

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council

Consultation and Engagement Report on the Performance Improvement Objectives 2018-19



Introduction

The Local Government Act (NI) 2014 sets out a General Duty of Improvement, whereby all District Councils must put in place arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of their functions and set performance improvement objectives for each financial year.

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council's draft performance improvement objectives 2018-19 have been carried forward from 2017-18 and were considered by the Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee on 15 March 2018. This was followed by extensive consultation and engagement activity which encouraged key stakeholders, including residents, businesses, statutory and community planning partners and Elected Members, to have their say on the proposed draft performance improvement objectives.

This report provides an overview of the consultation and engagement methodology and an analysis of the responses which were received.

Consultation and Engagement Activity

Between 23 March – 18 May 2017, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council carried out an eight week consultation and engagement process with key stakeholders on the draft performance improvement objectives 2018-19, through the following mechanisms:

- Electronic documentation and survey on the Council's website and social media channels
- Hard copies of the documentation and survey at the Council's public receptions in Monaghan Row (Newry), Downshire Civic Centre (Downpatrick) and the Ethnic Minority Support Centre (Town Hall, Newry)
- Email distribution to Community Planning Partners and Equality Scheme consultees
- Public Notices in local newspapers
- Engagement with the DEA Fora through public engagement events and private meetings
- Engagement with Section 75 groups including the Older Persons Forum and Youth Councils*

*Following ongoing liaison with the Newry and Mourne Youth Council and Down Youth Council, a meeting is scheduled to take place on 27 June 2018 between Youth Councillors, Chairperson of Council, Chief Executive and Council Officials. The purpose of this meeting is to provide Youth Councillors with an opportunity to consider the Performance Improvement Plan 2018-19 in a similar format to Council meetings. Feedback from this meeting will be used to inform the Council's future performance improvement objectives.

Analysis Methodology

A total of 92 completed surveys were received in response to the consultation and engagement on the Council's draft performance improvement objectives 2018-19. Respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the draft performance improvement objectives, if they had any comments to make regarding each objective and to put forward their suggested priorities for future improvement. In addition to the survey, engagement was also carried out with Elected Members, statutory partners, community, voluntary and business sectors and Section 75 groups through meetings of the DEA Fora and Older Persons Forum.

In carrying out the quantitative and qualitative consultation and engagement, a structured process was used to capture responses around each of the five draft performance improvement objectives 2018-19. All consultation and engagement responses have been considered and amendments have been recommended in relation to the 'supporting actions' for some performance improvement objectives.

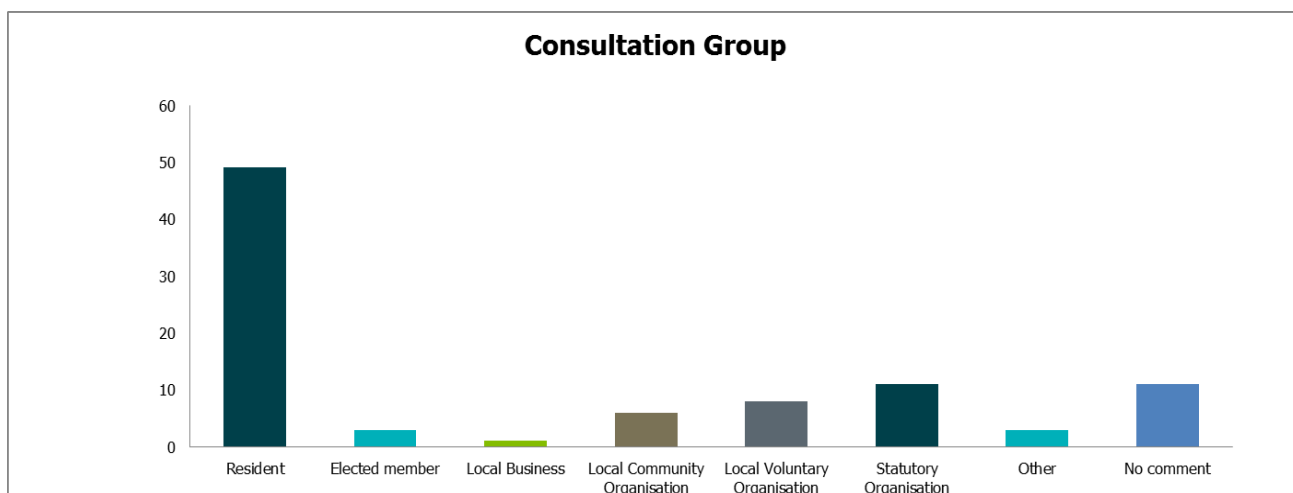
Feedback from the consultation and engagement process has been circulated to the Council's Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee, Senior Management Team, Corporate Management Team and Community Planning partners for their consideration as part of the business planning process.

The Performance Improvement Plan 2018-19 and summary document entitled 'Our Performance, Looking Back, Going Forward' will also be circulated to consultees and published on the Council's website.

Consultation and Engagement Findings

Profile of Respondents

Responses to the draft performance improvement objectives 2018-19 were received from a range of key stakeholders, with the highest number of responses from residents, local community and voluntary organisations and statutory partners, as outlined in the following chart.



Eight survey responses were submitted on behalf of the following organisations:

- Southern Regional College (SRC)
- Mourne Heritage Trust
- Volunteer Now
- Kilclief Residents Association
- Shopmobility Newry
- Children and Young People’s Strategic Partnership (CYPSP)
- Early Years
- Down Senior Citizens Consortium
- Down Youth Council

The Council also attended the following events to consult key stakeholders:

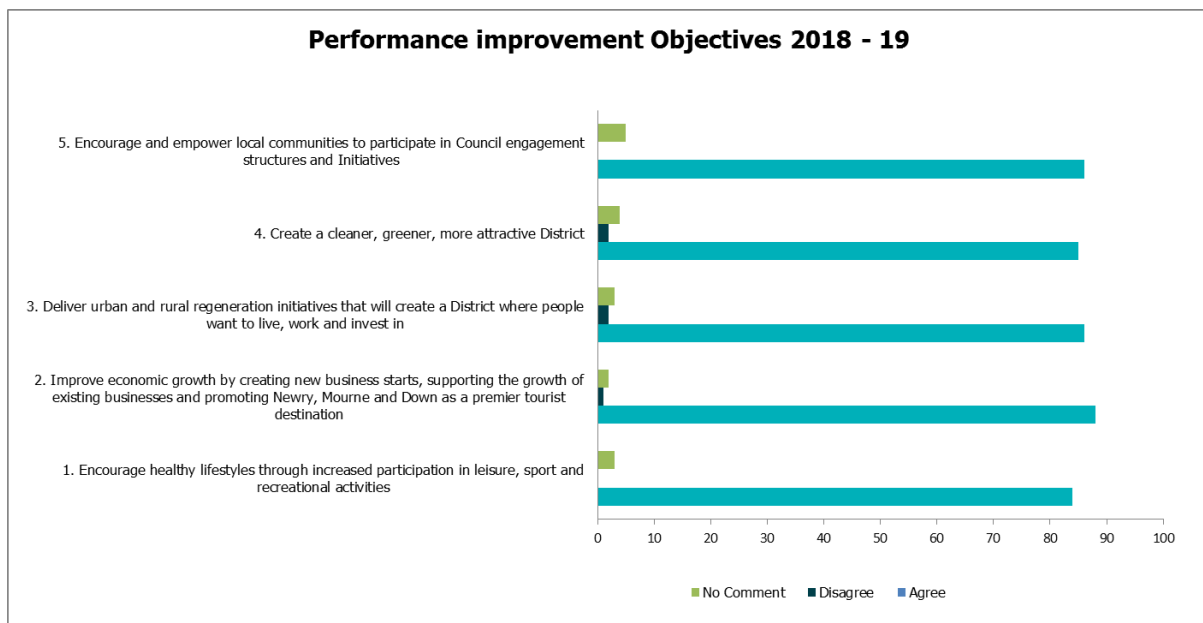
- Silver Surfers Event, 28 March, Newry
- Mourne Mountain Adventure, 21 April, Kilkeel

In addition, the Council engaged approximately 80 stakeholders, including Elected Members, representatives from the business, voluntary, community and statutory sectors, statutory and community planning partners, as well as Section 75 groups through the meetings outlined below.

| Meeting | Date and Venue |
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| Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee | 15 March 2018, Downshire Civic Centre |
| Audit Committee | 26 April 2018, Downshire Civic Centre |
| Rowallane DEA Private Meeting | 23 March 2018, Market House, Ballynahinch |
| Slieve Gullion DEA Private Meeting | 10 April 2018, Cullyhanna Community Centre |
| Downpatrick DEA Private Meeting | 11 April 2018, Downshire Civic Centre |
| Newry and Mourne Older Persons Forum | 24 April 2018, Newry Leisure Centre |
| Crotlieve DEA Private Meeting | 24 April 2018, Warrenpoint Town Hall |
| Slieve Croob DEA Private Meeting | 8 May 2018, The Lodge, Castletwellan |

Analysis of Findings

Overall, there was a very positive response to the five proposed performance improvement objectives 2018-19, with almost all respondents agreeing with each objective. This was similar to the outcome of the 2017-18 consultation and it is therefore recommended that the proposed performance improvement objectives 2018-19 are not subject to amendment.



You Said, We Did

2017-18 - Feedback

As part of the process for developing the 'supporting actions' and 'measures of success' which underpin the performance improvement objectives 2018-19, the Council considered feedback from the 2017-18 consultation and engagement process which highlighted key issues around:

- The City Park in Newry
- More investment in coastal areas
- A better arts and culture scene
- Accessibility from rural to urban areas
- Preserving the history and heritage of Bessbrook
- Opportunities to engage young people

These issues will be addressed through the 'supporting actions' within the Performance Improvement Plan 2018-19, as outlined below:

- Consider options to progress the development of a Park at the Albert Basin in Newry
- Provide proposals to invest in the fishing dependent communities of Kilkeel, Annalong and Ardglass through the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund
- Address the skills gap between education and employment
- Develop an Arts, Culture and Heritage Strategy to increase participation in cultural activities
- Improve accessibility to Council facilities by working in partnership with Translink and Newry BID to pilot a night time bus service from Newry City to Crossmaglen and Kilkeel
- Secure funding to progress the regeneration of the Derrymore demesne through a play area, trail development, interpretation and other infrastructural projects
- Positively engage minority groups in Council initiatives, including young people, older people and people from black and minority ethnic communities

2018-19 - Feedback

An analysis of the results of 2018-19 consultation and engagement process indicate that many of the issues raised will be addressed through the proposed performance improvement objectives, 'supporting actions' and 'measures of success', or as part of the Council's business planning process.

However, based on the consultation and engagement feedback and the ongoing work in developing and refining the performance improvement objectives, the following amendments have been recommended to the 'supporting actions' and 'measures of success':

Performance Improvement Objective 1

- Engage children and young people in Community Play *and other health and wellbeing initiatives* across the District
- *Through the Play and Leisure Partnership*, produce a multi-stakeholder Activity, Promotion and Development Plan, which maps out the provision of physical activity across the District, suitable for all ages and abilities
- Inclusion of targets for attendances at indoor leisure facilities

Performance Improvement Objective 2

- *Total estimated spend associated with the Giant Adventure festivals, including direct spend*

Performance Improvement Objective 3

- *Work with the Department for Communities to commence the delivery of the environmental improvement scheme in Downpatrick and the revitalisation schemes in Newry and Warrenpoint*

Performance Improvement Objective 4

- Inclusion of statutory recycling and landfill targets

Suggested Areas for Improvement

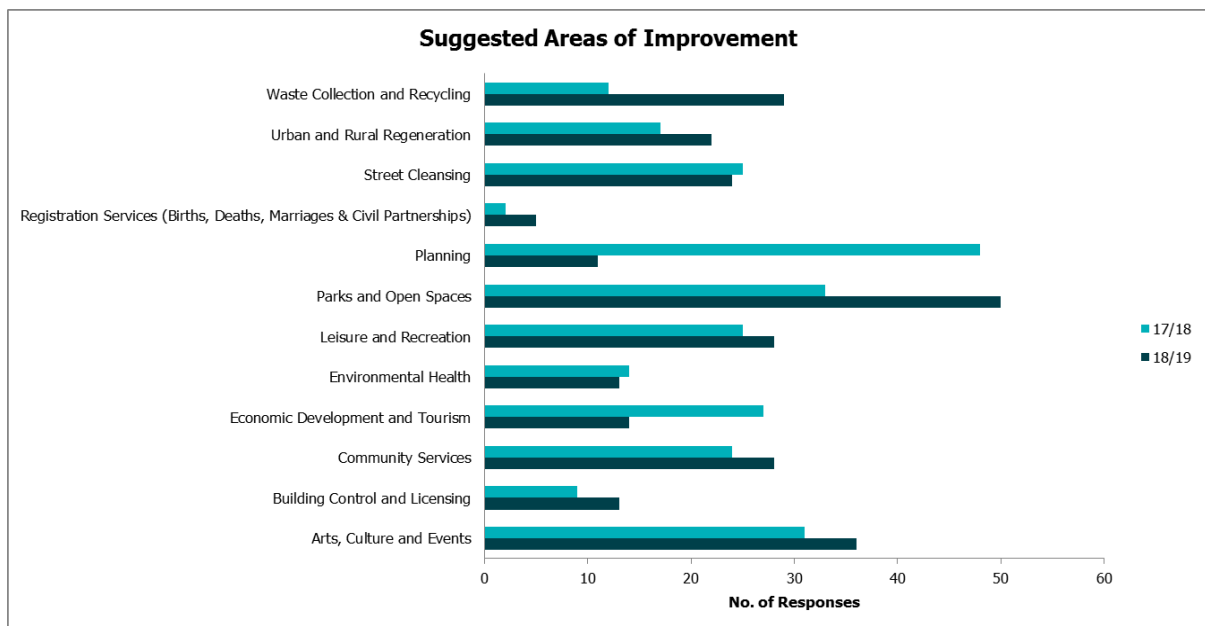
As part of the survey, respondents were also asked to put forward their suggested areas for improvement for 2018-19. An overview of the results is outlined below:

The suggested areas which most need improving are as follows:

- Parks and Open Spaces
- Arts, Culture and Events
- Waste Collection and Recycling
- Community Services

The suggested areas which least need improving are as follows:

- Registration
- Planning
- Environmental Health
- Building Control and Licensing



Next Steps

Whilst no amendments to the five draft performance improvement objectives 2018-19 are being suggested, this report includes recommendations to amend and expand some of the 'supporting actions' and 'measures of success' which underpin each objective. These recommendations are based on the feedback obtained through the consultation and engagement process, as well as the ongoing developmental work around each performance improvement objective 2018-19.

Overview of Consultation and Engagement Feedback

| Performance Improvement Objective 1 Encourage healthy lifestyles through increased participation in leisure, sport and recreational activities | |
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| Rowallanne DEA Private Meeting | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There should be improved promotion and use of the conference and meeting facilities in Newry Leisure Centre. • Public transport from rural areas to urban centres should be improved, such as Killyleagh to Downpatrick Leisure Centre/town centre. |
| Slieve Croob DEA Private Meeting | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An issue was raised in relation to Sport NI funding through the Financial Assistance Scheme. 26 community groups passed the application process but have not been awarded funding, as this theme was over subscribed. This demonstrates that there is a clear demand for funding towards community sports projects which will have a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of local communities. The allocation of Council funding towards the respective financial assistance schemes therefore requires further consideration, in order to reflect community planning outcomes and public demand. |
| Slieve Gullion DEA Private Meeting | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a need to manage expectations around the park in Newry City, particularly in relation to the overall cost and available external funding. The City Park should not be progressed at the expense of development projects in rural areas. |
| Older Persons Forum | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The water in Newry Leisure Centre is too cold for older people, children and babies. |
| Summary of Survey Responses | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Albert Basin Park should be developed in Newry. • There should be walking activities and trails across the District, including coastal areas. • Newry Leisure Centre is a great asset and Kilkeel Leisure Centre should offer more programmes. • The Council should give more commitment to Newry Rugby Club. • Warrenpoint does not have a leisure centre, community centre or swimming baths. • There should be more emphasis on non physical activities which have a positive impact on mental health, and could incorporate the Council's initiatives around arts, culture and community development. Suggested amendment: 'Encourage healthy lifestyles through increased participation in activities that enhance physical and mental wellbeing'. • Volunteering has a positive impact on health and wellbeing and |

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| | <p>those who volunteer are more likely to be involved in health and leisure related activities. Volunteering reduces social isolation and those who volunteer are more likely to have a social support network.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteer Now has developed a programme to encourage socially isolated older people to become more involved in West Belfast, and a similar model could be developed in Newry, Mourne and Down. Volunteer Now also supports mobile volunteering opportunities, particularly amongst older people and those with a disability, and the Walking Bus Scheme which was piloted in Newry last year was very successful. The Council should consider including 'volunteering' within this objective. |
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Performance Improvement Objective 2

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

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| Rowallanne DEA Private Meeting | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smaller towns tend to be neglected in terms of tourism and investment. • More information should be promoted and publicised regarding the Social Economy Programme and the level of support which is available to social enterprises. |
| Slieve Gullion DEA Private Meeting | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slieve Gullion has a lot to offer in terms of tourism and it is positive that additional tourism events have been identified across the DEA. More funding and investment to build on the success and cultural heritage of the area would be welcomed. • Feedback indicates that residents would be willing to pay an entry fee to popular events, such as the Halloween Festival in Slieve Gullion Forest Park, which was a huge success in 2017. • The toilet block in Slieve Gullion Forest Park is a welcome and necessary facility, given the popularity of this local attraction. • It is positive that the Council is proactively trying to access funding for the Derrymore Demesne project in Bessbrook. • Camlough Lake has huge potential as a water sports hub in Slieve Gullion. More should be done to promote Camlough Lake as an outdoor attraction, particularly in relation to the triathlon and potential inclusion of a range of family events. This would help attract visitors and create a 'buzz' around the area. Glamping pods should also be considered to support tourism initiatives around Camlough Lake. |

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| <p>Slieve Croob DEA Private Meeting</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is positive that the SEAFLAG programme will deliver investment in coastal areas and communities over the next few years. • There is a need to ensure that villages and hamlets have access to development land, which should be considered through the Local Development Plan. • Major festivals should be used to raise awareness and signpost visitors to other attractions across the District, such as Castlewellan Maze and Arboretum. This would help establish and strengthen links between the various visitor attractions in each area and contribute towards the development of tailored experiences for specific geographic locations and target audiences, such as the family market and young professionals. • There is a need to improve the tourism signage to the various visitor attractions, including Dundrum Castle, which would also help raise awareness, as well as visibility, of the many attractions the District has to offer. |
| <p>Summary of Survey Responses</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council should consider ways to support educational establishments and businesses to boost skills supply and demand to create quality local jobs and build adaptable local economic strategies and systems. • Vocational education and training is the learning pathway to equip people with the knowledge and competencies required in the labour market, for the jobs identified in the NI Skills Barometer and to enable us to meet the outcomes within the draft Programme for Government. • Facilities around the Lecale Coast should be improved to attract more tourists. The area would benefit from better public conveniences, picnic areas and water activities. • There should be more multi-use outdoor spaces and events across the District. Local events should also receive more support as they encourage civic pride and improve good relations locally. • Volunteering makes a positive contribution to skills development and links with employability. There is increased understanding of how the skills acquired through volunteering, such as communication, confidence and teamwork, can enhance workplace skills. • Volunteer Now has witnessed an increase in the number of employers wishing to access quality volunteering opportunities for staff, recognising the dual benefits that volunteering can have on the economic sustainability of businesses and the sustainability of those supported. • Volunteer Now would welcome links within the Skills Forum to volunteering and how it can support educational pathways and employability. • Volunteers have a role to play in developing the tourism |

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| | <p>economy and supporting major festivals, as it helps to enhance a sense of community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High business rates force entrepreneurs to operate outside Newry City Centre. • The derelict sites in Downpatrick should be used to support tourism and generate income. • The Council should provide more support for small businesses, especially in Newry City. • There should be more apprenticeships for young people. • There have been difficulties in getting planning permission for the Viking Village in Ballyduggan which will enhance local tourism and the local economy. |
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Performance Improvement Objective 3

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

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| Rowallanne DEA Private Meeting | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The bus service for rural areas around Downpatrick, particularly Killyleagh needs to be improved. Concerns were raised regarding the budget cuts recently announced by Translink. |
| Slieve Gullion DEA Private Meeting | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The night time bus pilot between Newry and Crossmaglen is positive and welcomed. • There is an issue regarding the final phase of the Forkhill Masterplan, particularly in relation to a potential housing development within the greenspace. The proposed development would appear to suggest that people will use the greenway to walk around houses. |
| Crotlieve DEA Private Meeting | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further emphasis could be placed on the coastal shore in Warrenpoint, perhaps as a programme of work progressed through the Crotlieve DEA Action Plan, and aligned to the South East Masterplan. |
| Slieve Croob DEA Private Meeting | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is important for residents to be able to access Council and other public services and facilities through public or community transport, including the new Downpatrick Leisure Centre. The Down Senior Forum is meeting Translink to discuss a potential pilot transport service between Ballykinler and Clough to improve overall accessibility for local residents. |
| Older Persons Forum | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The paths in Newry and Warrenpoint are slippery in wet weather which is hazardous for all residents, particularly older people. Some slabs are also cracked and broken, and should therefore be replaced or resurfaced. • Vehicles are parked on footpaths which is dangerous and has |

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| | <p>an impact on accessibility. This is particularly prevalent in Newry City, with security vans for the Northern Bank parking on the footpath around Oxfam on Hill Street. This issue has also been raised with the PSNI.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was a lack of consultation on the regeneration of Warrenpoint Municipal Park. • The towpath is an excellent resource for the Council and the District, and is used frequently by older people. However, concerns were raised in relation to the fact that trees were cut down along the footpath to reduce anti-social behaviour. Whilst the removal of trees has helped reduce the level of dog fouling, this has negative implications for the environment. • The level of dumping is a growing issue around Clonallon Road and Clonallon Park in Warrenpoint. |
| <p>Summary of Survey Responses</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to services and facilities should be improved for those with a disability. • Footpaths should be improved to provide better access to facilities and encourage people to walk as opposed to drive. • The processing time for planning applications is slow and the Planning Department should consider holding face to face meetings with unsuccessful applicants. • Rural areas are lagging behind urban areas and it is unfair that people in rural areas cannot build on their own land. • Community transport to access facilities across the District should be improved. • Suggested amendment: Deliver urban and rural regeneration initiatives that will create a District in which people want to live, work and invest’. • Rural areas are losing shops and post offices and require better transport to urban areas. • There is a need to improve digital connectivity in rural areas. • Playgrounds need to be upgraded. • There should be more investment in Downpatrick. |

Performance Improvement Objective 4

Create a cleaner, greener, more attractive District

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| <p>Rowallanne DEA Private Meeting</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The brown bin campaign has been a success but not all households in the DEA currently have a brown bin. • Further clarification and promotion of what materials can be recycled in blue and brown bins is required. • Street cleansing remains a key issue for residents. Community groups and volunteers in Saintfield have been proactive in carrying out litter picks and local clean-up campaigns, which has helped to improve the cleanliness of the local environment. This good practice should be rolled out elsewhere. |
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| <p>Slieve Gullion DEA Private Meeting</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Littering is a key issue across the District, with too many people dumping and fly tipping illegally. There is a need to lobby for legislation around anti-littering and fly tipping, as a small fine does not act as a real deterrent for perpetrators. |
| <p>Slieve Croob DEA Private Meeting</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council should be more proactive in supporting community groups with litter picks and encouraging more groups and individuals to participate. There is currently an issue around accessibility to litter picking equipment and getting the bags collected, and it was suggested that the Council should allocate specific community centres across the District with equipment. Community groups could borrow this equipment on a continuous basis, which would improve street cleanliness and community ownership over the local environment, whilst encouraging civic pride. In doing so, community centres could support the development of a schedule of activity to promote and facilitate litter picks in a particular area, linking in with the respective caretakers. Litter picking could also potentially feature as part of the Neighbourhood Services initiative. Strengthening community involvement in litter picking would enable the Council to engage groups which are not interested in 'filling in forms' to apply for the 'Down Your Street – Live Here Love Here' programme. |
| <p>Summary of Survey Responses</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The public should take more responsibility for street cleanliness and dumping. Dog fouling remains a key issue. 'Greener' does not touch on the quality of the local environment, some of the District's biodiverse areas are not considered to be 'green', and the term 'attractive' is very subjective. Suggested amendment: 'Create a clean, green high quality environment'. Volunteering opportunities within the environmental field are very important as they encourage people to make a real difference in their local areas and generate a sense of community ownership. Volunteer Now can support the Council in encouraging 'public participation' in environmental campaigns and has already well established links with the National Trust, Mourne Heritage Trust and the Ring of Gullion. The Council should push for public participation in protecting the environment through clean up campaigns, which would help reduce issues around littering and vandalism. Household Recycling Centres need to be more accessible, especially on back holidays. There should be more litter bins and a better system to enforce litter fines. The towpath has been well cleaned up and now requires toilet facilities for users. |

Performance Improvement Objective 5

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

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| <p>Slieve Gullion DEA Private Meeting</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a need to access the 'silent majority' and those who do not actively engage with the Council and the initiatives it offers. • There are ongoing issues between the Travelling and settled communities in Dobson's Way, Bessbrook. The Housing Association continues to engage residents through the provision of a range of activities to address the issues. Many young Travellers are members of the Sacred Heart Boxing Club, and the Southern Trust continues to work with the Club to develop and deliver additional community engagement projects and initiatives. • There is a successful youth engagement programme in Cloughreagh which includes Black and Minority Ethnic Communities and is delivered in partnership with Community Restorative Justice (CRJ), addressing key issues around speed and road safety. |
| <p>Slieve Croon Private DEA Meeting</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 'In It to Win It' project in Slieve Croob was highly successful and enabled the DEA to establish links with more community groups. Whilst it was a good project and helped groups to avoid onerous 'form filling', there was only a small amount of funding available to support the project. Further consideration should be given to the funding available for 'In It to Win It', potentially allocating bigger pots of funding to specific themes and providing all participants with a token financial reward of £50-£100 for taking part. |
| <p>Summary of Survey Responses</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people often feel they are judged and more investment is needed for dedicated physical spaces for young people. • This objective should refer to all engagement structures across the District, such as those which are facilitated through Government Departments, as the Council has a role to encourage people to get involved, even if it does not 'own' the specific structure. • Volunteering can improve physical, mental and emotional wellbeing. Many of the roles within the Council engagement structures are undertaken in a voluntary capacity and Volunteer Now would encourage the Council to develop a 'Volunteering Policy' to support the effective inclusion of volunteers within structures and the development of good practice in volunteer management. • Community groups need more support to be proactive and deliver community projects. The Planning Departments has requested that a group pay £831 in planning fees for a community garden which is unacceptable. |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More intergenerational work would be welcome and more people should have their say on Council initiatives. |
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| General Feedback | |
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| Downpatrick DEA Private Meeting | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a deficit of social housing across the District and within the Downpatrick DEA, which has a negative impact on the rates base. • It is positive that the five performance improvements are directly aligned to the Downpatrick DEA Action Plan. • The 'supporting actions' appear to be weighted towards activity in the legacy Newry and Mourne District. |
| Summary of Survey Responses | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteer Now would be interested in working with the Council to develop a strategic plan to support the development and integration of good practice in volunteer involvement and management throughout all its services. Volunteering touches all aspects of community life and whilst Newry, Mourne and Down has a strong community and voluntary sector there are more ways in which people can be involved as volunteers, accessing the social benefits that it can offer. |