

Performance Improvement Plan 2025-26

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 2025. Where possible, performance has been tracked against the targets set within the Performance Improvement Plan 2025-26.

Performance Improvement Objectives 2025-26

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

Legend

Status		Legend	
	Target or objective achieved / on track to be achieved		Performance has improved since Q1/Q2 2024-25
	Target or objective partially achieved / likely to be achieved / subject to delay		Performance is similar to Q1/Q2 2024-25
	Target or objective not achieved / unlikely to be achieved		Performance has declined since Q1/Q2 2024-25

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 2024-25.
- 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 2025.

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	472,721 paid attendances recorded across the six Council Leisure Centres	😊 △
	5 play parks upgraded	😊
	10,824 leisure centre memberships recorded	😊 △
	16,384 people participating in targeted health programmes	😊 △
	£225,000 in financial assistance funding allocated to sporting clubs across the District	😊
We will contribute to growing the economy by supporting local businesses job creation	113 new jobs promoted through business start activity	😊 △
	7 new social enterprises supported, and 6 new social enterprise jobs created	😊 ▶
	189 business plans created for start-up businesses and employer enterprises	😊 △
	160 businesses supported to progress growth and scaling ambitions	😊 ▼
	81 new enterprises created as a result of support.	😊 △
We will improve the cleanliness of our District by continuing to promote recycling and addressing littering, fly tipping and dog fouling incidents	17 fixed penalty notices issued and 14 paid	😞 △
	100% of community clean up requests supported	😊
	£15k awarded towards 10 environmental projects through the NI 'Live Here Love Here' scheme	▼
	Decrease in the rate of recycling	😞 ▶
	Decrease in the amount of Local Authority Collected Municipal Waste arisings	△
We will improve our sustainability and reduce our impacts in relation to climate change	Carbon footprint of Council estate baselined from 2024-25 data establishing a footprint of 5,246 tCO2e	😊
	1 vehicle within the Council fleet currently has an alternative fuel source. Orders are due to be placed for 13No small electric vans.	😞 ▶
	89 trees planted on the Council managed estate	😞 △
	19 EV charging points currently installed across the Council estate with a further 18 due to be installed through the ORCs scheme	😊
	76% 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 46.1 weeks	😞 ▼
	The average processing time for major planning applications decreased to 54.4 weeks	😞 △
	The percentage of planning enforcement cases progresses within 39 weeks increased to 74.0%	😊 △
	Decrease 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 2025-26, the Council:

- Ran a comprehensive summer activity programme across the District during July and August.
- Continued to work with the capital estates team on progressing the design for Jennings Park. Planning application has been submitted.
- Successful re-opening of Newry Pool.
- Completed the Play Strategy review with 5 play parks now open.
- Sports capital financial assistance call was opened and completed in Q1/Q2.
- Continued to work towards Leisure-safe accreditation with a new list compiled by Disability NI and a works programme scheduled for the next 6 months.
- Appointed an external provider and agreed a customer survey questionnaire for the mystery shopper programme to be completed in Q3.

Measure of Success	2025-26		Status	Explanatory note
	Target	Q1/Q2 Actual		
Number of paid attendances at:	757,500	482,251	 	In the first six months of 2025-26 there were a total of 482,251 paid attendances recorded across the six leisure centres in the District. This represents an increase of 46% compared to the figure recorded for the same period last year which can be attributed to the re-opening of the pool at Newry Leisure Centre. The highest number was recorded in Newry Leisure Centre accounting for 54% of the total paid attendances recorded.
Newry Leisure Centre	335,000	258,292	 	
Down Leisure Centre	275,000	136,402	 	
Kilkeel Leisure Centre	15,000	21,208	 	
St. Colmans Sports Complex	68,700	34,798	 	
Newcastle Centre & Tropicana Outdoor Swimming Complex	27,800	12,488	 	

Ballymote Sports & Wellbeing Centre	36,000	19,063	 	
Number of people participating in targeted health programmes	22,000	16,384	 	During Q1 & Q2 of 2025-26 participation in targeted health programmes reached 16,384 which is 75% of the annual target. This figure also represents a 75% increase on the figure recorded for the same period last year.
Value of Financial Assistance Funding allocated to clubs	£225,000	£225,000		Financial assistance completed including major and minor options. 31 clubs and 6 facilities benefitted from this assistance.
Number of leisure centre memberships	10,100	10,824	 	A total of 10,824 leisure centre memberships were recorded by the end of Q2 2025-26 which is an increase of 17.4% when compared to the 9,217 memberships recorded at the end of Q2 2024-25
Number of capital leisure projects progressed	2	2		Projects complete for Donard Park, Dunleath and Dundrum Changing Rooms. Kilkeel Leisure Centre has now closed, and works are in progress. Jennings Park work is now progressing.
Number of play parks upgraded	2	5		5 Play parks all complete in Year 1. Granite View, Mullaghbawn, Scrogg Road, Ardglass and Belleek. Year 2 & 3 works have commenced.

Performance Improvement Objective 2









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




Senior Responsible Officer: Director of Enterprise, Regeneration and Tourism

Progress:

During Q1 and Q2 2025-26, the Council:

- Engagement with Local Economic Partnership and key stakeholders on the development of a range of interventions that will be delivered up to March 2028 focusing on increasing productivity.
- Received approval from DfC for 2025-27 Labour Market Partnership (LMP) Action Plan, LMP meetings and Schools to Industry meetings continue.
- LMP Get Work Ready pre-employment programme launched with 27 participants enrolled.
- LMP HGV Employment Academy launched with 32 participants enrolled.
- Employment Pathway Job Fair event on 19th June with 50 employers; 16 support organisations; and 388 attendees, over 450 jobs were on offer and 63% of attendees were aged 19-44.
- Continued to support the startup and growth of Social Enterprises in NMD.
- Delivered Go Succeed Start and Grow pillars.
- Supported DTFF implementation.
- Delivered a range of Make it Local campaigns to support "Giant Adventures"
- Continued to support artisan traders via artisan markets held monthly in Downpatrick, Newcastle and Warrenpoint.

Measure of success	2025-26		Status	Explanatory note
	Target	Q1/Q2 Actual		
Number of social enterprise start-ups supported	12	7	 	7 new social enterprise start-ups engaged, achieving 58% of the annual target.
Number of social enterprise jobs created	12	6	 	6 new social enterprise jobs created, achieving 50% of the annual target.
Number of participants engaged across all 'Go Succeed' activity	712	555	 	Between April and September 2025, 555 people registered for the Go Succeed Programme achieving 78% of the annual target. These registrations were across three pillars of: Engage: 289 Foundation: 83 Growth: 183
Number of business plans created for start-up businesses and employer enterprises	289	189	 	189 Business Plans approved, achieving 65% of the annual target. These include: 158 Business Plans and 31 Enterprise Action Plans.

Number of new enterprises created as a result of support	119	81		372 start-ups registered for 'Go Succeed' between April and September 2025. This has resulted in 81 new startups created, achieving 68% of the annual target.
Number of new jobs promoted through business start-up activity NI 'Go Succeed' <i>(statutory performance indicator)</i>	173	113*		113 jobs created based on the multiplier of 0.6 as per DfE. 189 Business Plans approved, these include: 158 Business Plans and 31 Enterprise Action Plans. This accounts for 65% of the annual target
Number of existing businesses supported to progress growth and scaling ambitions	220	160		160 businesses received 1-2-1 diagnostic support achieving 73% of the annual target. Mentoring is allocated depending on growth ambitions i.e. 10 hours. 15 hours and 21 hours. Average support is 15 hours

*The 2025/26 mid year figure is a draft number to be finalised following monitoring and verification of data by Go Succeed lead BCC

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 of Sustainability and Environment

Progress:

During Q1 and Q2 2025-26, the Council:

- Received 481 service requests for incidents of illicit dumping, fly tipping and dog fouling, an increase of 30% compared to the 371 incidents recorded for the same period last year.
- Issued 17 fixed penalty notices (14 of which have been paid). Overall, 82.4% of fixed penalty notices have been paid to date.
- Assisted 17 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 £14,822 was awarded towards 10 environmental projects including monthly nature clubs, organic gardening, community food growing initiatives and making village public spaces greener.
- Recorded a decrease in the rate of recycling and an increase in the amount of biodegradable waste sent to landfill.
- Recorded a decrease in the amount of Local Authority Collected Municipal Waste arisings

Measure of success	2025-26 Target	Q1/Q2 Actual	Status	Explanatory note
Number of fixed penalty notices issued (littering, fly tipping and dog fouling)	100	17	 	The Council issued 17 fixed penalty notices, achieving 17% of the annual target. To date, 14 of the fixed penalty notices have been paid. FPN's not paid will be referred for legal action with a higher penalty likely to apply. It should be noted that there does remain a number of vacant posts within the section.
Number of fixed penalty notices paid (littering, fly tipping and dog fouling)	80	14	 	
Percentage of fixed penalty notices issued that are paid	80%	82.4%		Overall, 82.4% of fixed penalty notices issued during the first six months of 2025-26 have been paid.
Percentage of community clean up requests supported	90%	100%		The Council assisted with 17 community clean ups between April and September 2025, providing support to all requests from the community.

Number of 'Live Here Love Here' environmental projects	No target	10		A total of 10 environmental projects across Newry, Mourne and Down received funding totalling nearly £15K 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>)	55% by 2025	Q1 Actual	 	In Q1 2025-26, the 2025 target of 55% has not been achieved with the rate of recycling recorded as 50.5% for Newry, Mourne and Down. This falls below the regional average of 54.0% and the Council is currently ranked 10/11 across Northern Ireland. When compared to Q1 2024-25, this represents a decrease of 2.0% in the rate of recycling, from 52.5% to 50.5%.
		50.5%		
The amount of biodegradable Local Authority Collected Municipal Waste that is landfilled (<i>statutory performance indicator</i>)	<20,954 tonnes (2019-20)	148	 	During Q1 2024-25, the Council sent 148 tonnes of biodegradable municipal waste to landfill which was the fifth lowest across Northern Ireland and has only used 0.7% of the NILAS* allowance. When compared to Q1 2024-25, the amount of biodegradable waste that was sent to landfill increased by 190%, from 51 tonnes.
The amount of Local Authority Collected Municipal Waste arisings (<i>statutory performance indicator</i>)	No target	22,914		During Q1 2025-26, the Council collected 22,914 tonnes of municipal waste arising which was the fourth highest across Northern Ireland. When compared to Q1 2024-25, the amount of local authority collected municipal waste arisings decreased by 1.4%, from 23,250 tonnes to 22,914 tonnes. This decrease is greater than the 0.8% decrease 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 2025-26, the Council:

- Completed the Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy in draft which was presented to elected members at the SE Working group in September 2025. Approval to be sought at SE Committee in October 2025 for launch of public consultation.
- Climate Mitigation report (which includes carbon baseline reporting) currently being finalised for submission to DAERA by 31 October 2025.
- Progressed the action plan contained within the Newry, Mourne and Down Biodiversity Strategy (2024-30)
- Continued to implement the Fleet Replacement Programme. Fleet modernisation will deliver a significant reduction in CO2 emissions particularly with the procurement of 13 no. electric battery vehicles by the Council before the end of 2025-26.
- Work has commenced on the Climate Adaptation Report which is due to be submitted to DAERA by 31 March 2026.

Measure of Success	2025-26 Target	Q1/Q2 Actual	Status	Explanatory note
Carbon footprint of Council Estate	No Target	5,246 tCO2e		The Baseline Emissions Footprint for Newry Mourne and Down is 5,246 tCO2e (Tonnes of CO2 equivalent) This baseline was established using information from 2024-25.
Renewable Energy generation	No Target	154,684 kWh		The Council has 21 Solar PV sites across the District. The Baseline figure for Generation of renewable energy is 154,684 kWh which is currently how much renewable electricity we produce from our solar systems.
Energy Consumption Baseline	No Target	Electricity - 4,584,089 kWh Mains Gas - 4,996,992 kWh Heating Oil (Kerosene) -		The Baseline energy usage which was established using 2024-25 data is as follows: Electricity - 4,584,089 kWh Mains Gas - 4,996,992 kWh Heating Oil (Kerosene) - 449,723 litres Fleet Use (Diesel) - 837,901 litres Fleet Use (Unleaded Petrol) - 4,995 litres

		449,723 litres Fleet Use (Diesel) - 837,901 litres Fleet Use (Unleaded Petrol) - 4,995 litres		
Percentage of Council fleet younger than 8 years	85%	76%	 	76% of the Council's fleet is younger than 8 years and is an increase of 6% when compared to the 70% recorded for the same period last year.
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. Orders are now due to be placed for 13 No small/medium electric vans. Procurement is in progress for Council fleet charging infrastructure.
Number of trees planted on Council managed estate	2,800	89	 	89 trees have been planted across the District during Q1 & Q2. In general, the planting season takes place during Q3 & Q4, and planting will start largely from November onwards.
Number of Council supported EV charging points	18	19		Council currently supports 19 EV charging points across its estate. Another 18 are due to be installed as part of the ORCS (On street residential charge point scheme) which should be completed by 31 March 2026.

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 Economy, Regeneration and Tourism

Progress:

During Q1 2025-26, the Council:

- Received 271 planning applications in total which is the second highest across Northern Ireland.
- The Council decided on 252 applications in Q1 2025-26, which is the third highest across Northern Ireland. 213 local planning applications were approved, resulting in an approval rate of 84.5%, which is below the Northern Ireland average of 94.5%.
- Processed 2.3% of local planning applications within the statutory standard of <15 weeks, which is below the regional average of 42.9%. This represents a decrease of 0.5% when compared to the 2.8% of applications processed within <15 weeks during Q1 2024-25.
- Received 4 major planning applications, decided on and approved 2 applications. In Q1 2025-26, 0% of major planning applications were processed within the statutory standard of <30 weeks which is below the current regional average of 51.5%. This represents a decrease of 25% compared to the 25% of applications processed within <30 weeks in Q1 2024-25.
- Opened 83 enforcement cases which is the third highest across NI with 50 cases concluded. As of 30 June 2025, the Council had 833 planning enforcement cases in the system, which is by far, the highest across Northern Ireland.
- Launched the Draft Plan Strategy in Q2 2025-26

Measure of Success	2025-26		Status	Explanatory note
	Target	Q1 Actual		
Average processing time for local planning applications (weeks) <i>(statutory performance indicator)</i>	<15 weeks	46.1 weeks	 	During Q1 2025-26, the average processing time for local planning applications was 46.1 weeks which is above the regional average of 19.8 weeks. When compared to Q1 2024-25, this represents an increase of 3.1 weeks for Newry, Mourne and Down.
Average processing time of major planning applications (weeks) <i>(statutory performance indicator)</i>	<30 weeks	54.4 weeks	 	During Q1 2025-26, the average processing time for major planning applications was 54.4 weeks which is above the regional average of 30.0 weeks. When compared to Q1 2024-25 however, this represents a

				decrease of 64.1 weeks for Newry, Mourne and Down.
Percentage of planning enforcement cases progressed within 39 weeks <i>(statutory performance indicator)</i>	70%	74.0%		During Q1 2025-26, the percentage of cases concluded within 39 weeks was 74.0% which is above the regional average of 73.2%. When compared to Q1 2024-25, this represents an increase of 27.2% for Newry, Mourne and Down.
Number of planning applications in the system for 12 months or more	170	473		As of 30 June 2025, Newry, Mourne and Down had 473 planning applications in the system for 12 months or more. This represents an increase of 65 applications when compared to March 2025 and 118 applications when compared to 30 June 2024. A reduction of 303 applications is required to achieve the target.
Number of planning applications in the system for 12 months or less	870	1,054		As of 30 June 2025, Newry, Mourne and Down had 1,054 planning applications in the system for 12 months or less. This represents a decrease of 64 applications when compared to 31 March 2025 and a decrease of 29 applications when compared to 30 June 2024. A reduction of 184 applications is required to achieve the target.
Number of enforcement cases in the system 12 months or more	580	610		As of 30 June 2025, Newry, Mourne and Down had 610 enforcement cases in the system for 12 months or more. This represents an increase of 36 cases when compared to 31 March 2025 and an increase of 41 cases when compared to 30 June 2024. A reduction of 30 cases is required to achieve the target.