcastle, Kilkeel and Ballymote. Leisure Safe accreditation will conclude when compliance issues are resolved by S&E. Representing community and leisure services on corporate facilities management steering group to manage current risks within leisure and community facilities
Roll out Leisure Safe accreditation across all leisure centres	Leisure Safe accreditation is in place at Newry Leisure Centre.	In Progress	Conor Haughey	8/31/2026	
Statutory Compliance	Ensuring facilities compliance	In Progress	Conor Haughey Alison Robb	8/31/2026	

Risk

02. Fraud, theft and mismanagement of money, property and assets

Consequence	5				G		Risk Categories Business operational/reputational Financial Impact on individuals (staff or public) Risk Description Fraud, theft and mismanagement of money including grant income and expenditure, property and assets Potential Root Cause Poor governance Poor security/IT systems Failure to effectively implement internal audit recommendations Insufficient monitoring and spot checks Lack of training and understanding of Fraud and Whistleblowing Policies Corporate culture Non reconciliation of assets and inventory Major changes in organisational development increasing fraud risk No inventory of assets in leisure and community centres Consequence Financial impact Reputational risk Risk Owners Conor Haughey; Andy Patterson; Alison Robb Gross/Inherent Risk Red 20 Residual Risk Amber 12 Target Risk Level Green 6 Last Review 07/05/2026 Next Review 30/7/2026 Risk Appetite Risk Averse
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Probability							

Objectives		Key Controls Identified	
1. Promote increased levels of activity and develop targeted programmes to support improved health and wellbeing outcome		Corporate Procurement Policy in place Expansion of online payment methods to limit the amount of cash handling at Council facilities Fraud and Whistleblowing Policy in place Governance arrangements in place including the Audit Committee and independent internal audit function Leisure Services Cash Handling and Booking Management procedures in place	

Action Plans

	Action Plan Description	Action Plan Type	Action Plan Owner	Action Plan Action Date	Comments
Introduce management checks and controls on financial governance	System of spot checks to ensure appropriate controls are in place and adhered to in relation to financial management and governance.	In Progress	Conor Haughey Andy Patterson Alison Robb	8/31/2026	Financial controls and checks are in place across all leisure centres. Requirements are in place for Community Associations, through SLAs and FMAs, in relation to legal and financial controls, record keeping and rights of inspection of accounts for Council.
Maintain a centre based asset register for community facilities	Asset Register includes an inventory of all assets within community facilities	In Progress	Alison Robb	8/31/2026	Asset register is in place and is reviewed annually.
Maintain a centre/service based asset register for sport and leisure	Asset Register includes an inventory of all assets within each leisure facility	In Progress	Conor Haughey	8/31/2026	Asset register is in place and is reviewed annually
Online booking system for Council owned and managed Community Centres	Development of Business Case and obtaining of approvals	In Progress	Alison Robb	8/31/2026	Subject to internal approvals and budgets

Risk

03. Failure to enforce and comply with legislative requirements and statutory functions

Consequence	5					G	Risk Categories Business operational/reputational Quality of Service Statutory Duty (Legal/Regulatory)				
	4				R			Risk Description Failure to enforce and comply with legislative requirements and statutory functions			
	3		T						Potential Root Cause Lack of training Inadequate funding and resources to provide the required level of service Non-compliance with legislation leading to prosecution		
	2									Consequence Financial penalty Reputational damage Poor service being provided	
	1										Risk Owners Conor Haughey; Andy Patterson; Alison Robb
		1	2	3	4	5					
Probability											

Objectives

1. Promote increased levels of activity and develop targeted programmes to support improved health and wellbeing outcome

Key Controls Identified

- Continuous review of policies and procedures.
- Council oversight and independent audits
- Ongoing submission of quarterly returns to external organisations
- Performance management arrangements in place

Action Plans

	Action Plan Description	Action Plan Type	Action Plan Owner	Action Plan Action Date	Comments
Statutory compliance	Ensuring adherence with all statutory compliance responsibilities	In Progress	Conor Haughey Alison Robb	8/31/2026	Contributing to the Council's Corporate Facilities Management Steering Group and Corporate Health and Safety Joint Forum to ensure ongoing compliance. Continue to commission relevant independent audits and reviewing systems procedures and policies and comply with relevant actions. Quarterly meetings established between FMA Community Groups and Council Facility Managers.

Risk

04. Reduction in funding and/or income has an impact on service delivery

Consequence	5				G		Risk Categories Financial Impact on individuals (staff or public) Quality of Service Statutory Duty (Legal/Regulatory) Risk Description Loss or reduction in funding or income has an impact on service delivery within Community Development and Leisure Services. Potential Root Cause Financial cutbacks from outside organisations Market forces/Government policy Lack of compliance with third party requirements and failure to achieve targets within Letters of Offer Financial Assistance Scheme and ongoing compliance with Financial Assistance Policy Stakeholders do not participate in the range of programmes being delivered Reduced funding for the Good Relations Programme Inadequate approach to develop income generation opportunities Unplanned closure of leisure facilities over a longer duration due to unforeseen maintenance issues. Consequence Financial impact on the Council Reduced funding for specific positions and services may result in key programmes not being delivered Potential negative impact on the health and wellbeing of citizens and stakeholders Impact on staff morale Participants will not have opportunity to engage in physical activity and community-based programmes Negative Publicity Risk Owners Conor Haughey; Andy Patterson; Alison Robb Gross/Inherent Risk Red 20 Last Review 07/05/2026 Residual Risk Amber 16 Next Review 30/07/2026 Target Risk Level Yellow 9 Risk Appetite Risk Cautious
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Probability							

Objectives

Key Controls Identified

- Annual targets agreed with funders and quarterly monitoring arrangements in place
- Fixed term and temporary contacts
- Funding in place for key projects and programmes.
- Income opportunities maximised
- Key plans and policies in place, eg Good Relations Action Plan, DEA Action Plans,
- Ongoing liaison and partnership working with funders
- Ongoing programme of renewals and repairs in high-use leisure facilities
- Ongoing promotion of sport and community facilities and programmes
- Project governance arrangements and Risk Registers for key projects in place
- Review maintenance schedules of high-use leisure facilities

Action Plans

	Action Plan Description	Action Plan Type	Action Plan Owner	Action Plan Action Date	Comments
Identify alternative future funding arrangements and ways of working	Identify alternative and additional future funding arrangements and ways of working	In Progress	Alison Robb	8/31/2026	The Council continues to work with partners to identify and consider a range of funding streams. Current funding received and issued arrangements will be reviewed as part of the Community Development Strategy. Refurbishment of Kilkeel Leisure Centre commenced in September 2025 and progress continuing An annual review of community & leisure scales of charges takes place alongside the rate setting process of Council
Leisure Centre Maintenance	Continue to implement ongoing renewals, repairs / maintenance programme in leisure facilities.	In Progress	Conor Haughey	8/31/2026	
Review customer pricing arrangements at leisure and community facilities	Review customer pricing arrangements at leisure and community facilities to sustain customer loyalty and attract new customers.	In Progress	Conor Haughey Alison Robb	1/29/2027	

Risk

05. Failure to safeguard children/adults from the risk of harm including failing to comply with our statutory responsibilities

Consequence	5					G	Risk Categories Business operational/reputational Impact on individuals (staff or public) Statutory Duty (Legal/Regulatory) Risk Description The Council has statutory and moral responsibilities to fulfil its obligations regarding safeguarding children, adults at risk and staff from harm. Potential Root Cause Failure to comply with Safeguarding Policy Lack of staff expertise Policy not communicated properly Nature and Scope of Council Services / facilities giving abusers opportunity Failure to administer statutory/legal safeguarding obligations Consequence Failure to protect children and adults at risk (including personal injuries / death) Reputational damage Litigation Disciplinary Physical damage to property Risk Owners Conor Haughey; Andy Patterson; Gary Scott Gross/Inherent Risk Red 25 Last Review 07/05/2026 Residual Risk Amber 12 Next Review 30/07/2026 Target Risk Level Yellow 8 Risk Appetite Risk Averse
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Probability							

Key Controls Identified

- 1. Access NI checks for staff (regulated positions) and contractors as appropriate
- 10. Council Designated Safeguarding Officers in place together with Council Safeguarding Coordinator.
- 11. CCTV installed in relevant community and Leisure facilities
- 12. Safeguarding compliance embedded into procurement processes for contracted services
- 13. Safeguarding compliance embedded into procurement for contracted services and facility hire arrangements
- 14. . Dedicated Safeguarding Folder on Council staff R Drive providing support and signposting
- 15. Leisurewatch training provided to relevant leisure and community staff
- 16. Referral process with PSNI and social services regarding information sharing
- 17. Customer Exclusion Policy to prevent inappropriate behaviours by customers
- 18. Safeguarding Awareness and support leaflets for staff and customers and signage regarding photography displayed prom
- 2. Safeguarding Coordinator completes spots checks on Council schemes
- 3. Domestic Abuse Policy and Sexual Violence Policy for the workplace approved and available online
- 4. Registration booklet established for registering children/young people on all council activities/schemes.
- 4. Safe Place locations to support staff/communities for advice in relation to Domestic Abuse
- 6. Safeguarding Policy and associated procedures approved and available online.
- 7. Safeguarding Training
- 8. Internal and External working groups and direct information sharing referral mechanisms with PSNI and Social Services
- 9. Leisure Watch system and accreditation in place in Leisure and Community Facilities

Action Plans

	Action Plan Description	Action Plan Type	Action Plan Owner	Action Plan Action Date	Comments
Financial Assistance, Facility Hire and Event Documentation Risk Assessment and Safeguarding	To review all financial assistance, facility hire and event documentation to ensure consistency in application	In Progress	Conor Haughey Gary Scott	8/31/2026	work ongoing
	Continue to assess risk in context of safeguarding across leisure facilities and programmes	In Progress	Conor Haughey Gary Scott	8/31/2026	Over the past two years, the Council has focused on undertaking risk assessments across all leisure facilities. Actions - relevant actions to be updated and where relevant incorporated as a control where appropriate marked as complete Overall risk - Due to the fact Council is a public facing body and all services have interaction with the public, risk cannot be removed entirely, therefore by default are unable to fully control the risk, when considered against mitigation measures the target likelihood is unlikely. As an organisation numerous measures are in place and being developed to mitigate against that risk such as policies, designated safeguarding officers and training which also allows the threshold of major impact rather than catastrophic.
Safeguarding e-Learning module	Safeguarding eLearning module for newly procured system (skillgate) for staff on to be reviewed and implemented	In Progress	Conor Haughey Gary Scott	8/31/2026	In progress

Risk

06. Reduced participation in Community Engagement Programmes may have a negative impact on community cohesion across the District.

Consequence	5				G		Risk Categories	Financial Impact on individuals (staff or public) Quality of Service Statutory Duty (Legal/Regulatory)									
	4			R				Risk Description	Reduced participation in Community Engagement Programmes may have a negative impact on community cohesion across the District.								
	3			T					Potential Root Cause	Stakeholders do not participate effectively in community planning structures Partners across the community, voluntary, statutory and business sectors have limited opportunities to influence key decisions and programmes of work at a local level Lack of awareness and understanding of programmes							
	2									Consequence	Reduced funding in future years for key programmes of work that build capacity at a local level Reduced income across community facilities Failure to provide efficient and effective public services to meet the needs and aspirations of local communities Lack of social inclusion and community cohesion at a local level Hard to reach and vulnerable groups become increasingly marginalised and isolated within society Potential social unrest						
	1										Risk Owners	Alison Robb					
		1	2	3	4	5						Gross/Inherent Risk	Red 20		Last Review	07/05/2026	
Probability						Residual Risk	Amber 12						Next Review	30/07/2026			
							Target Risk Level	Yellow 9						Risk Appetite		Risk Open	

Objectives

Key Controls Identified

- Community Planning Partnership and Community Plan in place
- Key programmes of work in place around Neighbourhood Renewal, PCSP Action Plan, Good Relation and Financial Assistance.
- Ongoing promotion of programmes through the Council's website and social media platforms
- Seven DEA Forums operational and DEA Action Plans being delivered

Action Plans

	Action Plan Description	Action Plan Type	Action Plan Owner	Action Plan Action Date	Comments
Continue to engage BME communities through the Ethnic Minority Support Centre	The EMSC provides ongoing support, in multiple languages, on issues such as EU Registration, housing and education. The centre is based in Newry and Downpatrick.	In Progress	Alison Robb	8/31/2026	The centre records approximately 3,000 visits per annum. Support is provided to individuals from established minority ethnic communities and to newcomers, including Ukrainian refugees and asylum seekers accommodated in the district. A newcomers guide was developed in 2024/25.
Deliver DEA Action Plans,, Neighbourhood Renewal Plans and PCSP and Good Relations Action Plans.	Engage stakeholders through established Forums and Partnerships to facilitate the delivery of key plans and strategies at a local level.	In Progress	Alison Robb	8/31/2026	The implementation of key plans and strategies is ongoing. The Council is also working with the Department for Communities to review the Neighbourhood Renewal Programme which will be replaced by a new programme entitled 'People and Place'. A Newcastle RCRG has been established and one is being developed in Camlough with DEA support. The DEA Team continues to review its response to emergency situations to assist local communities.
Facilitate the Strategic Stakeholder Forum	Continue to facilitate the Strategic Stakeholder Forum which is aligned to existing community planning structures	In Progress	Alison Robb	8/31/2026	To enable continued support to and engagement with the community and voluntary sector.
Review the existing community planning structures.	Review the existing community planning structures.	In Progress	Alison Robb	8/31/2026	Community Planning Structures will be reviewed as part of the development of a Community Development Strategy. Statutory and community and voluntary partners will be engaged as part of the process.

Report to:	Audit Committee
Date of Meeting:	30 July 2026
Subject:	Prompt Payment Statistics – Quarter 1 2026/27
Reporting Officer (Including Job Title):	Kathryn Hanna: Finance Manager
Contact Officer (Including Job Title):	Alice McCann: Purchase to Pay Supervisor

Confirm how this Report should be treated by placing an x in either:-

For decision	☐	For noting only	☒
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1.0	Purpose and Background																								
1.1	'Prompt payment' is the payment of valid supplier invoices by public bodies, as set in government targets. This dataset contains the: • Total amount paid by each Northern Ireland council to suppliers • Total number of invoices • Number of invoices paid within 10 working days • Number of invoices paid within 30 calendar days • Number of invoices paid outside 30 calendar days Adherence to the policy is not mandatory for councils, but in a letter issued to council Chief Executives in October 2013, the Department of Environment’s Local Government Policy Division said that: ‘District councils are encouraged to pay suppliers as promptly as possible and to endeavour to meet the 10 day prompt payment commitment made by Northern Ireland Executive in response to the current economic position’.																								
2.0	Key issues																								
2.1	The table below provides a comparison of prompt payment statistics for the last five financial years. <table><tr><th>Financial Year</th><th>Within 30 days (T&C’s)</th><th>Within 10 days</th></tr><tr><td>2019/20</td><td>90%</td><td>18%</td></tr><tr><td>2020/21</td><td>86%</td><td>11%</td></tr><tr><td>2021/22</td><td>89%</td><td>17%</td></tr><tr><td>2022/23</td><td>86%</td><td>43%</td></tr><tr><td>2023/24</td><td>95%</td><td>50%</td></tr><tr><td>2024/25</td><td>94%</td><td>46%</td></tr><tr><td>2025/26</td><td>90%</td><td>32%</td></tr></table>	Financial Year	Within 30 days (T&C’s)	Within 10 days	2019/20	90%	18%	2020/21	86%	11%	2021/22	89%	17%	2022/23	86%	43%	2023/24	95%	50%	2024/25	94%	46%	2025/26	90%	32%
Financial Year	Within 30 days (T&C’s)	Within 10 days																							
2019/20	90%	18%																							
2020/21	86%	11%																							
2021/22	89%	17%																							
2022/23	86%	43%																							
2023/24	95%	50%																							
2024/25	94%	46%																							
2025/26	90%	32%																							

2.2	Quarter 4 2025/26 - 1 January 2026 to 31 March 2026 <table><tr><td></td><td>Paid within 10 days</td><td>Paid within 30 days</td><td>Paid outside payment period</td><td>Total invoices</td></tr><tr><td>Number of Invoices</td><td>2,052</td><td>3,967</td><td>325</td><td>4,292</td></tr><tr><td>Percentage</td><td>48%</td><td>92%</td><td>8%</td><td>100%</td></tr><tr><td>Value</td><td>£4,554,147</td><td>£14,990,940</td><td>£2,143,986</td><td>£17,134,926</td></tr><tr><td colspan="3">Average number of days to pay suppliers: 14.22</td><td colspan="2">Performance trend: </td></tr></table>		Paid within 10 days	Paid within 30 days	Paid outside payment period	Total invoices	Number of Invoices	2,052	3,967	325	4,292	Percentage	48%	92%	8%	100%	Value	£4,554,147	£14,990,940	£2,143,986	£17,134,926	Average number of days to pay suppliers: 14.22			Performance trend: 	
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Average number of days to pay suppliers: 14.22			Performance trend: 																							
2.3	Quarter 1 2026/27 - 1 April 2026 to 30 June 2026 <table><tr><td></td><td>Paid within 10 days</td><td>Paid within 30 days</td><td>Paid outside payment period</td><td>Total invoices</td></tr><tr><td>Number of Invoices</td><td>2,840</td><td>4,435</td><td>478</td><td>4,913</td></tr><tr><td>Percentage</td><td>58%</td><td>90%</td><td>10%</td><td>100%</td></tr><tr><td>Value</td><td>£10,753,378</td><td>£18,484,131</td><td>£860,562</td><td>£19,344,694</td></tr><tr><td colspan="3">Average number of days to pay suppliers: 14.51</td><td colspan="2">Performance trend: </td></tr></table>		Paid within 10 days	Paid within 30 days	Paid outside payment period	Total invoices	Number of Invoices	2,840	4,435	478	4,913	Percentage	58%	90%	10%	100%	Value	£10,753,378	£18,484,131	£860,562	£19,344,694	Average number of days to pay suppliers: 14.51			Performance trend: 	
	Paid within 10 days	Paid within 30 days	Paid outside payment period	Total invoices																						
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Value	£10,753,378	£18,484,131	£860,562	£19,344,694																						
Average number of days to pay suppliers: 14.51			Performance trend: 																							
3.0	Recommendations																									
31	To note: The Q1 2026/27 financial year Prompt Payment statistics.																									
4.0	Resource implications																									
4.1	The Purchase to Pay Team provide statistics to the Department for Communities on a quarterly basis. The prompt payment statistics are also published on our website.																									
5.0	Due regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations (complete the relevant sections)																									
5.1	General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes It is not anticipated the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations ☒																									
5.2	Proposal relates to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision Yes ☐ No ☒ If yes, please complete the following:																									

	The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) has been equality screened ☐ The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) will be subject to equality screening prior to implementation ☐
5.3	<i>Proposal initiating consultation</i> Consultation will seek the views of those directly affected by the proposal, address barriers for particular Section 75 equality categories to participate and allow adequate time for groups to consult amongst themselves ☐ Consultation period will be 12 weeks ☐ Consultation period will be less than 12 weeks (rationale to be provided) ☐ <i>Rationale:</i> Consultation not required.
6.0	Due regard to Rural Needs (please tick all that apply)
6.1	Proposal relates to developing, adopting, implementing or revising a policy / strategy / plan / designing and/or delivering a public service Yes ☐ No ☒ If yes, please complete the following: Rural Needs Impact Assessment completed ☐
7.0	Appendices
	None
8.0	Background Documents
	None

Report to:	Audit Committee
Date of Meeting:	30 July 2026
Subject:	Assurance Framework and Code of Governance
Reporting Officer (Including Job Title):	Marie Ward – CEO
Contact Officer (Including Job Title):	Marie Ward – CEO

Confirm how this Report should be treated by placing an x in either:-

For decision	For noting only	X
1.0	Purpose and Background	
1.1	The purpose of this paper is to explain to Members the key elements of the 'year-end' process and the 'assurance framework' that the Council developed to help ensure that the Council complies with statutory requirements and Members and senior officers can have effective, ongoing oversight of the Council's governance and assurance arrangements.	
1.2	The Assurance Framework and Code of Governance at Appendix 1 are used to inform Council's Governance Statement within our Statement of Accounts.	
2.0	Key issues	
2.1	<u>Assurance Framework</u> The Council's Assurance Framework is summarised at Appendix 1 . It demonstrates how different sources of assurance and related key elements / control measures combine to enable the Council to monitor its governance arrangements and produce the evidence to support its Annual Governance Statement. The diagram shows how the Council's Audit Committee, the Strategy Policy and Resources Committee and Council provide oversight of these governance arrangements. No Amendments were required to the Council's Assurance Framework.	
2.2	<u>Annual Governance Statement 2025/26</u> The Council has a statutory responsibility to annually prepare and publish an Annual Governance Statement as part of the Financial Statements. Many different processes inform the preparation of the Statement as can be seen from the Assurance Framework at Appendix 1 . The Annual Governance Statement for 2025/26 is presented at item number 10. It will be incorporated into the unaudited statement of accounts and will be subject to review by the NIAO as part of their annual audit.	
3.0	Recommendations	
3.1	Members are asked to note the Council's Assurance Framework and the Code of Governance, illustrated and described at Appendix 1 .	

4.0	Resource implications
4.1	There are no resource implications.
5.0	Due regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations (complete the relevant sections)
5.1	<i>General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes</i> It is not anticipated the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations ☒
5.2	<i>Proposal relates to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision</i> Yes ☐ No ☒ If yes, please complete the following: The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) has been equality screened ☐ The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) will be subject to equality screening prior to implementation ☐
5.3	<i>Proposal initiating consultation</i> Consultation will seek the views of those directly affected by the proposal, address barriers for particular Section 75 equality categories to participate and allow adequate time for groups to consult amongst themselves ☐ Consultation period will be 12 weeks ☐ Consultation period will be less than 12 weeks (rationale to be provided) ☐ <i>Rationale:</i> Consultation not required.
6.0	Due regard to Rural Needs (please tick all that apply)
6.1	Proposal relates to developing, adopting, implementing or revising a policy / strategy / plan / designing and/or delivering a public service Yes ☐ No ☒ If yes, please complete the following:

	Rural Needs Impact Assessment completed	☐
7.0	Appendices	
	Appendix 1 – NMDDC Assurance Framework (including Code of Governance)	
8.0	Background Documents	
	Agenda Number 10 – Annual Governance Statement 2025/26	



Newry, Mourne and Down District Council

Assurance Framework



Comhairle Ceantair
an Iúir, Mhúrn
agus an Dúin
Newry, Mourne
and Down
District Council

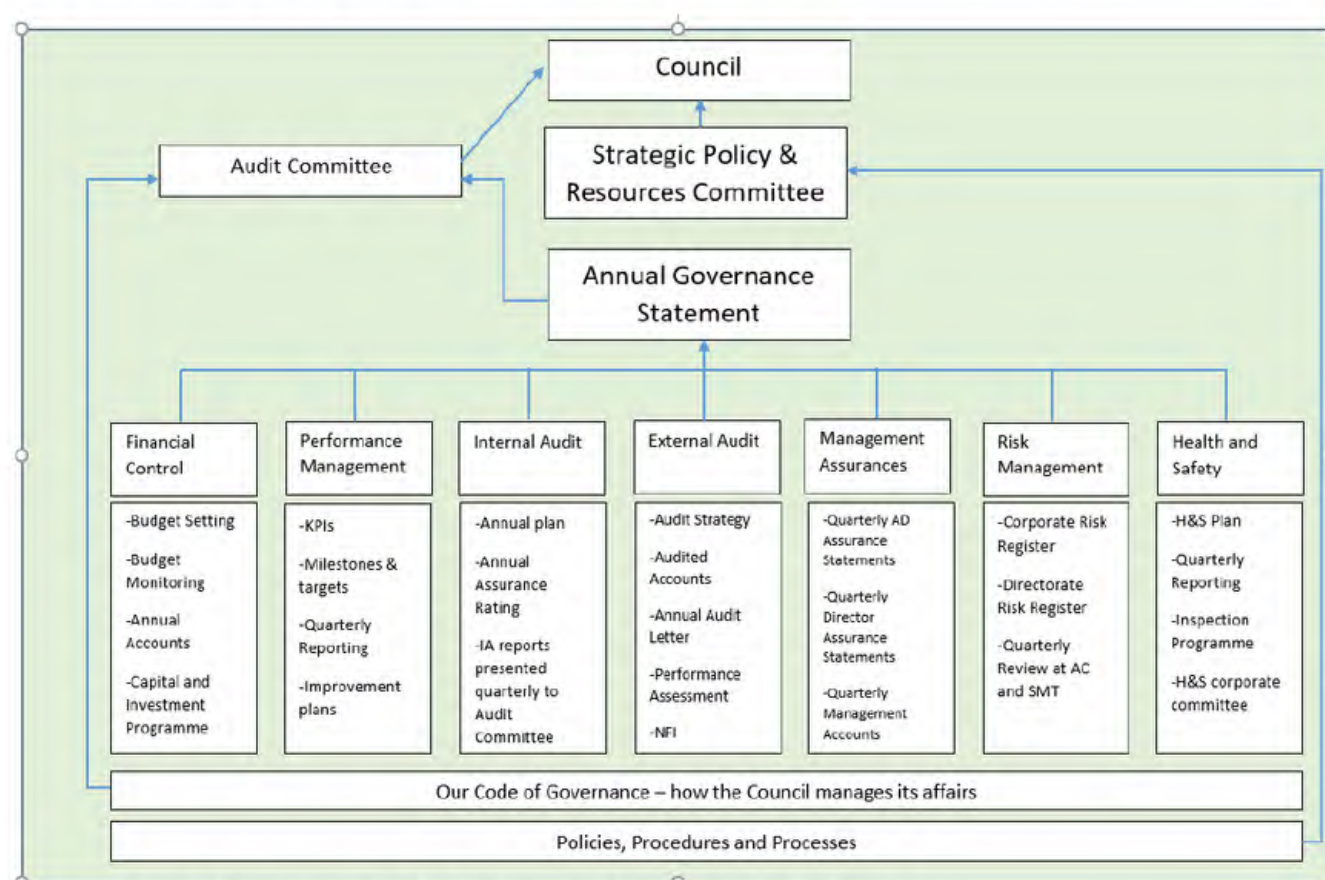
Effective Date: June 2019

Version 7.0

Policy Control

Policy Title	Assurance Framework
Departmental Ownership	Corporate Services
Document Owner	Director of Corporate Services
Officer Responsible	Assistant Director of Finance & Performance
Date of Approval	Audit Committee – 3 July 2019 Council – 5 August 2019
Date of Last update	June 2026
Updated by	Gerard Byrne, Assistant Director of Finance & Performance
Date of next Review	June 2027
Location where document is held and referenced	Shared Drive and NMDDC Website

Key Components of the Council's Assurance Framework



Description of Key Elements the Council's Assurance Framework

The diagram shows how different sources of assurance and related key elements / control measures combine to enable the Council to monitor its governance arrangements and produce the information which enables the Council to prepare their Annual Governance Statement. The diagram also shows how the Council's Audit Committee, the Strategy Policy and Resources Committee (SP&R) and Council provide oversight of these governance arrangements. The key elements of the framework are described below.

Financial Control

A Financial Report for the year ended 31 March is prepared annually and submitted to the Department for Communities by 30 June. The report is then audited by the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) and published by 30 September each year (after approval by Committee). There is a budgetary control process including budget setting, budget monitoring and budget reporting. Senior Management Team (SMT), Corporate Management Team (CMT) and SP&R Committee challenge the process corporately when budgets are approved annually and performance is reported quarterly.

Standing Committees are also responsible for challenging and approving their annual budget and subsequently scrutinizing their budget performance at the end of each quarter in the following financial year.

Performance Management

The Council's performance management framework supports the implementation of the corporate and directorate plans through regular monitoring, reporting and review and, in future, will support monitoring / reporting on Community Planning outcomes. These plans set out what the Council

intends to deliver over the course of the year and through the performance framework regular performance reports are produced detailing progress against key milestones and targets.

These reports are considered by Directorate Management Teams and the CMT and actions for improvement are agreed. These arrangements are also designed to ensure that the Council meets its statutory duties in relation to continuous improvement and our performance and related plans are subject to annual NIAO audit.

Internal Audit

Internal auditing is an independent and objective assurance designed to add value and improve Council's operations. The Council's Assistant Director of Finance and Performance, who liaises with the fully independent specialist Auditing Contractor who prepares an annual Strategy and Plan of work designed to ensure that:

- there is a robust system of internal audit of key Council activities and processes through a plan of work which affords suitable priority to the Council's objectives and risks
- there is a process of ensuring improvements to the Council's control environment, by providing management with advice, training and recommendations to improve risk management, governance and control arrangements, including the formal monitoring of the implementation of audit recommendations
- the specialist Auditing Contractor will be in a position to provide, at the end of each year, a professional, evidence-based opinion on the adequacy of the Council's risk management, control and governance arrangements which, in turn, will support the preparation of the Council's Annual Governance Statement
- the Council meets its legislative responsibilities for internal control, risk management and internal audit.

External Audit

Each year, the Local Government Auditor (LGA), the NIAO, completes an audit of the Council's accounts in accordance with legislation and the Local Government Code of Audit Practice issued by the Chief LGA. The LGA Annual Report sets out their opinion on the Council's financial statements and is included within the annual Financial Report.

The NIAO also examines annually whether the Council has proper arrangements in place to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources and that public money is properly accounted for and undertakes an annual audit and assessment of the Council's performance improvement arrangements. Their findings are summarised in an Annual Audit Letter, a Performance audit report and a Report to those Charged with Governance.

Assurances from Management & Governance Statement

Each quarter, Assistant Directors provide their Director with a Quarterly Assurance Statement. The Directors in turn then prepare a quarterly assurance statements for the Chief Executive. The Assurance Statements confirms:

- Their responsibility for ensuring that there is a sound risk management and internal control system which supports the achievement of the corporate and directorate objectives.
- Compliance with the risk review process and outlining progress to manage key risks and highlight any significant governance issues that should be considered by SMT for inclusion within the Council's Annual Governance Statement.

Assistant Directors provide analysis on all budget variance quarterly to both their Director and to Finance.

Risk Management

There is an agreed risk management strategy which sets out the processes the Council has put in place to manage risk. Risk registers and risk action plans are in place at corporate, directorate and

project level and are recorded on the corporate risk management system, GRACE Governance Solutions. There is reporting to CMT, SMT and the Audit Committee on risk management.

National Fraud Initiative (NFI)

NFI is a UK-wide counter-fraud exercise. In Northern Ireland, the exercise is undertaken by the Comptroller and Auditor General for Northern Ireland (C&AG) under their statutory data matching powers set out in Article 4 of the Audit and Accountability (Northern Ireland) Order 2003. The C&AG works in collaboration with the Cabinet Office, Audit Scotland and Audit Wales, which undertake the NFI exercise in England, Scotland and Wales respectively. The NFI uses computerised techniques to compare information about individuals, held by different public bodies and on different financial systems, which might suggest the existence of fraud or error. It means that public bodies can take action if any fraud or error has taken place, and it allows auditors to assess the fraud prevention arrangements which those organisations have in place.

The Assistant Director of Finance and Performance coordinates this biannual exercise to ensure Council complies with its statutory duties and to ensure Council controls are effective to assist in preventing and detecting fraud and error.

Health and Safety (H&S)

The Council has a Corporate H&S Policy which is reviewed on an annual basis and incorporates the Organisation Structure and Arrangements to deliver on the Policy. The remit of the Corporate Health and Safety Joint Forum is to liaise between Senior Management, Assistant Directors, Safety Health & Emergency Planning (SHEP) Section and recognised Trade Union Representatives and any other subject matter experts deemed relevant.

The purpose of this forum is to discuss and review overarching health and safety issues and any unresolved matters escalated from the Departmental Operational Meetings (as appropriate). The Joint Forum meets on a quarterly basis and discuss issues as defined by the terms of reference for same. H&S reports and updates are provided by SHEP to all levels – operational, corporate and strategic to include information on performance against health and safety targets, accident statistics, policy changes, legislative changes and emerging health and safety issues.

The SHEP section facilitate the delivery of cross-cutting corporate H&S training as per agreed programme to include e-learning platforms.

Code of Governance

Underlying our Assurance Framework is our Code of Governance. The Council is committed to the principles of good governance and our Code of Governance is a public statement of that commitment. Our Code has been prepared in line with best practice and a summary is contained in the Annual Governance Statement, see appendix 1 for further detail.

Policies, procedures and processes

Policies, procedures and processes are designed to underpin day-to-day operations. All policies are controlled centrally by the Head of Corporate Policy.

Audit Committee

Its purpose is to provide an independent assurance on the adequacy of the Council's risk management framework and associated control environment.

Strategy Policy & Resources Committee (SP&R)

The SP&R Committee also oversees directly the financial management / stewardship of the Council.

Code of Governance

Introduction

Governance arrangements in the public sector are keenly observed and sometimes criticised. We need to ensure that we meet the highest standards and that our governance arrangements are not only sound but are seen to be sound.

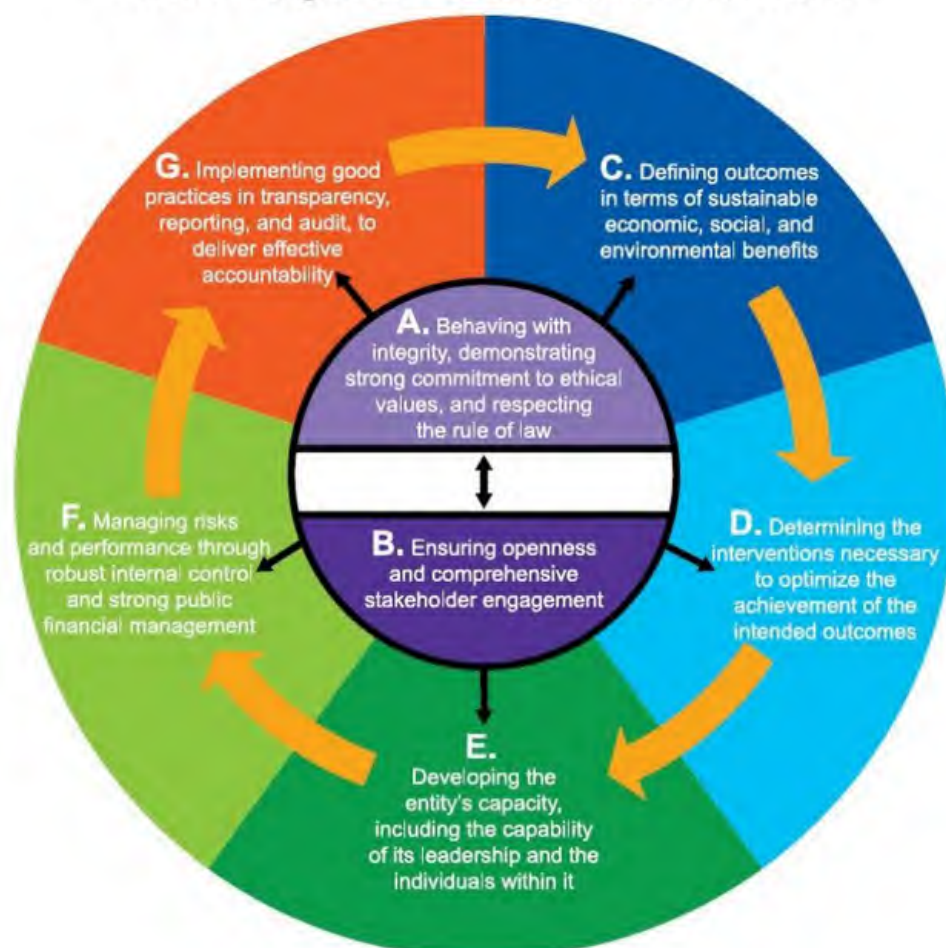
Governance is about how Newry, Mourne and Down District Council (NMDDC) ensures that it is doing the right things, in the right way, for the right people, in a timely, inclusive, open, honest and accountable manner. It comprises the systems and processes, and cultures and values, by which Council is directed and controlled and through which it accounts to, engages with and, where appropriate, leads its community.

The CIPFA Solace 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: A Framework' was issued in April 2016 and represents best practice for developing and maintaining a local code of governance and applies to annual governance statements prepared for the 2018/19 financial year onwards.

NMDDC is committed to the principles of Good Governance and has developed this Code of Governance to demonstrate this commitment. This Code will be updated and approved by the Audit Committee on an annual basis.

The 7 Principles of Good Governance

Achieving the Intended Outcomes While Acting in the Public Interest at all Times





A. Behaving with integrity

- Shared values communicated via community plan, corporate plan and key strategies
- Mandatory Code of Conduct for Councillors
- NI charter for Elected Member Development
- Staff Code of conduct
- Council Constitution including Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and Scheme of Delegation
- Council Anti-Fraud Policies and Fraud Response Plan
- Council participate in the National Fraud Initiative – Bi annual data matching exercise
- Council Raising Concerns Policy
- Gifts and Hospitality Policy
- Declarations of interest
- Conflicts of Interest Policy
- Equality and Diversity Framework
- People Perform Grow (PPG) appraisal process for staff

B. Ensuring Openness

- Council and Committee meetings open to the public
- Council and Committee agendas and minutes displayed on the Council web site
- Consultation and engagement with staff and trade unions
- Annual financial report published on the Council's web site
- Access to Information Policy and Procedure
- Community Plan and Local Development Plan
- Corporate plan and performance improvement plan are subject to consultation before agreement
- Equality Screening Outcome reports available through Council website

C. Defining Outcomes

- Community Plan 'Living well together'
- Corporate and Directorate Plans
- Belfast Region City Deal Investment Plan
- Organisational Development
- Tourism Development and Marketing Strategy
- Performance Improvement Plans
- Local Development Plan
- Equality Impact Assessment
- Grant Funding Processes

D. Optimising the achievement of outcomes

- Corporate and Directorate plans
- Constitution
- Strategic financial management and reporting framework in place
- Risk Management Policy and Framework in place
- Adoption of the NMDDC Local Development Plan (LDP)
- Key partner in the Belfast Region City Deal
- Regular reports on progress of our performance improvement plan to SMT, SP&R and Audit Committee

E. Developing Capacity and Capability

- Organisational Development and Learning Development Policy
- Harmonisation of policies

- Development of a joint Employee Relations consultation and negotiating policy
- Elected Members Development Charter/Member Leadership Programme
- Appraisal Scheme in place for Chief Executive
- People Perform Grow (PPG) appraisal process for staff
- Health and Wellbeing working group
- Planning for the Future restructure now implemented

F. Finance, Performance and Risk Management

- Financial Regulations In place
- Risk Management Policy and Framework
- Quarterly Audit Committee
- Fully independent outsourced Internal Audit firm
- Annual Internal Audit Strategy and Plan
- Data Protection policy and procedures
- Director and Assistant Director quarterly Assurance reporting
- Independent Audit Committee Chairperson
- Annual Rate Setting Process
- Compliance with CIPFA Financial Management Code
- Treasury Management and Capital Strategy in place with quarterly reporting

G. Transparency, Reporting and Effective Accountability

- NMDDC website which is regularly updated
- Publication of key reports including Annual Accounts, Annual Governance Statement and Performance Improvement Report
- Committee support framework to approve papers prior to submission to Members
- Internal Audit annual assurance statement within the annual governance statement
- Internal Audit effectiveness annually reviewed against public sector internal audit standards, with an independent external review every five years
- Monitoring of all Internal and External Audit recommendations and quarterly updates to the Audit Committee.

Compliance with the Code

This Code of Governance is supported by Policies, Procedures and Systems that determine and control how the Council manages its affairs. **Appendix B** provides more detail, demonstrating how the Council currently complies with the Code.

Monitoring and Review

Our governance arrangements are reviewed annually to ensure that they are adequate and operating effectively in practice. The results of these reviews are reported to the Audit Committee and inform the preparation of our Annual Governance Statement which forms part of our published financial report.

Internal Audit will undertake reviews of the Councils governance arrangements to ensure they are adequate and operating effectively in practice.

Appendix B

Core Principle A: Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values and respecting the rule of law	
Supporting Principles	How we meet these principles
A.1 Behaving with integrity	➤ Mandatory Code of Conduct for Councillors – The NI code of Local Government Conduct for Members ➤ Code of conduct for NMDDC staff ➤ NI Charter for Elected Member Development ➤ Declarations of interest a standing agenda item for Council/Committee meetings ➤ Conflicts of Interest Policy ➤ Annual Mandatory declarations of Interest to be completed by staff who are deemed to be high risk. Voluntary declarations to be completed by other staff ➤ Council minutes include whether any declarations of interests have been made ➤ Fraud and Raising Concern policies in place ➤ Council participate in the National Fraud Initiative – Biannual data matching exercise ➤ Gifts and Hospitality Policy with each Department maintaining a register (Directors' Pas record all declarations) ➤ Members approve the: ▪ Constitution ▪ Standing Orders and Financial Regulations ▪ Codes of Conduct ➤ Members approval of the Community and Corporate Plans ➤ Scheme of Delegation ➤ Party Group Leaders Forum ➤ Members Training and Workshops ➤ Shared values communicated through the Community Plan, Corporate Plan and the Annual Performance Improvement Plan ➤ Open and transparent committee system and reporting ➤ People Perform Grow (PPG) appraisal process for staff
A.2 Demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values	➤ Mandatory Code of Conduct for Councillors ➤ Register maintained of Members' declarations of interest ➤ Register maintained of Officers' declarations of interest ➤ Ethical requirements of Professional Standards ➤ Standing Orders ➤ Register maintained of Members' declarations of interest ➤ Ongoing monitoring and reporting through Internal Audit and Risk Management processes ➤ Systems and processes for financial administration ➤ Partners and Contractors required to comply with relevant policies ➤ Policies in place which demonstrate our commitment to ethical values includes:

Core Principle A: Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values and respecting the rule of law	
Supporting Principles	How we meet these principles
	▪ Equality Scheme and Equality Action Plan ▪ Equality and Diversity Framework ▪ Councillors' Equality and Good Relations Reference Group ▪ Disability Action Plan ▪ Data Protection Policy ➤ Equality Screening process and Rural Needs Impact Assessments ➤ Letters of Offer issued with Grants ➤ Monitoring arrangements ➤ Procurement guidance and policy
A.3 Respecting the rule of law	➤ Council Constitution ➤ Updated Financial Regulations ➤ Updated Standing Orders ➤ Register maintained of Members' declarations of interest ➤ Register maintained of Officer' declarations of interest ➤ Operating Protocol for Planning Committee ➤ Council Anti-Fraud Policy and Fraud Response Plan ➤ Council participate in the National Fraud Initiative – Biannual data matching exercise ➤ Council Raising Concern Policy ➤ Gifts and Hospitality Policy ➤ Qualified majority voting and Call-In process in operation in accordance with the Local Government Act 2014 ➤ External expert legal and other professional advice sought when necessary. ➤ Fraud and Raising Concern investigations undertaken ➤ HR Disciplinary processes.

Core Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

Supporting Principles	How we meet these principles
B1: Openness	➤ Council meetings are open to the public and members of the media ➤ Council's web site provides up-to-date information regarding: ▪ Council activities ▪ Policies ▪ Reports issued ➤ Use of Social Media ➤ Internal Communications issued via Chief Executives' briefs ➤ Consultation with stakeholders regarding the Community and Performance Improvement Plans ➤ Community Planning Process ➤ Corporate Complaints Procedure ➤ Customer Service Standards in Draft format – to be brought through Council Summer 2019. ➤ Council minutes are published on the website ➤ Standard pro forma for all Committee reports. ➤ Annual Performance Improvement Plan published on the web site. ➤ Categories for 'confidential business' for Committee ➤ Staff Consultations ➤ Access to Information Policy and Procedure
B2: Engaging comprehensively with institutional stakeholders	➤ A co-ordinated and strategic approach to community engagement and involvement that enables partners to bring together their community engagement work and plans and connects Members, community and citizen engagement and partnership decision making ➤ Local Development Planning ➤ Strategic Stakeholder Forum ➤ Community Planning Process ➤ Monthly Community Planning team meetings ➤ Community planning partnership meets 3 times per year ➤ Community Plan Statutory Partners ➤ Place Shaping Agenda ➤ Ongoing engagement with Trade Unions

B3: Engaging with individual citizens and service users effectively	➤ Community Plan developed following consultation with Statutory Partners, stakeholders and the public ➤ Local Development Plan ➤ Annual Performance Improvement Plan ➤ Corporate Plan Engagement ➤ Residents Survey undertaken every four years
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Core Principle C: Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits	
Supporting Principles	How we meet these principles
C1: Defining Outcomes	➤ 'Living well Together' the Districts Community Plan 2017-2030 ➤ The Corporate Plan will be driven by priorities set out in the 'Living Well Together' Community Plan ➤ Annual Performance Improvement Plan ➤ Corporate Planning Framework for the development of the 2024-2027 Corporate Plan ➤ Transformation programme being developed which will include detailed service reviews ➤ Treasury Management ➤ Multi year Capital Programme ➤ Prudential Financial Framework ➤ Local Development Plan ➤ Annual Directorate Business Plans ➤ Sports Facilities Strategy Document ➤ NMDDC Tourism Strategy ➤ Tourism Marketing Plan ➤ Tourism Experience Brochure ➤ Belfast Region City Deal Investment Plan ➤ Regeneration and Economic Development Strategy ➤ Arts, Culture and Heritage Strategy ➤ Irish Language Strategy

C2: Sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits	➤ 'Living well Together' the Districts Community Plan 2017-2030 ➤ Annual Performance Improvement Plan ➤ Local Development Plan ➤ New Corporate Plan will be driven by priorities set out in the Community Plan ➤ Corporate Planning Framework for the development of the 2024-2027 Corporate Plan ➤ Local Development Plan – Preferred Options Papers ➤ Risk Management processes ➤ Corporate Policy & Equality Officer ➤ Established processes for governance, management and administration of grants ➤ Equality Impact Assessments ➤ Equality Screening completed for all policies
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Core Principle D: Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievements of the intended outcomes/	
Supporting Principles	How we meet these principles
D1: Determining interventions	➤ Evidence and Research team support the Council in the development of a data and evidence based approach to support the creation of the Community Plan, Corporate Plan, Local Development Plan and key related strategies. ➤ Ongoing consultation and engagement with the public, stakeholders and the community and voluntary sectors. ➤ Ongoing consultation and engagement with the public and key stakeholders ➤ Professional advice sought when required ➤ Transformation programme being developed which will include detailed service reviews

D2: Planning interventions	➤ Planning processes encompassing Community, Corporate and Performance Improvement Plans ➤ Community Planning engagement framework completed through thematic groups via the DEA's ➤ Local Development Plan ➤ Strategic Planning Framework ➤ Directorate business plans ➤ Performance Improvement Plans including KPI's ➤ Risk Management processes ➤ Budgetary Control including a multiyear capital plan ➤ Monthly Management accounts ➤ Financial planning ➤ Estimates process including Efficiency Working Group ➤ Performance Indicators ➤ Transformation programme being developed which will include detailed service reviews ➤ Medium term financial planning ➤ Financial management of capital programme ➤ Treasury Management Strategy and Prudential Indicators
D3: Optimising achievement of intended outcomes	➤ Financial reporting ➤ Reporting to the Strategy Policy and Resources Committee ➤ Treasury Management ➤ Estimates Process ➤ Budgetary Reporting ➤ MRP Policy ➤ Estimates Process ➤ Council/Committee Reporting ➤ Community Plan ➤ Local Development Plan

Core Principle E: Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it

Supporting Principles	How we meet these principles
E1: Developing the entity's capacity	➤ Organisational Development ➤ Transformation programme being developed which will include detailed service reviews ➤ Performance Improvement Plan ➤ Annual NIAO Improvement Audits and Assessments of Council ➤ Monitoring of the performance of the delivery of Council Improvement Objectives to ensure compliance with the performance improvement requirements of part 12 of the Local Government (NI) Act 2014 ➤ Directors and Assistant Directors quarterly assurance statements ➤ Community Plan Statutory Partners ➤ Service Level Agreements
E2: Developing the capability of the entity's leadership and other individuals	➤ Group Party Leaders Meetings ➤ Induction Training and Learning and Development Programme for Members ➤ Member Development Charter ➤ Scheme of Delegation ➤ Audit Committee undertake an annual self-assessment exercise against CIPFA standards ➤ Planning Scheme of Delegation ➤ CE Job Description/Specification and Appraisal Scheme ➤ Terms and conditions of employment ➤ Capacity building around the Code of Conduct ➤ Performance Improvement consultation ➤ Consultation on major Council strategies ➤ Performance Improvement Plan ➤ Directorate business plans ➤ Project Plans ➤ Corporate Management Team Meetings ➤ Continuing Professional Development ➤ Corporate Health & Safety ➤ Occupational Health Service including Westfield Health ➤ All staff have access to leisure facilities ➤ A number of posts related to improving health and wellbeing in the district (i.e. Exercise referral coordinator, GP referral coordinator, Macmillan move more coordinator and Age friendly Coordinator)

Core Principle F: Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong financial management

Supporting Principles	How we meet these principles
F1: Managing risk	➤ Risk Management Policy ➤ Risk Management software system ➤ SMT update Corporate Risk Register quarterly and present to audit Committee ➤ Directorate risk registers updated bi-annually ➤ Director and Assistant Director Quarterly Assurance Statements
F2: Managing performance	➤ Annual NIAO Audit and Assessment Reports ➤ Annual Performance Improvement Plans ➤ Directorate business plans ➤ Agreed pro forma for Committee reports showing option appraisals and implications. ➤ Regular reporting of financial information to the SP&R committee ➤ Legal and professional advice obtained as necessary ➤ The SP&R and Audit Committee oversees and monitors performance management, processes, systems and related arrangements. ➤ The SP&R Committee oversees and monitors structures, governance arrangements and financial information. ➤ Performance Improvement updates ➤ Financial Management ➤ Risk Management processes and reporting ➤ Budgetary reporting ➤ Performance Management System
F3: Robust internal control	➤ Directorate Business Plans ➤ Risk Management Policy and processes ➤ Risk registers in place and linked to objectives ➤ Assistant Director of Finance and Performance liaises with a fully independent internal audit firm ➤ Independent External Review of Internal Audit every 5 years. ➤ Internal Audit planning ➤ Risk based auditing ➤ Recommendation tracker to monitor all Internal Audit recommendations ➤ Council Fraud Policy and Fraud Response Plan ➤ Council Raising Concern Policy ➤ Council participate in the National Fraud Initiative – Biannual data matching exercise ➤ Gifts and Hospitality Policy ➤ Directors and Assistant Director Quarterly Assurance Statements ➤ Annual Governance Statement ➤ Audit Committee with an independent Chairperson

Core Principle F: Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong financial management	
Supporting Principles	How we meet these principles
F4: Managing data	➤ Data Protection Policy ➤ Data Protection training ➤ IT Transformation Project underway ➤ Access controls in place on Council network ➤ Secure physical access to Council buildings and IT server rooms
F5: Strong public financial management	➤ Rates Estimates process ➤ Annual Budget setting process and Budgetary reporting systems ➤ Financial management detailed in Directorate Business Plans ➤ Prudential Framework ➤ Compliance with CIPFA's Code on a Prudential Framework for Local Authority Capital Finance and CIPFA's Treasury Management Code ➤ Transformation programme being developed which includes detailed service reviews ➤ All Committee reports include financial implications ➤ Financial Regulations

Core Principle G: Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability

Supporting Principles	How we meet these principles
G1: Implementing good practice in transparency	➤ Annual Financial Report published on the Council's website. ➤ The Financial Report and accounts are prepared in line with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting the UK ➤ The Council web site provides the public with up to date information ➤ Standard Committee report template
G2: Implementing good practices in reporting	➤ Annual Accounts published on the Council's web site ➤ Established timescale for submission and approval of annual accounts ➤ Performance Improvement – Annual Audit and Assessment Reports ➤ Publication of statutory performance indicators in line with the Local Government (Northern Ireland) Act 2014 ➤ Annual Governance Statement reviewed by Chief Executive and published on Council's website ➤ Council Committees consider and approve reports which are ratified by full Council ➤ Review of Corporate Governance carried out by Internal Audit ➤ Service Level Agreements ➤ The Annual Accounts are prepared in line with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the UK based on International Financial Reporting Standards and the Department of Communities Accounts Direction. ➤ Committee reports presented by Senior Officers
G3: Assurance and effective accountability	➤ All NIAO recommendations are included on the recommendation tracker with updates reported to Audit Committee ➤ All NIAO (External Audit) reports presented to the Audit Committee ➤ Assistant Director of Finance and Performance who liaises with fully independent Internal Audit firm ➤ External audit completed by NIAO ➤ NIAO Proper Arrangements Audit ➤ Internal Audit annual review of effectiveness ➤ Community Planning Statutory Partners ➤ The Local Government (Community Planning Partners) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016 ➤ Service Level Agreements ➤ Contract Management ➤ Directorate Business Plans in place which contain key corporate actions, risk actions and performance indicators

Report to:	Audit Committee Meeting
Date of Meeting:	30 July 2026
Subject:	Update of Members' Interests
Reporting Officer (Including Job Title):	Sarah Taggart, Democratic Services Manager
Contact Officer (Including Job Title):	Sarah Taggart, Democratic Services Manager

Confirm how this Report should be treated by placing an x in either: -

For decision	☐	For noting only	☒
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1.0	Purpose and Background
1.1	For Elected Members it is likely that from time-to-time private matters will impinge upon public duties. In such circumstances, Members should be aware that it is not appropriate to use public position or resources to deal with private matters or to pursue private interest. The Council has established a Register of Interests and by recording interests openly, any actual or potential conflicts of interest can be identified more easily.
2.0	Key issues
2.1	Councillors have a responsibility to regularly review their circumstances and determine if any change has occurred which should rightly result in a change to their declaration or facilitate the need for a new declaration. If this is the case, they should contact Democratic Services to have their form updated.
2.2	At the Audit Committee meeting in January 2021, it was agreed that Members should regularly review their Register of Interest Forms and that a six-monthly report be brought forward to the Audit Committee to ensure compliance.
2.3	As part of the Audit Recommendations, it has been agreed that all Members' forms are updated on a 6 monthly basis whether there are any amendments or not. This has been completed in July 2026 and a further update will be done in January 2027.
2.4	The online register has been adapted to reflect any amendments and is up to date for all Members.
3.0	Recommendations
3.1	That Members: Note the update provided on Members' Register of Interests.
4.0	Resource implications
4.1	None identified

5.0	Due regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations (complete the relevant sections)
5.1	General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes It is not anticipated the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations ☒
5.2	Proposal relates to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision Yes ☐ No ☒ If yes, please complete the following: The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) has been equality screened ☐ The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) will be subject to equality screening prior to implementation ☐
5.3	Proposal initiating consultation Consultation will seek the views of those directly affected by the proposal, address barriers for particular Section 75 equality categories to participate and allow adequate time for groups to consult amongst themselves ☐ Consultation period will be 12 weeks ☐ Consultation period will be less than 12 weeks (rationale to be provided) ☐ <i>Rationale:</i>
6.0	Due regard to Rural Needs (please tick all that apply)
6.1	Proposal relates to developing, adopting, implementing or revising a policy / strategy / plan / designing and/or delivering a public service Yes ☒ No ☐ If yes, please complete the following: Rural Needs Impact Assessment completed ☐ If no, please complete the following: The policy / strategy / plan / public service is not influenced by rural needs ☒
7.0	Appendices
	None
8.0	Background Documents
	None