

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council

Consultation and Engagement Report on the Performance Improvement Objectives 2019-20



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.

Prior to, and as part of the 2019-20 consultation and engagement process, it was proposed that the five existing performance improvement objectives were carried forward from 2017-18 and 2018-19, as approved by the Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee in December 2018 and Audit Committee in January 2019. This was followed by consultation and engagement activity which encouraged key stakeholders, including residents and Elected Members to have their say on the proposed performance improvement objectives.

In line with good practice, and to avoid duplication and consultation fatigue amongst key stakeholders, the consultation and engagement process was further supplemented by, and integrated with, the consultation and engagement on the development of the Corporate Plan 2019-23. In recognition of the close alignment between the Corporate Plan and Performance Improvement Plan, the Council has used the results from both consultations to inform and finalise the performance improvement objectives 2019-20.

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 14 January 2019 – 5 April 2019, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council carried out an twelve week consultation and engagement process with key stakeholders on the draft performance improvement objectives 2019-20, through the following mechanisms:

- Electronic documentation and survey on the Council's website and social media channels
- Hard copies of the documentation and survey at the Council's public receptions in Monaghan Row (Newry), Downshire Civic Centre (Downpatrick) and the Ethnic Minority Support Centre (Town Hall, Newry)
- Public Notices in local newspapers
- Feedback from the 'mock' Council meeting with the Newry and Mourne Youth Council (held on 27 June 2018)

This process was further supplemented by the consultation and engagement on the Corporate Plan 2019-23, which involved:

- Residents Survey (carried out in September 2018)

- Engagement sessions between February-April 2019 with the following stakeholders:
 - Elected Members
 - Seven District Electoral Area Forums
 - Business Sector
 - Strategic Stakeholder Forum
 - Older Persons Forums in Newry and Downpatrick
 - Newry and Mourne Youth Council
 - Senior Management Team, Corporate Management Team and staff

Analysis Methodology

A total of 74 completed surveys were received in response to the consultation and engagement on the Council's draft performance improvement objectives 2019-20. Respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the draft performance improvement objectives, if they had any comments to make regarding each objective, and to put forward their suggested priorities for future improvement.

In carrying out the consultation and engagement, a structured process was used to capture responses around each of the five draft performance improvement objectives 2019-20. This process was supplemented by the results of the Residents Survey, which reported a total of 764 respondents, as well as a range of engagement sessions with 370 stakeholders.

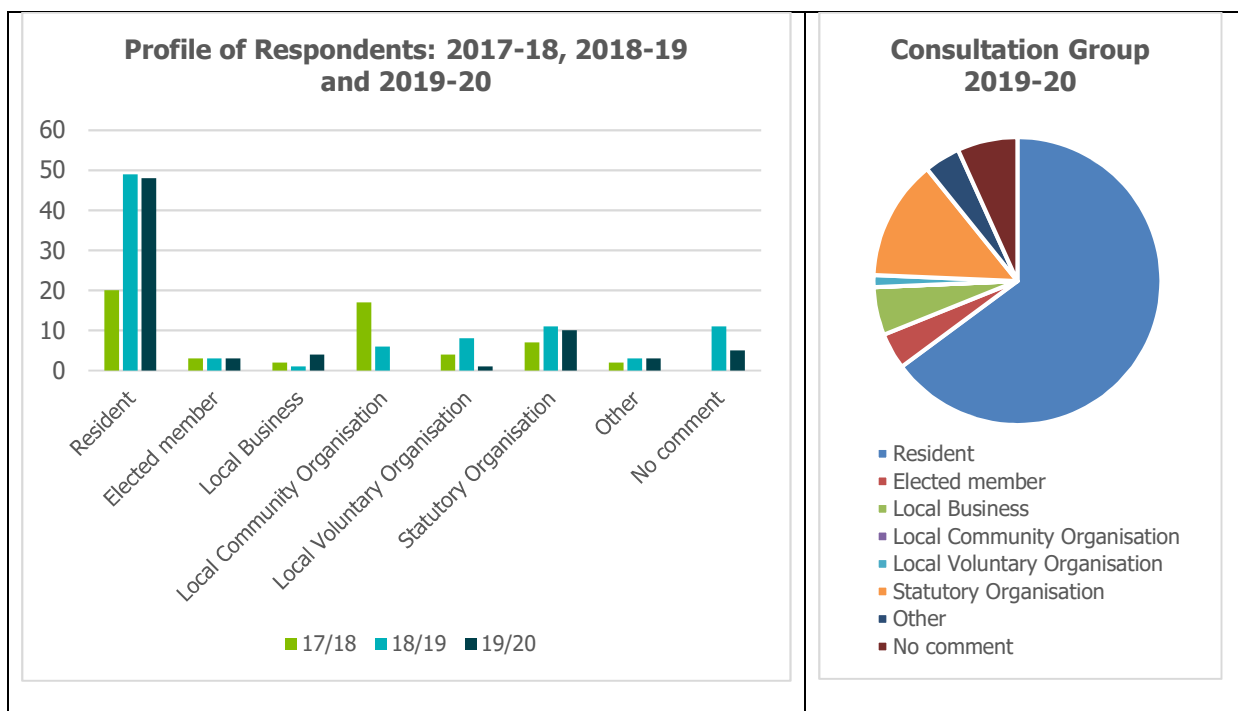
Feedback from the consultation and engagement process has been considered and circulated to the Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee, Senior Management Team, Corporate Management Team and community planning partners for their consideration as part of the business planning process.

Consultation and Engagement Findings

Profile of Respondents

Performance Improvement Objectives 2019-20

Over the past three years, responses to the draft performance improvement objectives have been received from a range of key stakeholders, with the highest number of responses submitted by residents, local community and voluntary organisations and statutory partners, as outlined in the following chart. In 2019-20, residents were the largest consultation group to respond, and survey responses were also submitted on behalf of the Newry and Mourne Youth Council and Keep It Green.



Corporate Plan 2019-23

The Council engaged a further 1,134 stakeholders in the development of the Corporate Plan, as outlined below:

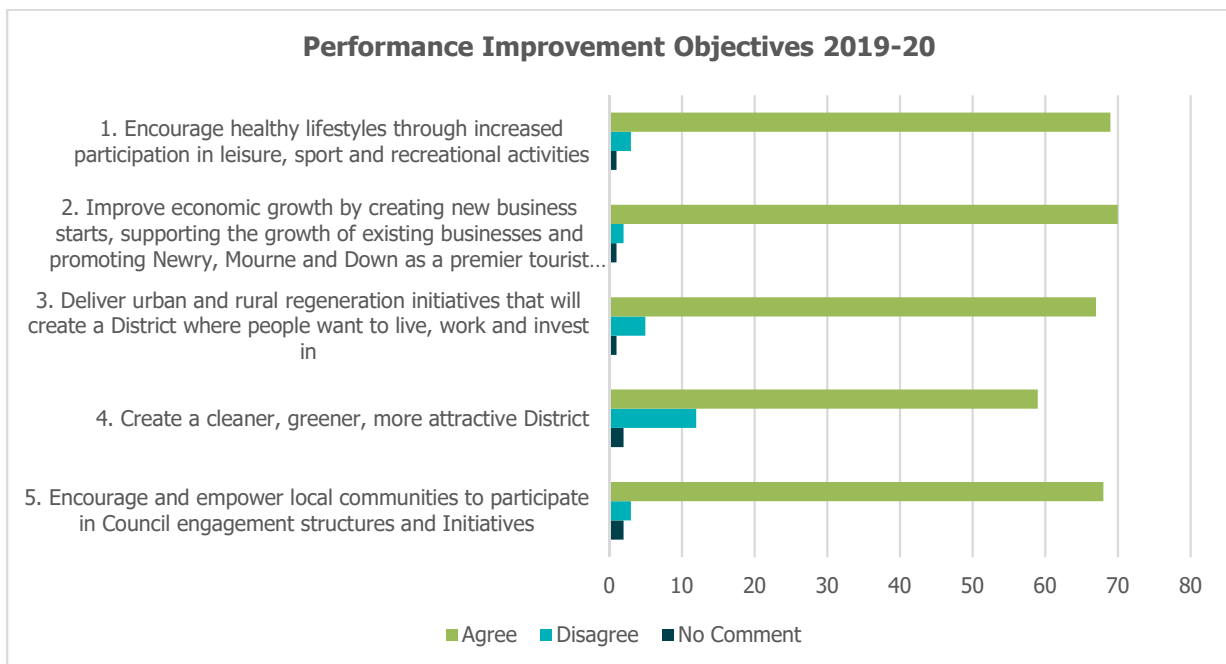
Residents Survey	764 residents aged 16+ with quotas applied for age, gender, social class and District Electoral Area
Slieve Gullion DEA Forum	19 February 2019, Newtownhamilton Community Centre
Elected Members	25 February 2019, Downshire Civic Centre
Older Person's Forum	26 February 2019, Newry Leisure Centre
Rowallane DEA Forum	27 February 2019, The Hub, Saintfield
Strategic Stakeholder Forum	4 March 2019, Cabra Community Centre
Mournes DEA Forum	12 March 2019, Kilkeel
Crotlieve DEA Forum	12 March 2019, Warrenpoint Town Hall
Down Senior Forum	20 March 2019, Ballymote Centre, Downpatrick
Newry DEA Forum	21 March 2019, The Museum, Newry
Slieve Croob DEA Forum	25 March 2019, The Lodge, Castlewellan
Downpatrick DEA Forum	25 March 2019, Downshire Civic Centre
Youth Council	4 April 2019, Boardroom, Monaghan Row, Newry

Staff Events	3 April 2019, Strangford Road Depot / Downshire Civic Centre / Newry Leisure Centre 4 April 2019, Greenbank / Boardroom, Monaghan Row 9 April 2019, Down Leisure Centre / Newcastle Centre
Senior and Corporate Management Teams	9 April 2019, Boardroom, Monaghan Row
Business Representatives	11 April 2019, Newry Leisure Centre

Analysis of Findings

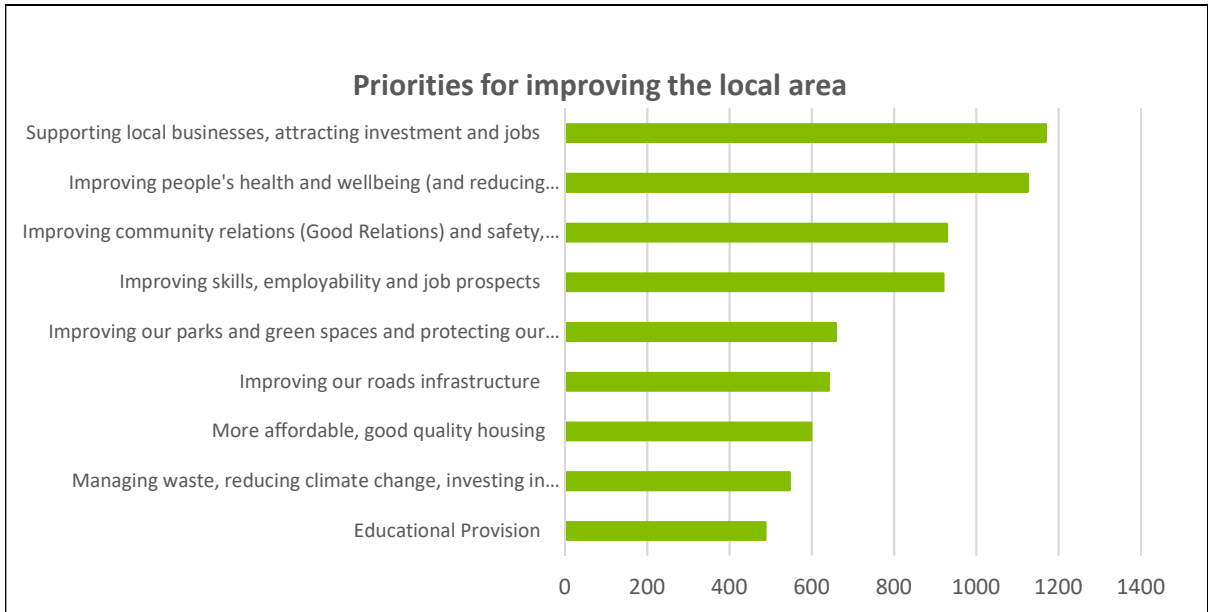
Performance Improvement Objectives 2019-20

For the past three years, there has been a positive response to the five proposed performance improvement objectives, with almost all respondents agreeing with each objective. However, feedback from the 2019-20 consultation and engagement process suggests that an increasing number of respondents 'disagree' with performance improvement objective 4.



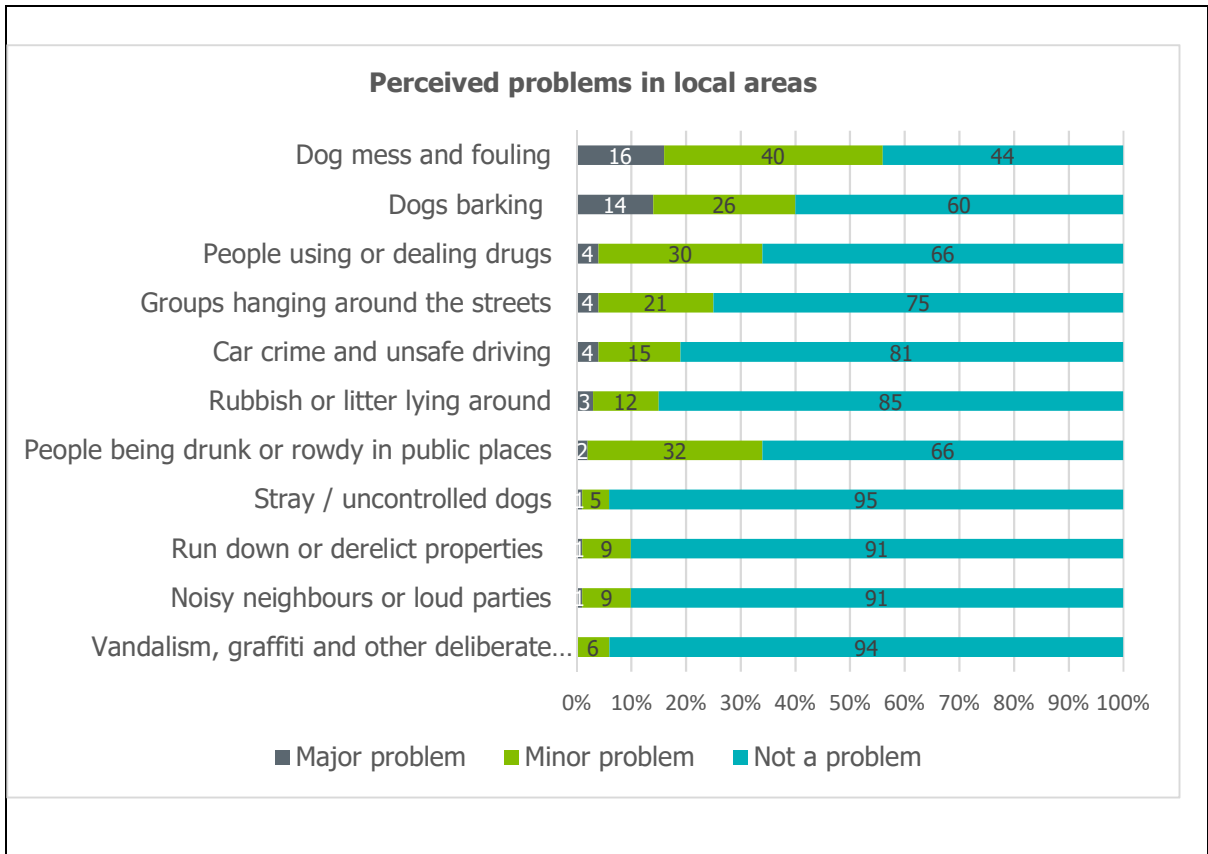
Corporate Plan 2019-23

These findings are further endorsed by the results of the Residents Survey which indicate that the performance improvement objectives broadly address the top priorities for improvement which were identified by residents.



- The local economy, health and wellbeing, community relations, good relations, community safety, protecting the environment and managing waste are amongst the top 10 priorities for improvement.
- A cleaner, more attractive area, regeneration, accessible leisure centres, attracting more tourists, participating in cultural activities and volunteering are amongst the lesser priorities for improvement for residents.

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



You Said, We Did - Overview of Consultation Feedback

Performance Improvement Objectives

An analysis of the results of all consultation and engagement processes indicates that many of the issues raised will continue to be addressed through the proposed 2019-20 performance improvement objectives, 'supporting actions' and 'measures of success', or as part of the Council's business planning process.

Based on the consultation and engagement feedback, and ongoing work in developing and refining the performance improvement objectives, it was proposed that objective 4 was amended as follows, so that it is more focused on delivering tangible outcomes for local communities:

'Increase the rate of recycling, reduce the amount of waste going to landfill and improve the level of cleanliness across the District'

However, on the proposal of the Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee, performance improvement objective 4 has been retained as follows.

'Create a cleaner, greener, more attractive District'

The five performance improvement objectives have therefore been carried forward from 2017-18 and 2018-19, and are not subject to amendment.

Supporting Actions and Measures of Success

Over the past three years, the consultation and engagement process highlighted the following key issues:

- The need to encourage healthy lifestyles
- The City Park in Newry
- More investment in coastal areas
- Preserving the history and heritage of Bessbrook
- More use of outdoor areas for recreational activities
- The need to address littering and dog fouling
- More community clean ups to improve towns and villages, and encourage civic pride
- Promote environmental issues in schools from an early age
- Improve community engagement and opportunities to engage young people

These issues will continue to be addressed through some of the 'supporting actions' within the Performance Improvement Plan 2019-20, as outlined below:

- Consider options to progress the development of a Park at the Albert Basin, Newry

- Support the establishment of new jobs and businesses in the fishing dependent communities of Kilkeel, Annalong and Ardglass
- Address the skills gap between education and employment in traditional and key growth sectors through the Skills Forum
- Commence the delivery of the capital works at the Derrymore demesne, to include a play area, trail development and other infrastructure projects
- Address issues around dog fouling, littering and illegal dumping through the development of the Enforcement Improvement Plan and implementation of the Dog Fouling Strategy
- Increase and support public participation in local clean up campaigns and initiatives such as 'Live Here-Love Here' and 'Cleaner, Greener Communities'
- Positively engage minority groups in Council initiatives, including young people, older people and people from black and minority ethnic communities

However, based on the consultation and engagement feedback and ongoing work in developing and refining the performance improvement objectives, some 'supporting actions' and 'measures of success' have been amended.

Performance Improvement Objective 2

- Supporting the growth of the existing business and social enterprise base by delivering the *Social Economy and NMD Growth programmes* (NMD Procurement omitted and measure of success on the number of businesses supported through NMD Growth included)
- *Supporting the establishment of new jobs and businesses* in the fishing dependent communities of Kilkeel, Annalong and Ardglass (*Priority 4 of the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (SEAFLAG 2)*) – Measures of success have also been amended to include Portavogie with a timescale of 2022
- *Progressing the Belfast Region City Deal* by developing Outline Business Cases for the Regeneration of Newry City, visitor attractions in the Mourne Mountains and 'skills and employability' and 'digital connectivity' initiatives
- Completing phase 2 of the Carlingford Lough Greenway, from Victoria Lough to Omeara, by *Q1 2020-21*
- *Developing and delivering further Visitor Experience Plans*
- *Launching the Arts, Culture and Heritage Strategy* to increase participation in cultural activities
- *97 new jobs created in rural areas by March 2020*
- *Level of footfall on the Great Eastern Greenway* (measure of success included)

The following 'supporting action', which was included in the consultation documentation on the draft performance improvement objectives 2019-20, has been removed, and will be monitored through future activity in the Enterprise, Regeneration and Tourism Directorate.

- Exploring options to invest in and improve the facilities at Camlough Lake

Performance Improvement Objective 3

The following 'supporting actions', which were included in either the consultation documentation on the draft performance improvement objectives 2019-20 or the Performance Improvement Plan 2018-19 have been removed and will be monitored through the Enterprise, Regeneration and Tourism Business Plan 2019-20 and related Action Plans:

- Creation of new jobs and protection of the intangible cultural heritage through the transnational Atlantic CultureScapes project
- Delivery of heritage projects through the 10 year legacy phase of the Ring of Gullion Landscape Partnership Scheme
- Protection of upland landscape through the transnational ASCENT project
- Develop a programme of future regeneration initiatives, incorporating Warrenpoint Baths, Lisburn Street car parks in Ballynahinch, Newry Civic Centre and the former police station and adjacent lands in Downpatrick

Performance Improvement Objective 4

- Increase and support public participation in local clean up campaigns and initiatives such as 'Live Here-Love Here' and '*Cleaner, Greener Communities*'
- *Address issues around dog fouling, littering and illegal dumping through the development of the Enforcement Improvement Plan and implementation of the Dog Fouling Strategy*
- Open the Downpatrick Household Recycling Centre by Q2 2019-20 (delayed and carried forward)

The following 'supporting action', which was included in the Performance Improvement Plan 2018-19, has been omitted and will be monitored through the Neighbourhood Services Directorate Business Plan 2019-20:

- Develop the Neighbourhood Services initiative, including the launch of a dedicated telephone number and online channels to report issues around street cleanliness, refuse collection and environmental crime

Corporate Plan 2019-23

The performance improvement objectives, 'supporting actions' and 'measures of success' have been further endorsed through the engagement sessions on the Corporate Plan. Some of the key points raised are outlined below:

- Projects around mental health are important and accessibility to leisure facilities and green spaces should be improved
- The Council should support schools in developing local skills for future employment
- There should be more emphasis on starting small businesses and supporting existing businesses
- Broadband should be improved in rural areas

- Street cleanliness should be improved and dog fouling should be lifted from play parks, pitches and rights of way
- Litter education programmes should be delivered through schools and there should be more litter Enforcement Officers
- Community groups require assistance and support to access funding

Suggested Areas for Improvement

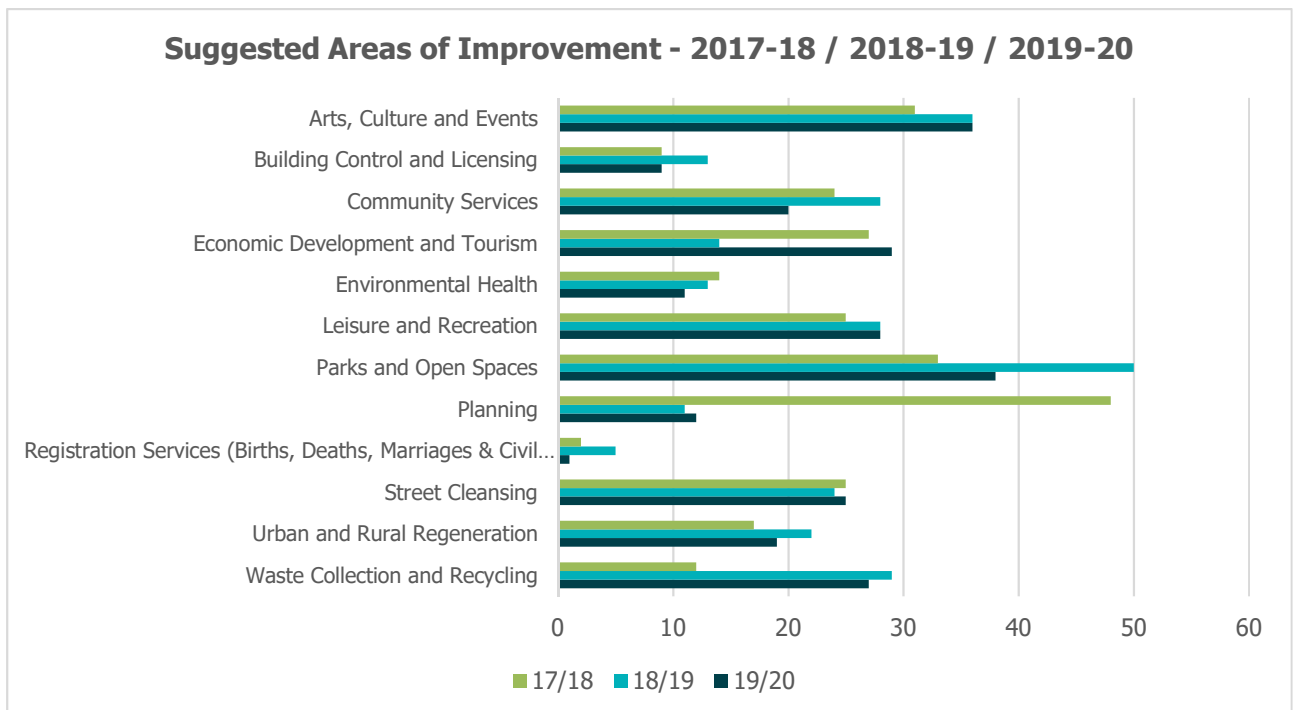
As part of the survey, respondents were also asked to put forward their suggested areas for improvement for 2019-20.

The suggested areas which most need improving are:

- Parks and Open Spaces
- Arts, Culture and Events
- Economic Development and Tourism
- Leisure and Recreation
- Waste Collection and Recycling

The suggested areas which least need improving are:

- Registration
- Building Control and Licensing



Next Steps

Whilst the five performance improvement objectives have not been subject to amendment, this report includes recommendations to amend, expand and omit

some of the 'supporting actions' and 'measures of success' which underpin each objective. These recommendations are based on the feedback obtained through the consultation and engagement process, as well as the ongoing developmental work around each performance improvement objective 2019-20.

Summary of Consultation and Engagement Feedback

Performance Improvement Objective 1

Encourage healthy lifestyles through increased participation in leisure, sport and recreational activities

- Encourage more use of community centres and promote fitness for all ages.
- There are lots of sports facilities in the area, fitness equipment in parks and places to walk in the District.
- There are a wide range of sports facilities and outstanding parks for walking in.
- There are no recreational activities in Warrenpoint.
- Families on low income cannot afford gyms.
- How can you encourage healthy lifestyles when it is cheaper to buy takeaway foods than fruit and vegetables?
- Healthy lifestyles can improve health status and help relieve stress on the health service in the future.
- There is an inadequate number of leisure facilities in South Down.
- There is no information/activity in rural areas to ensure leisure activities are inclusive.
- Minority groups should be encouraged to take part in recreational activities.

Performance Improvement Objective 2

Improve economic growth by creating new business starts, supporting the growth of existing businesses and promoting Newry, Mourne and Down as a premier tourist destination

- More tourism information should be publicised on the NMDDC website.
- Lots of initiatives take place, but more could be done to promote the District.
- There should be more exposure on the internet regarding tourism activities.
- Business rates in Newry City Centre act as a barrier for local businesses. The Council should try to ensure rates are affordable for businesses to grow and be sustainable. This will provide the young generation with secure employment in the future.
- There should be more information regarding the Belfast Region City Deal and further clarification regarding the SEAFLAG project.
- There should be more advertising on what support is in place for business start ups.
- Rostrevor should be treated as a Gateway to the Mournes, similar to Newcastle.
- Reference should be made to the People's Park / Albert Basin.
- The port is a huge economic benefit.

Performance Improvement Objective 3

Deliver urban and rural regeneration initiatives that will create a District where people want to live, work and invest in

- There should be more use of outdoor areas for recreational activities.
- The Council should engage more with the public and seek ideas at Community Forums.
- There is a need for more housing in the area.
- There are very few jobs that would encourage young people to invest in at the present time.
- The NI Housing Executive needs to build more homes throughout the District and deliver more Neighbourhood Schemes.
- Litter bins and rural streets need to be improved.
- Civic pride, community clean-ups and partnership working with relevant agencies will improve our villages, towns and city, and make them more attractive. This will help ensure that individuals and businesses will come and settle in our District.
- Wildlife and indigenous trees need protection.
- Planning should be proactive – keeping the area sustainable by complementing the needs of the community, and inward investment.
- Planning should be introduced as a strategic objective, focusing on sustainability.

Performance Improvement Objective 4

Create a cleaner, greener, more attractive District

- Provide more bins in urban areas, produce a dog litter strategy and programmes to tackle the issue.
- Ensure more dog fouling bins and bags are provided, especially along the towpath and public parks.
- Provide more dog litter bins in parks e.g. Derrymore Woodand and the Egyptian Arch have no bins / and it would be useful to have more bins along the main Camlough Road and Derramore Road.
- More recycling bins should be made available to the public and dog litter bins should be placed in more areas, including rural areas.
- Start promoting environmental issues in schools from an early age.
- More needs to be done to clean up our district. Wardens should be on patrol to stop illegal dumping and issue fines to those who are guilty.
- More needs to be done to address the amount of rubbish that is being dumped throughout this district.
- Encourage local businesses to use biodegradable bags and packaging.
- The issues of litter and dog fouling need to be addressed.
- There should be greater reference to the key services of the Council, particularly street cleansing and bin collections.
- Community clean-ups and encouraging civic pride should be improved.
- Reduce and eliminate single use plastics.
- Green transport and promoting the accessibility of charging points is an issue.

- Many housing estates and Council houses require investment.
- A clean environment will help promote investment from outside businesses.
- The Council should collect extra items at no charge, along with bin collections.
- There are issues in relation to trade/commercial waste / landfill / fly-tipping.
- Initiatives such as Ulster in bloom, Britain in bloom, NI best kept awards and green flag awards are horticultural, environmental and community based incentives which assist the Council in improving the local area.

Performance Improvement Objective 5

Encourage and empower local communities to participate in Council engagement structures and initiatives

- There is a lot of support the local community can offer in this field.
- The Council should try to get younger people involved, as this is where they will hopefully live and work in the future.
- More information on Council activities should be publicised, possibly on the internet.
- Further information should be provided, outlining what the Council plans to do for some segments of the population, particularly older people.
- The Council should widely advertise public DEA Forum meetings.
- There should be better door to door engagement with people living in our district, online surveys and community surveys.
- People feel they can't get involved and that their opinions aren't heard (hence people protesting).
- Promote cross community involvement in community based activities.
- There should be better communication systems and policies between the Council and the public.