

Performance Improvement Plan 2021-22

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 2021. Where possible, performance has been tracked against the targets set within the Performance Improvement Plan 2021-22.

Performance Improvement Objectives 2021-22

1. **We will encourage local people to lead healthy and active lives by improving the quality of our parks and open spaces**
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 build the capacity of local communities through the Financial Assistance Scheme**
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 2020-21
	Target or objective partially achieved / likely to be achieved / subject to delay		Performance is similar to Q1/Q2 2020-21
	Target or objective not achieved / unlikely to be achieved		Performance has declined since Q1/Q2 2020-21

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 2020-21.
- 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 2022.

Progress at a glance

Performance Improvement Objective	Progress	Status Trend
We will encourage local people to lead healthy and active lives by improving the quality of our parks and open spaces	1.6m visits recorded at Kilbroney Park, Slieve Gullion Forest Park and Warrenpoint Municipal Park	
	102,177 visits recorded at 8 community trails	
	Green flag accreditation for 5 parks, including Slieve Gullion Forest Park and Delamont Country Park	
	Blue flag accreditation for Cranfield, Murlough and Tyrella beaches	
	Two new play parks complete and open	
We will grow the economy by supporting local businesses and creating new jobs	114 new jobs promoted through business start activity	 
	6 new social enterprises supported and 8 new social enterprise jobs created	
	213 businesses supported and 1,718 mentoring hours delivered through 'NMD Growth', 'Digital Growth', 'Tender for Growth' and 'Sales and Trade'	
	9 new jobs and 2 new businesses created through SEAFLAG 2	
We will improve the cleanliness of our District by addressing littering, fly tipping and dog fouling incidents	74 fixed penalty notices issued and 56 paid	
	Assistance provided towards 66 community clean ups	
	£13k awarded towards 17 environmental projects through the NI 'Live Here Love Here' scheme	
	Decrease in the rate of recycling	 
	Increase in the amount of waste sent to landfill	 
We will build the capacity of local communities through the Financial Assistance Scheme	£1.4m awarded towards 365 successful applications through the Financial Assistance Scheme	
	£844k awarded towards Sport and Community Facilities Capital projects	
	£44k awarded towards 24 COVID-19 Transition projects	
	6 online capacity building sessions delivered to external and internal stakeholders	
	2,604 participants have taken part in completed projects funded through the Financial Assistance Scheme	
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 improved to 16.8 weeks	 
	The average processing time for major planning applications improved to 43 weeks	 
	54.4% of enforcement cases processed within 39 weeks	 
	Reduction 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 encourage local people to lead healthy and active lives by improving the quality of our parks and open spaces

Senior Responsible Officer: Director of Enterprise, Regeneration and Tourism

Progress:

- The Council continued to work towards UNESCO Global Geopark designation for Mourne, Gullion, Strangford, and it is anticipated that the evaluation will take place during Q3 2021-22.
- The Fallows phase 1 trail at Kilbroney Park is almost complete and phase 2 is scheduled to commence in November 2021. The planning application for the new visitor facilities at Tyrella beach has been submitted and the outdoor performance and interpretive space at Slieve Gullion Forest Park is scheduled to complete during Q3 2021-22.
- The draft proposals for the viewpoint upgrade, walking trails and visitor information centre at Delamont Country Park are currently being finalised and the consultation process will commence during Q4 2021-22.
- Three new community trails opened at Daisy Hill (Newry), Aughrim Hill (Attical) and Corry Wood (Castlewellan).
- The Council delivered a Social Sustainability campaign which focused on good visitor management by encouraging people to be mindful of their surroundings and consider the impact of their actions on others. This included the #LeaveNoTrace campaign which promoted 7 handy tips to preserve the local area and respect the natural environment.
- A diverse range of activities have been delivered at Warrenpoint Park, including a heritage led programme for the Warrenpoint Youth Forum, regular 'art in the park' exhibitions, tai chi and puppy socialisation classes as well as a digital, traditional and performing arts programme for young people.

Measure of Success	2021-22		Status	Explanatory note
	Target	Q1/Q2 Actual		
Number of recorded visits at:				
Kilbroney Park*	No target	982,812		982,812 visits were recorded at the main car park at Kilbroney Park. Additional visits have been recorded at the Narnia Trail, Fairy Glen and Mountain Bike run.
Slieve Gullion Forest Park*	No target	469,940		469,940 visits were recorded at the main car park at Slieve Gullion Forest Park. Additional visits have been recorded at the Kissing Gate.
Carlingford Lough Greenway	No target	Data not available	-	The number of visits recorded at the Carlingford Lough Greenway will be reported through the Assessment of Performance 2021-22.

Warrenpoint Municipal Park	143,500	139,845		139,845 visits were recorded at Warrenpoint Municipal Park, achieving 97.5% of the annual target. The majority of visits (54.7%) were recorded during Q2 2021-22.
Community trails	No target	102,177 visits		102,177 visits were recorded at 8 community trails. Bunkers Hill recorded the most visits (21,715) and April/May 2021 were the busiest months.
Number of parks with green flag accreditation	5	5		The Council was recently awarded green flag accreditation for five parks, including Kilbroney Park and Slieve Gullion Forest Park and green flag heritage accreditation for Warrenpoint Municipal Park, Newry Canal and Delamont Country Park.
Number of parks with green flag heritage accreditation	2	3		
Number of beaches with blue flag accreditation	3	3		The Council was awarded blue flag accreditation for Cranfield, Murlough and Tyrella beaches in Q1 2021-22.
Level of satisfaction with the Council's forest parks	-	-	-	During September 2021, the Council carried out Visitor Satisfaction Surveys for the Council's main parks and beaches. The results of both surveys are currently being analysed and will be reported in due course.
Number of new/upgraded play parks	5	2		The Council opened two new play parks at Martins Lane (Newry) and Mourne Esplanade (Kilkeel). Building work at the new play parks in Downs Road (Newcastle) and Mullagh Close (Ballymartin) has been temporarily suspended due to the implications of Brexit on accessing materials. However, the Council is on track to complete the remaining three new/upgraded play parks by March 2022.

*New counter systems have been installed across selected Council parks and work is underway to verify the quality of the data for accuracy. It should be noted that the baseline data records the number of vehicles entering the parks which is multiplied by 4 to calculate the number of individual visits.

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 2021-22, the Council:

- Delivered the 'Make it Local' marketing campaign to stimulate footfall and the re-opening of businesses across the District, using local publications and social media platforms, billboard advertising and promotional videos.
- Continued to deliver the £1.9m COVID-19 Recovery Revitalisation Programme, through which 788 letters of offer, with a total value of £1,137,633, have been issued to local businesses.
- Supported 190 entrepreneurs with an approved Business Plan, creating 114 new businesses and promoting 114 new jobs.
- Supported 213 local businesses and delivered 1,718 mentoring hours, 6 workshops, 2 thematic programmes and 1 'Meet the Buyer' event through the 'NMD Growth', 'Digital Growth', 'Tender for Growth' and 'Sales and Trade' programmes.

Measure of success	2021-22		Status	Explanatory note
	Target	Q1/Q2 Actual		
Number of business plans approved through NI 'Go For It'*	312	190		190 Business Plans approved, achieving 60.9% of the annual target.
Number of new business starts created through NI 'Go For It'	187	114		114 new businesses created, achieving 70% of the annual target.
Number of new jobs promoted through NI 'Go For It' (statutory performance indicator)	>155	114	 	114 new jobs promoted, achieving 73.6% of the statutory annual target. When compared to Q1/Q2 2020-21, this is well above the 64 jobs which were promoted through the NI 'Go For It' programme.
Number of social enterprise start-ups supported	12	6		6 new social enterprise start-ups supported, achieving 50% of the annual target.
Number of social enterprise jobs created	12	8		8 new social enterprise jobs created, achieving 66.7% of the annual target.
Number of businesses supported through 'NMD Growth'	128	102		102 businesses supported, achieving 79.7% of the annual target.
Number of jobs created through 'NMD Growth'	64	-	-	The number of jobs created will be monitored in Q4 and reported through the Assessment of Performance 2021-22.
Number of businesses	90	39		39 businesses supported, achieving 43.3% of annual target. As there has been moderate uptake to the programme,

supported through 'Digital Growth'				plans are underway to review recruitment levels with the delivery agent.
Number of jobs created through 'Digital Growth'	50	-	-	The number of jobs created will be monitored in Q4 and reported through the Assessment of Performance 2021-22.
Number of businesses supported through 'Tender for Growth'	81	35	☹️	35 businesses supported, achieving 43.2% of annual target. Increased levels of recruitment were recorded during Q1/Q2, and the annual target is likely to be achieved.
Number of jobs created through 'Tender for Growth'	40	-	-	The number of jobs created will be monitored in Q4 and reported through the Assessment of Performance 2021-22.
Number of businesses supported through 'Sales and Trade'	80	37	😊	37 businesses supported, achieving 46.3% of annual target. This programme was launched during Q1 2021-22, with good levels of uptake during the first round of recruitment. The Council is on track to achieve the annual target.
Number of jobs created through 'Sales and Trade'	40	-	-	The number of jobs created will be monitored in Q4 and reported through the Assessment of Performance 2021-22.
Number of new jobs created in coastal areas (SEAFLAG 2)	Mar 2023: 5.5	To date	😊	To date, 9 new jobs have been created through the SEAFLAG programme, exceeding the 2023 target of 5.5 new jobs. Current projections indicate that a further 12 FTE jobs will be created through the programme. It should be noted that there is a 'lag' between the initiation of the programme and the subsequent creation of new jobs and businesses, and the achievement of qualifications. Progress against the targets set will continue to be monitored by SEA FLAG during the programme period.
		9		
Number of new businesses created in coastal areas (SEAFLAG 2)	Mar 2023: 2	2	😊	A total of two new businesses have been created in Ardglass and Killeel and the 2023 target has been achieved.

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 Neighbourhood Services

Progress:

During Q1 and Q2 2021-22, the Council:

- Received 583 service requests for incidents of illicit dumping (301), littering (197) and dog fouling (85).
- Issued 51 littering and fly tipping fixed penalty notices (41 of which have been paid) and 23 dog fouling fixed penalty notices (15 of which have been paid). Overall, 75.7% of fixed penalty notices have been paid to date.
- Assisted 66 voluntary organisations, community groups, sports associations, schools and individuals with community clean ups across the District. This included nine beach cleans at a range of locations including Tyrella, Dundrum and Coney Island beaches.
- Supported the NI 'Live Here Love Here' scheme, through which £13,000 was awarded towards 17 environmental projects for a range of initiatives across the District, including community clean ups, creating community gardens, allotments and vegetable plots, planting wildflowers and fruit bushes and delivering horticultural workshops.
- Recorded a slight reduction in the rate of recycling and an increase in the amount of waste sent to landfill. However, current statutory standards have been achieved.

Measure of success	2021-22		Status	Explanatory note
	Target	Q1/Q2 Actual		
LEAMS score (Keep NI Beautiful Cleanliness Index)	68	-	-	The annual Cleaner Neighbourhoods Survey results for the 2021-22 financial year will be published by Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful in July 2022 and the LEAMS score for Newry, Mourne and Down will be reported through the annual Assessment of Performance 2021-22.
Number of fixed penalty notices issued (littering, fly tipping and dog fouling)	90	74	😊	The Council issued 74 fixed penalty notices, achieving 80% of the annual target. To date, 56 of the fixed penalty notices have been paid which represents 77.8% of the annual target.
Number of fixed penalty notices paid (littering, fly tipping and dog fouling)	72	56	😊	
Number of community clean ups supported	60	66	😊	The Council assisted with 66 community clean ups, exceeding the annual target by 10%.
Number of 'Live Here Love Here' environmental projects	No target	17	😊	A total of 17 environmental projects across Newry, Mourne and Down received funding through the NI 'Live Here Love Here' scheme.
The percentage of household waste collected	50% by 2020	Q1 Actual		Whilst the Council has exceeded the current statutory standard of 50%

by District Councils that is sent for recycling (<i>statutory performance indicator</i>)		50.4%	 	by 2020, the rate of recycling continues to reduce. The Q1 2021-22 rate of recycling was 50.4% which falls below the regional average of 52.1% and the Council is currently ranked 8/11 across Northern Ireland. When compared to Q1 2020-21, this represents a reduction of 6.6% in the rate of recycling, from 57% to 50.4%, which is above the regional rate of reduction of 2.3% when comparing the same quarters.
The amount of biodegradable Local Authority Collected Municipal Waste that is landfilled (<i>statutory performance indicator</i>)	<20,954 tonnes (2019-20)	658 tonnes	 	During Q1 2021-22, the Council sent 658 tonnes biodegradable municipal waste to landfill which was the second lowest across the Northern Ireland, and has only used 3.1% of the NILAS* allowance. However, when compared to Q1 2020-21, the amount of waste that was sent to landfill increased by 52.3%, from 432 tonnes.
The amount of Local Authority Collected Municipal Waste arisings (<i>statutory performance indicator</i>)	No target	24,059 tonnes		When compared to Q1 2020-21, the amount of local authority collected municipal waste arisings increased by 19.3%, from 20,174 tonnes to 24,059 tonnes. This increase is similar to the regional trend and may be attributed to less waste being collected at Household Recycling Centres during Q1 2020-21, when many Household Recycling Centres were closed.

*NILAS: Northern Ireland Landfill Allowance Scheme.

Performance Improvement Objective 4




We will build the capacity of local communities through the Financial Assistance Scheme


Senior Responsible Officer: Director of Active and Healthy Communities

Progress:

During Q1 and Q2 2021-22:

- The Council awarded £1,465,203 towards 364 applications across 18 themes, including Community Engagement, Summer Schemes, Irish Language and Local Biodiversity.
- The most popular themes were Community Safety, Good Relations and Community Engagement, through which £199,139 was awarded towards 128 successful applications.
- The highest amount of funding was awarded to Sports Facility Capital projects (£705,695 awarded to 16 applications) followed by Community Facility Capital projects (£138,326 towards 4 projects) and Sport Development Minor Capital projects (£92,198 towards 22 applications).
- The Council awarded £44,290 towards 24 COVID-19 transition projects and £12,670 towards 13 Suicide Prevention projects.
- Through existing Service Level Agreements, the Council awarded a total of £471,858 to the Newry Gateway Club, Newry Mourne and Down Community Advice, County Down Rural Community Network and Confederation of Community Groups.

Measure of Success	2021-22		Status	Explanatory note
	Target	Q1/Q2 Actual		
% of successful financial assistance applications*	74%	68.8%		Overall, the Council received 529 applications to the 2021-22 Financial Assistance Scheme. 364 (68.8%) applications were successful with 67 failing stage 1 and 98 failing stage 2 of the process. All successful applications were awarded funding and the Council did not use the score and rank process.
% of financial assistance applications funded*	No target	68.8%	-	
Number of views of the online training module	100	28		Between April-September 2021, the Council recorded 28 views of the online training module for Financial Assistance. Work is currently underway to devise, deliver and promote a more explicit and targeted online campaign to advertise this resource to potential applicants across the District.
Number of online capacity building sessions delivered	2	6		The Council delivered six internal and external capacity building sessions on using the new electronic Grants Management System, exceeding the annual target of 2. A total of 68 people attended the sessions, including Council officers, Elected Members, independent members from DEA Forums and representatives from the community and voluntary sector.

Number of participants/beneficiaries of the Financial Assistance Scheme	No target	2,604		To date, the Council has recorded 2,604 participants on those projects which have already been delivered and completed. The total number of participants benefitting from the Financial Assistance Scheme is likely to increase substantially when the final claim and evaluations forms are submitted by successful applicants.
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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 2021-22, the Council:

- Received 522 planning applications in total which is the highest across Northern Ireland.
- Received 517 local planning applications and decided on 435 applications, which are the highest across Northern Ireland. 373 local planning applications were approved, which results in an approval rate of 85.7%, which is the lowest across Northern Ireland.
- Processed 42.6% of local planning applications within the statutory standard of <15 weeks, which is just below the regional average of 48%. This represents a significant improvement when compared to the 18.3% of applications processed within <15 weeks during Q1 2020-21.
- Received 5 major planning applications, decided on and approved 2 applications. Similar to Q1 2020-21, no major planning applications were processed within the statutory standard of <30 weeks which is below the current regional average of 22.6%.
- Opened 113 enforcement cases which is the third highest across NI and concluded 90 cases in total. As at 30 June 2021, the Council had 838 planning enforcement cases in the system, which is by far, the highest across Northern Ireland.

Measure of Success	2021-22		Status	Explanatory note
	Target	Q1 Actual		
Average processing time for local planning applications (weeks) <i>(statutory performance indicator)</i>	<15 weeks	16.8 weeks	 	During Q1 2021-22, the average processing time for local planning applications was 16.8 weeks which is slightly above the regional average of 15.8 weeks. When compared to Q1 2020-21, this represents an improvement of 8.8 weeks for Newry, Mourne and Down.
Average processing time of major planning applications	<30 weeks	43 weeks	 	During Q1 2021-22, the average processing time for major planning applications was 43 weeks which is well below the regional average of 54 weeks. When compared to

(weeks) <i>(statutory performance indicator)</i>				Q1 2020-21, this represents an improvement of 44 weeks for Newry, Mourne and Down.
Percentage of planning enforcement cases progressed within 39 weeks <i>(statutory performance indicator)</i>	70%	54.4%	 	During Q1 2021-22, 54.4% of planning enforcement cases were concluded within 39 weeks, which is well below the regional average of 71.7%. When compared to Q1 2020-21, this represents an improvement of 29.7% for Newry, Mourne and Down.
Number of planning applications in the system for 12 months or more	150	174		As at 30 June 2021, Newry, Mourne and Down had 174 planning applications in the system for 12 months or more. This represents a reduction of 21 applications when compared to 31 March 2021 and a further reduction of 24 applications is required to achieve the annual target.
Number of planning applications in the system for 12 months or less	700	939		As at 30 June 2021, Newry, Mourne and Down had 939 planning applications in the system for 12 months or less. This represents an increase of 82 applications when compared to 31 March 2021 and a further reduction of 239 applications is required to achieve the annual target.
Number of enforcement cases in the system 12 months or more	450	540		As at 30 June 2021, Newry, Mourne and Down had 540 enforcement cases in the system for 12 months or more. This represents an increase of 6 cases when compared to 31 March 2021 and a further reduction of 100 cases is required to achieve the annual target.