Proud of our past.
Building our future together.

Newry, Mourne & Down District Council
Corporate Plan 2015-19
1. Forward

Welcome to our Corporate Plan for 2015-2019. This period heralds a new era for our District, as a new Council (Newry, Mourne & Down District Council) is established following the amalgamation of Newry & Mourne District Council with Down District Council.

This is both an exciting, as well as a challenging time for us all. Although recent economic data points to a recovery which is well underway and real opportunities for future economic prosperity, we continue to have a significant number of areas of social deprivation. This combined with an uncertain future for some of our other key public services, as well as the future of public finances in Northern Ireland, all point towards some uncertainty in the coming years. New responsibilities for Planning and other important powers add to this dual sense of opportunity and uncertainty during what will undoubtedly be a period of significant change for us all.

During this time however, the new Council is committed to providing strong civic leadership, advocating on your behalf concerning those issues which are important for you, making best use of the resources at our disposal and delivering a range of actions aimed at improving the lives of local people and communities.

We recognise that we have many assets: our beautiful natural environment, our strategic location on the island of Ireland, and our impressive built heritage to name but a few. However, it is the people and communities of this District who make this place truly unique; we are committed to putting our communities at the heart of everything we do. Our new powers in relation to Community Planning will give us the tools for achieving this by working in partnership with local communities and other important organisations to deliver what is best for our District.

Our plan is ambitious despite some of the well documented challenges. However, we are determined as a Council to use the next four years to deliver on our ambitions and to make a real difference to the economic, health, educational, as well as the environmental wellbeing of the District.

Council Chairman

Chief Executive
2. Executive Summary

Our promise to you (the Council’s mission) is to lead and serve a District that is prosperous, healthy, as well as sustainable from an economic, environmental and social perspective.

We will achieve this by focusing on eight core areas (the Council’s strategic objectives):

By 2019, we will have:

1. Become one of the premier tourism destinations on the island of Ireland
2. Attracted investment and supported the creation of new jobs
3. Supported improved health and wellbeing outcomes
4. Protected our natural and built environment
5. Led the regeneration of our urban and rural areas
6. Advocated on your behalf specifically in relation to those issues which really matter to you
7. Empowered and improved the capacity of our communities
8. Transformed and modernised the Council, providing accessible as well as value for money services

This will need considerable investment in terms of money, people and time, as well as a coordinated range of actions to turn this vision into reality. However by the completion of this four year period, we expect to see the following:

- An increase in the number of visitors to the District with a corresponding increase in visitor spend;
- Support for local business to create new employment opportunities;
- Two new, replacement leisure centres for Newry City and Downpatrick;
- Investment in facilities and programmes to encourage healthier lifestyles;
- Commenced work on a new civic centre for Newry City;
- The regeneration of our towns and villages including investment in rural development;
- Zero waste to landfill and the closure of our two landfill sites;
- Local communities that are energised, empowered as well as actively engaged around the issues that are important to them;
• A strong and influential Council advocating on your behalf; and
• A modern and fit for purpose Council

3. Introduction

This is a Corporate Plan for the new Newry, Mourne & Down District Council which formally assumes its full powers and statutory responsibilities on the 1 April 2015. We believe it strikes the right balance between being sufficiently ambitious for our District whilst at the same time taking account of those issues which are outside of our direct control but will influence how our future unfolds.

With a population of around 171,500 and a coastline of approximately 100 miles, we are the third largest Council area in Northern Ireland. Although primarily made up of the former Newry & Mourne and Down District Council areas, the new Council also includes the electoral ward of Ballyward which has transferred from the former Banbridge District Council area.

In the initial years after April 2015, successfully establishing a new organisation and providing a seamless change as possible represent the biggest challenges for us as a Council to overcome. We are however determined to use this time wisely to ensure we put in place strong foundations to deliver for local people and local communities. This will require the effective stewardship of local resources as well as an outward-looking perspective in that the Council will seek to influence central government and other key stakeholders in relation to those issues which are important to you.

This Plan will also guide our activities and how we allocate the resources at our disposal. However, the real test will be how well we have delivered on our ambition to see the District becoming one of the most desirable places on the island to live, work and visit.

4. Our Mission, Vision and Values

Our Mission

Our mission as a Council is “to lead and serve a District that is prosperous, healthy and sustainable.”

Our Vision

We want to create opportunities for local people and local communities to thrive by supporting sustainable economic growth over time and helping them to lead fulfilling lifestyles. Our vision is that our District is, or grows to be a place:

• that is attractive to visit and do business;
• where people and communities can unlock their enterprising spirit as well as play their part in contributing to its social and economic development;
• that facilitates and encourages healthy lifestyles;
that offers a good quality of life for young and old, especially for those groups who may need more support than others;

where our communities are cohesive, actively engaged in civic life and where people live safe from crime and disorder;

with a protected natural environment that can be enjoyed today, but in a way that is also sustained for future generations;

that offers access to a range of modern, affordable services that make use of new technologies and are delivered to recognised quality standards;

where we work collaboratively and in partnership with a range of stakeholder and partner organisations to secure better outcomes for all; and

that is proud of its Council, what it stands for and what it represents.

**Our Values**

In pursuing our mission we have adopted five core values (see Table 1 below) which will be fundamental to everything that we do.

**Table 1: Our Values Explained**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>We Will Be</th>
<th>What This Means</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Citizen Focused</td>
<td>We will actively encourage citizen and community engagement, as well as be a listening and responsive Council.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accountable</td>
<td>We will make decisions based on an objective assessment of need and operate in a transparent way as well as openly report on our performance.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collaborative</td>
<td>We will actively encourage and pursue working in partnership and at all levels to deliver for our District.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sustainable</td>
<td>We will take into account the social, economic and environmental impacts of our decisions on current and future generations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fairness</td>
<td>We will proactively target actions at those which are marginalised in our community.</td>
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We are also committed to delivering on the promotion of equality and diversity in accordance with our statutory requirements as laid out in Section 75 of The Northern Ireland Act (2008).
4. Our District and its Challenges

Located in the south east of Northern Ireland, and covering parts of Counties Down and Armagh, our new District is easily accessible from both Belfast and Dublin. Renowned for its scenic beauty, we are bounded on the east by Strangford Lough and Carlingford Lough, and on the west by Slieve Gullion and Slieve Croob, with the picturesque Mountains of Mourne at our centre. To complement our outstanding natural assets, we are also home to a number of significant built heritage assets including Struell Wells in Downpatrick, Dundrum Castle and Bagenal’s Castle in Newry City.

Population

As the third largest Council, we make up approximately 11% of the total land area of Northern Ireland, more than 100 miles of coastline, and provide services to 171,533 residents (2011 Census). This represents 9.5% of the total population of Northern Ireland. 28.5% of our population is aged 19 or younger, 58.1% are 20-64 and 13.4% are over 65. With such a significant population, our challenge is to effectively cater for an increasing demand for public services but within reduced public expenditure.

Urban & Rural

In addition to Newry City, our principal settlements are Downpatrick, Ballynahinch, Kilkeel, Newcastle, Warrenpoint and Crossmaglen. Our challenge is to take advantage of wider EU as well as other funding opportunities to regenerate our urban and rural areas, including those available for cross-border initiatives.

Connectivity

Our District enjoys excellent road and rail links with Dublin as well as Belfast and contains a number of ports and harbours, providing direct access by water. However, internal connectivity is a problem, in terms of roads, transport and communications (broadband and mobile) infrastructure. Our priority is to improve the internal connection (transport and roads) and the connectivity (technology) of the entire District, as well as addressing traffic congestion in our urban areas and our tourist resorts.

Health & Wellbeing

We enjoy the highest percentage of people who are in very good health (50.32%). 70.1% of people have no long-term health problems, the second highest of all the eleven Councils in Northern Ireland. There are two major hospitals, Daisy Hill in Newry City and the Downe in Downpatrick. Our challenge is to at least maintain performance in these areas but at the same time tackle high levels of health inequalities as well as anti-social behaviour in areas of disadvantage, poverty and a tradition of dependency.
**Education**

Our District has excellent primary, secondary and tertiary educational establishments and can claim some of the best results in Northern Ireland. Our District is also home to two major education campuses in the South Eastern and the Southern Regional Colleges.

However, 28.2% of those aged 16 or over have no qualifications. This is slightly lower than the Northern Ireland average of 29.1%, and 4th lowest of the eleven Council areas. Our challenge is to work with the education sector and others to improve access to locally based higher education and to secure higher levels of employment skills development.

**Tourism**

Our tourism potential is enormous with three areas of outstanding natural beauty in Strangford & Lecale, Slieve Gullion, and the Mournes, numerous Blue Flag beaches, and an unrivalled link to St Patrick.

Over half (55%) of overnight trips to the District are for holiday purposes, the second highest in Northern Ireland after the Causeway Coast and Glens. We enjoy the third highest number of overnight visitors, representing around 3 visits per head of population and generating around £50 million of expenditure in the area. The area has 3,951 beds, fairly evenly split across hotels, B&Bs and Self-Catering. Occupancy rates are around 42%, meaning there is significant potential within current stock. Of the top 10 visitor attractions in Northern Ireland in 2013, Murlough Reserve ranked 5th, attracting around 358,000 visitors. As an employer, the tourism sector represents a little under 5,000 jobs in the District, the second highest of all Councils in Northern Ireland.

Our challenge is, that despite a strengthening Pound against the Euro and an increasingly uncertain future for the Euro zone, to build on this initial success by increasing visitor numbers, dwell time and spend as part of an overall economic growth plan.

Our responsibilities in relation to the environment will also play a key role in contributing to the tourism success of this District as well as making it an attractive place to live. Our challenge is to ensure we develop an effective local response to its use, the impacts of flooding and pollution.

**Enterprise & Employment**

Our District is an attractive location for business. Newry City is strategically placed on the A1 / M1 Belfast to Dublin corridor and Downpatrick is in close proximity to Belfast. The District is well served with a strong retail offering and a diverse range of service industries, manufacturing and agri-food businesses. The importance of the retail sector is reflected in the employment statistics, with 17.23% of the workforce employed in this area. This is followed by the health (13.85%), construction (12.5%) and education (9.95%) sectors.
Our District ranks third in terms of the percentage of the workforce who are self-employed with 11.45%, demonstrating the entrepreneurial nature of the District. Our farming sector employs 6,490 workers, 13.6% of all farm workers in Northern Ireland, working in 3,546, or 14.5% of all farms. 3,199 farms raise cattle, sheep and pigs representing 90.2% of all farms in the area.

However, we have the third highest percentage of people who have never worked, representing 0.81% of the working age population, and are joint second in terms of unemployment at a rate of 5.59%. Our challenge is to support securing greater private and public investment into our District as a means of supporting improved employment opportunities for all.

Council

Establishing a new organisation as well as being responsible for the discharge of new responsibilities, such as Planning, presents enormous challenges to overcome. Our key challenge is to manage this change as seamless as possible and to secure community buy-in as well as a common purpose across the entire District.

We will publish a number of important plans that will govern the future development of our District (Local Development Plan) as well as develop a meaningful Community Plan, which will be led by Council but equally involve the full and active participation of other key stakeholders and partner organisations.

Key Features of our District

Listed below are some of the key features of our District.

- A settlement mix of city, towns, villages and rural areas;
- Outstanding natural and built heritage;
- Coastline, beaches, resorts, forests, mountains (Mournes and Slieve Gullion);
- Tourism destination status;
- Economic corridor and cross border location – proximity to markets;
- Access in and out – by road, rail, port and air;
- Employment in large industry and through small business, including urban and rural options;
- Important contributions from farming, food and fishing sectors;
- Public service provision: health, education, housing, amenities;
- Retail services;
- Educated, skilled and enterprising people;
- Overall quality of life for residents;
- Community capacity and engagement; and
- Potential for renewable energy sources.
Corporate Plan 2015-19

Newry, Mourne & Down District Council

Retail sector vulnerable to exchange rate fluctuations and rise in online shopping

Need to capitalise on activity tourism and the opportunities offered by the coast

Pockets of deprivation and ill-health

Economic downturn

International competition for visitors and investment

Poor transport links within district

Need to promote community cohesion

Jobs

Higher than average unemployment and underemployment

Need to maximise opportunities arising from the environment and ICT
5. Our Priorities (Strategic Objectives)

To be true to our mission and realise our long-term vision for the development of our District, we have adopted the following eight priorities (see Figure 2, below). In the next section we have gone a step further and committed to a set of initiatives (a programme of work) that we believe will ensure that these priorities are met.

We believe in delivery on the ground and have therefore been specific about translating our strategic intentions into actions capable of achieving measurable results.

**Figure 2: Eight Strategic Objectives**

**By 2019, we will have:**

1. Become one of the premier tourism destinations on the island of Ireland;
2. Attracted investment and supported the creation of new jobs;
3. Supported improved health and wellbeing outcomes;
4. Protected our natural and built environment;
5. Led the regeneration of our urban and rural areas;
6. Advocated on your behalf specifically in relation to those issues which really matter to you;
7. Empowered and improved the capacity of our communities; and
8. Transformed and modernised the Council, providing accessible as well as value for money services.
6. **Key Actions & Measures of Success**

The following table provides a summary of the strategic intent of the Council for the period of its first term (2015-19). The table demonstrates how the Council intends to deliver on what people highlighted as strategic priorities for the District and its development over the plan period.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategic Objectives</th>
<th>Key Actions</th>
<th>Measures of Success</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. <strong>Become one of the premier tourism destination on the island of Ireland</strong>&lt;br&gt;Ensuring that we have a cultural and tourism infrastructure that will attract and serve the expectations of a growing number of local and international visitors.</td>
<td>1. Establish a recognised tourism brand for the District&lt;br&gt;2. Work with NITB, Tourism Ireland and other key stakeholders to review and improve tourism infrastructure&lt;br&gt;3. Explore the potential for Geotourism along the east coast / border areas&lt;br&gt;4. Take a lead role in realising the tourism potential of hosting the Irish Open and other major events&lt;br&gt;5. Review the tourism infrastructure of Newcastle</td>
<td>• Increased visitor numbers&lt;br&gt;• Increased dwell time of visitors&lt;br&gt;• Increased visitor spend</td>
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<td>2. <strong>Attracted investment and supported the creation of new jobs</strong>&lt;br&gt;Facilitating business investment and job creation as well as making sure that we have a skilled workforce to support our new industries.</td>
<td>1. Secure the District’s position as a “cross border” gateway for Dublin, Belfast and beyond&lt;br&gt;2. Liaise with education and training establishments to ensure a steady flow of skilled employees for employers&lt;br&gt;3. Successfully deliver Small Business Start and Growth Programmes, locally based&lt;br&gt;4. Prioritise infrastructure development and economic regeneration as part of the new Local Development Plan&lt;br&gt;5. Establish a new civic centre for Newry City</td>
<td>• Increased number of new businesses started&lt;br&gt;• Increased levels of employment&lt;br&gt;• Major planning applications processed (within 30 weeks)</td>
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<td>3. <strong>Supported improved health and wellbeing outcomes</strong></td>
<td>1. Replace the two existing Leisure Centres in Newry City and Downpatrick&lt;br&gt;2. Develop targeted programmes to</td>
<td>• Two Leisure Centres constructed and operational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Objectives</td>
<td>Key Actions</td>
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| Playing our part in improving quality of life and reducing health inequalities, primarily through programmes, services and access to open spaces. | tackle obesity and diabetes  
3. Promote increased physical activity levels  
4. Implement a leisure facilities and play strategy | • Increase in the number of people using Council leisure facilities |
| 4 | Protected our natural and built environment  
Developing clean and attractive places with increase in bio diversity and renewable energy sources and lower energy costs. | 1. Close our two existing landfill sites  
2. Better manage the District’s waste  
3. Reduce the risk of flooding in high risk areas  
4. Protect the District’s rich natural and built heritage | • Level of waste to landfill - zero waste to landfill across the District  
• Completion of flood defences at Camlough Lake  
• 70% of Planning enforcement cases processed within 39 weeks |
| 5 | Led the regeneration of our urban and rural areas  
Ensuring that our city, towns, villages and surrounding rural areas are great places for people to live, work, and visit. | 1. Implement master plans, including an up-to-date action plan for every town and village  
2. Introduce a rolling programme of EI schemes across towns and villages  
3. Agree with the Department for Social Development (DSD) arrangements for the transfer of regeneration powers and functions | • Increased number of new businesses and jobs created in rural areas |
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| 6. Advocated on your behalf specifically in relation to those issues which really matter to you | 1. Establish a new Community Planning Partnership as a means to engage and involve statutory partners as well as communities in developing the District  
2. Attract public sector jobs to the District  
3. Advocate for the introduction of high-speed broadband and enhanced mobile infrastructure across the District  
4. Lobby for the improvement of roads within and across the District  
5. Promote good health care provision for all citizens | • Increased broadband & mobile coverage  
• Improved roads infrastructure |
| 7. Empowered and improved the capacity of our communities | 1. Establish seven new Community Fora based on District Electoral Areas (DEAs) to allow for engagement and reporting at a local level  
2. Explore the potential for the community management of current Council facilities  
3. Develop a community engagement strategy for all aspects of Council services  
4. Develop and deliver a Community Support Plan (formerly the responsibility of DSD) | • Community Plan completed and published by mid 2016  
• 7 Community Fora established across the entire District with associated action plans |
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| **8** | **Transformed and modernised the Council, providing accessible as well as value for money services**  
*Establish the new Council as an efficient, effective and equitable organisation that people (employees and citizens) are proud of.* | 1. Become an Investors in People (IIP) and Customer Service Excellence (CSE) accredited organisation  
2. Develop a strategic financial plan to meet the capital and revenue needs of the Council  
3. Comprehensively review existing models of service delivery to identify more efficient ways of doing business  
4. Implement an Improvement Plan to transform existing Council operations | • Increased citizen satisfaction  
• Increased employee satisfaction  
• Reduced absenteeism  
• IIP/CSE accreditation  
• Annual Improvement Plan validated by the Local Government Auditor |
7. Making it Happen

We have agreed new governance structures (political and managerial) to ensure ownership and scrutiny across the entire organisation. This is represented by a Committee structure, which enables Elected Members of Council to fulfil their leadership and scrutiny roles, as well as a Management structure, to ensure there is sufficient organisational capacity for successful implementation. These are summarised below.

Council’s Committee Structure

![Council Committee Structure Diagram]

Council’s Management Structure

![Council Management Structure Diagram]
Delivering Our Priorities

Our aim is to deliver our priorities in a joined-up, integrated way where the Council's Departments work together to deliver the whole plan. Each of the Departments have an important role in this regard, however there will be instances where a lead Department will be responsible for delivering specific elements of the Plan. The lead Department is identified below (L) with key supporting Departments highlighted (s) under each theme.

The five Council Departments responsible for Plan delivery are:

- Enterprise, Regeneration and Tourism (ERT)
- Active and Healthy Communities (AHC)
- Regulatory and Technical Services (RTS)
- Corporate Services (CS)
- Strategic Planning and Performance (SPP)

Our Resources

We employ approximately 750 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) employees and have an annual budget in excess of £50m. This is made up of rates income, grants from central government and from the fees we charge for specific Council services.

Reviewing Our Performance

This Plan covers a four-year period from 2015-2016 and is the strategic means by which we will deliver for our District.

It will act as the primary driver for all activity within the Council and in doing so the priorities contained within it will shape other important plans and strategies that we will need to consider. This will include our new Community Plan, our Local Development Plan as well as a number of operational plans across the organisation.

Reviewing our progress against the Plan is something which is very important to us. In accordance with our new statutory responsibilities we will publish an annual improvement plan which will measure our success against what we have said we will achieve. This will be independently audited by the Local Government Auditor.

In addition to this we will also review our performance internally. The Plan will be reviewed annually by the Full Council, at six monthly intervals at Committee level by the Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee, as well as quarterly by the Senior Management Team. Furthermore, there will be ongoing review of performance at Departmental and Service levels within the Council.