

Performance Improvement Plan 2023-24

Mid Year Assessment



Comhairle Ceantair
**an Iúir, Mhúrn
agus an Dúin**

**Newry, Mourne
and Down**
District Council

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Introduction

This report provides an overview of the Council’s progress in implementing the performance improvement objectives between April-September 2023. Where possible, performance has been tracked against the targets set within the Performance Improvement Plan 2023-24.

Performance Improvement Objectives 2023-24

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

Legend

Status		Legend	
	Target or objective achieved / on track to be achieved		Performance has improved since Q1/Q2 2022-23
	Target or objective partially achieved / likely to be achieved / subject to delay		Performance is similar to Q1/Q2 2022-23
	Target or objective not achieved / unlikely to be achieved		Performance has declined since Q1/Q2 2022-23

It should be noted that:

- For the statutory performance indicators for economic development, planning and waste management, performance has been compared to the same period in 2022-23.
- The information contained within this report may be subject to change when the results are verified, validated and reported through the annual Assessment of Performance which will be published by 30 September 2023.

Progress at a glance

Performance Improvement Objective	Progress	Status Trend
We will support the health and wellbeing of local people by improving our local facilities and services	385,878 paid attendances recorded across the six Council Leisure Centres	
	120,264 visits recorded at 10 community trails	
	9,904 leisure centre memberships recorded	
	10,452 people participating in targeted health programmes	
	14,099 recorded attendances of young people participating in targeted youth health and wellbeing initiatives	
We will grow the economy by supporting local businesses and creating new jobs	77 new jobs promoted through business start activity	
	8 new social enterprises supported, and 8 new social enterprise jobs created	
	129 businesses supported to progress growth and scaling ambitions	
	69 new businesses and employer enterprises supported to start-up.	
We will improve the cleanliness of our District by addressing littering, fly tipping and dog fouling incidents	27 fixed penalty notices issued and 22 paid	
	Assistance provided towards 14 community clean ups	
	£13k awarded towards 9 environmental projects through the NI 'Live Here Love Here' scheme	
	Increase in the rate of recycling	
	Decrease in the amount of waste sent to landfill	
We will improve our sustainability and reduce our impacts in relation to climate change	80 trees planted on the Council managed estate	-
	Carbon footprint of Council estate to be progressed in 2024-25	
	5 drinking water fountains installed across the District	
	0 EV charging points installed across the District	
	61% of Council fleet younger than 8 years	
We will improve the processing times of planning applications and enforcement cases by implementing the Planning Service Improvement Programme	The average processing time for local planning applications increased to 28.6 weeks	
	The average processing time for major planning applications increased to 513 weeks	
	Data on the conclusion times of enforcement cases has not yet been made available by the Department	-
	Increase in the number of planning applications in the system for 12 months or more	
	Increase in the number of enforcement cases in the system for 12 months or more	

Performance Improvement Objective 1



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





Senior Responsible Officer: Director of Active and Healthy Communities

Progress:

During Q1 and Q2 2023-24, the Council:

- The completion of the Kilkeel Leisure Centre Review should be finalised by March 2024.
- Procurement for the implementation of 'Mystery Visitor' Programme will commence in Q3 with appointment to take place in Q4.
- Kilkeel Bowling Pavilion Project has now been completed.
- Council's Play Strategy Programme is complete, and the Play Strategy Review has commenced.
- The development of the Sports Development and Health & Wellbeing Strategy commenced in Q1.
- Sports capital financial assistance call was opened and completed in Q1/Q2.
- Multi Sports Hub expressions of interest has been progressed from Q1.

Measure of Success	2023-24		Status	Explanatory note
	Target	Q1/Q2 Actual		
Number of paid attendances at:	750,000	385,878		In the first six months of 2023/24 there were a total of 385,878 paid attendances recorded across the six leisure centres in the District. The highest number was recorded in Newry Leisure Centre accounting for 46% of the total paid attendances recorded.
Newry Leisure Centre		178,672		
Down Leisure Centre		129,007		
Kilkeel Leisure Centre		31,674		
St. Colmans Sports Complex		19,964		
Newcastle Centre & Tropicana Outdoor Swimming Complex		16,018		
Ballymote Sports & Wellbeing Centre		10,543		
Number of people participating in targeted health programmes	9,400	10,452		During Q1 & Q2 of 2023-24 participation in targeted health programmes reached 10,452 which already exceeds the annual target of 9,400 by 11%.

Number young people participating in targeted youth health and wellbeing initiatives	20,000	14,099		Between April & September 2023, over 14,000 attendances were recorded of young people participating in youth health and wellbeing initiatives across the District, achieving 70.5% of the annual target. These initiatives included summer sports camps, teen fitness, volleyball and £1 summer activities.
Number of leisure centre memberships	9,750	9,904		A total of 9,904 leisure centre memberships were recorded by the end of Q2 2023-24 which already exceeds the annual target of 9,750 by 1.6%. The memberships are broken down by leisure centre as follows: Down Leisure Centre - 4397 Newry Leisure Centre – 3958 Kilkeel Leisure Centre – 805 Newcastle Centre - 466 Ballymote - 174 St Colmans Sports Complex - 104
Number of capital leisure projects progressed	No target	3		Kilkeel Bowling Pavilion complete. Multi-Sports Hub EOI progressed. Play Park signage complete.
Number of recorded visits at community trails	225,000	120,264	 	120,264 visits were recorded at 10 community trails across the District between April and September of this year, achieving over 50% of the annual target set.

Performance Improvement Objective 2












We will grow the economy by supporting local businesses and creating new jobs

Senior Responsible Officer: Director of Enterprise, Regeneration and Tourism

Progress:

During Q1 and Q2 2023-24, the Council:

- Approved the 2023-24 Labour Market Partnership (LMP) Action Plan with one LMP meeting conducted.
- Hosted an Employment Pathway Job Fair event on 25th May with 50 employers; 10 support organisations; and 418 attendees to showcase opportunities in key sectors and career vacancies, along with enhanced career guidance.
- Commenced Drivers Academy with 22 participants registered.
- Approved the 2023-24 Schools to Industry Action Plan with 3 sub-group meetings conducted.
- Supported 128 entrepreneurs with an approved Business Plan, creating 69 new businesses and promoting 77 new jobs.
- Supported 129 local businesses to progress growth and scaling ambition.

Measure of success	2023-24		Status	Explanatory note
	Target	Q1/Q2 Actual		
Number of social enterprise start-ups supported	12	8	 	8 new social enterprise start-ups engaged, achieving 67% of the annual target.
Number of social enterprise jobs created	12	8	 	8 new social enterprise jobs created, achieving 67% of the annual target.
Number of business plans created for start-up businesses and employer enterprises	300	128	 	128 Business Plans approved, achieving 43% of the annual target. Go For It ceased implementation on 30 September 2023. Potential clients for Go For It will be referred to ESS once commenced.
Number of new businesses and employer enterprises supported to start-up.	187	69	 	69 new businesses created, achieving 37% of the annual target. Go For It ceased implementation on 30 September 2023. Potential clients for Go For It will be referred to ESS once commenced.
Number of new jobs promoted through business start up activity NI 'Go For It' <i>(statutory performance indicator)</i>	>155	77	 	77 new jobs promoted, achieving 50% of the statutory annual target. When compared to Q1/Q2 2022-23, this is below the 92 jobs which were promoted through the NI 'Go For It' programme. Go For It ceased implementation on 30 September 2023. Potential clients for Go For It will be referred to ESS once commenced.
Number of existing businesses	200	144		144 existing businesses supported, achieving 72% of the annual target. ERDF

supported to progress growth and scaling ambitions				funding programmes ceased between March and June 2023. Council implemented an interim programme to support businesses with the potential for growth.
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Performance Improvement Objective 3




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






Senior Responsible Officer: Director of Sustainability and Environment

Progress:

During Q1 and Q2 2023-24, the Council:

- Received 373 service requests for incidents of illicit dumping and fly tipping (261) and dog fouling (112).
- Issued 27 fixed penalty notices (22 of which have been paid). Overall, 81.5% of fixed penalty notices have been paid to date.
- Assisted 14 voluntary organisations, community groups, sports associations, schools and individuals with community clean ups across the District.
- Supported the NI 'Live Here Love Here' scheme, through which £13,000 was awarded towards 9 environmental projects covering themes such as community clean ups, community food growing initiatives and skill sharing in horticulture and community growing.
- Recorded an increase in the rate of recycling and a decrease in the amount of biodegradable waste sent to landfill. All current statutory standards have been achieved.

Measure of success	2023-24		Status	Explanatory note
	Target	Q1/Q2 Actual		
LEAMS score (Keep NI Beautiful Cleanliness Index)	65	-	-	The annual Cleaner Neighbourhoods Survey results for the 2023-24 financial year will be published by Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful in July 2024 and the LEAMS score for Newry, Mourne and Down will be reported through the annual Assessment of Performance 2023-24.
Number of fixed penalty notices issued (littering, fly tipping and dog fouling)	120	27		The Council issued 27 fixed penalty notices, achieving 22.5% of the annual target. To date, 22 of the fixed penalty notices have been paid which represents 22.9% of the annual target. FPN's not paid will be referred for legal action with a higher penalty likely to apply. It should be noted that the post responsible for the management of the enforcement team continues to be vacant.
Number of fixed penalty notices paid (littering, fly tipping and dog fouling)	96	22		
Number of community clean ups supported	100	14		The Council assisted with 14 community clean ups between April and September 2023.

Number of 'Live Here Love Here' environmental projects	No target	9		A total of 9 environmental projects across Newry, Mourne and Down received funding through the NI 'Live Here Love Here' small grants scheme.
The percentage of household waste collected by District Councils that is sent for recycling (<i>statutory performance indicator</i>)	50% by 2020	Q1 Actual		In 2022-23 the Council did not achieve the 2020 recycling target of 50%, falling slightly below this at 49.6%. For Q1 2023-24 however, the 2020 target has been exceeded with the rate of recycling recorded as 52.4%. This falls below the regional average of 53.8% and the Council is currently ranked 9/11 across Northern Ireland. When compared to Q1 2022-23, this represents an increase of 0.6% in the rate of recycling, from 51.8% to 52.4%. There was no increase in the rate of recycling at the regional level when comparing these quarters.
		52.4%	 	
The amount of biodegradable Local Authority Collected Municipal Waste that is landfilled (<i>statutory performance indicator</i>)	<20,954 tonnes (2019-20)	504	 	During Q1 2023-24, the Council sent 504 tonnes of biodegradable municipal waste to landfill which was the second lowest across Northern Ireland and has only used 2.4% of the NILAS* allowance. When compared to Q1 2022-23, the amount of waste that was sent to landfill decreased by 10.6%, from 564 tonnes.
The amount of Local Authority Collected Municipal Waste arisings (<i>statutory performance indicator</i>)	No target	22,473		When compared to Q1 2022-23, the amount of local authority collected municipal waste arisings increased by 0.5%, from 22,351 tonnes to 22,473 tonnes. This increase is lower than the increase experienced at the regional level.

*NILAS: Northern Ireland Landfill Allowance Scheme.

Performance Improvement Objective 4




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


Senior Responsible Officer: Director of Sustainability & Environment

Progress:

During Q1 and Q2 2023-24, the Council:

- Progressed the development of a Climate Change and Sustainable Development Strategy which will be brought to Committee for approval in Q4 2023-24.
- Continued the development of a Climate Change Adaptation Plan which will be brought to Committee for approval in Q4 2023-24.
- Progressed the development of the Newry, Mourne and Down Biodiversity Strategy (2023-28), with a public consultation planned for Q3 2023-24.
- Installed 5 Drinking Water Fountains at the following locations:
 - Annalong Harbour
 - Ardglass Harbour
 - Delamont Country Park
 - Kilkeel Harbour
 - Newcastle Promenade
- Planted 80 trees across the District.

Measure of Success	2023-24		Status	Explanatory note
	Target	Q1/Q2 Actual		
Carbon footprint of Council Estate	No Target			It was agreed by Council to procure a consultant in 2024 to assist in setting a carbon baseline and future targets. DAERA are currently consulting on future carbon budgets and so when the outcome of this is known in 2024, and more detail provided on the proposed methodology, then Council can align its approach with Central Government.
Percentage of Council fleet younger than 8 years	50%	61%		61% of the Council's fleet is younger than 8 years which already exceeds the annual target set by 11%
Number of vehicles within the Council fleet that have an alternative fuel source	10	1		Approval has been granted for the replacement of a proportion of existing small and medium sized diesel vans with electric vehicles. Work is ongoing in relation to the procurement of these vehicles and the required EV infrastructure.
Number of trees planted on Council managed estate	No target set	80		80 trees have been planted across 4 sites in the District and are a mix of native and non-native species including Oak, Beech, Hawthorn and Lime.

Number of Council supported EV charging points	20	0		<p>Council anticipate that EV chargers will be installed through the FASTER project in Q3 23/24 (approx. 8 charging bays). Others are to be installed through the collaborative ORCs (On-Street Residential Charge Point Scheme) project, which is currently being procured, with delivery expected by the end of Q4 2023-24.</p>
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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 of Enterprise, Regeneration and Tourism

Progress:

During Q1 2023-24, the Council:

- Received 357 planning applications in total which is the highest across Northern Ireland.
- The Council decided on 251 applications in Q1 2023-24, which is the fourth highest across Northern Ireland. 241 local planning applications were approved, resulting in an approval rate of 96.0%, which is just below the Northern Ireland average of 96.3%.
- Processed 16.5% of local planning applications within the statutory standard of <15 weeks, which is below the regional average of 39.8%. This represents a decrease of 21.4% when compared to the 37.8% of applications processed within <15 weeks during Q1 2022-23.
- Received 1 major planning application, decided on 1 application and approved 1 application. Similar to Q1 2022-23, no major planning applications were processed within the statutory standard of <30 weeks which is below the current regional average of 34.1%.
- Opened 73 enforcement cases which is the sixth highest across NI however data on the number of concluded cases is under development and therefore not yet available. As at 30 June 2023, the Council had 741 planning enforcement cases in the system, which is by far, the highest across Northern Ireland.

Measure of Success	2023-24		Status	Explanatory note
	Target	Q1 Actual		
Average processing time for local planning applications (weeks) <i>(statutory performance indicator)</i>	<15 weeks	28.6 weeks		During Q1 2023-24, the average processing time for local planning applications was 28.6 weeks which is above the regional average of 18.9 weeks. When compared to Q1 2022-23, this represents an increase of 11 weeks for Newry, Mourne and Down.
Average processing time of major planning applications (weeks) <i>(statutory performance indicator)</i>	<30 weeks	513.0 weeks		During Q1 2023-24, the average processing time for major planning applications was 513.0 weeks which is significantly above the regional average of 59.6 weeks. When compared to Q1 2022-23, this represents an increase of 209.2 weeks for Newry, Mourne and Down.
Percentage of planning enforcement cases progressed within 39 weeks <i>(statutory performance indicator)</i>	70%	-	-	Enforcement data for 'Enforcement cases concluded by planning authority' and 'Enforcement cases conclusion times by planning authority' is currently under development. The Department has advised that users will be notified when data is

				published.
Number of planning applications in the system for 12 months or more	150	239		As at 30 June 2023, Newry, Mourne and Down had 239 planning applications in the system for 12 months or more. This represents an increase of 11 applications when compared to March 2023 and 18 applications when compared to 30 June 2022. A reduction of 89 applications is required to achieve the annual target.
Number of planning applications in the system for 12 months or less	700	1,025		As at 30 June 2023, Newry, Mourne and Down had 1,025 planning applications in the system for 12 months or less. This represents an increase of 91 applications when compared to 31 March 2023 and an increase of 255 applications when compared to 30 June 2022. A reduction of 325 applications is required to achieve the annual target.
Number of enforcement cases in the system 12 months or more	450	544		As at 30 June 2023, Newry, Mourne and Down had 544 enforcement cases in the system for 12 months or more. This represents an increase of 41 cases when compared to 31 March 2023 and an increase of 94 cases when compared to 30 June 2022. A reduction of 94 cases is required to achieve the annual target.