

# **Newry, Mourne and Down District Council**

## **Assessment of Performance 2023-24**

## Contents

	Page
Overall Assessment of Performance	3
Introduction	4
Our District Our Organisation Our Performance	7
A Snapshot of 2023-24	8
General Duty of Improvement	10
All people in Newry, Mourne and Down enjoy good health and wellbeing	14
All people from Newry, Mourne and Down benefit from prosperous communities	22
All people in Newry, Mourne and Down benefit from a clean, quality and sustainable environment	44
All people in Newry, Mourne and Down live in respectful, safe and vibrant communities	56
Corporate Plan 2021-23: Self Imposed Performance Indicators	60
Appendix 1: Progress against the Proposals for Improvement	73
Appendix 2: The Golden Thread	83

## Overall Assessment of Performance 2023-24

The Council has worked determinedly to deliver services for all residents across the district. Our residents and visitors continued to re-connect with the natural beauty of the District as we recorded over 525,000 visits to Kilbroney and Slieve Gullion Forest parks in the last 8-9 months of 2023-24 and over 263,000 recorded visits to the Council's 10 community trails. We retained blue and green flag accreditation for our beaches and parks, supported nineteen community clean ups and issued fixed penalty notices to address environmental crime.

We continued to progress and achieve a number of key priorities, in particular the Belfast Region City Deal, encompassing the Mourne Mountain Gateway project, Newry City Regeneration project and the development of the Southern Relief Road. Our Digital Programme of Investment will play a critical role in contributing to economic inclusion and sustainable growth, creating skills and employment for a digital future.

However, whilst much has been achieved, there is still more to do. We recognise where we need to improve and are committed to delivering further improvements e.g., There has been a decrease in young people engaged in targeted health programmes, and a slight increase in recycling, however longer processing times for local and major planning applications persist. We will continue to focus on what matters most to you - improving the quality of our leisure facilities and services, contributing to growing the local economy, improving the cleanliness of our District and continuing to support recycling, improving our sustainability and reducing our impacts in relation to climate change, and improving the performance of our Planning Service.

As we look forward to 2024-25, we will continue to bring more opportunities as our ambition remains for Newry, Mourne and Down to be one of the best places to live, work, invest in and visit.

## Introduction

Part 12 of the Local Government (NI) Act 2014 sets out a General Duty of Improvement for local government, whereby all District Councils must put in place arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of their functions. As part of the Act, District Councils are required to:

- Produce and publish an annual Performance Improvement Plan, setting out the performance improvement objectives, which should be aligned to the Community Plan. It should however be noted that, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Councils were not required to publish a Performance Improvement Plan 2020-21.
- Produce and publish an annual Assessment of Performance, outlining the arrangements to secure continuous improvement, demonstrating whether planned improvements have been achieved, analysing year on year performance trends and comparisons with the performance of other Councils, where possible.

The Assessment of Performance 2023-24 provides an overview of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council's progress in delivering the following:

### General Duty of Improvement

As set out in the Local Government (NI) Act 2014

### Performance Improvement Objectives

Three of the five performance improvement objectives 2022-23, were carried forward to 2023-24. One of the objectives was amended to reflect improvements achieved and where improvements were now required while another seen significant progress and was deemed to have been delivered and was therefore replaced, enabling the Council to use this Assessment of Performance to further establish a baseline and trends to monitor and report progress against the majority of the 'measures of success' which underpin the performance improvement objectives 2023-24.

1. We will support the health and wellbeing of local people by improving our leisure 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

## Statutory Performance Indicators and Standards

As set out in the Local Government (Performance Indicators and Standards) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015:

- The number of jobs promoted through business start-up activity
- The average processing time of major planning applications
- The average processing time of local planning applications
- The percentage of planning enforcement cases processed within 39 weeks
- The percentage of household waste collected by District Councils that is sent for recycling (including waste prepared for reuse)
- The amount (tonnage) of biodegradable Local Authority Collected Municipal Waste that is landfilled
- The amount (tonnage) of Local Authority Collected Municipal Waste arisings

## Self Imposed Performance Indicators

The Council has developed a baseline to monitor and report progress against the 'measures of success' which are set out in the Corporate Plan 2021-23.

Corporate Objective	Measure of Success
Invest in and support new and growing businesses, job creation and employment skills	Number of jobs created and businesses supported through Council programmes
	Number of jobs promoted through business start-up activity
	Amount of investment secured by Council
Continue to improve the health and wellbeing of everyone in the District and reduce health inequalities	Number of people participating in targeted health programmes
	Attendance at free play sessions
	Number of attendances at Council indoor leisure facilities
Enhance, protect and promote our environment	Level of street cleanliness across the District (Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful Street Cleanliness Index)
	65% of municipal waste recycled by 2030
	Level of compliance with Sustainable Development Duty
Support sustainable forms of tourism which value our environment and cultural heritage	Increased visitor spend
	Increased overnight stays
	Increased visitor satisfaction
Enable and support people to engage in inclusive and diverse activities in their communities	Percentage of residents who agree that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together
	Percentage of residents who agree that the Council consults with and listens to the views of local people
	Percentage of residents who feel they can have a say on how services are delivered in their local area
	Number and percentage of financial assistance projects funded and successfully delivered







Promote the revitalisation of our city, towns, villages and rural communities	Progress against key Belfast City Region Deal projects
	Number of public realm schemes delivered
	Increased business growth and employment
Provide accessible, high quality and integrated services through continuous improvement	Increased citizen satisfaction
	Compliance with the Duty of Improvement
Advocate with others for the benefit of all people of the District	Compliance with the duty of community planning / monitor delivery of outcomes with partners
	Percentage of residents who are satisfied with their local area as a place to live

Where possible, progress in delivering the 'measures of success' within the Performance Improvement Plan 2023-24 and Corporate Plan 2021-23 has been aligned to the Community Plan, in order to demonstrate how the Council is contributing to the achievement of community planning outcomes. The golden thread that exists between the Community Plan, Corporate Plan 2021-23 and Performance Improvement Plan 2023-24 is highlighted further in Appendix 2.

<b>All people in Newry, Mourne and Down enjoy good health and wellbeing</b>	
<b>All people in Newry, Mourne and Down benefit from prosperous communities</b>	
<b>All people in Newry, Mourne and Down benefit from a clean, quality and sustainable environment</b>	

Progress has been tracked against targets, trends over time, and where possible, compared with the performance of local authorities across Northern Ireland, using the legend below. It should however be noted that comparisons with previous years should be considered within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent impact on Council service provision. The Assessment of Performance is instrumental in helping the Council to review progress and identify the key objectives and areas of improvement in the year ahead.

### Legend

Status		Trend	
	Target or objective achieved / on track to be achieved		Performance has improved since the previous year
	Target or objective substantially achieved / likely to be achieved / subject to delay		Performance is similar to the previous year*
	Target or objective not achieved / unlikely to be achieved		Performance has declined since the previous year

\*Where appropriate, a 10% variance when compared to the previous year's performance has been applied.

# Our District, Our Organisation, Our Performance



## District

Population: 182,074  
Households: 68,398  
7 District Electoral Areas  
41 Elected Members  
1,000+ employees  
88% of residents are satisfied with the Council



## Community

**Life expectancy:**  
Male: 78.9 years /  
Female: 82.7 years

**Age Profile:** 0-15 years:  
22% / 65+ years: 17%

87% of residents agree that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together

100% of residents feel safe during the day, 78% of residents feel safe after dark

115 Neighbourhood Watch Schemes

18,407 food parcels delivered to vulnerable households

£10.8m awarded through the Financial Assistance Scheme since 2015



## Tourism

**Between 2018 and 2019:**

15% increase in visitor numbers, to 516,203

21% increase in visitor spend, to £83.7m

Three Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

6 'green flag' parks and 3 'blue flag' beaches



## Health and Wellbeing

82% of residents feel they are in very good or good health

83% of residents are physically active at least once a week for 30mins

73.5% of customers are satisfied with the Council's six leisure facilities

263k recorded visits at community trails

Over 500k recorded visits to Kilbroney and Slieve Gullion Forest Parks for the last 9 months of 2023-24



## Economy

Employment rate (age 16 to 64): 61.6

9,375 VAT Registered Businesses

14.3% of the population aged 16 years and over have no qualifications

90 new jobs promoted through business start activity

351 businesses supported delivered through economic development programmes



## Environment

Recycling is important to 91% of residents

Top perceived problem for residents: Dog mess and fouling

Recycling rate: 50.0%




166 community clean ups supported since 2020

Second lowest level of waste to landfill across all NI Councils





















## A snapshot of 2023-24:

Performance Improvement Objective	Progress	Status Trend
 <p><b>We will support the health and wellbeing of local people by improving our leisure facilities and services</b></p>	10% increase in paid attendances at Council leisure centres	△
	16.1% increase in the number of people participating in targeted health programmes	😊 △
	11% decrease in the number of young people participating in targeted youth health and wellbeing initiatives	😞 ▽
	4.1% increase in the number of Council leisure centre memberships	😊 △
	3 capital leisure projects progressed	😊
	16.6% increase in recorded visits of community trails	😊 △
 <p><b>We will grow the economy by supporting local businesses and creating new jobs</b></p>	90 new jobs promoted through business start activity	😐 ▽
	12 new social enterprise businesses supported and 16 new social enterprise jobs created	😊 △
	90 new enterprises created as a result of support	😐 ▽
	351 existing businesses supported to progress growth and scaling ambitions	😊 △
	'Make it Local' campaign rolled out	😊
 <p><b>We will improve the cleanliness of our District by addressing littering, fly tipping and dog fouling incidents</b></p>	25 fixed penalty notices issued and 19 paid	😞 ▽
	19 community clean ups supported	😞 ▽
	Increase in the rate of recycling, to 50.0%*	😊 △
	Second lowest levels of waste sent to landfill across all NI Councils	😊 △
	9 'Live Here, Love Here' environmental projects supported	▽
	Responsible dog ownership promoted across Council's social media channels	😊



 <p><b>We will improve our sustainability and reduce our impacts in relation to climate change</b></p>	1 vehicle within the Council fleet that has an alternative fuel source	
	20 Council supported EV charging points installed	
	75% of Council fleet younger than 8 years.	
	Installed 5 drinking water fountains across the District	
	2,800 trees planted on Council managed estate	
 <p><b>We will improve the processing times of planning applications and enforcement cases by implementing the Planning Service Improvement Programme</b></p>	The Council received the second highest number of planning applications across the 11 Councils.	
	The processing time for local planning applications increased from 21.6 weeks in 2022-23 to 33.7 weeks in 2023-24	 
	The processing time for major planning applications increased from 89 weeks in 2022-23 to 154.8 weeks in 2023-24	 
	The number of planning applications in the system for 12 months or more increased from 228 by year end 2022-23 to 352 by year end 2023-24	 
	The number of enforcement cases in the system for 12 months or more increased from 500 by year end 2022-23 to 599 by year end 2023-24	 

\*The 2023-24 data in relation to the statutory performance indicators for waste management remains provisional, as the end of year validated data will not be published by DAERA until Q3 2024-25.

## General Duty of Improvement

The Council recognises improvement to mean activity that enhances the sustainable quality of life and environment for ratepayers and communities. During 2023-24, the Council continued to strengthen and embed the arrangements it has put in place to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of functions, in order to improve the quality of life for all local communities.

Following the Performance Audit and Assessment 2023-24, the Local Government Auditor concluded that:

### **Improvement planning and publication of improvement information**

The Council has discharged its duties in relation to improvement planning, published the required improvement information and the extent to which the Council has acted in accordance with the Department's guidance in relation to those duties;

### **Improvement assessment**

The Council is likely to comply with the requirements of Part 12 of the Act.

## Arrangements to secure continuous improvement

The Council's Business Planning and Performance Management Framework drives and provides assurance that community planning outcomes, corporate priorities and performance improvement objectives are being delivered. By demonstrating the alignment that exists between the Community Plan, Corporate Plan, Performance Improvement Plan, Directorate Business Plans, Service Plans and Individual Performance, the framework provides a mechanism to manage performance at all levels of the organisation, and ensure the necessary steps are taken to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of functions.

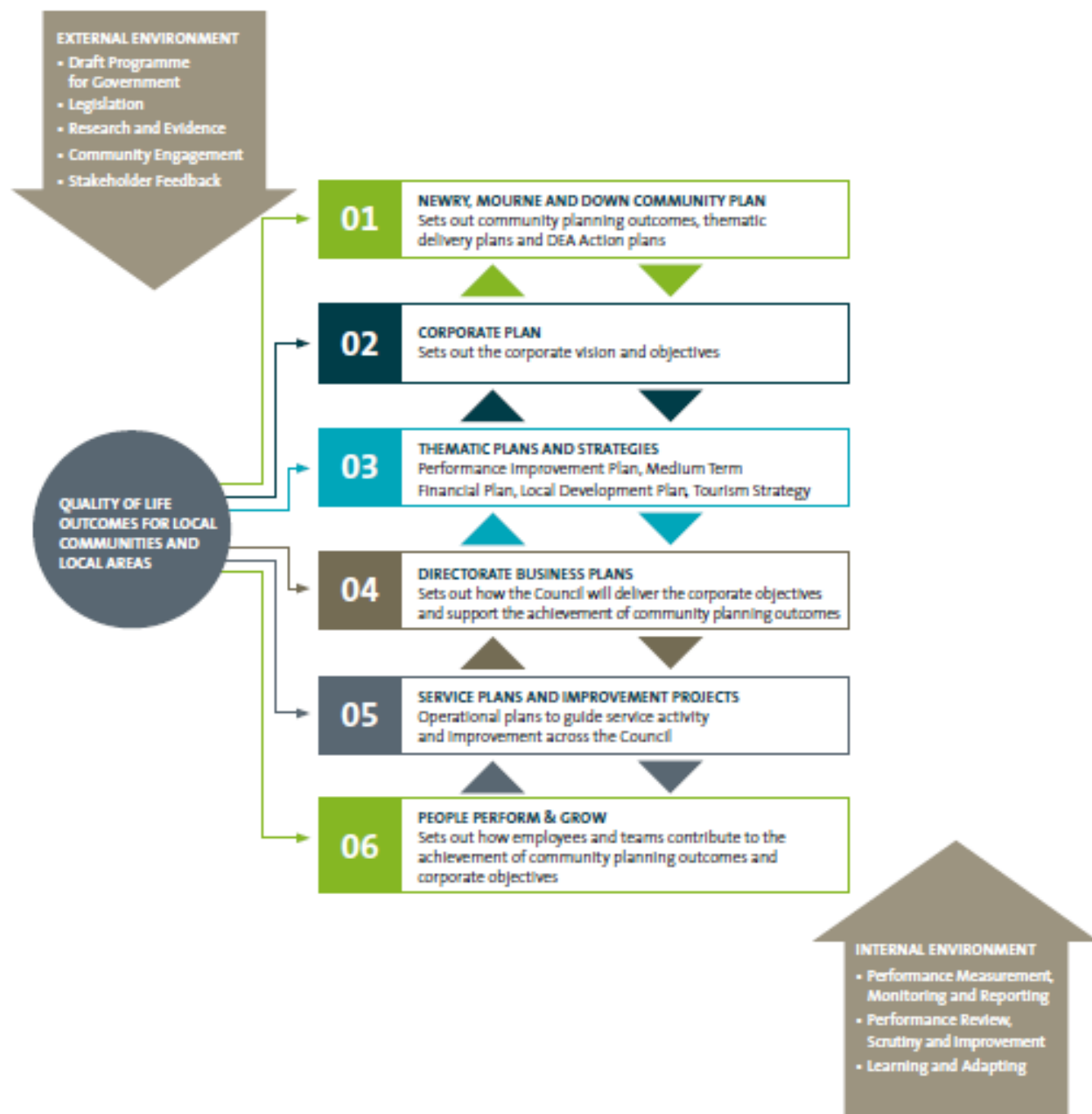
Over the past seven years, the Council has continued to implement and embed the Business Planning and Performance Management Framework:

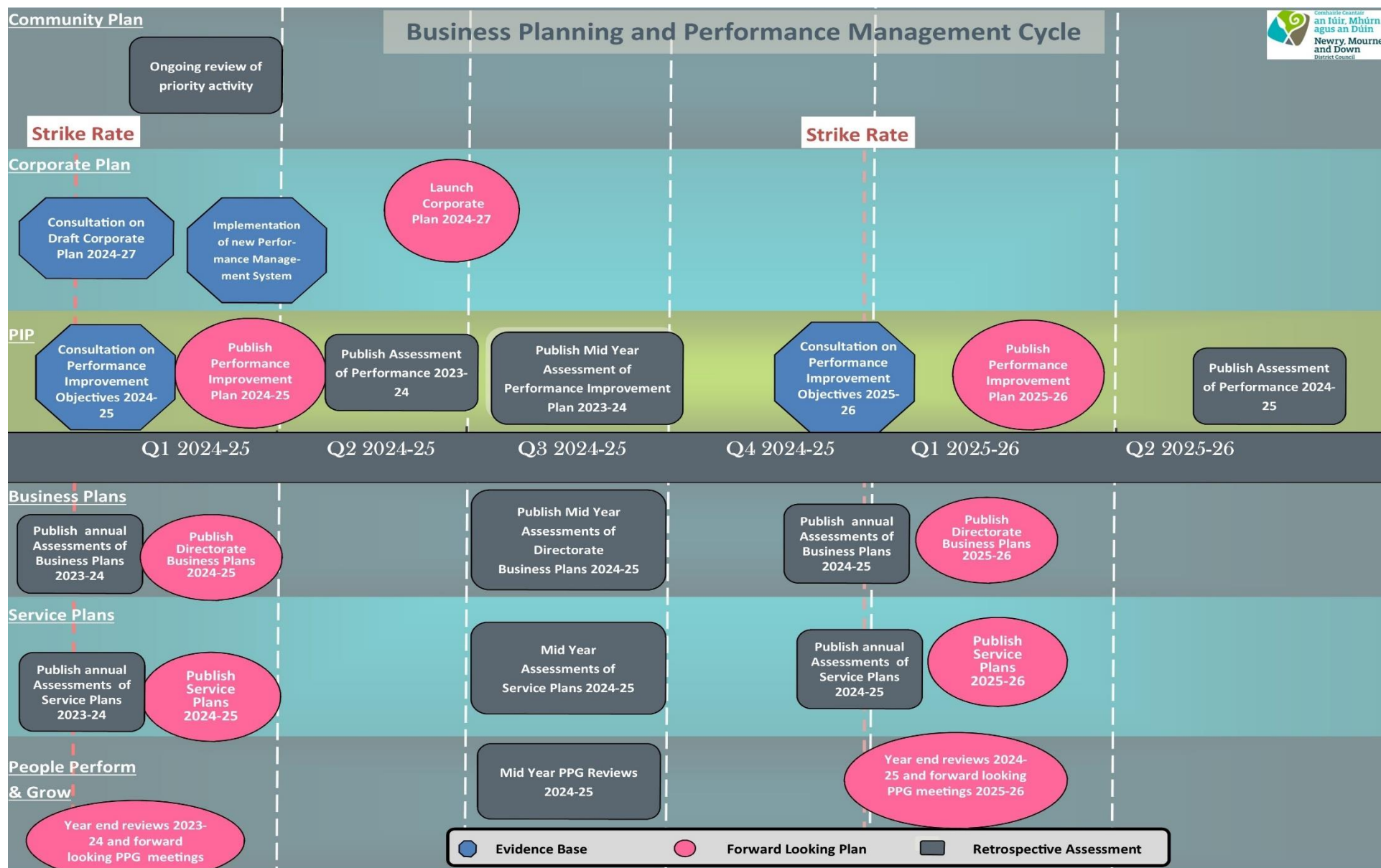
- The Council has developed and agreed integrated planning, monitoring and reporting cycles, which have been aligned to ensure everyone in the organisation is working towards shared objectives, with progress being monitored and reported on a regular basis. This integrated timeline of activity is outlined in the Business Planning and Performance Management Cycle.
- The governance arrangements at all levels of the Business Planning and Performance Management Framework continue to strengthen and embed, with the delivery of the Performance Improvement Plan and Directorate Business Plans being monitored and reported to the Committees of Council and the Senior Management Team on a bi-annual and annual basis.
- A number of Directorates and departments also organised business and service planning sessions to engage officers in reviewing performance during 2023-24, setting direction in 2024-25 and communicating the objectives within the Corporate Plan.

- All departments produced Service Plans in 2023-24, outlining core operational activity and improvement activity which will support the achievement of the objectives within the Corporate Plan and Directorate Business Plans.
- Individual Performance has been progressed through the 'People Perform Grow' initiative, which seeks to link and align the contribution of employees with strategic objectives. All employees have now had an opportunity to participate in People Perform Grow and performance management arrangements have been introduced to support and monitor the effective implementation and roll-out of People Perform Grow across the organisation. The effective implementation of People Perform Grow is monitored through the Corporate Performance Dashboard.
- Through the Corporate Performance Dashboard, progress continues to be monitored and reported against a suite of 18 key performance indicators on a quarterly basis to the Senior and Corporate Management Teams. The performance indicators are aligned to both the Corporate Plan and Corporate Risk Register.
- The Council continues to secure greater alignment across the business planning, performance and risk management arrangements, with the Corporate Risk Register now being directly aligned to the Corporate Plan 2024-27 and Directorate Risk Registers being aligned to Directorate Business Plans.
- The Performance Improvement Plan demonstrates the Council's commitment to secure continuous improvement in the delivery of services, and the objectives seek to bring about improvement across the seven areas outlined in the Local Government Act (NI) 2014.
- The Council has also completed the second Residents Survey to identify and understand perceptions of the Council and the local area as a place to live. The findings from the survey build a robust and reliable evidence base to inform future Corporate Plans, PIP's and Directorate Business Plans ensuring the strategic direction of the organisation is focused on the needs and aspirations of residents.

Further information on the Council's arrangements to secure continuous improvement and progress in implementing the 'proposals for improvement', which have been put forward by the Northern Ireland Audit Office, is outlined in Appendix 1.

# Business Planning and Performance Management Framework and Cycle







## Community Planning Outcome





All people in Newry, Mourne and Down enjoy good health and wellbeing

### Corporate Objective

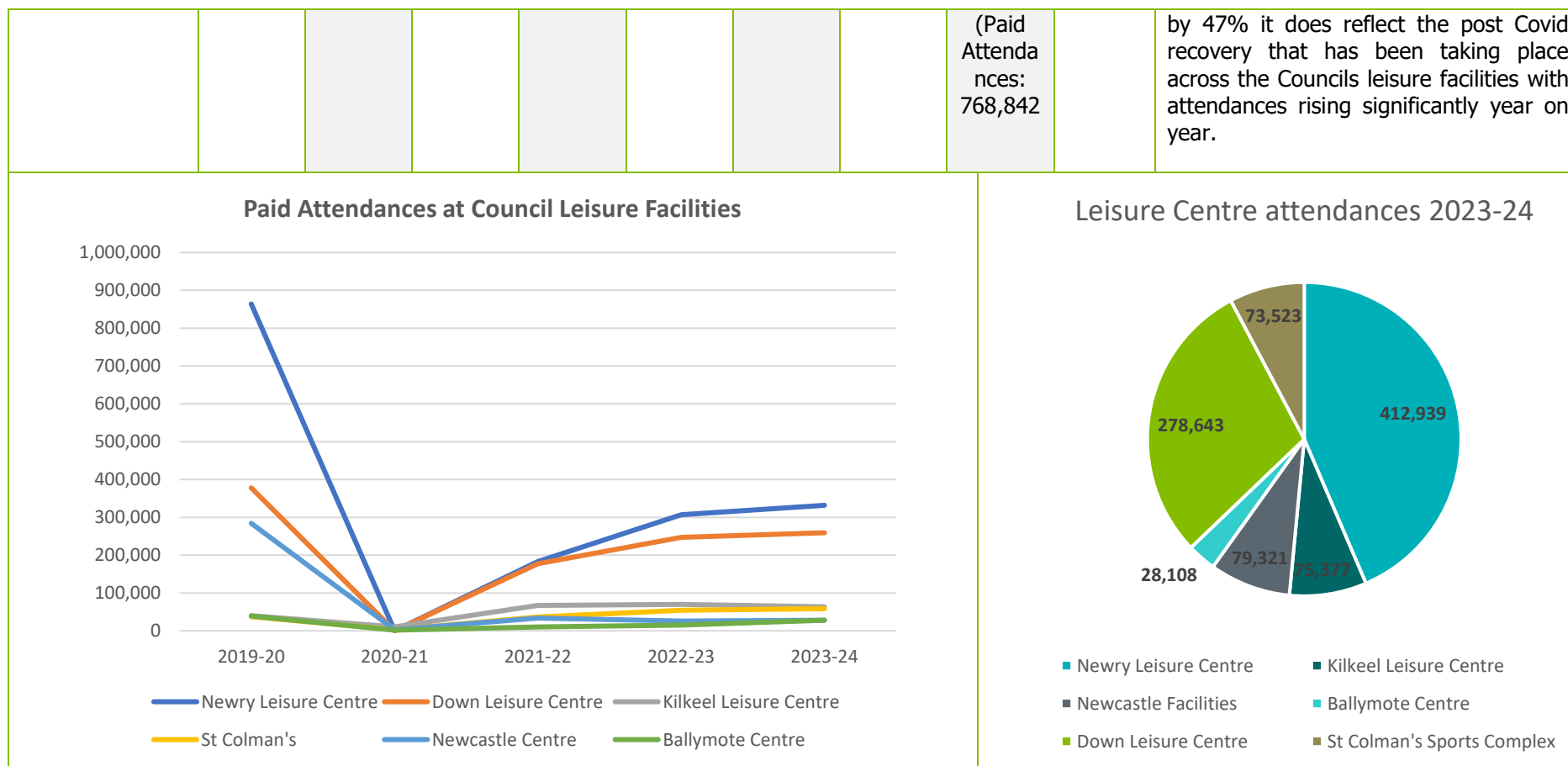
Continue to improve the health and wellbeing of everyone in the District and reduce health inequalities

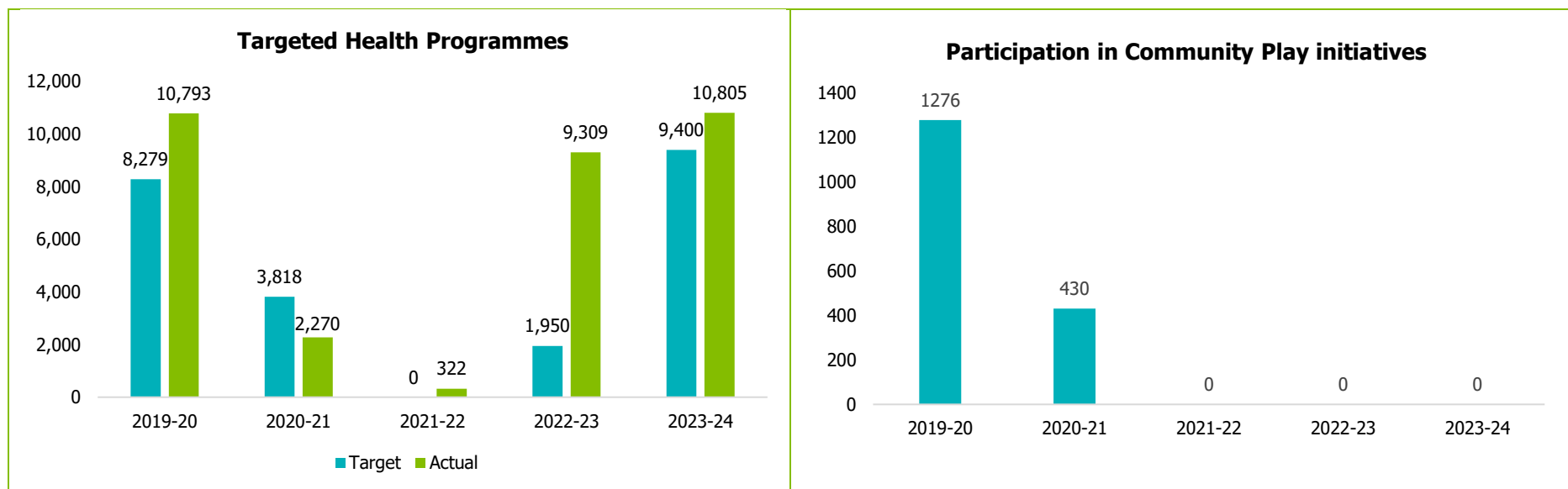
Key Action	Status	Update
Promote healthier lifestyles, including increased physical activity levels, diet and emotional wellbeing.		The Council engaged 10,805 participants in several physical activity programmes, including the Physical Activity Referral Scheme (PARS) which helps clients manage chronic health conditions, Macmillan Move More, which encourages clients to take part in physical activity during and after cancer treatment and NMD Be Active for Life which provides bespoke physical activity opportunities for people who are inactive and at risk of chronic illness. 17,726 young people participated in the Council's targeted youth health & wellbeing initiatives.
Continue to implement the Leisure Facilities and Play Strategy for the District.		The Council has delivered a full refurbishment of Kilkeel Bowling Pavilion at an investment of £300,000. The Council also implemented the final phase of the Play Strategy 2017-22, opening two new playparks in Darragh Cross and Teconnaught with a final two upgrades at Kilmorey Park, Newry and Kitty's Road, Kilkeel. Across the life cycle of this strategy the Council has completed 6 new play parks, 22 upgrades, 11 consolidations and 10 transformations. The Council is progressing the development of multi-sport hubs as well as upgrading work at Dundrum Football Club and the refurbishment of Kilkeel Leisure Centre. Dunleath skate park is also progressing.
Develop and implement a Sports Development and		The Open Spaces Strategy is being aligned to the wider Planning Departments' Open Space Strategy which is a statutory requirement by all Councils to complete as part of the Local Development Plan.

Open Spaces Strategy for the District.		A consultant has prepared the Sport & Physical Activity Strategy, and this will be presented to the AHC Committee in due course. The Multi Sports Hub review was completed in 2022-23 which allowed Council to establish a capital budget to support the future development of multi sports hubs across the District in each of the 7 DEAs.
--	--	--

Measure of Success	2020-21		2021-22		2022-23		2023-24		Status Trend	Explanatory note
Number of people participating in targeted health programmes (Everybody Active 2020)	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	 	There has been an increase of 16.1% in the number of people participating in targeted health programmes increasing from 9,309 in 2022-23 to 10,805 in 2023-24.
	3,818	2,270	-	322	1,950	9,309	9,400	10,805		
Attendance at free play sessions	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual		Council invested in the purchase of play equipment for each DEA and capacity building for coordinators to deliver free play sessions with 430 children attending in 2020-21. This was a funded, one-off programme to enable free play sessions to be delivered in local communities by local groups. Council continues to invest in local play parks across the district via the delivery of the Play Strategy.
	-	430		0	-	0	-	0		
Number of attendances at Council leisure facilities	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual		There has been an increase of 18.8% in the number of attendances at Council Leisure facilities between 2022-23 and 2023-24. The figure rose from 803,517 in 2022-23 to 954,912 in 2023-24. Whilst this remains below pre-pandemic levels
	1,922,131	75,296	-	447,095	-	803,517	-	954,912		































## Performance Improvement Objective 1

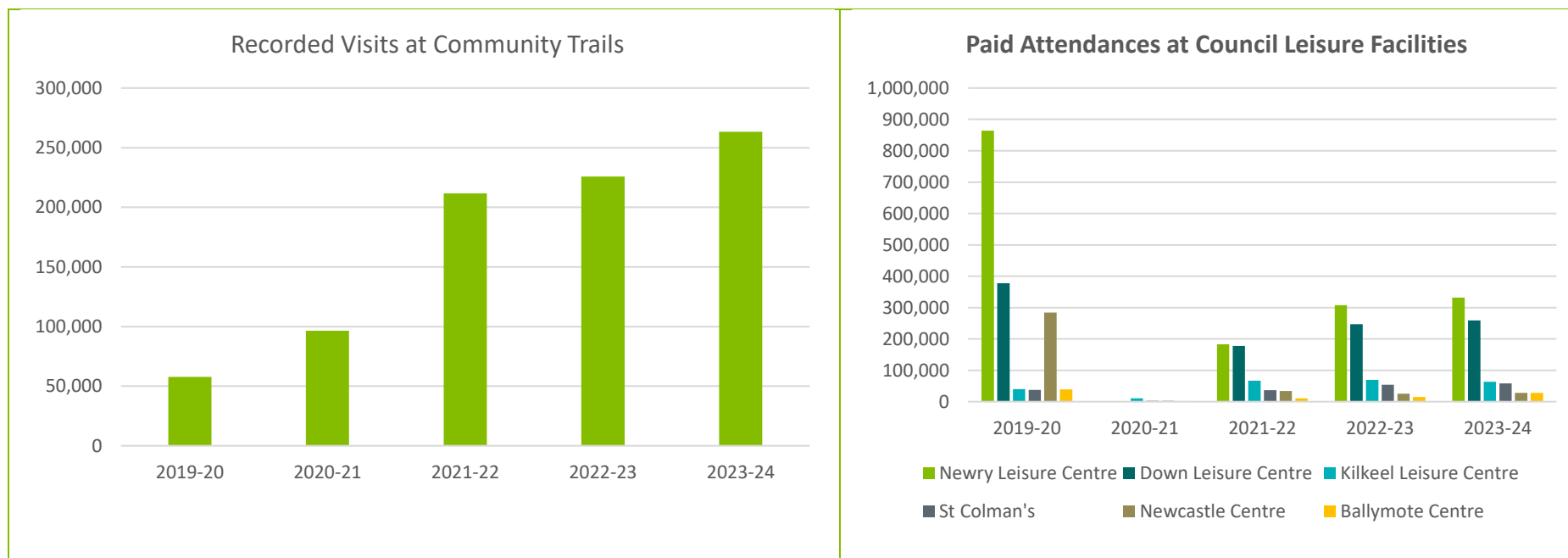
We will support the health and wellbeing of local people by improving our leisure facilities and services

Supporting action	Status	Update
Increase the number of paid attendances at indoor leisure facilities through the Covid-19 recovery plan.		There were 768,842 paid attendances in 2023-24 which is 2.5% above the target set of 750,000. It also represents a 10% increase on the 2022-23 figure of 698,864.
Continue to progress and implement the review of Leisure Services.		The review of Leisure Services is ongoing in line with the introduction of a pay protection policy and HR work plans.
Deliver a range of targeted health programmes to encourage participation in physical activity.		In 2023-24 the Council ran a number of targeted health initiatives including the Physical Activity Referral Programme (PARS), Macmillan Move More and the Be Active for Life programme which collectively saw participation of 10,805.
Deliver a number of seasonal youth health and wellbeing initiatives to encourage participation in physical activity.		The Council delivered a number of seasonal youth health and wellbeing initiatives including Summer Activity Programmes and the £1 summer promotions to encourage participation in physical activity which led to 17,226 participating during 2023-24.
Progress the leisure projects agreed within the Capital Programme		The delivery of projects within Council's Capital Programme is ongoing. These include the development of multi-sports hubs at Donard Park and Jennings Park. Capital projects are progressing for Newry City Park, Kilkeel Leisure Centre and Dunleath Skate Park Downpatrick.
Maintain the number of recorded visits to Community Trails.		The number of recorded visits to community trails increased by 16.6% between 2022-23 and 2023-24 increasing from 225,795 in 2022-23 to 263,364 in 2023-24. This 2023-24 figure also exceeded the target set for 2023-34 by 17.1%

Implement a 'Mystery Visitor' Programme for indoor leisure.		The 'Mystery Visitor' Programme was not implemented in 2023-24. This will be delivered in the 2024-25 financial year.
---	---	---

Measure of success	2019-20 Actual	2020-21 Actual	2021-22 Actual	2022-23 Actual	2023-24 Actual	Status Trend	Explanatory note
Number of paid attendances at:				698,864	768,842 (Target: 750,000)	 	<p>There was an increase in paid attendances experienced across five of the six leisure centres in the District between 2022-23 and 2023-24. The biggest increase was at Ballymote Sports and Wellbeing Centre that increased paid attendances by over 80%. This was followed by an increase of 14.2% at Down Leisure Centre, 8.8% increase at Newcastle Centre, 8.3% increase for paid attendance figures at St Colmans Sports Complex and 8.1% increase at Newry Leisure Centre. Between 2022-23 and 2023-24 Kilkeel Leisure Centre experienced a decrease of 8.6% in the number of paid attendances falling from 69,797 to 63,811. The capital redevelopment of Kilkeel Leisure Centre is currently progressing for delivery in 2025.</p> <p>Across all the leisure centres the total number of paid attendances totaled 768,842 which exceeds the target set of 750,000 by 2.5%.</p>
Newry Leisure Centre	864,190	27,253	183,224	306,802	331,546		
Down Leisure Centre	377,842	30,199	177,496	227,156	259,473		
Kilkeel Leisure Centre	40,219	10,367	66,987	69,797	63,811		
St. Colmans Sports Complex	37,349	2,945	36,717	54,024	58,491		
Newcastle Centre & Tropicana Outdoor Swimming Complex	284,230	2,778	33,801	25,517	27,765		
Ballymote Sports and Wellbeing Centre	38,993	1,754	10,309	15,365	27,756		

Number of people participating in targeted health programmes	10,793	2,270*	322*	9,309	10,805 (Target: 9,400)	 	There has been an increase of 16.1% in the number of people participating in targeted health programmes increasing from 9,309 in 2022-23 to 10,805 in 2023-24. This exceeded the target set in 2023-24 of 9,400 by 14.9%
Number of young people participating in targeted youth health and wellbeing initiatives	New Measure			19,365	17,226 (Target: 20,000)	 	This was a new measure introduced in 2022-23 with 19,365 young people participating in targeted programmes in that financial year. The first target in 2023-24 was set at 20,000 participants with an actual achievement of 17,226 young people taking part in programmes throughout the year. The target set for the 2024-25 financial year has been set to more accurately reflect the level of participants targeted in health & wellbeing initiatives.
Number of leisure centre memberships	New Measure			9,534	9,923 (Target: 9,750)	 	Between 2022-23 and 2023-24 the number of leisure centre memberships increased by 4.1% from 9,534 in 2022-23 to 9,923 in 2023-24 while also exceeding the target set. There are several leisure centre memberships available including platinum, gold and silver.
Number of capital leisure projects progressed	New Measure				5		The delivery of projects within Council's Capital Programme is ongoing. These include the development of multi-sports hubs at Donard Park and Jennings Park. Capital projects are progressing for Newry City Park, Kilkeel Leisure Centre and Dunleath Skate Park Downpatrick.
Number of recorded visits at community trails	57,849	96,563	211,718	225,795	263,364 (Target: 225,000)	 	In 2023-24, 263,364 visits to community trails across the District were recorded. This is an increase of 16.6% when compared to the 2022-23 figure of 225,795 recorded visits to community trails. This figure also exceeds the target set by 17.1%.



\*The 'Be Active for Life' programme, which forms part of this measure, was only getting established when Covid-19 occurred and therefore participation rates were restricted.



## Community Planning Outcome




All people in Newry, Mourne and Down benefit from prosperous communities


### Corporate Objective




Support sustainable forms of tourism which value our environment and cultural heritage

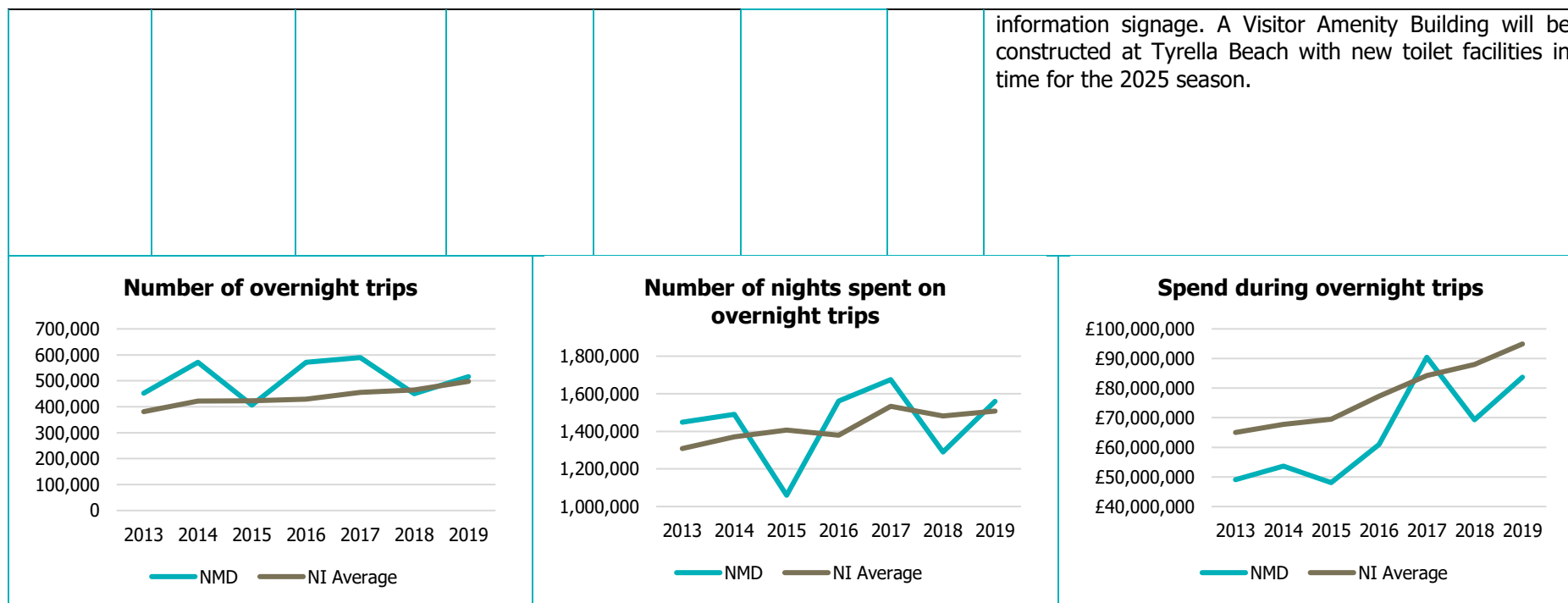
Key action	Status	Update
Develop the tourism proposition for the district in line with Tourism NI's Experience Brand.		<p>The Council completed a 12-week consultation on the draft Tourism Strategy which included a new tourism brand concept. Following the 12-week consultation minor amendments were made to the draft Strategy for presentation to Council in April 2024. Sustainability is an inherent hallmark of NMD Tourism Strategy, championing a balanced and holistic approach that prioritises:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• safeguarding the environment</li><li>• supporting the local community</li><li>• supporting livelihoods and the economy</li></ul> <p>The Council completed a new facilitated programme to work with the Outdoor Adventure sector engaging 15 businesses across the District who completed the Programme and developed new visitor experiences, 5 will be progressed to Embrace a Giant Spirit Brand Alignment.</p>
Work with Tourism NI, Tourism Ireland, government departments, and the private		Engagement with tourism and hospitality businesses continued during 2023 -2024 through regular engagement with food and drink, culture & heritage and outdoor groups providing regular industry updates and stakeholder engagement with industry



sector to grow the economic impact of the tourism industry and to address barriers to growth.		associations. The Council continue to work in partnership with key stakeholders to address long-term sustainability issues in the Mourne Mountains through 'Forever Mournes'.
Invest in major tourism capital projects that will attract international visitors to NI and the district.		Progress continues on the delivery of capital projects at key tourism sites across the District, with construction work underway in Castlewellan Forest Park, completion of integrated design for visitor facilities and planning secured for trail development at Delamont Country Park, developed design consultation completed for Camlough Lake Recreational Hub, concepts developed for Narnia at Kilbroney Park and an Integrated Delivery Team (IDT) appointed to oversee new visitor facilities at Tyrella. The Mourne Mountain Gateway Project Integrated Consultancy Team (ICT) tender issued, and assessment completed. The next stage of project development will be a comprehensive programme of surveys and consultation and engagement activity through the Integrated Consultancy Team.
Implement a Sustainable Tourism Growth Plan to ensure responsible development of our tourism offering with respect to environmental, social and economic considerations.		Sustainable Tourism Growth is a central theme in the new Tourism Strategy 2024-29 with sustainable tourism development and social inclusion underpinning all ambitions and actions within the Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2024-2029. A key focus of communications for the destination and with businesses has been ensuring that tourism businesses are equipped with the knowledge and support to act as confident communicators of NMD's sustainable and regenerative tourism ethos and approaches.
Continue to develop the district's bid to achieve the UNESCO Global Geopark designation by summer 2021.		The Council achieved UNESCO Global Geopark designation for Mourne, Gullion, Strangford in May 2023 and hosted the annual UK Geopark Committee. Implementation of the Geopark Action Plan is ongoing

Measure of Success	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Trend	Explanatory Note
Increased overnights stays	406,302	571,054	589,581	449,953	516,203		Between 2015 and 2019, the number of overnight trips in the District increased by 27%, including an increase of 14.7% between 2018 and 2019. Newry, Mourne and Down


							accounts for 9.4% of all overnight trips in Northern Ireland, and since 2015, the average number of nights spent in Newry, Mourne and Down also increased by 47.1% to 1,559,810 nights. The average overnight trip per visitor has therefore increased from 2.6 in 2015 to 3 in 2019.
Increased visitor spend	£48,071,493	£60,934,823	£90,432,246	£69,345,336	£83,671,689		Between 2015 and 2019, visitor spend in Newry, Mourne and Down increased by 74%, including a 20.7% increase between 2018 and 2019, which equates to an overall increase of £35.6m being generated by local tourism. Visitor spend in Newry, Mourne and Down currently accounts for 8% of all visitor spend in Northern Ireland and the average spend per trip also increased from £118.31 in 2015 to £162.09 in 2019.
Measure of Success	2018	2019	2020	2021	2023	Trend	
Increased visitor satisfaction	-	-	-	Satisfaction with Parks 83% (Baseline)	Satisfaction with Parks 76%	 	A follow up to the 2021 parks and beaches survey was carried out in Q2 2023-24. It shows that overall satisfaction has fallen in respect of both parks and beaches across the District. Satisfaction with parks decreased by 7% from 83% in 2021 to 76% in 2023 while beaches recorded a decrease of 15% in terms of satisfaction during this period. Some of the reasons for dissatisfaction included food and drink offerings, visitor information and signage and toilet facilities. In response to this feedback Council has put in place a mobile vendors service across sites which includes a new service at Kilbroney to provide tea/coffee in the carpark to address queues in the cafe. A new cafe provision will be in place at Castlewella Forest park next year with works already underway. Council also has design concepts in development at both Delamont and Kilbroney which includes interpretation and the Castlewella Forest Park restoration project due to be completed in May 2025 includes interpretation and signage. Across the tourism facilities Council have a rolling programme to update
				Satisfaction with Beaches 67% (Baseline)	Satisfaction with Beaches 52%		






\*Since 2019 tourism estimates have not yet been published by the NI Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) and this report reflects the 2019 Local Government District (LGD) tourism data. NISRA has confirmed that the tourism estimates should not be used on a year on year comparison basis, and should be used as a trend analysis, alongside other local tourism information.

## Corporate Objective

Invest in and support new and growing businesses, job creation and employment skills


Key action	Status	Through the CIO Update
Provide a programme of support that will increase growth and investment for new and established businesses across the district.		<p>European funded business growth programmes ended in June 2023. During April – June 2023 Council implemented a business support programme for 40 businesses.</p> <p>Go for It ceased on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2023. During April – June 2023 the programme created 77 jobs from April to September 2023.</p> <p>Council in partnership with all Council's in Northern Ireland developed Northern Ireland Enterprise Support Service branded "Go Succeed" funded via DHLUC. The Service was launched in November 2023. 207 established businesses were assisted through growth diagnostic, mentoring and masterclasses. 101 new start businesses were assisted with a diagnostic and mentoring, and 19 foundation/early start businesses were assisted with a diagnostic and mentoring.</p> <p>7 businesses were supported via Innovate Accelerate through NMEA.</p> <p>The Council delivered two 'Make it Local' promotional campaigns, to highlight the unique business offering in Newry and Downpatrick and encourage shoppers to shop locally, in store or online. The campaign was delivered through across multiply platforms, including social media, video, billboard and print</p> <p>The Council also delivered 37 artisan markets in Downpatrick, Newcastle, Warrenpoint and Newry with 37,208 visitors recorded across all 4 sites during 2023-24.</p> <p>Council organised NMD Enterprise Week in November 2023. 20 events were hosted which included a range of workshops, networking events and online activities to showcase the entrepreneurial networks and support available for residents and businesses across the District.</p>

Work with partners to enhance employability and skills, provide quality jobs for all our citizens and meet the needs of our businesses.		The Council continues to implement the Economic Development and Regeneration Strategy and is working with partners in the employability, skills and education sectors through the Labour Market Partnership (LMP). LMP focus is on creating employability pathways for those furthest from the labour market and creating upskilling opportunities to align with business & labour market need. Opportunities are created for local residents to access support to assist with gaining employment or progressing within their current employment.
Maximise the district's location as a cross-border gateway to Great Britain, Ireland and international markets.		<p>The Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor (DBEC) is a partnership of the 8 Councils and 2 Universities located along the Dublin to Belfast corridor. The partnership has developed an ambitious 7-year strategy and action plan that outlines the vision for the Partnership to become a leading economic corridor in Europe and seeks to position the Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor as a prime investment location, enabling access to regional, national and international markets. Newry, Mourne and Down District Council are the current lead Council on behalf of the DBEC partnership and will progress actions as agreed through the DBEC Government structure, which is now in place and operational as defined in the Partnerships Collaboration Agreement formally agreed in September 2023.</p> <p>Key activities are now actively being progressed across 3 core themes focusing on Sustainable and innovation-led growth, Skills Development and Engagement &amp; brand development. Project concepts currently under consideration as potential funding opportunities are Transformative Innovation Support networks, a Cross Border Skills strategy, investor-ready development lands availability, Circular Economy initiatives and collaborative tourism propositions that exist across the Corridor.</p>
Secure investment in infrastructure that enables the future economic growth of the district.		<p><b>FFNI - Delivery of Digital Transformation Flexible Fund</b></p> <p>Since June 2022 NMDDC c/o FFNI has been developing and leading on a £7.5M project for all Councils which will fund micro and small businesses with a Grant between £5k-£20k to fast-track Digital Transformation using emerging technologies.</p>

		<p>The DTFF Consortium is made up of the 11 local authorities, DAERA and Invest NI. The project outcomes are job creation/sustainability, new products/services and export potential.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DTFF is a demand led capital grant operating across Northern Ireland to stimulate Digital Transformation.</li> <li>• 1st of its kind Cross Growth Deal programme for Northern Ireland.</li> <li>• £7.5m Capital Funding Pot (£6m from Complementary Fund, £1.1m from DAERA, £451k from D&amp;S Growth Deal)</li> <li>• DTFF has been designed to contribute to the City/Growth Deal ambitions, particularly digital and innovation priorities.</li> </ul> <p>The funding programme officially launched in Nov 2023.</p> <p><b>Call 1 November 2023 (complete)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attracted 135 Expressions of Interest across NI (NMD 16)</li> <li>• 108 businesses invited to submit a full application (NMD 12)</li> <li>• 63 Applications received (NMD 8)</li> <li>• 40 Letters of offer issued and signed by applicants (NMD 5)</li> <li>• 36 Claims totaling £533k (NMD £63,514)</li> </ul> <p><b>Call 2 March 2024 (Ongoing)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attracted 207 Expressions of Interest across NI (NMD 27)</li> <li>• 153 businesses invited to submit a full application (NMD 20)</li> <li>• 78 Applications received (NMD 10)</li> <li>• 37 Letters of offer issued and signed by applicants (NMD 4)</li> <li>• Approximate Letter of Award Amount due Oct 24: £610,251.50 (NMD £70,303.96)</li> </ul>
--	--	--

		<p><b>Call 3 – June 2024 (ongoing)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attracted 246 Expressions of Interest across NI (NMD 26)</li> <li>• 179 businesses invited to submit a full application (NMD 18)</li> </ul> <p><b>FFNI - Mobile Action Plan.</b></p> <p>The MAP NI was developed by a cross-sectoral working group which included members from central and local government who consulted with stakeholders including industry, UK Government and Ofcom. Its aim is to identify issues which inhibit the rollout of mobile networks and seek to establish solutions to enable better, faster and more consistent mobile coverage throughout Northern Ireland. This plan has been in development since June 2022.</p> <p>Under MAP, FFNI Ops team are chairing the Council representation in the Northern Ireland Barrier Busting taskforce using existing FFNI Governance arrangements. FFNI has engaged with Solace to request that each council should consider the establishment of an internal working group to support the regional digital champions working group to improve mobile connectivity in district/NI.</p> <p><b>FFNI – DCMS Shared Rural Network</b></p> <p>£1 billion deal to improve poor and patchy rural 4G phone coverage was agreed in June 2022. The Shared Rural Network Consortium is made up of FFNI, EE, O2, Three and Vodafone, DfE, DAERA, DfE, DfI and Mobiles UK. The SRN is investing in a network of new and existing phone masts through a partnership between the mobile operators and local/central government.</p>
--	--	---

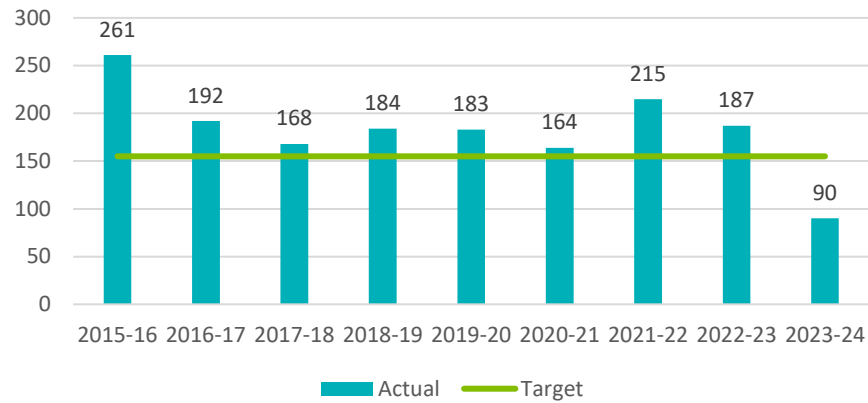


<p>Through the BRCD partnership, implement a series of (1) skills and employment and (2) digital and innovation programmes to meet the needs of the region.</p>		<p>The Belfast Region City Deal was signed in December 2021, confirming the commitment of partners to deliver all City Deal proposals. BRCD represents an investment of approximately £200 Million that will transform Newry, Mourne and Down.</p> <p>Mourne Mountains Gateway project: Contract for funding now in place and project design and development underway.</p> <p>Newry City Centre Regeneration including grade A office provision and public realm schemes. Contract for funding now in place and project design and development underway. Planning permission submitted for Theatre and Conference space and Civic Centre.</p> <p>Newry Southern Relief Road - public consultation held.</p> <p>Regional Innovation Hub - The aim is to drive IDEs, foster innovation, digital transformation, and economic growth. Extensive Consultation with Catalyst completed in June 2024 in preparation for full business case development for the Regional Hub due to commence October/November 2024.</p> <p>The Belfast region led by BCC secured £3.8 million for wireless technology from Dept Science, Innovation and Technology and has become one of 5g Innovation regions across UK.</p> <p>Digital Transformation Flexible Fund launched</p> <p>Skills Assessments underway to shape industry needs against forecast growth.</p>
---	---	---

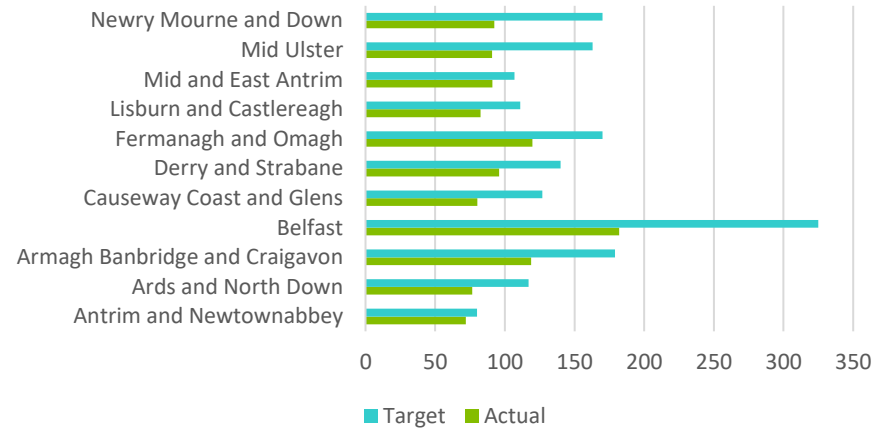
Measure of Success	2022-23		2023-24		Status Trend	Explanatory Note
Number of jobs created and businesses supported through Council programmes	Jobs created	Businesses supported	Jobs created	Businesses supported		Through the new NI 'Go Succeed' programme and the Social Economy programme 104 jobs were created with 363 businesses supported. This represents a decrease of 46% in relation to the number of jobs created but an increase of 1% in the number of business supported. A key contributing factor to the decrease in the number of jobs created was the transitional gap between the ending of the NI 'Go For It' scheme and the commencement of the NI 'Go Succeed' programme.
	193	359	104	363	<div><div>▽</div><div>△</div></div>	
Number of jobs promoted through business start-up activity	Target	Actual	Target	Actual		NIESS (Go Succeed) commenced in November 2023. The delivery was delayed due to a number of issues including procurement and the development of a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. This has resulted in a decline in overall performance compared to 2022-23, with the number of new jobs promoted decreasing by 52%. This figure is also only 58% of the target set for 2023-24 with the Council ranked 5/11 across Northern Ireland.
	>155	187	>155	90	<div><div>☹️</div><div>▽</div></div>	
Amount of investment secured by the Council	Investment		2022-23	2023-24		<b><u>Economic Development</u></b>
	Economic Development - Total Value of Funding Contracts Held:		£2.2m	£1.7m	<div><div>😊</div></div>	Council is a project partner on NIESS. The investment from DHLUC is £7,500,000 for 2023/2024 across Northern Ireland, which includes delivery for NMDDC. NMDDC has provided match funding (£83,632.00) in respect of Go Succeed programme and delivered £292,728 of funding in 2023/24
	Economic Development – Annual Spend:		£695,176	£966,171		Council is in receipt of a Letter of Offer for £524,373.87 from DfC for Labour Market Partnership (LMP) for 23/24.
	Regeneration – Total Value of Funding Contracts Held:		£14.3m	10.8m	<div><div>😊</div></div>	NMDDC is the lead Council on DTFF. Council is managing a £7.5m Capital Funding Pot (£6m from Complementary Fund, £1.1m from DAERA, £451k from D&S Growth Deal).
	Regeneration – Annual Spend:		£3.0m	£5.495m		<b><u>Regeneration</u></b> Council is in receipt of Letter of Offer valued at £4,002,000 for Small Settlement Scheme. The LoO straddles 22/23, 23/24 24/25. Expenditure for 23/24 £2,597642.10

				<p>Council is in receipt of a LoO from DAERA valued at £1,484,688. The LoO straddles 23/24 24/25 25/26 26/27 27/28 committed in 23/24 is £291,520.</p> <p>Council is in receipt of a Letter of Offer for Warrenpoint Revitalisation for £100,000 in 23/24. (The Letter of Offer straddles two financial years. £33,602.50 committed in 23/24 and £66,397.50 for 24/25)</p> <p>Council is in receipt of LoO for Warrenpoint from DfC for £1,988,993.00. The Letter of Offer straddles two financial years (£1,295,000 23/24).</p> <p>Council is in receipt of funding from NLHF for £2.69 million for the restoration of Castlewellan Forest Park. 23/24 expenditure was £708,369.95</p> <p>Council is a project partner on Carlingford Lough Greenway, 23/24 expenditure was £569,371.81</p>																																		
<p><b>Economic Development - Investment secured and spent by Council</b></p> <table><thead><tr><th>Project</th><th>SPEND 2023/2024</th><th>Contracts Held £</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>DTFF (23/24, 24/25, 25/26)</td><td>80,000</td><td>850,000</td></tr><tr><td>LMP (Annual)</td><td>550,000</td><td>550,000</td></tr><tr><td>NIESS (23/23, 24/25)</td><td>400,000</td><td>400,000</td></tr></tbody></table>				Project	SPEND 2023/2024	Contracts Held £	DTFF (23/24, 24/25, 25/26)	80,000	850,000	LMP (Annual)	550,000	550,000	NIESS (23/23, 24/25)	400,000	400,000	<p><b>Regeneration - Investment secured and spent by Council</b></p> <table><thead><tr><th>Project</th><th>SPEND 2023/2024</th><th>Contracts Held £</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>Carlingford Greenway</td><td>700,000</td><td>700,000</td></tr><tr><td>NLHF</td><td>800,000</td><td>2,800,000</td></tr><tr><td>Warrenpoint - DFC</td><td>1,300,000</td><td>2,000,000</td></tr><tr><td>Warrenpoint Revit</td><td>100,000</td><td>100,000</td></tr><tr><td>DAERA</td><td>400,000</td><td>1,500,000</td></tr><tr><td>SSS</td><td>2,600,000</td><td>4,100,000</td></tr></tbody></table>		Project	SPEND 2023/2024	Contracts Held £	Carlingford Greenway	700,000	700,000	NLHF	800,000	2,800,000	Warrenpoint - DFC	1,300,000	2,000,000	Warrenpoint Revit	100,000	100,000	DAERA	400,000	1,500,000	SSS	2,600,000	4,100,000
Project	SPEND 2023/2024	Contracts Held £																																				
DTFF (23/24, 24/25, 25/26)	80,000	850,000																																				
LMP (Annual)	550,000	550,000																																				
NIESS (23/23, 24/25)	400,000	400,000																																				
Project	SPEND 2023/2024	Contracts Held £																																				
Carlingford Greenway	700,000	700,000																																				
NLHF	800,000	2,800,000																																				
Warrenpoint - DFC	1,300,000	2,000,000																																				
Warrenpoint Revit	100,000	100,000																																				
DAERA	400,000	1,500,000																																				
SSS	2,600,000	4,100,000																																				

**Number of new jobs promoted through the business start programme**







**Number of jobs promoted against target 2023/24**






## Corporate Objective

Promote the revitalisation of our city, towns, villages and rural communities




Key action	Status	Update
Progress the Belfast Region City Deal, ensuring inclusive economic growth for the region.		<p>The Belfast Region City Deal was signed in December 2021, confirming the commitment of partners to deliver all City Deal proposals. BRCD represents an investment of approx. £200 Million that will transform Newry, Mourne and Down.</p> <p>Mourne Mountains Gateway project: Contract for funding now in place and project design and development underway.</p> <p>Newry City Centre Regeneration including grade A office provision and public realm schemes. Contract for funding now in place and project design and development underway. Planning permission submitted for Theatre and Conference space and Civic Centre.</p> <p>Newry Southern Relief Road - public consultation held.</p> <p>Regional Innovation Hub - The aim is to drive IDEs, foster innovation, digital transformation, and economic growth. Extensive Consultation with Catalyst completed in June 2024 in preparation for full business case development for the Regional Hub due to commence October/November 2024.</p> <p>The Belfast region led by BCC secured £3.8 million for wireless technology from Dept Science, Innovation and Technology and has become one of 5g Innovation regions across UK.</p> <p>Digital Transformation Flexible Fund launched</p> <p>Skills Assessments underway to shape industry needs against forecast growth.</p>

		Council is represented at the Skills and Employability Board by AD, Full Fibre NI Operations Lead attends Digital and Innovation Board.
Implement priority projects identified within masterplans and village plans.		<p>Having been completed in 2022-23, the final defects period for the 'Warrenpoint Front Shore Promenade Public Realm Scheme' was concluded over the course of 2023-24 at an overall cost of £2m. Also, in 2023-24 approvals were obtained and works commenced on the next phase of 'Warrenpoint Front Shore Car-Parks Public Realm Scheme'.</p> <p>During the period 2023-24, the Council also invested £100k in delivery of the follow-up Revitalisation/Shop Front Scheme for Warrenpoint Front Shore Promenade.</p> <p>Council is also in receipt of funding from DfC, DAERA and DfI for implementation of £4.3m Small Settlement Scheme. Annalong, Dundrum, Hilltown, Killyleagh, Meigh, Newtownhamilton, Strangford and Killough villages were included in the scheme. Business and Community representatives along with elected members co-designed action plans tailored for village enhancement.</p> <p>Kilkeel Feasibility Study commenced in late February 2024; it is due to conclude in Q1 2025-26. It is anticipated that the report will review the Masterplan for Kilkeel and will inform revitalisation projects for 25/26.</p>
Establish a new civic centre, theatre and conference facility that will revitalise Newry City and the wider district.		The contract for funding was agreed for Newry City Centre Regeneration Projects in January 2023. Planning permission has been applied for both the Theatre and Conference Centre and Civic Centre projects.
Develop a car parking strategy in line with strategic regeneration development needs and sustainability.		The appointment of carpark providers was delayed due to a legal challenge. The new provider is now in place and a draft car parking strategy has been developed.

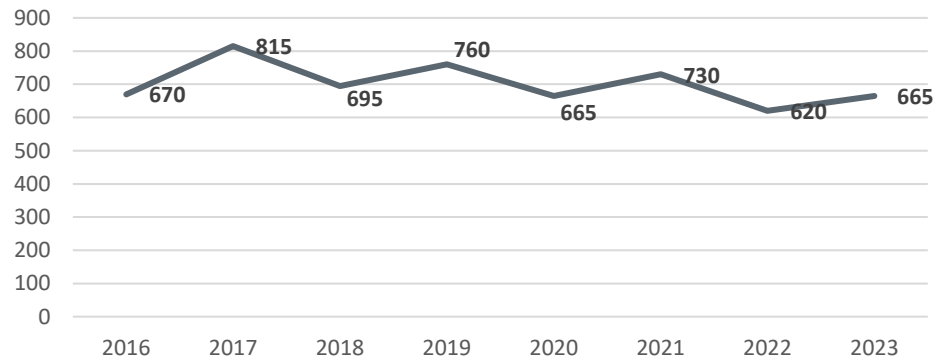
Progress Downpatrick Regeneration.		<p>As part of a pilot initiative aimed at rejuvenating the High Street, a Downpatrick Living High Streets Framework for Downpatrick was launched in September 2023.</p> <p>Downpatrick Regeneration Working Group (DRWG) in conjunction with The Ministerial Advisory Group (MAG) for Architecture and the Built Environment, Department for Communities and Council produced the framework for Downpatrick with the help of businesses, residents and stakeholders, to develop a vision for the town and put it in the best possible position for funding opportunities.</p>
------------------------------------	---	---

Measure of success	2022-23	2023-24	Status Trend	Explanatory Note
Progress against BRCD projects	Progress underway	Progress underway		The Belfast Region City Deal was signed in December 2021, confirming the commitment of partners to deliver against City Deal proposals. BRCD includes five projects that will transform Newry, Mourne and Down, including the Mourne Mountains Gateway, Newry Southern Relief Road, Newry City Centre Regeneration, Digital and Innovation projects and Skills and Employment projects. Outline Business Cases for Mourne Mountain Gateway and Newry City Centre Regeneration have been approved and a signed contract for funding with the Department for Communities for the latter has been completed. In Q4 of 23/24 NMDDC appointed an Integrated Consultancy Team (ICT) to progress the Mourne Mountains Gateway Project. Global engineering consultancy Arup will lead the highly experienced project team, along with TODD Architects, Gleeds and Tandem Design. In 2023-24 both Newry City Centre Regeneration Projects progressed through the planning application and procurement of Integrated Supply Teams (IST) and on programme to appoint in Q2 of 24/25 subject to obtaining approvals. Outline Business Cases for the Southern Relief Road and Digital and Innovation remain in progress. A regionally focused working group has been established to progress investments under skills and employability.
Number of public realm schemes delivered	2	1 complete 4 onsite 1 received planning		During 2023/24, the Council applied for planning and undertook a procurement process for 'Small Settlement Public Realm Schemes' in Bessbrook, Castlewellan, Saintfield and Rostrevor. One

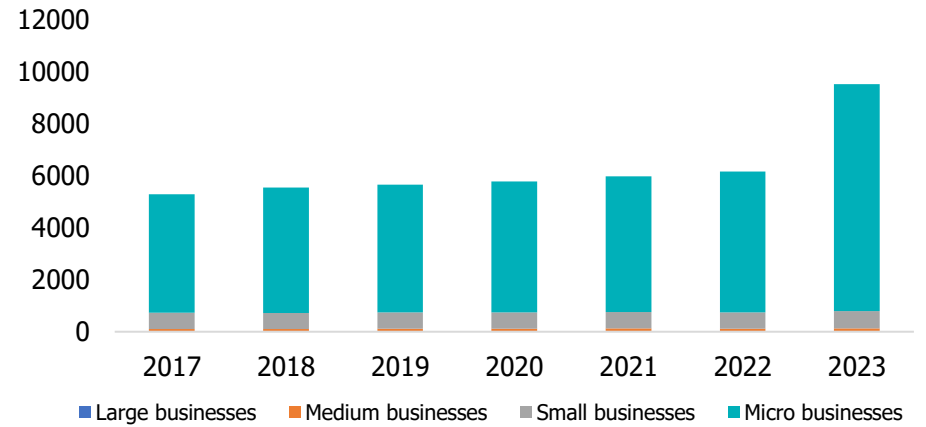


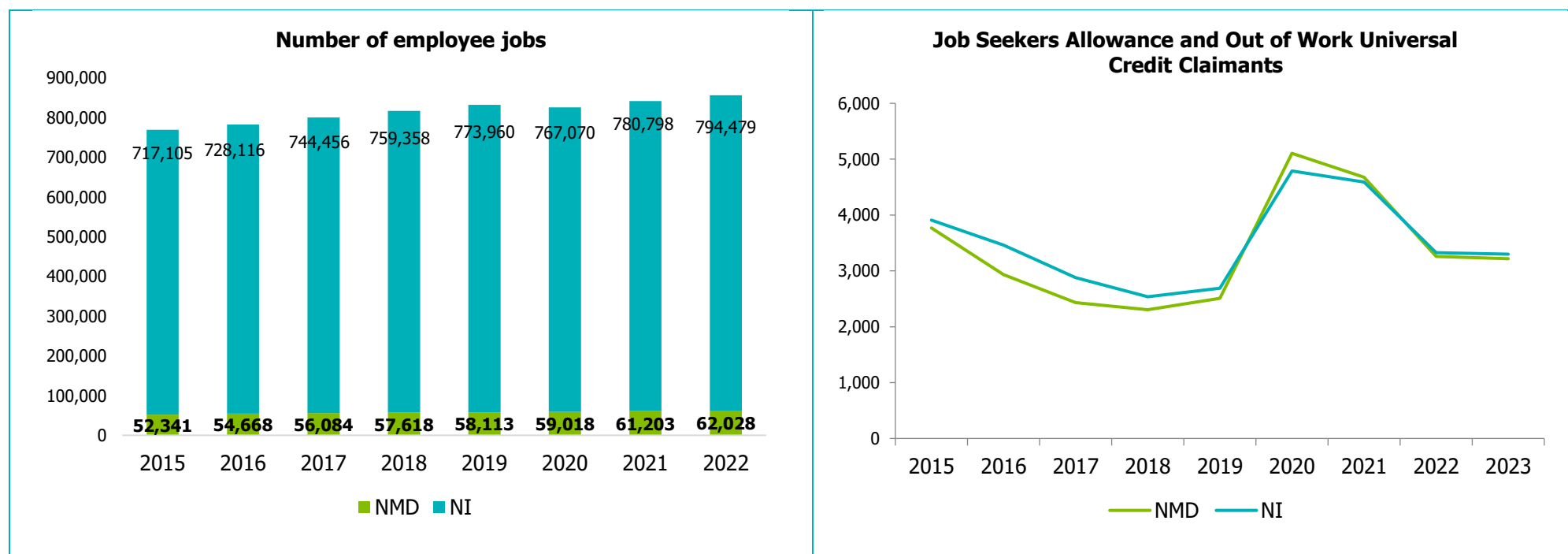
		1 in progress		<p>contractor was appointed to deliver Castlewellan and Saintfield and one contractor appointed to deliver Bessbrook and Rostrevor. Works will complete in 24/25.</p> <p>Warrenpoint Promenade scheme was delivered by June 2023. Warrenpoint Front shore Car Parks Public Realm scheme received planning with a contractor appointed and due to go on site in April 24.</p> <p>Warrenpoint Breakwater PR Scheme – planning permission achieved in 23/24, this project did not proceed due to budgetary constraints but will be revisited as funding becomes available.</p> <p>Council received a Letter of Offer for Warrenpoint Revitalisation Project in September 2023. The Letter of Offer straddles two financial years. £33,602.50 committed in 23/24 and £66,397.50 for 24/25.</p> <p>Downpatrick Church Street and DeCourcy Place RIBA commenced development. A consultant was appointed to develop the scheme to RIBA Stage 0-3.</p>
Increased business growth and employment	<b>9,175</b> VAT and/or PAYE registered businesses	<b>9,375</b> VAT and/or PAYE registered businesses		Since 2015, the number of VAT and/or PAYE registered businesses in Newry, Mourne and Down increased by 22.1%, from 7,675 in 2015 to 9,375 in 2023. This includes an increase of 2.2% between 2022 and 2023 which can largely be attributed to the creation of an additional 270 new micro businesses and 45 new small businesses. The birth rate of new businesses in Newry, Mourne and Down was 665* in 2023-24, the second highest across all the Council areas and accounts for 12% of all new business births in Northern Ireland.
	<b>61,203</b> employee jobs	<b>62,028</b> employee jobs		Between 2015 and 2022, the number of employee jobs across Newry, Mourne and Down increased by 18.5%, from 52,341 to 62,028, which was the 4 <sup>th</sup> highest across Northern Ireland, accounting for 7.8% of all regional employee jobs. The BRES (Business Register and Employment Survey) NI 2023 document which reports this data will not be published until 26 September 2023) and so the 2023 figure is currently not available.
	<b>3,260</b> job seekers and out of work universal credit claimants	<b>3,220</b> Job seekers and out of work universal credit claimants		There was a 1.2% reduction in the number of job seekers allowance and out of work universal credit claimants, from 3,260 in 2022 to 3,220 in 2023, which is the lowest it has been since 2019 but is still above pre-pandemic levels by 23%. This is slightly above the regional trend where the claimant count reduced by 0.9% between 2022 and 2023. Newry, Mourne and Down is ranked 7/11 across all Councils for its claimant count annual average.

**Birth rate of newly registered businesses in Newry, Mourne and Down**



**VAT and/or PAYE registered businesses operating in Newry, Mourne and Down**



















\*The 2023 Birth rates data is based on ONS quarterly statistics as the NI Business Demography 2023 is not due to be published until January 2025 and may therefore be subject to change.




## Performance Improvement Objective 2

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

Key action	Status	Update
Roll-out the NMD 'Make it Local' campaign to support the revitalisation of our local economy		The Council implemented several 'Make it Local' promotional campaigns focusing on business recovery in Newry and Downpatrick following flooding in Autumn. Council delivered a Christmas Make it Local campaign featuring 3 businesses from Newry and 3 businesses from Downpatrick. Council delivered a Spring Make it Local campaign with funding received from DfC featuring a range of businesses in Newry and Downpatrick. The campaign was delivered via outdoor marketing, social and print media.
Invest in the social economy through the Social Enterprise programme.		The Council achieved all targets set through the Social Economy programme, supporting 30 social enterprises, 12 new start-up businesses created, delivering 194 mentoring days, assisting 51 people to gain increased skills for entering employment, creating 32 new volunteering jobs, 16 people securing employment and 16 new jobs created.
Support the growth of existing businesses and creation of new jobs through the Entrepreneurship Support Programme		Support for prestart up, start up and growth businesses commenced following the launch of the Northern Ireland Entrepreneurship Support Scheme (NIESS) in November 2023. 13 jobs were created via Go Succeed through the Engage pillar. The service encountered several mobilisation challenges including procurement, CRM delays, delays in mentor training, mobilisation etc. across Northern Ireland which has impacted on achieving targets.
Support the establishment of new businesses through the Entrepreneurship Support Programme		Following the cessation of ERDF funding, 11 Councils throughout NI led by Belfast CC worked in partnership to co design NIESS. NIESS branded "Go Succeed" launched on 13 <sup>th</sup> November 2023. The service is designed to assist pre start up, start up and growth businesses on their entrepreneurial journey.
Continue to create opportunities for employability and skills		Newry, Mourne and Down Labour Market Partnership continued to support local employment by delivering various initiatives in 2023-2024 to assist with the supply of potential employees to the business community. With a focus on employability and

<p>through implementation of the LMP Action Plan</p>	<p>upskilling, local residents have been provided with the opportunity to access support to work towards gaining employment or progressing within their current employment.</p> <p>Initiatives included delivery of a Pre-employment Programme "Get Work Ready" to 48 participants; all of whom availed of one-to-one support, resulting in 30 securing employment to date; assisting 35 local entrepreneurs with mentoring support and grant assistance to develop a business; 95 Upskilling for Growth enrolments, surpassing the initial target of 75 participants, with 83 of those completing their respective courses; delivery of 5 employability academies to 66 participants, 51 of whom completed, 23 of whom have secured employment to date; two sector specific employer engagement events were held to highlight the job opportunities within the Engineering Industry and Hospitality and Tourism Industry, with 58 people in attendance; two business masterclasses were facilitated for flood effected businesses which attracted 84 participants; local employers attended a Disability Engagement Event to obtain practical advice and support when considering employing someone with a disability or health condition.</p> <p>Additionally, a job fair was held with approximately 420 attendees and over 60 employers exhibiting their current vacancies; a careers fair was attended by 12 schools in the Ballynahinch and Lecale Learning Communities attracting 1000+ year 12 and year 13 students. A Bring IT On event was also hosted to highlight potential career pathways into technology. NMD LMP attended the Downpatrick Jobs and Benefits Office Youth Event and hosted two Health and Social care specific events in partnership with Downpatrick and Ballynahinch Jobs and Benefits Offices and NMP LMP continued to support the promotion of Apprenticeships as a viable and alternative pathway to employment through sponsorship of the SRC Big Apprenticeship Event and SERC Excellence Awards Apprentice of the Year.</p>
--	--

Measure of success	2019-20 Actual	2020-21 Actual	2021-22 Actual	2022-23 Actual	2023-24 Actual	Status Trend	Explanatory Note
Number of social enterprise start-ups supported	10	12	12	12	12 (Target: 12)	 	Since 2017-18, the Council has consistently met and exceeded the targets set for the number of new social enterprise start-ups supported and jobs created. During 2023-24, the Council supported 12 new social enterprise start-ups and 30 existing social enterprises, assisted 51 people in increasing their skills for entering employment and created 16 new social enterprise jobs, as well as 32 new volunteering jobs.
Number of social enterprise jobs created	12	14	13	12	16 (Target: 12)	 	
Number of business plans created for start-up businesses and employer enterprises	298	266	358	361	151 (Target: 300)	 	NIESS (Go Succeed) commenced in November 2023. The delivery was delayed due to a number of issues including procurement and the development of a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, but the service is fully functional from March 2024. This has led to an overall decline in performance compared to 2022-23, with the number of new business plans created decreasing by 58%. This represents only half of the target set for 2023-24.
Number of jobs promoted via business start-up activity	194	199.5	215	187	90 (Target: 155)	 	NIESS (Go Succeed) commenced in November 2023. The delivery was delayed due to a number of issues including procurement and the development of a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, but the service is fully functional from March 2024. This has led to an overall decline in performance compared to 2022-23, with the number of new jobs promoted decreasing by 52% to 90 which includes 13.8 through NIESS. In 2023-24, Newry, Mourne and Down ranked 5/11 for the number of jobs promoted across NI. Newry, Mourne and Down also approved 151 business plans in 2023-24 placing the Council 5/11 across NI for business plan approvals.
Number of new businesses & employer enterprises supported to start up	203	181	215	187	90 (Target: 190)		NIESS (Go Succeed) commenced in November 2023. The delivery was delayed due to a number of issues including procurement and the development of a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, but the service

							is fully functional from March 2024. This has led to an overall decline in performance compared to 2022-23, with the number of new start-ups supported decreasing by 52% and achieving only 47% of the set target.
Number of existing businesses supported to progress growth and scaling ambitions	198	327	373	220	351 (Target: 200)	 	The number of existing businesses supported to progress growth and scaling ambitions increased significantly between 2022-23 and 2023-24 rising from 220 to 351. This indicates an increase of 59.5% and is 76% above the target set.

20

15

10

5

0

2019-20

2020-21

2021-22

2022-23

2023-24

Jobs Created

Enterprise Start-Ups Supported

400

350

300

250

200

150

100

50

0

2019-20

2020-21

2021-22

2022-23

2023-24






## Community Planning Outcome



All people in Newry, Mourne and Down benefit from a clean, quality and sustainable environment

### Corporate Objective




Enhance, protect and promote our environment

Key action	Status	Update
Develop a Circular Economy Plan for the district to make best use of our waste and resources.		A new Waste Management Strategy for Northern Ireland is being developed by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) which supports the Circular Economy Package measures. This regional strategy will then allow for each Council, including Newry, Mourne and Down to develop its own Circular Economy Plan.
Develop and implement a strategic plan for controlling environmental crime.		The Council's Education and Enforcement Plan has been delayed due to resourcing issues within the section. Once this plan has been developed it will be monitored and reported to the Sustainability and Environment Committee on a quarterly basis. The Council continues to liaise with NIEA in relation to environmental crime. Enforcement Officers are being strategically assigned to identified "hotspots" where there has been an increase in dog fouling and littering offences. However, there is an acknowledgement that recruitment of seasonal enforcement officers has been difficult which may be a consequence of the challenging recruitment market.
Develop and implement the Local Development Plan.		A revised draft Plan Strategy was agreed by Council in August 2023 and subsequent advice on policies received from the Department for Infrastructure. A final review of the evidence base has been undertaken. The LDP team will finalise the countryside policies with Members in September 2024. Final draft policies will be shared with Shared Environmental Service (carrying out the SA) along with a legal review of








		<p>policies in the last calendar quarter 2024. It is intended to publish the draft Plan Strategy for public consultation at end of March 2025 to meet the current LDP timetable.</p>
<p>Develop a Local Climate Change Adaption Plan.</p>		<p>The development of the Local Climate Adaption Plan which identifies the impact of climate change on a range of operations, including flooding, storms, heat, coastal erosion, heat and drought, has been significantly progressed with publication due in Q3 2024-25.</p>
<p>Implement priority projects identified within AONB action plans and protect our biodiversity.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The management structure and secretariat support for the three Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) were successfully provided, with facilitation and coordination of meetings for five distinct working groups within the Strangford Lough MPA.</li> <li>• Quarterly reports were regularly submitted to the AONB Management Groups, along with annual reports to NIEA.</li> <li>• The Ring of Gullion and Strangford and Lecale AONB Partnership groups continued to be managed, with networking, shared learning, and collaboration opportunities facilitated, as evidenced by the AONB Officers' meetings.</li> <li>• Reports on the implementation of AONB Management Plans were generated, and a review conducted in Q1 of the second year.</li> <li>• The implementation of two AONB Management Plans focused on Nature and Climate Recovery to build ecological and climate resilience, maintaining and improving landscape, water, habitats, species, and earth science conditions, as well as addressing terrestrial invasive species.</li> <li>• The enhancement of the geodiversity profile within the AONB was pursued, primarily through the implementation of the Geoparks 10-year Master Plan and 4-year Business Plan.</li> </ul>



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Multiple programs were developed and delivered, engaging various groups, institutions, and individuals.</li> <li>Outdoor recreation opportunities were increased, and access to green and blue spaces was improved, mainly through the implementation of the Outdoor Recreation Action Plan.</li> <li>Actions from the Slieve Gullion SAC management plan were carried out, with ongoing development and implementation of management plans to contribute significantly to maintaining and increasing the area of protected areas in favourable condition.</li> </ul>
--	--	--





Measure of Success	2020-21		2021-22		2022-23		2023-24		Status Trend	Explanatory Note
Level of street cleanliness across the District (KNIB street cleanliness score)	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual		The Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful (KNIB) Cleaner Neighbourhoods Survey for 2023-24 has not yet been published. This figure will be included in the Mid-Year Assessment of the Performance Improvement Plan 2024-25.
	-	64	-	64	-	Data unavailable	64	Data unavailable		
65% of municipal waste recycled by 2030	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual		Since 2017-18, the Council increased the overall rate of recycling by 3.9% to 50.0% and meets the 2020 target of 50%. Similar to the regional trend there has been an increase in the rate of recycling between 2022-23 and 2023-24 with the Council placed 7/11 across Northern Ireland.
	50% by 2020	51.9%	50% by 2020	49.8%	50% by 2020	49.6%	50% by 2020	50.0%	 	
Level of compliance with sustainable development duty		The Council has made significant progress in addressing the impact of climate change locally. Through the Sustainability and Climate Change Forum, the implementation of the Council's Local Climate Action Plan is significantly progressed with publication due in Q3 2024-25. The Council is involved in several projects to increase the availability of EV charging points across the District, with 20 new charging points delivered in 2023-24.								

### Performance Improvement Objective 3

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

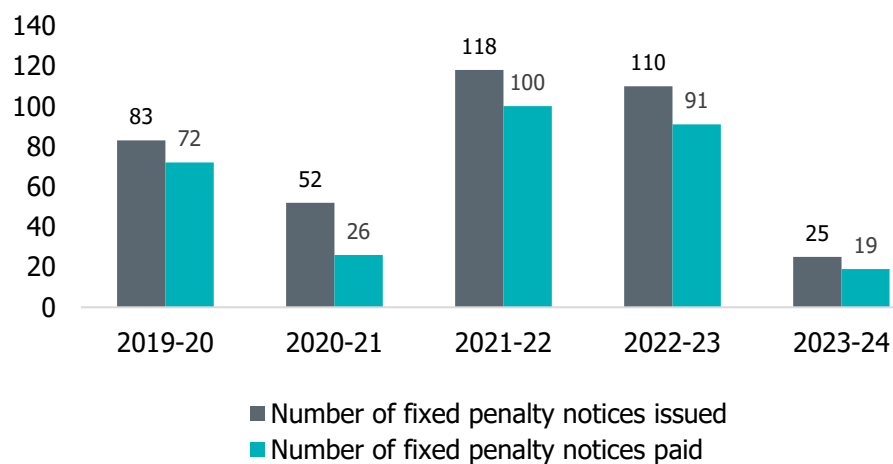
Key action	Status	Update
Address issues around littering, fly tipping and dog fouling by:		
Continuing to implement the Enforcement Action Plan		The Council's Education and Enforcement Plan has been delayed due to resourcing issues within the section. Once this plan has been developed it will be monitored and reported to the Sustainability and Environment Committee on a quarterly basis.
Promoting responsible dog ownership through publicity and social media campaigns		The Council continued to promote and encourage responsible dog ownership. The Council also provides information on responsible dog ownership through the website, social media channels and when issuing dog licences.
Working with Louth County Council to raise awareness of the impact of littering and illicit dumping along the border area		Newry, Mourne and Down District Council continue to liaise with colleagues from Louth County Council with a view to continuing to raise awareness of the impact of littering and illicit dumping along the border area.
Encouraging residents to bring properly sorted surplus recyclable waste to our Household Recycling Centres.		Work is ongoing in relation to the review of Household Recycling Centres. The website and HRC site signage provides clear guidance to residents on how to sort surplus recyclable waste. A booking system is in place which allows residents to access HRC sites in larger vehicles free of charge.
Support local community clean ups.		The Council supported 19 community clean ups at a range of locations across the District, including Kilkeel, Newtownhamilton, Jonesborough, Ballynahinch, Carnagat, Downpatrick and Annalong, however it did not achieve its target number of clean ups during 2023-24.

Implementation of a Paint Re-Use Scheme at 7 Household Recycling Centres throughout the district.		The Paint Re-Use scheme was initially implemented in Camlough during 2023-24. It resulted in the recycling and reuse of 20% of the paint brought to the HRC. The Council intend to rollout this scheme to HRC sites in Newry and Downpatrick during 2024-25.
Promote the Keep NI Beautiful 'Live Here Love Here' campaign.		The Council continued to participate in the Keep NI Beautiful 'Live Here Love Here' campaign, administering 9 grants, with a combined value of £10,697 which were awarded towards local projects. These projects were located across the District including Annalong, Castlewellan, Mayobridge, Lislea and Saul. The funding for these projects were used for numerous items including compost, tools, plants, seeds and seating.

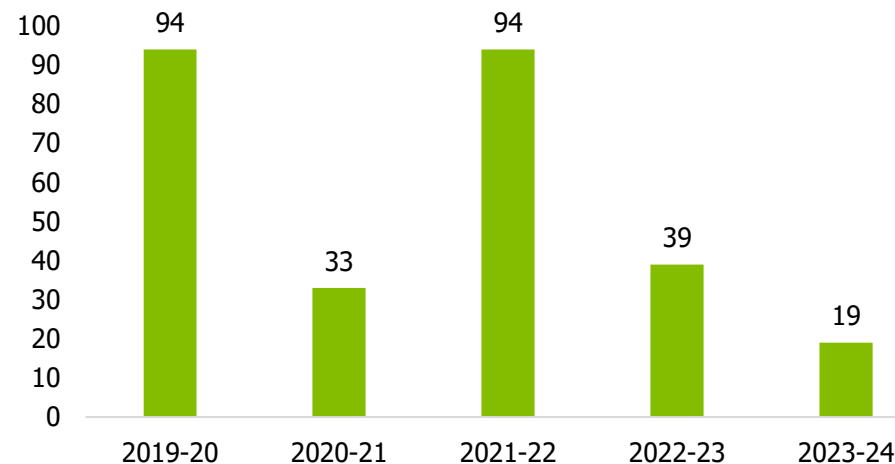
Measure of success	2020-21 Actual	2021-22 Actual	2022-23 Actual	2023-24 Actual	Status Trend	Explanatory Note
LEAMS score (Keep NI Beautiful Cleanliness Index)	64	64	Data unavailable	Data unavailable		The Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful (KNIB) Cleaner Neighbourhoods Survey for 2023-24 was not yet been published. This figure will be included in the Mid-Year Assessment of the Performance Improvement Plan 2024-25.
Number of fixed penalty notices issued	52	118	110	25 (Target: 120)	 	Between 2022-23 and 2023-24 the number of illicit dumping incidents reported to Council decreased by 9.6%, from 575 to 520 incidents, whilst the number of littering and dog fouling incidents reported also decreased from 245 to 239 during this period, resulting in a reduction of 2.4%.
Number of fixed penalty notices paid	26 (to date)	100	91	19 (Target: 96)	 	The number of fixed penalty notices issued decreased by 77.3% in the past year, from 110 in 2022-23 to 25 in 2023-24. 19 of the fixed penalty notices have been paid to date, accounting for 76% of the total issued.



Number of community clean ups supported	33	94	39	19 (Target: 100)	 	The Council actively supports clean ups which are carried out by local community groups and residents. Between 2018-19 and 2023-24, the Council supported 379 clean ups across the District, including 19 during 2023-24. This figure was well below the target set of 100.
Number of 'Live Here Love Here' environmental projects	24	18	10	9		Since 2018-19, the Council has supported 120 'Live Here Love Here' environmental projects, including nine during 2023-24. Successful projects used their funding to buy compost, tools, green houses, plants, planters, seeds and seating.

**Number of fixed penalty notices issued and paid**

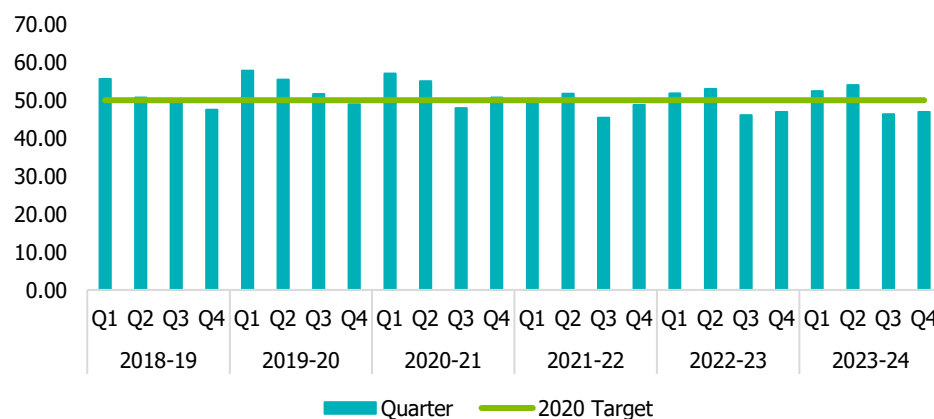


**Number of community clean ups supported**





Measure of success	2020-21		2021-22		2022-23		2023-24		Status Trend	Explanatory note
The percentage of household waste collected by District Councils that is sent for recycling	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	 	<p>Since 2017-18, the Council increased the overall rate of recycling by 3.9% to 50.0% and meets the 2020 target of 50%. It is however slightly below the 2023-24 regional average of 51.1% and ranks the Council 7/11 across Northern Ireland. Between 2022-23 and 2023-24, the overall rate of recycling in the District increased by 0.4%. This is in line with the regional upward trend over the past year with a 0.4% increase in the overall rate of recycling.</p>
	50% by 2020	51.9%	50% by 2020	49.8%	50% by 2020	49.6%	50% by 2020	50.0%		

**Percentage of household waste collected by the Council that is sent for recycling**

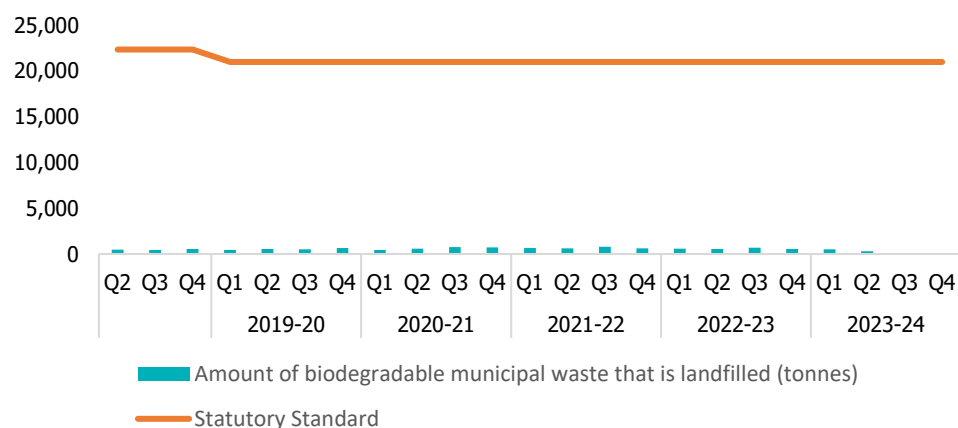


**Percentage of household waste that is sent for recycling**



Measure of success	2020-21		2021-22		2022-23		2023-24		Status Trend	Explanatory note
	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual		
The amount of biodegradable Local Authority Collected Municipal Waste that is landfilled	<20,954	2,538t	<20,954	2,685t	<20,954	2,319t	<20,954	937	 	Since 2015-16, the amount of biodegradable local authority collected municipal waste that is sent to landfill reduced by 94.2%, to 937 tonnes, and the Council only used 4.5% of the 2019-20 Northern Ireland Landfill Allowance Scheme allowance**. This falls well below the 2023-24 regional average of 8,682 tonnes with Newry, Mourne and Down ranked 2/11 across Northern Ireland. Between 2022-23 and 2023-24, Newry, Mourne and Down recorded a 59.6% decrease (1382 tonnes) in the amount of waste that is sent to landfill.

**Amount of biodegradable local authority municipal waste that is landfilled**

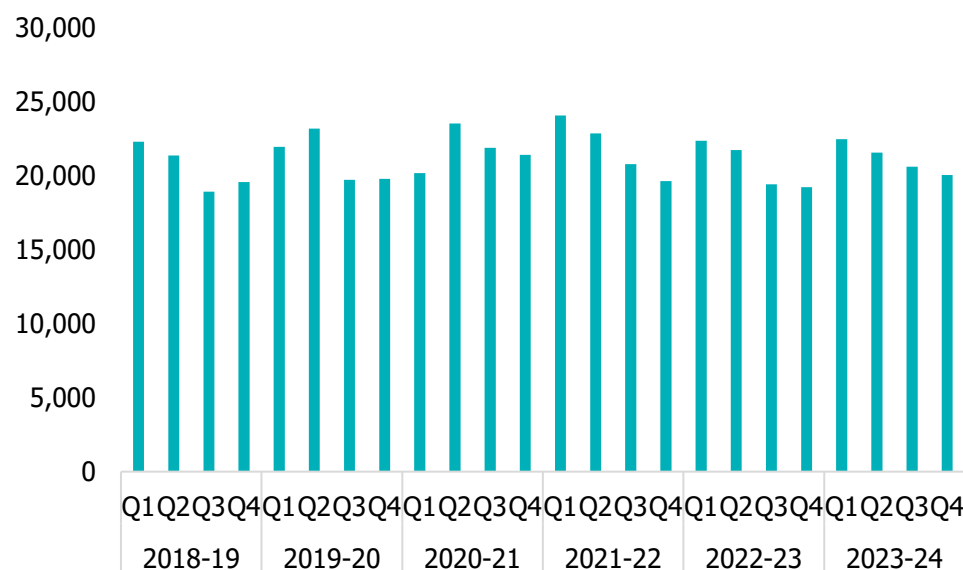


**Amount of biodegradable municipal waste that is sent to landfill (tonnes)**



Measure of success	Actual 2020-21	Actual 2021-22	Actual 2022-23	Actual 2023-24	Trend	Explanatory note
The amount of Local Authority Collected Municipal Waste arisings	86,900t	87,336t	82,842t	84,684	▶	Since 2017-18, the amount of local authority collected municipal waste arisings has increased by 3.9% to 84,684 tonnes, however it does fall below the 2023-24 regional average of 90,901 tonnes. Newry, Mourne and Down is currently ranked 8/11 across Northern Ireland. 2023-24 seen an increase in the amount of Local Authority Collected municipal waste collected rising by 2.2% from 82,842t in 2022-23 to 84,684t in 2023-24.

**Amount of local authority collected municipal waste arisings (tonnes)**



**Amount of Local Authority Municipal Waste Arising**








\*The 2023-24 data in relation to the statutory performance indicators for waste management remains provisional, as the end of year data is currently being validated by DAERA and will not be published until Q3 2024-25. There are slight variances between the quarterly figures and the rolling 12-month figures, as outlined in the DAERA reports.




\*\*The 2019-20 NI Landfill Allowance Scheme (NILAS) target has been included as the Council awaits more up to date targets from DAERA








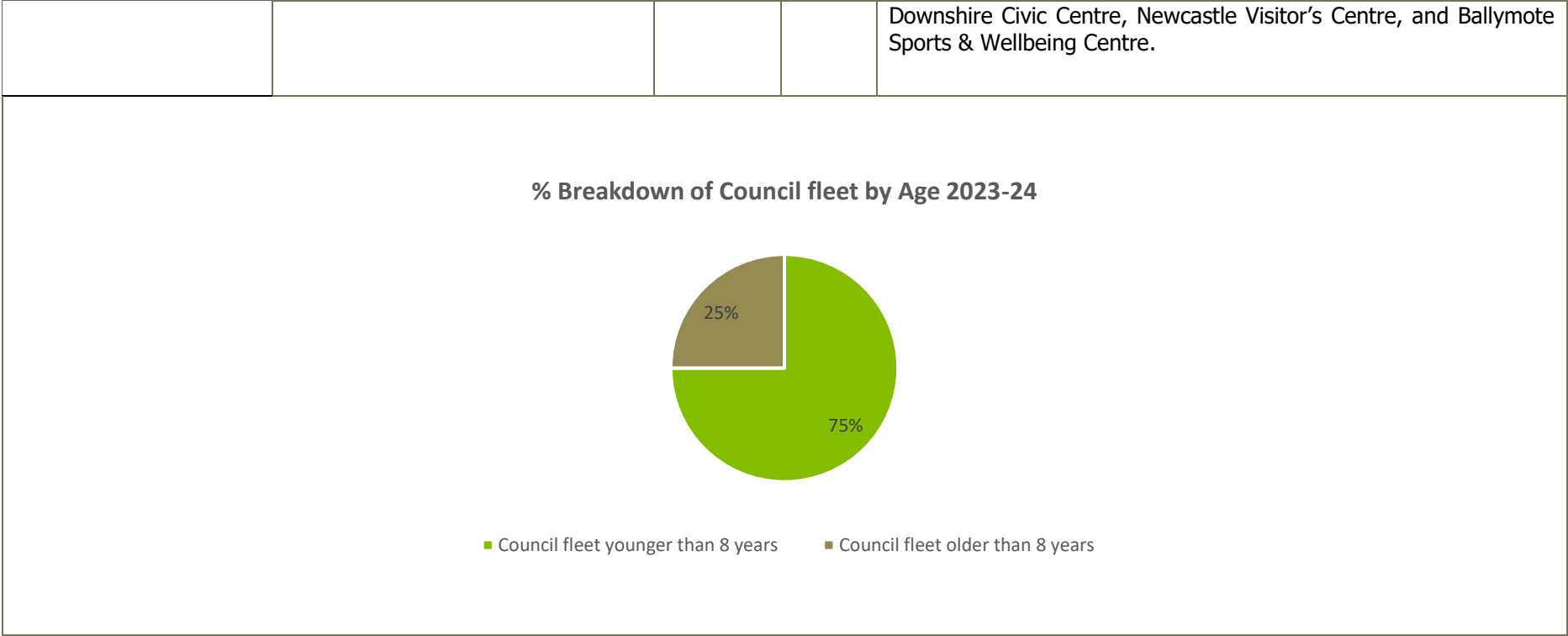
## Performance Improvement Objective 4

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

Key action	Status	Update
Developing a climate change and sustainable development strategy		The climate change and sustainable development strategy is completed in draft form with publication planned for Q3 2024-25.
Completing the development of the Climate Change Adaptation Plan		The climate change adaptation strategy is significantly progressed. A final workshop is planned for September 2024 with a target date for publication of December 2024.
Developing a new biodiversity strategy 2023-28		Public consultation for the biodiversity strategy was completed in Q3/Q4 2023-24. Feedback has led to significant changes which have delayed publication. The target date for publication is now September 2024. It should also be noted that it is now a strategy to 2030.
Implementing the Council's Tree Strategy		Implementation of the Council's tree strategy is ongoing with 2,800 trees planted across the District in 2023-24 including 300 root ball trees and 2,500 tree whips.
Installing new public drinking water fountains		Council installed 5 water fountains across the District during 2023-24 at the following locations: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Annalong Harbour</li> <li>2. Ardglass Harbour</li> <li>3. Delamont Country Park</li> <li>4. Kilkeel Harbour</li> <li>5. Newcastle Promenade, Downs Road</li> </ol>

Supporting the implementation of new Electric Vehicle (EV) charging points		During 2023-24, Council completed the Faster EV project which supported the installation of 20 EV charging points across the District. Locations include Newry Leisure Centre, Down Leisure Centre, Downshire Civic Centre, Newcastle Visitor's Centre, and Ballymote Sports & Wellbeing Centre
Undertaking a baseline assessment of the Council's carbon footprint		Council will be undertaking the baseline assessment of its carbon footprint in 2024-25 to meet legislation set out in the new Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022.
Implementing the Council's fleet replacement programme		Implementation of the Council's fleet replacement programme is ongoing with a replacement programme agreed and included in the capital programme.

Measure of success	2020-21 Actual	2021-22 Actual	2022-23 Actual	2023-24 Actual	Trend	Explanatory Note
Carbon footprint of Council estate	To be established					Council will be undertaking the baseline assessment of its carbon footprint in 2024-25 to meet legislation set out in the new Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022.
Percentage of Council fleet younger than 8 years	New measure			75% (Target: 50%)		In 2023-24, 75% of the Council's fleet was younger than 8 years old which significantly exceeds the target set.
Number of vehicles within the Council fleet that have an alternative fuel source	New measure			1 (Target: 10)		Currently, Council has only one vehicle within its fleet that has an alternative fuel source. This car is used within the enforcement section and is due to be replaced with a new EV vehicle. A further 9 additional small and medium sized electric vans will also to be added to the fleet.
Number of trees planted on Council managed estate	New measure			2,800		In 2023-24, 2,800 trees were planted across the Council managed estate.
Number of Council supported EV charging points	New measure			20 (Target: 20)		During 2023-24, Council completed the Faster EV project which supported the installation of 20 EV charging points across the District including at Newry Leisure Centre, Down Leisure Centre,







## Community Planning Outcome





All people in Newry, Mourne and Down live in respectful, safe and vibrant communities



### Corporate Objective

Enable and support people to engage in inclusive and diverse activities in their communities

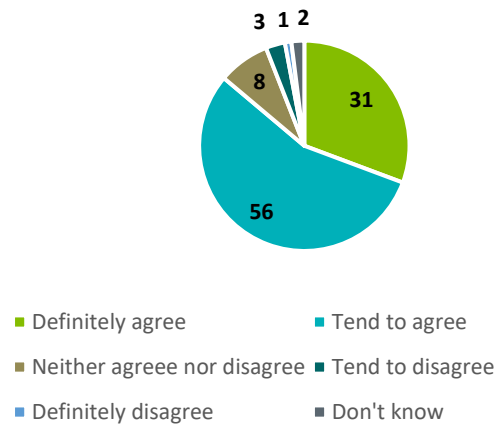
Key action	Status	Update
Through the process of community planning provide opportunities for communities to have a voice in shaping local services and local areas.	😊	<p>Speak NMD, the online engagement platform provides citizens with an opportunity to engage with members of the Newry, Mourne and Down Community Planning Partnership, the community and voluntary sector, and other local organisations on a range of current topics, issues and challenges facing the district.</p> <p>This year the site has conducted 6 projects ranging from Biodiversity to community facilities. The site has had 2762 visitors, 692 respondents, 783 contributions and 159 subscribers.</p> <p>Through the DEA's (District Electoral Areas) 25 forum meetings took place which is made up of a DEA co-ordinator, Elected representatives and independent members who represent a cross section of their communities.</p>
Engage and involve partners and communities in developing the district through the	😊	A Thematic Summit for Health and Wellbeing was held in October 2023, with over 100 delegates from Statutory and Community Voluntary sector partners. Through this summit a number of key priorities were identified that will be addressed through a number of health and wellbeing action groups.

implementation of the Community Plan.		The Partnerships multi-agency affordable housing action plan has been updated and will be published on the Councils website.
Develop and implement a Community Facilities Strategy.		The draft Community Facilities Strategy will now be included within a wider Community Development Strategy to include the role of DEA Fora, PCSP, Good Relations, Neighborhood Renewal, Community Services, Community Planning, Community Funding, and Consultation/Engagement. Alongside this, the Department will work on a model for the future delivery of Council's Community Facilities, aligned with Community Wealth Building (CWB) and Council's Asset Management Strategy, during 2024-25.
Promote sustainable and empowered communities through the implementation of the Council Financial Assistance Scheme.		The Council remains committed to investing in the capacity of local communities through the Financial Assistance (FA) scheme. Since 2015 the Council has awarded £10.8m (including 4-year cycle of FMA & SLA) to 3,440 successful applicants. In 2023-24, 71% of financial assistance applicants were successful with 55% awarded and 386 projects benefitting from the Financial Assistance scheme. The remaining 16% were scored and ranked.

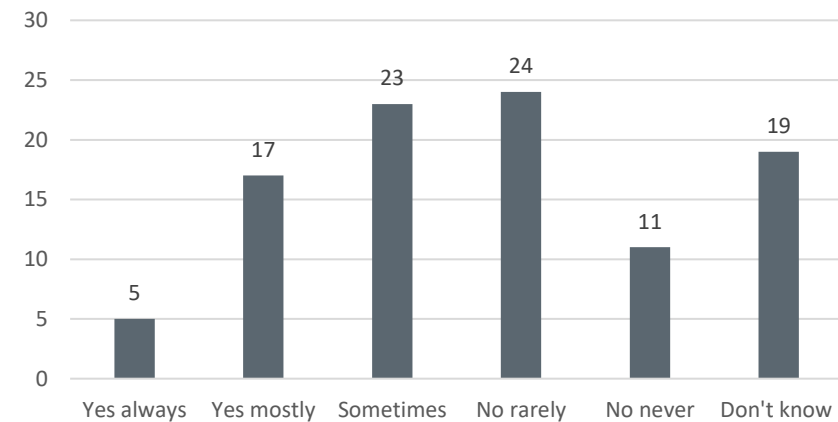
Measure of Success	2018 Actual	2022 Actual	Status	Explanatory Note
Percentage of residents who agree that the local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together	72%	87%	 	In September 2018 and again in September 2022, the Council commissioned a Residents Survey to establish and track a robust and reliable evidence base in relation to resident perceptions about their local area, the performance of the Council and key priorities for improvement in the future. A representative sample of 764 residents were surveyed and revealed that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>87% agree that the area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together, representing a significant increase on the 2018 figure of 72%.</li> </ul>
Percentage of residents who agree that the Council consults with and listens to the views of local people	62%	65%	 	

Percentage of residents who feel that they can have a say on how services are delivered in their local area	59%	45%		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 65% agree that the Council consults with and listens to the views of local people, which is an increase of 3% on the 2018 figure of 62%. The percentage of residents that disagree with this statement however has increased from 11% to 13% during the four year period.</li> <li>• 45% feel that they can have a say on how services are delivered in their local area. This represents a significant decrease from the 59% recorded in 2018.</li> </ul> <p>Feedback and comparative analysis from the two Residents Survey has been used to inform the development of future plans and strategies, including the Corporate Plan and Performance Improvement Plan.</p>
Measure of Success	2022-23 Actual	2023-24 Actual	Status	Explanatory Note
Number and percentage of financial assistance projects funded and successfully delivered	59.4% (366 projects awarded with 330 successfully delivered)	55% (71% of applicants were successful with 386 awarded)		Since 2015-16, the Council has awarded £10.8m to 3,440 successful applications through the Financial Assistance Scheme. This includes £1.18m being awarded to 386 projects during 2023-24.

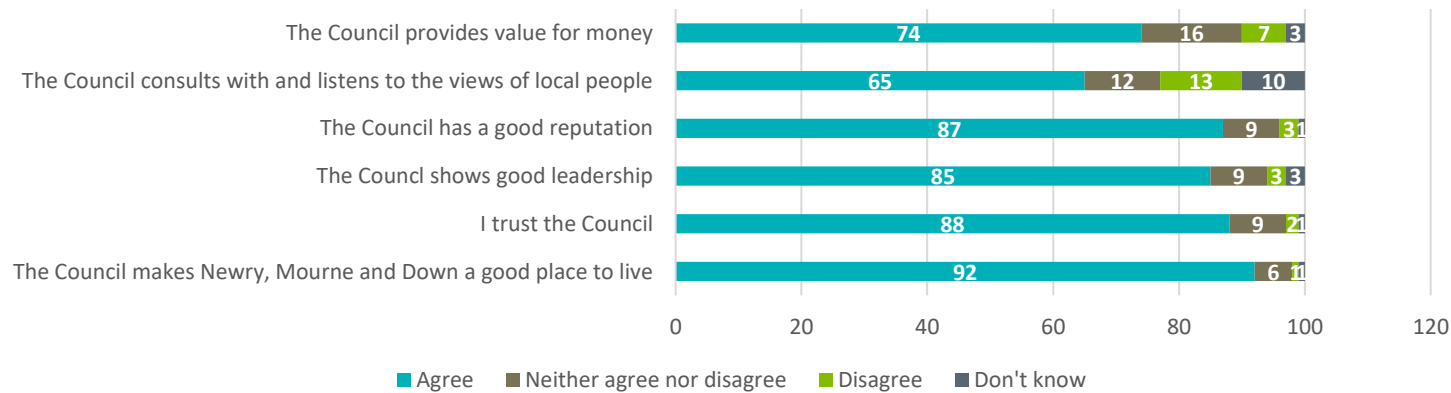
To what extent do you agree or disagree that your local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together? (%) (2022)



Do you feel you are able to have a say on things happening or how services are run in your local area? (%) (2022)




Thinking about Newry, Mourne and Down, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (2022)





# Corporate Plan 2021-23: Self imposed performance indicators



## Corporate Objective

Provide accessible, high quality and integrated services through continuous improvement

Key action	Status	Update
Introduce new, efficient and innovative ways to transform and improve the way we plan, manage and deliver services.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>From the 1 June 2022 the former system for paying invoices was discontinued and the Pecos and Multiquote systems are now embedded and operational within Council processes.</li> <li>The CMT working groups are still operational and are providing updates to the Senior Management Team on a regular basis. Some of the key milestones to date include; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A Customer engagement charter has been developed along with a series of broad service standards.</li> <li>An Agile Working Policy came into effect in July 2022</li> <li>A business case was developed for an EDRMS system in February 2023 and is being considered internally.</li> </ul> </li> <li>A mandatory Complaints Handling Procedure developed by the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman was implemented by Council by 1<sup>st</sup> January 2024. A Complaints Tracker was developed by Council on Sharepoint to compliment the new Procedure. The Tracker monitors complaints from receipt to completion. It provides management information for internal and external reporting purposes. This allows officers, Councillors and the public to map response times and volume of complaints. In Q4 of 2023-24 there were 94 complaints received by Council.</li> <li>An online property certificates service is now provided by Council.</li> <li>The Council continues to support the development of a new corporate administration model.</li> </ul>



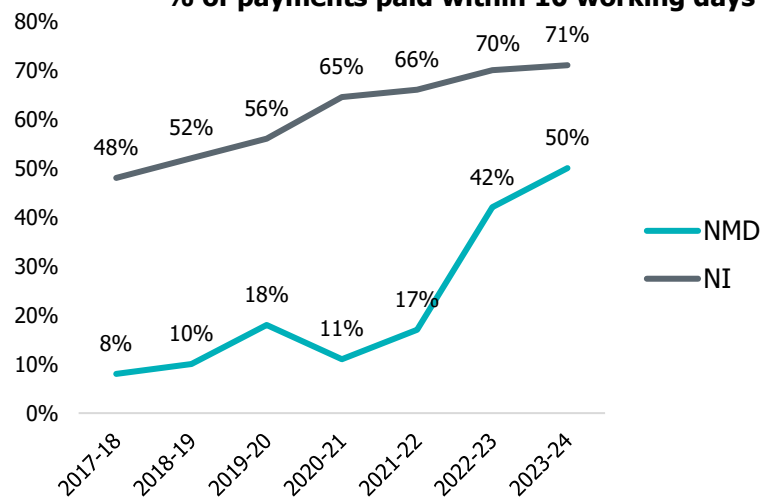
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implementation of a new performance management system began in November 2023 with all the actions and measures from the Council's Community Plan, Corporate Plan, Performance Improvement Plan and Directorate Business and Service Plans uploaded onto the system. Training was provided to all relevant staff in July 2024.</li> </ul> <p>The Council continues to identify and introduce new ways to transform local services.</p>
Develop a robust and reliable evidence base to inform decision making, policy development and service provision.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>During 2023-24, several surveys were conducted for a range of internal and external stakeholders. These included Museum Services, Parks and Beaches, Good Relations and the NMD Draft Corporate Plan.</li> <li>The evidence and research team facilitated a number of Councils consultation and engagements exercises through the "Speak NMD" public engagement site.</li> <li>The evidence and research team has conducted several data analysis and GIS analysis projects. Examples include mapping of social need, development of crime dashboards and mapping age friendly facilities.</li> <li>The indicator data from the NMD community plan has been updated and underpins the ongoing community planning activity as well as the development of the Draft NMD Corporate Plan (2024-27)</li> </ul> <p>The Council continues to adopt an evidence based and performance led approach to decision-making, policy development and service provision.</p>
Effectively manage performance and align individual contribution with corporate objectives and better outcomes for all.		<p>The Council continues to mainstream and embed the Business Planning and Performance Management Framework. During 2023-24, Service Plans were developed for all departments and a variety of training initiatives and programmes took place throughout 2023-24 to extend the roll out of the Council's People Perform Grow (PPG) process across the Council. These included PPG Leaders workshops and PPG Roadshows. Through Service Plans and People Perform Grow, the Council is demonstrating the alignment across the hierarchy of plans in place and the significant</p>

		contribution of employees in achieving the corporate objectives and better outcomes for all.
Support elected members in their leadership role.		<p>The Council continues to support Elected Members in their leadership role, by offering training and development programmes across a range of themes, including social media and the Law. A full induction programme was also held for newly Elected Members in 2024 including training in Standing Orders, Code of Conduct, Data Protection and Safeguarding. Elected Members also attended conferences organised by NILGA, National Association of Councillors and APSE.</p> <p>The Chairperson and Vice Chairperson have a designated resource within the Council to support them in fulfilling their role(s) as First Citizen(s). The Chairperson hosted 21 civic receptions and attended 180 official events across the District, including Civic Awards and Civic Recognition Awards for sporting and community groups and illuminating Council buildings and mentoring groups to recognise ‘NHS 75<sup>th</sup> Birthday, Alzheimer’s Foundation and Baby Loss Awareness Week’ as well as many others. The Chairperson also hosted a charity event to raise funds for her chosen charities – Down Right Brilliant; Life Change Changes Lives; Newry All-Stars; Sound Friends; and Well Lane Warriors.</p>
Implement a new neighbourhood model of providing cleansing and maintenance services.		Cleansing and maintenance service models continue to be reviewed with proposed models to be developed in 2024-25.

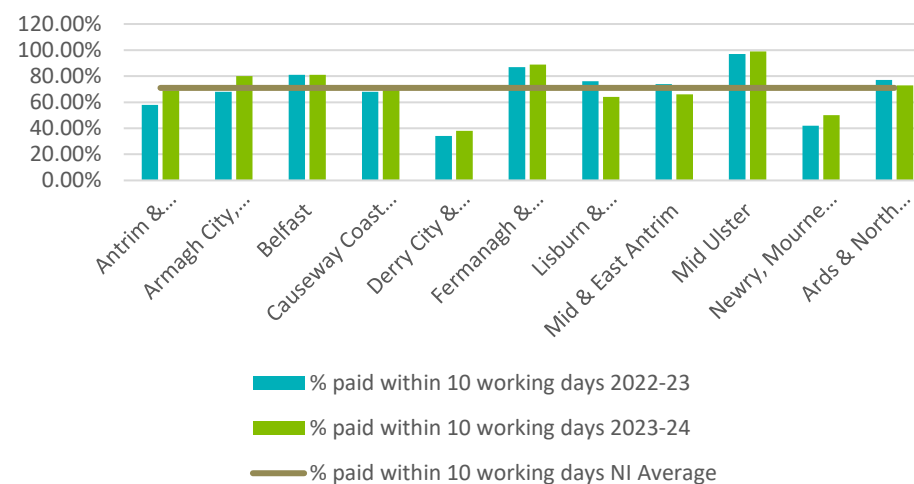
Measure of Success	Status Trend	Explanatory Note																																	
Increased citizen satisfaction	😊	<p>The 2022 Residents Survey revealed that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>88% are satisfied with the Council overall, an increase of 1% on the 87% figure recorded in 2018.</li> <li>92% agree that the Council helps to make Newry, Mourne and Down a good place to live, an increase of 17% on the 75% recorded in 2018.</li> <li>88% trust the Council, an increase of 15% on the 73% recorded in 2018.</li> <li>74% believe the Council provides good value for money, which is above the GB average of 51% and is an increase of 13% on the 61% recorded in 2018.</li> </ul>																																	
Compliance with Duty of Improvement	😊	<p>The certificate of Compliance was received from the Local Government Auditor in relation to the Duty of Improvement 2023-24. The Council is currently progressing the implementation of the 'proposals for improvement' which were put forward by the NI Audit Office, to help improve the arrangements in place to secure continuous improvement and facilitate a performance improvement culture.</p>																																	
Level of absenteeism	▶	<p>During 2023-24, Newry, Mourne and Down recorded 23.9 days lost per full time equivalent. This represents a small increase from 23.26 days in 2022-23. This is due to an increase in long term absence. Long term absence has increased from 18.24 to 20.53 days per employee and is the highest level of long-term absence recorded since 2015-16. This increase in long term absenteeism is due to a variety of individual circumstances which are carefully monitored.</p> <p>There has been a decrease in short-term absence from 5.02 days in 2022-23 to 3.33 days in 2023-24.</p> <p>48.6% of the workforce (465 employees) had no recorded absence during 2023-24, this represents an increase when compared to the 39.1% of employees with no recorded absence in 2022-23.</p> <p>Overall absenteeism is carefully monitored through the Policies &amp; procedures of the Council.</p>	<p><b>Absenteeism - Days lost per full time employee</b></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>Short term (days)</th> <th>Long term (days)</th> <th>Total (days)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2017-18</td> <td>2.58</td> <td>4.55</td> <td>7.13</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2018-19</td> <td>0.91</td> <td>3.73</td> <td>4.64</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2019-20</td> <td>1.60</td> <td>4.12</td> <td>5.72</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2020-21</td> <td>1.71</td> <td>2.37</td> <td>4.08</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2021-22</td> <td>5.61</td> <td>5.04</td> <td>10.65</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2022-23</td> <td>8.24</td> <td>5.02</td> <td>13.26</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2023-24</td> <td>10.53</td> <td>3.33</td> <td>13.86</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>■ Days lost per full time employee (short term) ■ Days lost per full time employee (long term)</p>	Year	Short term (days)	Long term (days)	Total (days)	2017-18	2.58	4.55	7.13	2018-19	0.91	3.73	4.64	2019-20	1.60	4.12	5.72	2020-21	1.71	2.37	4.08	2021-22	5.61	5.04	10.65	2022-23	8.24	5.02	13.26	2023-24	10.53	3.33	13.86
Year	Short term (days)	Long term (days)	Total (days)																																
2017-18	2.58	4.55	7.13																																
2018-19	0.91	3.73	4.64																																
2019-20	1.60	4.12	5.72																																
2020-21	1.71	2.37	4.08																																
2021-22	5.61	5.04	10.65																																
2022-23	8.24	5.02	13.26																																
2023-24	10.53	3.33	13.86																																
Percentage of payments paid:		<p>The percentage of payments made within 10 working days has increased by 8% from 42% in 2022-23 to 50% in 2023-24. It remains however, one of the lowest across all regional councils ranking NMD 10/11 across Northern Ireland. An increase has</p>																																	

Within 10 working days	△	also been recorded in the number of payments made within 30 calendar days rising from 86% in 2022-23 to 95% in 2023-24. This is above the NI average of 91% of invoices paid within 30 calendar days and ranks Newry, Mourne and Down joint 4/11 across Northern Ireland alongside Fermanagh and Omagh. The percentage of payments paid outside 30 days has decreased during this period from 14% in 2022-23 to 5% in 2023-24. This is below the regional average of 9% for payments paid outside 30 days with the Council ranked joint 4/11 across Northern Ireland alongside Fermanagh and Omagh.
Within 30 calendar days	△	
Outside 30 calendar days	△	

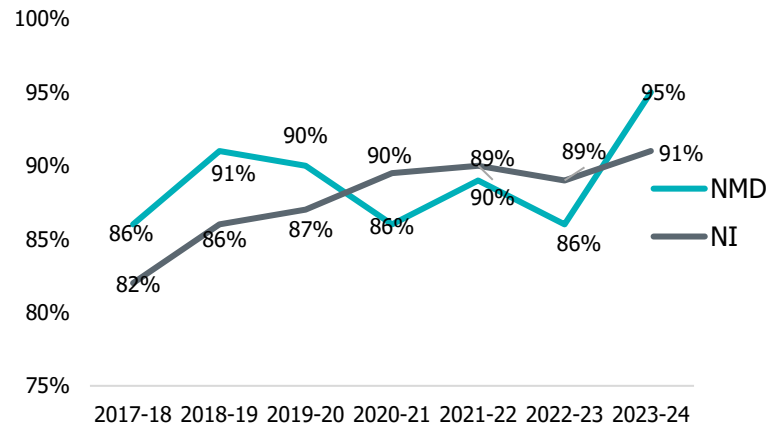
**% of payments paid within 10 working days**



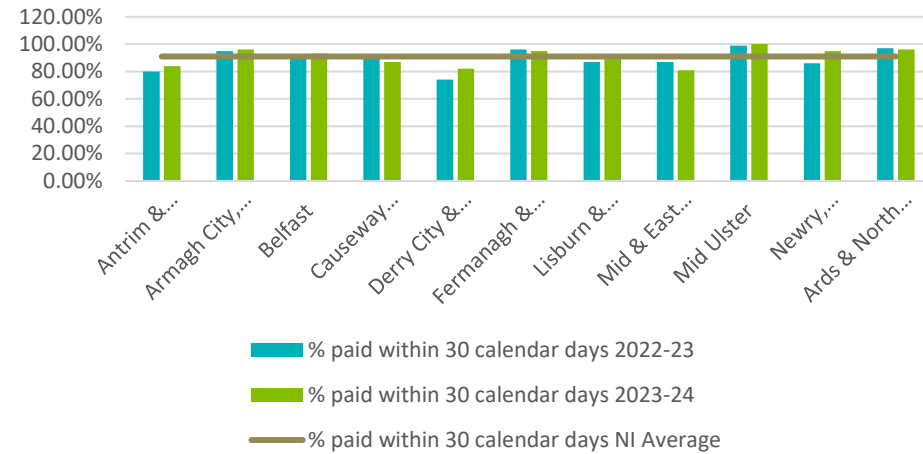
**% of payments paid within 10 working days**



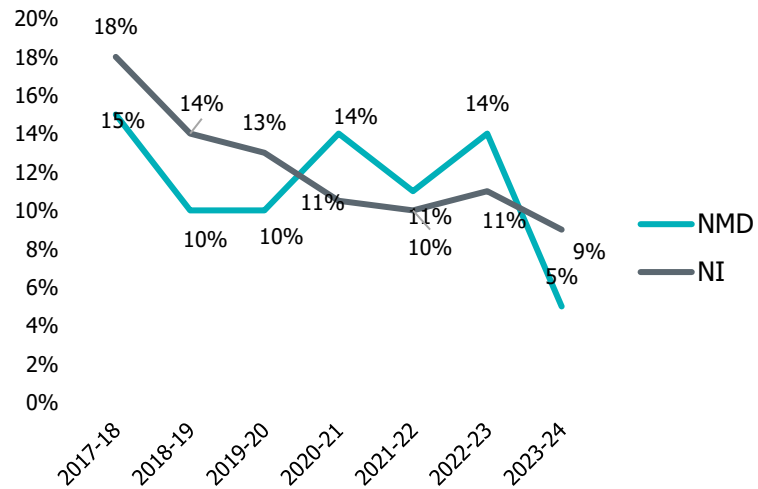
**% of payments paid within 30 calendar days**



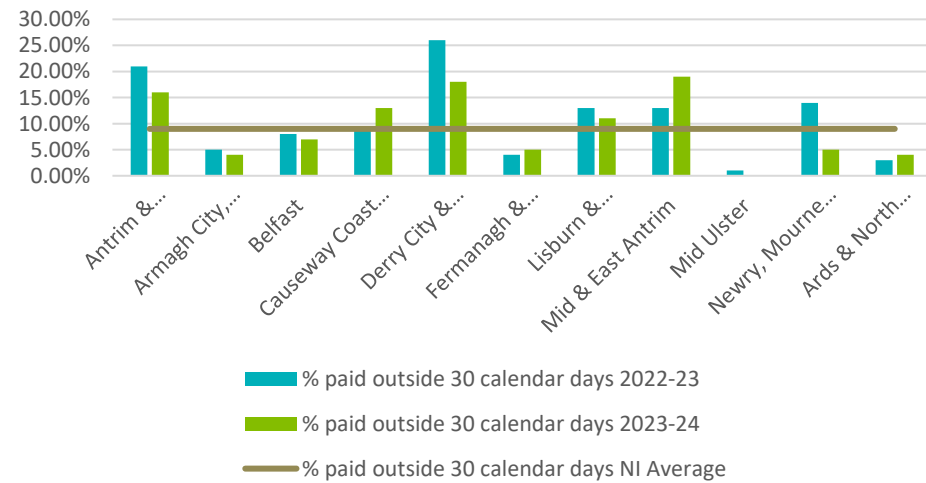
**% payments paid within 30 calendar days**



**% payments paid outside 30 days**







**% payments paid outside 30 days**



## Corporate Objective





Advocate with others for the benefit of all people of the District

Key action	Status	Update
Work with partners to implement the Community Plan and deliver better outcomes/improve the quality of life for all.		<p>The Community Planning team facilitated a Thematic summit for Health &amp; Wellbeing (October 2023) which identified a number of priority areas under this theme. A working group has been established to take forward actions to address these priorities</p> <p>The key actions that were undertaken by the Partnership in 2023-24 included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth and Future Talents Awards and NMD Youth Council</li> <li>• Community Support Partnerships</li> <li>• Labour Market Partnership</li> <li>• Sustainable Food Partnerships</li> </ul> <p>The Community Co-Ordination Hub and Strategic Stakeholder Forum brought together a number of Community Voluntary organisations with Council Officers and Statutory organisations. Their work has focused on the development of Social Supermarkets, the administration of Hardship Funds and Support for Refugees and Asylum Seekers</p> <p>DEA Fora has also contributed to the delivery of the Community Plan outcomes by delivering numerous cross community events and programmes, provision of warm spaces across the District, Community reimagining projects; health and wellbeing awareness raising, and representing Council at local partnerships. [DEAS]</p>
Support elected members in their advocacy role around key local actions.		Elected members are supported in their advocacy roles through the DEA officers who work together with their DEA fora members to identify key local actions relevant to communities and implement programmes, activities and projects that aim to benefit residents and communities.









Measure of Success	Status	Explanatory note
Compliance with the duty of community planning / monitor delivery of outcomes with partners		During 2023-24, the Council continued to comply with the statutory duty of community planning. The Community Planning Partnership met three times during the past year. The Partnership produced and published their bi-annual statement of progress which is available online. This included a synopsis of the partnership's activity as well as an update on the indicators of the community plan.
Percentage of residents who are satisfied with their local area as a place to live		The 2022 Residents Survey revealed that 91% of residents are satisfied with their local area as a place to live, which is well above the GB average of 81% and is an increase of 1% on the figure recorded in the 2018 Residents Survey. 99% of residents in the Slieve Croob DEA are satisfied with their local area as a place to live, compared to just 59% in the Newry DEA. Older residents are also more likely to be satisfied with their local area as a place to live than younger residents. The top perceived problems identified by residents are dog mess and fouling and rubbish or litter lying around.

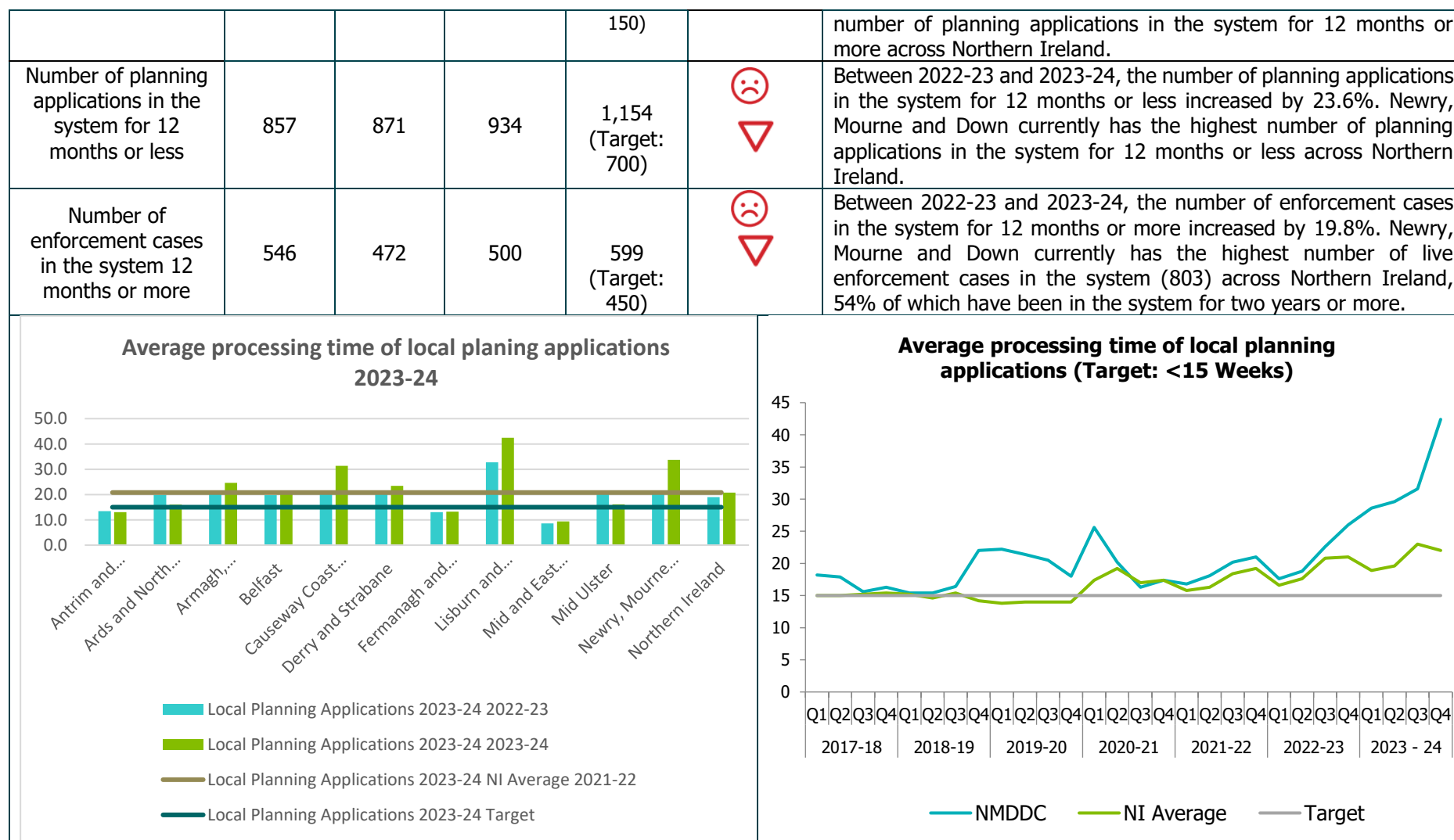
## Performance Improvement Objective 5

We will improve the processing times of planning applications and enforcement cases by implementing the Planning Service Improvement Programme

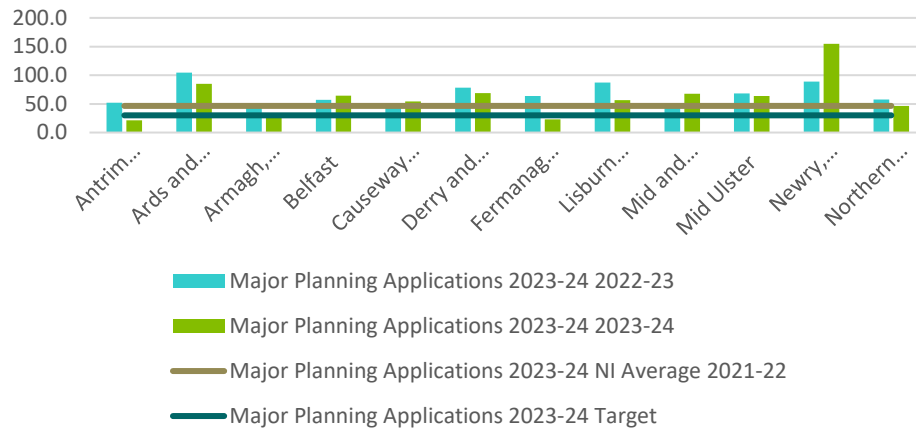
Key action	Status	Update
Reduce the number of live planning applications and enforcement cases which have been in the system for over 12 months.		The number of live planning applications which have been in the system for 12 months or more increased by 54.4% between 2022-23 and 2023-24 rising from 228 by March 2023 to 352 by March 2024. The number of enforcement cases in the system for 12 months or more also increased, rising by 19.8% during this same period from 500 cases in March 2023 to 599 cases by March 2024. Whilst the number of live planning applications and enforcement cases in the system for over 12 months remains high the Council is committed to continuing to reduce these figures.
Work with agents and architects to improve the standard of planning applications submitted.		In 2023-24 a workshop was held with agents and architects to outline the challenges within the planning service and to start discussions around the importance of quality applications. A broad agreement was reached around the use of validation checklists and work will be ongoing in 2024-25 to implement that.
Support employees to deliver service improvements through ongoing training, capacity building and 'planning surgeries'.		During 2023-24 there was a number of new recruits to the planning team and a number of existing staff promoted. Principal officers and their senior team continue to provide training to staff as part of their induction and continuous development.
Effectively implement the new electronic planning system		The new portal is live however work remains ongoing through ICF to enhance the service and deal with problems that emerge. The design team visited staff in December 2023 to capture feedback and have implemented a range of improvements. Work in relation to the enforcement modules has progressed and remains a work in progress.



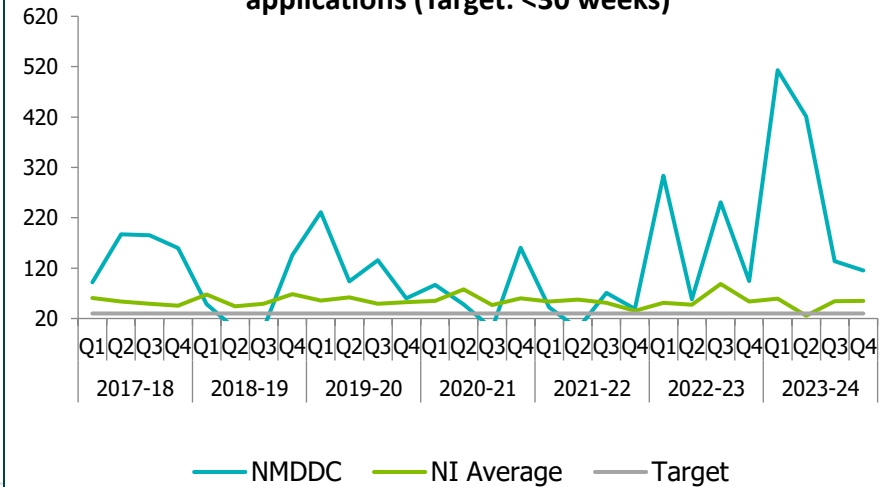
Measure of success	2020-21 Actual	2021-22 Actual	2022-23 Actual	2023-24 Actual	Status Trend	Explanatory Note
Average processing time for local planning applications (weeks)	19	18.8	21.6	33.7 (Target: <15 weeks)	 	During 2023-24, Newry, Mourne and Down received 1,277 local planning applications which is the second highest across Northern Ireland behind Belfast but represents a 15.7% decrease when compared to 2022-23. The processing time for local planning applications increased from 21.6 weeks in 2022-23 to 33.7 weeks in 2023-24 which is above the regional average of 20.8 weeks and exceeds the statutory standard of <15 weeks. Newry, Mourne and Down processed 10.0% of local planning applications within the statutory standard for 2023-24, a decrease of 18.3% compared to 2022-23. The Council is currently ranked 10/11 across Northern Ireland for processing local planning applications.
Average processing time of major planning applications (weeks)	64.6	44.3	89.0	154.8 (Target: <30 weeks)	 	During 2023-24, Newry, Mourne and Down received eight major planning applications, one more application than what was received in 2022-23. The processing time for major planning applications increased from 89 weeks in 2022-23 to 154.8 weeks in 2023-24 which was the highest increase in processing times across all 11 Councils. It is above the regional average of 46.5 weeks and still exceeds the statutory standard of <30 weeks. 14.3% of major planning applications were processed within the statutory standard, an increase of 5.2% compared to 2022-23 with the Council ranked 11/11 across Northern Ireland.
Percentage of planning enforcement cases progressed within 39 weeks	40.9%	48.5%	58.6%	60.0% (Target: 70%)	 	Data on enforcement cases has now been updated with Newry, Mourne and Down opening 250 enforcement cases in 2023-24, representing a decrease of 21.9% compared to the 320 cases opened in 2022-23. The percentage of enforcement cases progressed within the statutory timescale increased by 1.4% from 58.6% in 2022-23 to 60.0% in 2023-24 however it remains below the statutory target of 70% and below the regional average of 76.4% with Newry, Mourne and Down ranked 8/11 across Northern Ireland.
Number of planning applications in the system for 12 months or more	195	187	228	352 (Target: <200)	 	Between 2022-23 and 2023-24, the number of planning applications in the system for 12 months or more increased by 54.4% from 228 in 2022-23 to 352 in 2023-24. Currently NMD has the highest



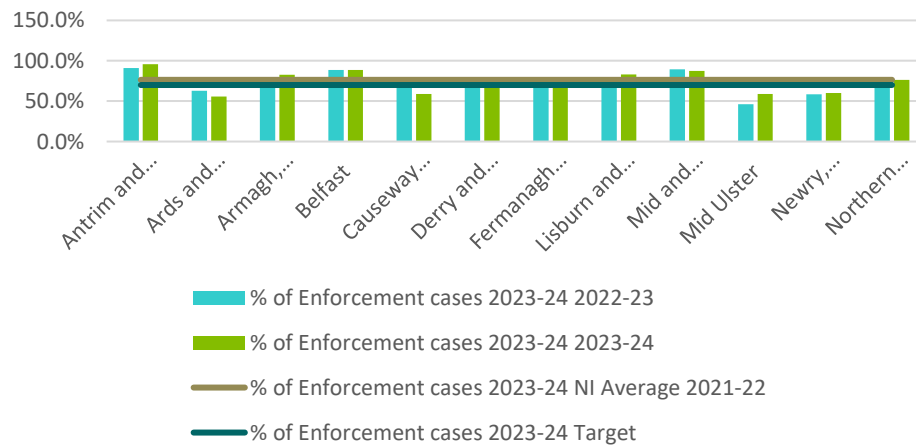
**Average processing time of major planning applications  
2023-24**



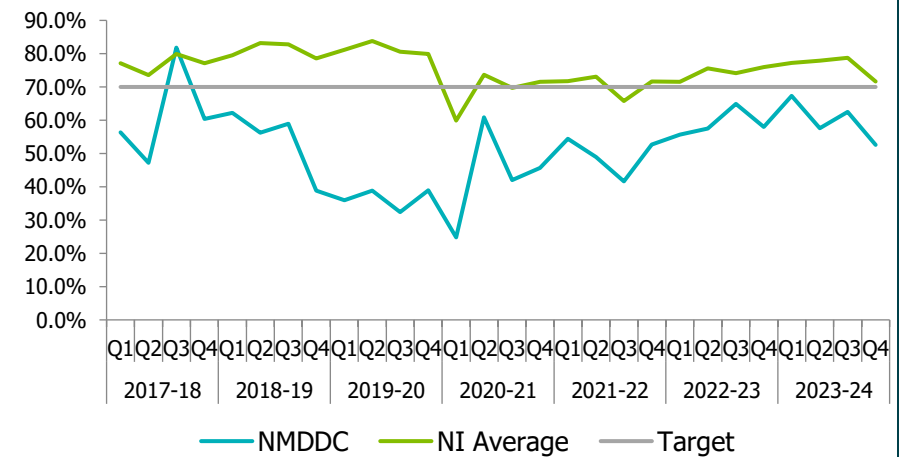
**Average processing time of major planning applications (Target: <30 weeks)**



**Percentage of planning enforcement cases processed  
within 39 weeks 2023-24**



**Percentage of planning enforcement cases that are  
processed within 39 weeks (Target: 70%)**



In addition to the performance measures within the Corporate Plan, the Council continues to develop and agree suites of self imposed performance measures at all levels of the organisation, in line with the Business Planning and Performance Management Framework. This is evidenced through the:

- Agreed suites of performance measures within Directorate Business Plans.
- Agreed suites of performance indicators for Arts and Heritage, Building Control, Corporate Services, Community Development, Economic Development, Environmental Health, Environmental Services, Leisure and Planning, through the Association of Public Service Excellence (APSE).

As the Council's performance management arrangements continue to mature and embed, the self-imposed performance indicators will be used to manage performance at all levels of the organisation, thereby facilitating a performance improvement culture and delivering sustainable improvements for local communities.




## Appendix 1: Progressing the 'proposals for improvement'

### **Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Performance Audit and Assessments: Proposals for Improvement - Progress Report**

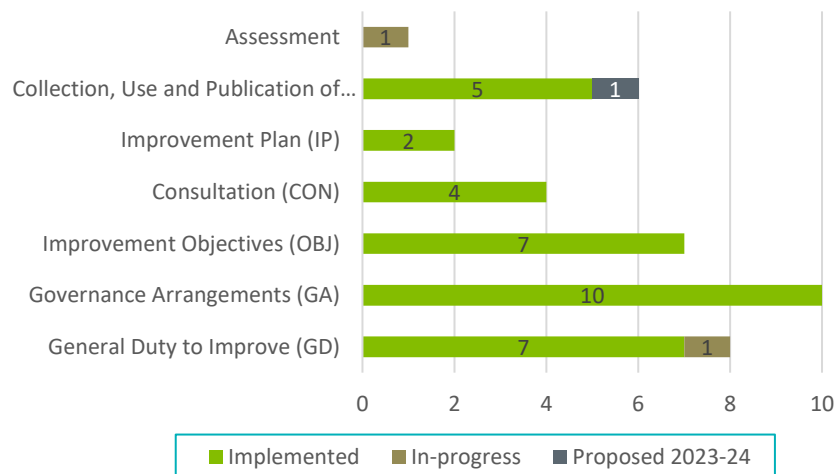
For the past six years, the Local Government Auditor has put forward 'proposals for improvement' as part of the annual Performance Audit and Assessments which are carried out by the Northern Ireland Audit Office. The purpose of the 'proposals for improvement' is to support the Council in putting in place arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of functions. The 'proposals for improvement' are categorised under the seven themes outlined below. This report provides an overview of progress to date in implementing the 'proposals for improvement', using the following legend.

#### **Themes:**

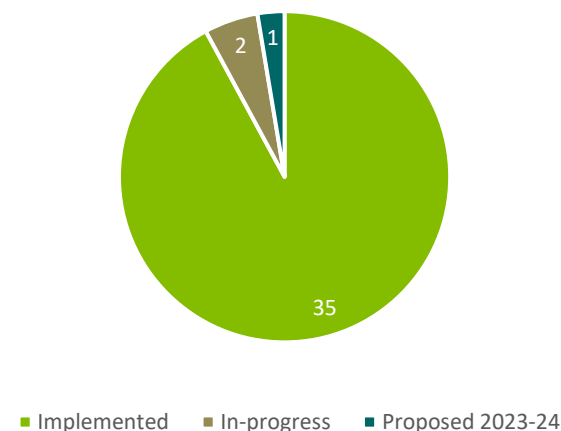
1. General duty to improve
2. Governance arrangements
3. Improvement objectives
4. Consultation
5. Improvement Plan
6. Arrangements to improve
7. Collection, use and publication of performance information

<b>Legend</b>	
Proposal implemented / on track to be implemented	
Proposal partially implemented / likely to be implemented	
Proposal not implemented	

### Proposals for Improvement - Progress to Date



### Proposals for Improvement - Progress to Date



### Theme, Proposal and Progress to Date

#### THEME: Collection, use and publication of performance information



#### PROPOSAL FOR IMPROVEMENT: Targets set out in the Improvement Plan should also be included within the Self-Assessment Report to enable the Self-Assessment report to be used as a standalone document



In the self-assessment, targets, where set, have always been provided for the measures within the corporate plan. There is also a legend provided at the start of the document that indicates that if a green face is under the status column, then the target has been achieved/on track to be achieved and similarly if a red face is under the status of the measure, it indicates that the target was not achieved or is unlikely to be achieved.

#### PROGRESS TO DATE

To further improve transparency and make it easier to assess performance, the Council has within this report, included all targets, where set, below the actual figure recorded for the assessment year (2023-24). This will also be carried forward for all future Assessment of Performance reports.

THEME: Assessment	
<b>PROPOSAL FOR IMPROVEMENT: Council should consider enhancing transparency of the self-assessment report by providing more detailed narrative to allow the reader to better understand how Council has determined the ratings of the trends in performance. Furthermore, where there are downward trends in performance or the Council has assessed targets are not likely to be achieved, appropriate explanations should be included as to how Council intends to address this</b>	
<p>The Residents Survey provides robust and reliable datasets for the Council to understand and track resident perceptions of the Council and its services. It is directly aligned to and influences the content of the Corporate Plan and PIP. Best practice indicates that Residents Surveys should be carried out every 3-4 years, as resident perceptions are unlikely to change on an annual basis, and the baseline data is therefore considered 'live' for this period of time. A legend is also provided in all performance reports indicating whether a target has been achieved/partially achieved or not achieved at all and where there has been an upward or downward trend in the figures year on year.</p>	
PROGRESS TO DATE	
<p>A second Residents survey was carried out in September 2022 which allows a comparative and trend analysis with the previous Residents Survey and provides clear transparency in how we are performing as a Council. A status and narrative are provided against every action and measure within the Assessment of Performance and where downward trends are experienced an explanation on how this has occurred is provided where possible.</p> <p>You will see in this Assessment Report that where applicable, a more detailed narrative has been included to allow better understanding of the Council's performance and where targets have not been achieved an explanation of what perhaps contributed to that is also included as well as what Council are doing to bring about improvement.</p>	
THEME: General duty to improve	
<b>PROPOSAL FOR IMPROVEMENT: An electronic performance management system would help to achieve long term continuous improvement as it would provide the basis for a more reliable system for identifying and monitoring improvements, as well as creating efficiencies in the process that could free up time to spend on value adding activities</b>	
<p>Implementation of a new electronic performance system through 'OneAdvanced' has taken place. It came online in Q4 2023-24 and work has been carried out to ensure all the objectives, actions and measures across the whole suite of the Council's performance framework has been included from the Community Plan, Corporate Plan, Performance Improvement Plan, Directorate Business Plans</p>	

down to Service Plans. Training has also been provided to all relevant staff and this training has been recorded for continuous reference. During this transition, the Council will continue to maintain and manage the excel based performance management system until the electronic system is fully embedded and operational. This system provides an overview of around 200 performance indicators, highlighting trends over time and against target. The performance management system is available for all employees to access on the shared drive.

## **PROGRESS TO DATE**

The Council has continued to embed the Business Planning and Performance Management Framework, in order to facilitate the effective cascade of strategic objectives across the organisation. The Framework features within the Corporate Plan, Performance Improvement Plan and Directorate Business Plans, as well as the guidance for Service Plans and People Perform Grow, demonstrating how employees contribute to the achievement of community planning outcomes and strategic objectives. The Performance Improvement Policy continues to provide the content for mainstreaming the Business Planning and Performance Management Framework, and was updated in Q3 2022, in line with the 4-year policy review cycle.

The Business Planning and Performance Management Cycle has also been updated to demonstrate the integrated timeline of activity required to strengthen the alignment across the Framework and facilitate the development, implementation and review of the Community Plan, Corporate Plan, Performance Improvement Plan, Directorate Business Plans, Service Plans and People Perform Grow. The monitoring, reporting and review arrangements at each level of the Framework continue to be mainstreamed and a standard, consistent approach has been developed for performance reporting, using the red/amber/green status. Performance reports are available to a range of stakeholders through the Council's website and Committee reporting arrangements.

### **Community Plan**

The Community Planning team facilitated a number of workshops to review the Community Plan. These workshops engaged all partners including the Strategic Stakeholder Forum, District Electoral Area Fora, Youth Council and Older Persons Fora. Subsequent to this an internal workshop was held with Council officers. A review of the plan was presented to the Community Planning Partnership in Q4 2023-24.

### **Corporate Plan**

The Council has now finalised the new Corporate Plan 2024-27 which has been approved through the Council's committee structure. The implementation of the consultation and engagement programme was completed following a 12-week public consultation period between March and May 2024. This included consultation with the Councils District Electoral Area Forums with representatives from the



community and business sectors as well as elected members and a number of Section 75 groups including Youth Voice and the Cedar Foundation. This plan was supported through the second Residents Survey for the District carried out in September 2022, involving a representative sample of residents across the District. The Residents Survey was supplemented by focus groups and workshops, which engaged key stakeholders in the process, particularly Elected Members, employees and the Senior and Corporate Management Teams. This robust and reliable quantitative and qualitative evidence base has been used to inform and influence the strategic objectives, key actions and measures of success within the new Corporate Plan.

### **Performance Improvement Plan**

The Council published the Performance Improvement Plan 2024-25 ahead of the statutory deadline. Three of the performance improvement objectives, supporting actions and measures of success were carried forward from 2023-24. One of the objectives has been amended to better reflect the link to the new corporate objective it supports, as well as the new economic programme 'Go Succeed' which is now in place. Another objective has been amended following feedback through the consultation to further signify the Council's support for recycling. All were developed and updated in close liaison with officers, approved by the Senior Management Team and Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee, and subject to pre-engagement consultation and a public consultation process between March-May 2024.

### **Directorate Business Plans**

Five Directorate Business Plans 2024-25 were developed and approved by the Senior Management Team and relevant Council Committee. Each Business Plan also includes objectives, key actions and measures for success which have now been aligned to the new corporate objectives. As well as that, all the Directorate Business Plans had to be reviewed following completion of the Council's restructure under its planning for the future strategy. This involved various sections moving in and out of Directorates which had to then be reflected within the new Directorate Business Plans. This also impacted the relevance of the Directorates key objectives which had to be developed again to best reflect the new Directorates and sections. Each Directorate also undertook an assessment of their respective Business Plan 2023-24, which was also approved by the Senior Management Team and relevant Council Committee. All Directorates are very proactive in engaging employees in reviewing and developing the Business Plan, organising workshops and business planning sessions.

### **Service Plans**

During 2019-20, the Council agreed a corporate approach to developing and mainstreaming Service Plans, as a tool to enable departments to turn plans into action, monitor performance and strengthen the effective cascade of strategic objectives to departments, teams and employees. Service Plans were subsequently introduced in 2021-22 to provide an overview of the operational activity and


key improvements that are planned for the year ahead, helping to ensure that teams and employees are working towards shared and agreed objectives. All departments developed a Service Plan during 2023-24, and some departments, particularly the Leisure and Sport and Community Development Departments were very proactive in engaging all employees in the development of the 2024-25 Service Plan.

### **Individual Performance**

During 2019-20, the Council developed Individual Performance through the 'People Perform Grow' pilot, which seeks to align the contribution of employees to the corporate objectives and community planning outcomes, as demonstrated through the Business Planning and Performance Management Framework. However, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, People Perform Grow was suspended and was subsequently launched during 2021-22 for tier four employees and above. During 2022-23, 'People, Perform, Grow' was rolled out to employees at tier 5 with People Perform Grow templates linked to individual performance objectives with the relevant Service Plan, in order to strengthen the cascade of corporate objectives to all employees across the organisation. An e-learning module and brochure was developed to support the effective implementation of People Perform Grow, and performance management arrangements have been introduced, through the 'PPG Tracker', to monitor progress in employee participation in People Perform Grow. Progress is reported through the Corporate Performance Dashboard on a quarterly basis.

In 2023-24 a variety of training initiatives and programmes took place to extend the roll out of the Council's People Perform Grow (PPG) process across the Council. There was the roll out of 'PPG Leaders' workshops to support line managers develop their leadership skills and have effective, structured, supportive PPG coaching conversations, in both individual and team settings to deliver all three strands of PPG. These mandatory workshops were successful with 87% of the target audience attending and feedback was excellent. In collaboration with Heads of Service, Learning & Development held 12 'PPG Roadshows' throughout the district to help embed PPG. The roadshows were well received and reached over 300 employees. There was also continued promotion of PPG via PPG Posters circulated throughout the Council district, PPG roadshows, a specific PPG Newsletter and the PPG eLearning module.

The Corporate Performance Dashboard continues to provide an overview of the overall organisational health of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council, using a suite of statutory and self-imposed performance measures across a range of key functions. The Corporate Performance Dashboard will now be aligned to the objectives within the Corporate Plan 2024-27 and risks within the Corporate Risk Register. It provides a platform to monitor performance on a quarterly basis, identify areas of good performance, address areas of under-performance and secure continuous improvement in the delivery of key functions. The Corporate Performance Dashboard 2023-24 is made up of 18 performance measures, including the seven statutory performance indicators for economic development, waste management and planning. These performance measures may change on an annual basis and will continue to be aligned to specific organisational objectives, risks and areas for improvement.

THEME: Governance Arrangements	Status
<b>PROPOSAL: The Council should consider using Internal Audit to review the performance improvement arrangements.</b>	
<p>The Council views the annual audit carried out by NIAO around the current Performance Management arrangements to be more than sufficient. However, the Council does recognise the value of engaging the Internal Audit function to identify and deliver improvements, specifically those which do not necessarily fall within the scope of NIAO audit, such as around data validation and monitoring. To this end, in 2018, an Internal Audit of the APSE PI's was carried out and all recommendations were implemented. An Internal Audit of the Corporate Plan's Performance Indicators took place in Q4 2022-23 and the Council also agreed a 4-year Internal Audit plan in April 2023 with an audit of Performance included for two of those four years with an option to increase if necessary.</p>	
<b>PROGRESS</b>	
<p>Performance have a new Internal Audit review scheduled to take place in Q4 2024-25, looking at a number of measures within the Performance Improvement Plan 2024-25. The review will be looking specifically at the validation processes for certain measures. In Q4 2022-23, the Council worked with ASM to agree the Terms of Reference for an audit of specific measures of success within the Corporate Plan 2021-23. The audit identified a number of improvements which could be incorporated within the Council's systems in relation to the performance measures in the 2021-23 Corporate Plan which have been implemented where possible within the new Corporate Plan 2024-27. Based on the information they reviewed however, they considered that the existing systems in place for recording and validating data for performance measures in the 2021-23 Corporate Plan were basically sound and provided a <b><u>satisfactory</u></b> level of assurance regarding the effective and efficient achievement of the Council's objectives. This process provides assurance that the necessary data collation processes are in place to ensure robust, reliable and accurate datasets are reported in the public domain, ahead of the publication of the new Corporate Plan 2024-27.</p> <p>Performance management training took place for members of the Audit Committee in January 2021, exploring the role of Elected Members in building high performing organisations. Performance and improvement is a standing item on the agenda of the quarterly Audit Committee meetings and has featured as a regular agenda item at the monthly Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee meetings. In addition, all Standing Committees of Council consider performance information in relation to their specific functions on an ongoing basis, which is supplemented by the mid-year and annual reviews of their respective Directorate Business Plan. Elected Members have also been actively engaged in identifying key local issues and informing the development of the Corporate Plan 2024-27 and Performance Improvement Plan 2024-25.</p>	

THEME: Improvement Objectives	Status
<p data-bbox="203 236 383 268"><b>PROGRESS</b></p> <p data-bbox="203 331 2107 676">Three of the 2023-24 performance improvement objectives have been carried forward to 2024-25. One of the objectives has been amended to better reflect the link to the new draft corporate objective it supports, as well as the new economic programme 'Go Succeed' which is now in place while another has been amended following feedback through the consultation to further strengthen the Council's support for recycling. These performance improvement objectives are based on set criteria and are aligned to the outcomes within the Programme for Government and Community Plan for Newry, Mourne and Down, as well as the strategic objectives within the Corporate Plan 2024-27. The five performance improvement objectives were endorsed through the public consultation and engagement process which was carried out during Q1 2024-25. These objectives are considered to be more specific, focused and measurable, and were approved by the Senior Management Team and Strategy Policy and Resources Committee in June 2024 and published before 30 June 2024, ahead of full Council ratification, in order to meet the statutory deadline.</p> <ol data-bbox="255 719 2069 986" style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. We will support the health and wellbeing of local people by improving our leisure facilities and services</li> <li>2. We will contribute to growing the economy by supporting local businesses and job creation</li> <li>3. We will improve the cleanliness of our District by continuing to promote recycling and addressing littering, fly tipping and dog fouling incidents</li> <li>4. We will improve our sustainability and reduce our impacts in relation to climate change</li> <li>5. We will improve the processing times of planning applications and enforcement cases by implementing the Planning Service Improvement Programme</li> </ol> <p data-bbox="203 1018 2107 1091">The NI Audit Office has confirmed that the performance improvement objectives carried over are legitimate, clear, robust, deliverable and demonstrable, covering a range of Council services that relate to improving Council functions or improving services for communities.</p> <p data-bbox="203 1134 2107 1321">As part of the process to redefine the current suite of performance improvement objectives, the Council reviewed the 'supporting actions' and 'measures of success' which underpin each objective, in order to ensure they remain meaningful and that their achievement can demonstrate improvement. Where possible and appropriate, baseline data for each 'measure of success' has been included in the Performance Improvement Plan 2024-25, to demonstrate performance trends over time and targets for improvement have also been agreed.</p>	

<b>THEME: Consultation</b>	
<b>PROGRESS</b>	
<p>The Council continues to implement a robust and inclusive consultation and engagement process in relation to the development of the annual performance improvement objectives. Overall, the 2024-25 consultation and engagement process resulted in 48 completed surveys and engagement with 111 stakeholders through the Newry DEA Forum, Downpatrick DEA Forum, Crotlieve DEA Forum, Slieve Gullion DEA Forum, Slieve Croob DEA Forum and Rowallane DEA Forum as well as Section 75 groups, including Newry, Mourne and Down Youth Voice and the Cedar Foundation. This consultation and engagement process was launched through the NMD Speak online platform, publicised through public notices in local newspapers and supplemented by the 764 responses to the Residents Survey in 2022. The majority of consultees agreed with the proposed performance improvement objectives 2024-25.</p>	
<b>THEME: Improvement Plan</b>	
<b>PROGRESS</b>	
<p>The Council published the Performance Improvement Plan 2024-25 ahead of the statutory timescale of 30 June 2024. The Council has also published the summary document 'Our Performance Looking Back Going Forward', to provide a user-friendly overview of retrospective performance during 2023-24 and the forward-looking performance objectives for 2024-25.</p>	
<b>THEME: Arrangements to Improve</b>	
<b>PROGRESS</b>	
<p>The Council continues to progress, implement and embed its arrangements to achieve the objectives, key actions and measures of success within the Corporate Plan, Performance Improvement Plan, Directorate Business Plans, Service Plans and People Perform Grow. The arrangements to deliver the performance improvement objectives continue to evolve and are supported by Objective Delivery Plans which provide a detailed overview of how the objectives and associated actions are managed, monitored and reported, under the direction of the Senior Responsible Officer.</p>	
<b>THEME: Collection, Use and Publication of Performance Information</b>	<b>Status</b>
<b>PROGRESS</b>	
<p>The Business Planning and Performance Management Framework demonstrates the alignment that exists between the Community Plan, Corporate Plan, Directorate Business Plans, Service Plans and People Perform Grow. It has been supplemented by an agreed cycle of activity required to embed the Framework across the organisation. All elements of the Business Planning and Performance Management Framework are currently being progressed and embedded across the organisation.</p>	

In addition to the statutory performance indicators and standards, the Council has developed and agreed suites of self-imposed performance indicators which underpin the Corporate Plan, Performance Improvement Plan and Directorate Business Plans. These plans provide the strategic and operational context for the work of the organisation, and year on year progress against the indicators is monitored and reported through the annual Assessment of Performance, as well as the annual and bi-annual assessments of the Performance Improvement Plan and Directorate Business Plans. The Council has also developed Performance Profiles for each Directorate to present baseline performance information in a meaningful and consistent way, to facilitate a performance led approach to business planning and embed a culture of improvement.

The Council continues to form part of APSE Performance Networks and has collated benchmarking data across a range of services since 2016-17. This information has been analysed and reported to the Senior Management Team and Corporate Management Team through the Performance Profiles as well as specific APSE Reports, ensuring a performance led approach to business planning, specifically in relation to Directorate Business Plans and Service Plans. An internal audit of APSE performance indicators was carried out by ASM in November 2018, in order to assess the reliability of the existing benchmarking arrangements and validate the accuracy and integrity of selected APSE performance indicators. The internal audit confirmed that the existing systems in place to validate performance indicators can provide satisfactory assurance regarding the effective and efficient achievement of the Council's objectives and all recommendations have now been implemented.

Through the Assessment of Performance, the Council continues to benchmark performance with other Councils, specifically in relation to economic development, planning, waste management and prompt payments. The Councils also compares year on year performance across a broad range of performance measures within the Corporate Plan and Performance Improvement Plan.

## Appendix 2: The Golden Thread

### NMD Community Planning Outcomes

All people in Newry,  
Mourne and Down get  
a good start in life and  
fulfil their potential

All people in Newry,  
Mourne and Down  
enjoy good health and  
wellbeing

All people in Newry,  
Mourne and Down  
benefit from  
prosperous  
communities

All people in Newry,  
Mourne and Down  
benefit from a clean,  
quality, sustainable  
environment

All people in Newry,  
Mourne and Down live  
in respectful, safe and  
vibrant communities

### NMDDC Corporate Objectives

Deliver sustainable  
services

Improve the health  
and wellbeing of  
everyone in the district

Support the continued  
growth and  
development of our  
local economy

Protect and enhance  
our environment to  
secure a sustainable  
future

Represent the voice of  
the district with our  
partners

Empowering  
communities to play an  
active part in civic life

Develop and revitalise  
our district

Support regenerative tourism  
opportunities which promote our  
culture, heritage and environment

### NMDDC Performance Improvement Objectives

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

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

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

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

We will improve the  
processing times of  
planning applications  
and enforcement cases  
by implementing the  
Planning Service  
Improvement  
Programme