# Performance Improvement Plan 2025-26



# **Contents**

	page
Foreword	3
Introduction	4
Our District, Our Organisation, Our Performance	5
<b>Performance Improvement Objective 1</b> We will support the health and wellbeing of local people by improving our leisure facilities and services	6
<b>Performance Improvement Objective 2</b> We will contribute to growing the economy by supporting local businesses and job creation	8
Performance Improvement Objective 3 We will improve the cleanliness of our District by continuing to promote recycling and addressing littering, fly tipping and dog fouling incidents	10
<b>Performance Improvement Objective 4</b> We will improve our sustainability and reduce our impacts in relation to climate change	12
Performance Improvement Objective 5 We will improve the processing times of planning applications and enforcement cases by implementing the Planning Service Improvement Programme	14
Strategic Alignment	16
Statutory Performance Indicators and Standards	17
Self-Imposed Performance Indicators	18
Identifying the Performance Improvement Objectives 2025-26	20
Achieving Continuous Improvement	29
Business Planning and Performance Management Framework	30
Governance Arrangements	33
How to propose new Performance Improvement Objectives	34



An Cathaoirleach Chairperson Councillor Philip Campbell



An Príomhfheidhmeannach Chief Executive Marie Ward

### **Foreword**

Welcome to Newry, Mourne and Down District Council's Performance Improvement Plan 2025-26. Having listened to our communities, we are retaining all our objectives for this year with a number of new measures and actions to support them which we feel will benefit both our people and place. As we focus on the continued revitalisation of our district we can look back and be proud of our achievements.

The Council worked determinedly to deliver services and implement the performance improvement objectives, particularly in the face of serious adverse issues including Storm Eowyn which caused damage and destruction across our District, particularly in our Forest Parks.

Our residents and visitors continued to embrace their health and wellbeing with nearly 740,000 paid attendances at our leisure centres and over 20,000 participating across our targeted health programmes. We supported 100% of all community clean up requests and issued fixed penalty notices to address environmental crime in the district.

Through our economic development programmes, we supported 233 local businesses and social

enterprises and helped to create 222 local jobs. We also reduced the average processing time of major planning applications within the District.

However, whilst much has been achieved, there is still more to do to make Newry, Mourne and Down a great place to live, work, visit and invest in. Through this year's performance improvement objectives, we will continue to focus on what matters most to you improving the quality of our leisure facilities and services, contributing to the growth of the local economy, improving the cleanliness of our District and promoting recycling, improving our sustainability by reducing our impacts in relation to climate change and improving the performance of our Planning Service.

We remain committed to working closely with communities and partners to deliver high quality, efficient and effective services and will continue to work hard to improve the quality of life for all local communities and build a District we can all be proud of.

## **Introduction**

Part 12 of the Local Government Act (NI) 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. The Council is required to set annual improvement objectives for the services it provides and to have in place arrangements to achieve these objectives. The Council recognises 'improvement' to mean activity that enhances the sustainable quality of life and environment for ratepayers and communities.

The performance improvement objectives do not describe every improvement the Council plans to make during 2025-26. Alternatively, they provide an overview of how the Council will address the issues which matter most to local communities. The Performance Improvement Plan outlines the Council's objectives for improvement, how performance will be measured and what positive outcomes stakeholders can expect as a result of improvement activity. It represents the Council's commitment to achieving continuous improvement in the delivery of key services.

## **Performance Improvement Objectives 2025-26**

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

These objectives have been developed within the context of the Business Planning and Performance Management Framework. They are:

- ✓ Linked to the Community Plan, Corporate Plan and Directorate Business Plans
- ✓ Based on a robust and reliable evidence base, including performance trends
- ✓ Aligned to the seven strategic aspects of improvement
- ✓ Legitimate, clear, robust, deliverable and demonstrable

# Our District, Our Organisation, Our Performance



#### District

Population: 182,074

Households: 68,397
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: 82.6 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

55 Neighbourhood Watch Schemes

18,407 food parcels delivered to vulnerable households



#### Tourism

In 2023:

Number of overnight stays - 482,585

Level of visitor spend -£79.139.615

Three Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

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

CROTHEVE



## 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

200k recorded visits at community trails

Over 525,000 recorded visits at Kilbroney and Slieve Gullion Forest Parks for the last 9 months of the year 2023-24



## **Economy**

Employment rate: 78 %

9,515VAT Registered Businesses

23.1% of the population aged 16-64 years have no qualifications

206 new jobs promoted through business start activity

231 businesses supported through economic development programmes



#### **Environment**

Recycling is important to 91% of residents

Top perceived problem for residents: Dog mess and fouling

Recycling rate: 5 o. 1%

185 community clean ups supported since 2020

Second lowest level of waste to landfill across all NI Councils



## **Performance Improvement Objective 1**

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

# Why this matters

You told us that:

- One of the top priorities for improving your local area was 'Improving people's health and wellbeing (and reducing health inequalities)
- 17% of our residents are not active for a single day each week.
- The third most important health and wellbeing opportunity you would like to see more of was 'physical activity opportunities such as leisure centres, gyms and sports facilities'
- Between 2018 and 2022 there has been an increase in the number of residents satisfied with the leisure centres across the District, however residents did comment on issues such as the need for modernisation and improving cleanliness
- 65% of respondents to our 2025-26 survey agreed with this objective

We know that keeping fit and active can help improve a person's health and wellbeing both physically and mentally and the provision of leisure facilities is key to achieving this. Newry, Mourne and Down District Council plays a key role in helping local communities to live long and healthy lives. The Council remains committed to promoting physical, mental and emotional well-being and encouraging residents to make healthy and informed lifestyle choices and as part of this we need to always be striving to improve our leisure facilities and offerings.

# **Looking Back:** What we did in 2024-25

 $\bigcirc$ 

737,439 paid attendances across the 6 leisure facilities

(3)

Recorded 196,333 visits across a total of 10 community trails.

(:)

10,050 memberships across the indoor leisure facilities

<u>(i)</u>

Progress is continuing on key Capital projects with support from Council's Estates and Capital Projects Team.



20,421 people participating in targeted health programmes

# **Looking Forward:** What we will do in 2025-26

- Sustain the number of paid attendances at indoor leisure facilities.
- Continue to deliver a range of targeted, sustainable health programmes to encourage participation in physical activity.
- Progress the leisure projects agreed within the Capital Programme
- Provide funding through financial assistance for capital projects for sports clubs.
- Work towards Leisure-Safe Accreditation for all indoor leisure facilities
- Implement a 'Mystery Visitor' programme for Indoor Leisure

11		2024.2	2 2022 22	2022 24	2024.25	C	2025.26
How we will me success	easure	2021-2 Actual		2023-24 Actual	2024-25 Actual	Status Trend	2025-26 Target
Number of paid atternet recorded at:	endances		698,864	768,842	737,439	$\nabla$	757,500
Newry Leisure Cent	re	183,22	4 307,153	331,546	244,929	$\nabla$	335,000
Down Leisure Centr	·e	177,49	6 246,978	259,473	273,783	Δ	275,000
Kilkeel Leisure Cent	re	66,987	69,797	63,811	74,988	Δ	15,000
St. Colmans Sports	Complex	36,71	7 54,024	58,491	68,662	Δ	68,700
Newcastle Centre & Outdoor Swimming	•	33,801	25,517	27,765	39,128	Δ	27,800
Ballymote Sports ar Wellbeing Centre		10,309	9 15,365	27,756	35,949	Δ	36,000
Number of people p in targeted health p		322*	9,309	10,805	20,421	Δ	22,000
Value of Financial A funding allocated to clubs	ssistance		New m	easure		-	£225,000
Number of leisure c memberships			9,534	9,923	10,050	<ul><li>○</li><li>△</li></ul>	10,100
Number of capital le projects progressed		Nev	v measure	Δ	2		
Number of Play par upgraded		New Measure - 2					
What you will see by March 2026	202 • Incopro • Inco • 2 p • 2 n • Wo • Plan upg • Fina £22 • Leis	<ul> <li>757,500 paid attendances at our six leisure centres by the end of 2025-26</li> <li>Increase in the number of people participating in targeted health programmes to 22,000.</li> <li>Increase the number of memberships being taken out to 10,100.</li> <li>2 play parks upgraded</li> <li>2 new build and/or upgraded capital leisure projects progressed.</li> <li>Works to be commenced on Kilkeel centre upgrade.</li> <li>Planning permission and contract tender agreed for Jennings park upgrade</li> </ul>					
Alignment	_				_		
Corporate Plan 2024-27	• Imp	orove th	e health and v	vellbeing c	ot everyone	in the Dis	strict.
Community Plan		people i Ibeing	n Newry, Mou	rne and Do	own enjoy g	jood heal	th and
Programme for Government	• Cut	health	waiting times				
7 aspects of improvement	Strateg effectiver		Service qualit	· \	Service ailability	Fa	airness
Responsible Officer	CITCCLIVE	Director: Active and Healthy Communities					

## **Performance Improvement Objective 2**

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

# Why this matters

You told us that:

- 'Improving skills, employability and job prospects' was your top priority for improving the local area in the 2022 residents survey
- Supporting local businesses, attracting investment and jobs' is in your top three priorities for improvement
- Investment to grow the economy, create jobs and attract tourists is the most important form of investment
- 69% of respondents to our 2025-26 survey agreed with this objective

Continuing to support and grow the economy of Newry, Mourne and Down remains a key priority for the Council. Council continues to support the growth of both new business start-ups and the growth of existing businesses though the collaborative delivery of the Go Succeed Programme. 'Go Succeed' is Northern Ireland's go-to source for free expert business advice focusing on the three pillars of starting, growing and scaling your business or business idea.

The NMD Labour Market partnership (LMP) is vital for delivery against skills and employability, addressing economic inactivity, and supporting the upskilling and re-skilling of residents in line with the demand for skills. The LMP has delivered a range of employment academies, careers fairs and jobs fairs, working closely with key stakeholders across the private and public sector.

Delivery against the Belfast Regional City Deal investment areas continues, with ambitions for job creation and the stimulation of private sector investment across the district.

Council is leading on the implementation of a DfE "Regional Balance Fund" establishing a Local Economic Partnership which will develop an action plan and deliver £4.5 million of investment over a 3-year period, that will drive the creation of good jobs, productivity growth, sustainability and decarbonisation.

# **Looking Back:**What we did in 2024-25

(S)

175 new enterprises created as a result of support and 206 new jobs promoted through business start-up activity



12 new social enterprise start-ups supported, and 16 new social enterprise jobs created



 $221\ \mbox{businesses}$  supported to progress growth and scaling ambitions



Delivered several Make it Local campaigns throughout the District and wider region. Make it Local is an initiative that is designed to encourage people within the district to shop locally and support local businesses. Artisan markets held in Downpatrick, Newcastle and Warrenpoint continue supporting the local artisan and craft micro businesses of the District.

# Looking Forward:

• Invest in the social economy through the Social Enterprise programme

# What we will do in 2025-26

- Support the establishment of new businesses through the 'Go Succeed' Programme
- Support the growth of existing businesses and creation of new jobs through the 'Go Succeed' Programme
- Invest in employability and skills through the implementation of the LMP Action Plan.
- Invest in the creation of good jobs, productivity growth, decarbonisation and regional balance through the implementation of a Local Economic Partnership action plan

	Local Economic Partnership action plan						
How we will me success	easure	2021-22 Actual	2022-23 Actual	2023-24 Actual	2024-25 Actual	Status Trend	2025-26 Target
Number of social er start-ups supported	•	12	12	12	12	<b>○ &gt;</b>	12
Number of social er created	nterprise jobs	13	12	14	16	© <b>△</b>	12
Number of participa across all 'Go Succe		New measure			839	(C)	712
Number of business created for start-up and employer enter	businesses	358	361	150	334		289
Number of jobs pro business start-up a		215	155	90	206	<b>② △</b>	173
Number of new ent created as a result	•	215	195	90	175		119
Number of existing supported to progreand scaling ambitio	ess growth	373	220	351	221	© <b>▽</b>	220

# What you will see by March 2026

- 289 business plans created for Start-Up businesses and employer enterprises
- Over 700 participants engaged across all Go Succeed activity
- Support provided to 220 existing businesses to progress growth and scaling ambitions
- 173 new jobs promoted via business start-up activity.
- 12 social enterprise start-ups supported and 12 social enterprise jobs created
- Continued support for new and established local businesses
- Continued support for the growth of new employment opportunities
- Continued support to grow a labour market that is economically active and prosperous

	and prosperous				
Alignment					
Corporate Plan 2024-27	Support the continued growth and development of our local economy				
Community Plan	<ul> <li>All people from Newry, Mourne and Down benefit from prosperous communities</li> </ul>				
Programme for Government	Grow a	Grow a Globally Competitive and Sustainable Economy			
7 aspects of improvement	Strategic effectiveness	Service quality	Service availability	Innovation	
Responsible					

Officer Director: Economy, Regeneration and Tourism

\*Updated 'Go Succeed' programme target for the number of jobs promoted in Newry Mourne and Down: 173. An amendment to the standard set out in the Local Government (Performance Indicators and Standards) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 is awaiting legislative passage and approval

## **Performance Improvement Objective 3**

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

# Why this matters

You told us that:

- Dog mess and dog fouling and rubbish or litter lying around are your top two perceived problems in your local area
- 6% of the residents surveyed were dissatisfied with the cleansing service provided by the Council.
- 91% of residents said recycling is important to them, an increase of 5% on the 2018 residents survey figure.
- 75% of respondents to our 2025-26 survey agreed with this objective

Issues around street cleanliness continue to escalate largely as a result of the increased number of illicit dumping, littering and dog fouling incidents reported to the Council.

To improve the overall cleanliness of the District, the Council is currently reviewing cleansing operations to design a more effective model of service provision. The Council also remains committed to collaborating with partner organisations and local communities to promote responsible dog ownership, address issues around littering and illicit dumping and generate local pride in having a cleaner, greener District for everyone to enjoy.

# **Looking Back:** What we did in 2024-25

Issued 31 fixed penalty notices, 26 of which were paid

Supported 100% of community clean-up requests

15 environmental projects funded through the NI `Live Here Love Here' Scheme with a total of £30,469.40 awarded to local groups

Anti-littering and responsible dog ownership campaigns rolled out

Maintained the rate of recycling, at 50.1%

# **Looking Forward:** What we will do in 2025-26

Address issues around recycling, littering, illicit dumping and dog fouling by:

- Continuing to implement the Enforcement Improvement Plan
- Promoting responsible dog ownership through publicity and social media campaigns
- Encouraging residents to bring properly sorted surplus recyclable waste to our Household Recycling Centres
- Supporting local community clean ups
- Continued implementation of a Paint Re-Use Scheme at a further 2 Household Recycling Centres
- Exploring options to determine levels of street cleanliness and identify emerging issues and hotspots
- Rollout an environmental awareness campaign displayed on Council fleet highlighting simple messages on recycling, littering and dog fouling

Work in partnership with Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful to:

Promote the 'Live Here Love Here' campaigns

	• Encou	rage comr	nunity gro	ups to 'Ad	opt a Spot	<i>I</i>	
		ght the im	pact of litt	ering on th	ne marine	environme	nt
How we will me	easure	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	Status	2025-26
success		Actual	Actual	Actual	Actual	Trend	Target
Number of fixed pe issued	nalty notices	118	110	25	31	$\triangle$	100
Number of fixed per paid	nalty notices	100	91	19	26	(S)	80
Percentage of issue notices that are pai			New m	neasure		-	80%
Percentage of commup requests support		N	lew measur	æ	100%	$\odot$	90%
Number of `Live Hell environmental projection		18	10	9	15	Δ	No target
The percentage of I waste collected by I Councils that is sen	District	49.1%	49.6%	50.1%	50.1% (Q1-Q3)	(i)	70% by 2030 (55% by 2025)
The amount of biod Local Authority Coll Municipal Waste tha	ected	2,685t	2,319t	932t	366t (Q1-Q3)	<ul><li>○</li><li>△</li></ul>	<20,954 tonnes (2019-20)
The amount of Loca Collected Municipal	•	87,336t	82,842t	84,636t	65,048t (Q1-Q3)	$\triangleright$	No target
What you will see by March 2026	<ul> <li>Increase in the number of fixed penalty notices issued and paid</li> <li>Responsible dog ownership and reduced levels of dog fouling, littering and illicit dumping</li> <li>Improved opportunities to report littering, dog fouling and illicit dumping</li> <li>Reduction in the disposal of paint from our Household Recycling Centre sites</li> <li>Opportunities to engage in community clean ups</li> <li>Increased awareness of environmental messaging on issues including recycling, dog fouling and littering</li> <li>A cleaner, greener District, with improved civic and community pride</li> <li>Street cleanliness inspection systems identified for use within Council</li> </ul>						
Alignment	Duetee	4 a a d a a b a					ماطم
Corporate Plan 2024-27	future					e a sustair	
Community Plan	•	•	• •	urne and I vironment	Down bene	efit from a	clean,
Programme for Government	• Protec	<ul> <li>Protecting Lough Neagh and the Environment</li> </ul>					
7 aspects of improvement	Strategic effectiveness	Serv s availa		Innova	tion	Sustair	nability
Responsible Officer		Director: Sustainability and Environment					

<sup>\*</sup>The Q1-Q3 2024-25 data for the statutory waste management performance indicators remains provisional and will be finalised when the year-end data is validated and published by DAERA.

\*\*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.

# Why this matters

You told us that:

- Managing waste, reducing climate change, investing in renewable energy etc. was important to you.
- Green technology skills were the second most important training support needed to improve the growth of resident employability.
- 91% of residents said recycling is important to them, an increase of 5% on the 2018 residents survey figure.
- 59% of respondents to our 2025-26 survey agreed with this objective

Our climate is changing, and we need to prepare. Greenhouse gas emissions cause the Earth's atmosphere to hold more radiation from the sun which increases the overall temperature of the planet. This change in temperature is altering our climate and causing one of the greatest threats of our time. In October 2019 Newry, Mourne and Down District Council declared a 'Climate Emergency'.

NMDDC is acutely aware of how intrinsic sustainability and care of our district is to its future. Within our new Council structure, a Sustainability Department has been created. This is led by a dedicated Assistant Director with responsibility for issues such as Energy, Council Fleet, Facilities Maintenance and Biodiversity.

Environmental sustainability has become a key objective in the development of our capital projects, providing economic growth for the region in an inclusive and sustainable way. Newry, Mourne and Down District Council aims to embed the ethos of sustainability throughout its operations and to provide leadership for the community.

The Council also forms part of the Local Government Climate Action Network which is helping to deliver the NI Climate Change Adaptation Programme. This network will enable us to collaborate with other Councils and relevant statutory partners to develop a strategic approach for climate action.

old

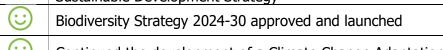
# **Looking Back:**What we did in 2024-25

 $\odot$ 

<u>:</u>	79% of Council fleet younger than 8 years
$\odot$	2024-24 fleet replacement programme com

2024-24 fleet replacement programme completed

Progressed the development of a Climate Change and
Sustainable Development Strategy



Continued the development of a Climate Change Adaptation Plan

# **Looking Forward:**What we will do in 2025-26

Address issues around climate change and sustainability by:

- Completing the draft Sustainability and Climate Change strategy ready for consultation, review, approval and then publication.
- Publishing the Council's Climate Change Adaptation Plan
- Implementing the newly published biodiversity strategy 2024-30
- Complete and implement the Council's Tree Strategy

- Supporting the continued implementation of new Electric Vehicle (EV) charging points
- Undertaking a baseline assessment of the Council's carbon footprint and renewable energy output
- Review the Council's active travel master plan alongside colleagues in the ERT Department
- Continue to implement Council's fleet replacement programme
- Preparing the Climate Change Mitigation Report in accordance with The Climate Change (Reporting Bodies) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024

		,				
How we will measure	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	Status	2025-26
success	Actual	Actual	Actual	Actual	Trend	Target
Carbon footprint of Council estate		To be es	tablished		-	-
Renewable energy generation		To be es	tablished		-	-
Energy Consumption baseline		To be es	tablished		-	-
Percentage of Council fleet					( <u>:</u>	
younger than 8 years	New m	easure	75%	79%	^	85%
Number of vehicles within the						
Council fleet that have an	New m	easure	1	1	(:)	10
alternative fuel source						
Number of trees planted on	New m	easure	2,800	257	$\stackrel{\sim}{\sim}$	2,800
Council managed estate	.1000		2,500	237	0	_,500
Number of Council supported EV	New m	easure	20	0	$\stackrel{\sim}{\odot}$	18
charging points	14CW III	icusui c	20	5		-0

# What you will see by March 2026

- Publication of the Council's Climate Change and Sustainable Development strategy and Climate Change Adaptation Plan
- Implementation of the new Newry, Mourne and Down Biodiversity Strategy (2024-2030)
- Publication of Council's Tree Strategy
- 2,800 new trees planted across the District
- Carbon baseline established for Council estate
- Renewable energy baseline established for Council estate
- Energy consumption baseline established for Council estate
- Increase in the percentage of younger, less polluting vehicles within the Council fleet
- A reviewed Active Travel Master plan
- New electric vehicles operating within Council fleet
- Publication of the Climate Change Mitigation Report in accordance with The Climate Change (Reporting Bodies) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024

# Alignment Corporate Plan 2024-27

- Protect and enhance our environment to secure a sustainable future
- All people from Newry, Mourne and Down benefit from a clean,
   plan
   All people from Newry, Mourne and Down benefit from a clean,
   quality and sustainable environment
- Protecting Lough Neagh and the Environment Government

7 aspects of improvement	Strategic effectiveness	Efficiency	Innovation	Sustainability
Improvement	CITCCUVCITCSS			
Docnonciblo				

Officer Director: Sustainability and Environment

## **Performance Improvement Objective 5**

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

# Why this matters

Delivering a more efficient and effective Planning Service for customers is a key priority for improvement for the Council. Planning plays a significant role in promoting sustainable development, regeneration, economic prosperity, investment and job creation for present and future generations of our District. 72% of respondents to our 2025-26 survey also agreed with this objective.

The new portal, which launched in December 2022, allowing customers to submit applications online and track live planning applications, is now fully operational and amendments and changes remain ongoing as per agreed structures.

Work continues on the Planning Improvement Programme and following discussions with SOLACE and DFI, the programme will be reviewed and updated during 2025-26 to be more reflective of the challenges currently facing planning across NI.

Staff retention and recruitment remains challenging with vacancies remaining in the planning team across all functions as per agreed structures. Recruitment remains ongoing. This has had, and continues to have, a significant impact on targets and performance. This remains a priority for Council and Senior Management with ongoing review and monitoring.

The Council has not yet achieved the statutory standards for 2024-25 but remain committed to delivering further improvements and providing a high-quality service to all customers.

# Looking Back: What we did

What we did between April-December 2024

# (3)

45.1% of live enforcement cases in the system longer than 2 years, which is below the regional average of 70.3%



Average processing time of 45.2 weeks for local planning applications, which is above the regional average of 19.2 weeks



Average processing time of 34.6 weeks for major planning applications, which is better than the regional average of 39.7 weeks Received 878 local planning applications, which is the third highest

## Looking Forward:

What we will do in 2025-26

- Reduce the number of live planning applications and enforcement cases which have been in the system for over 12 months.
- Ongoing work with agents and architects to improve the standard of planning applications submitted.
- Support employees to deliver service improvements through ongoing training, capacity building and 'planning surgeries.'
- Launch the Draft plan Strategy by Q2 2025-26

across Northern Ireland

How we will n	neasure success	2021-22 Actual	2022-23 Actual	2023-24 Actual	2024-25 Q1-Q3 Actual	Status Trend	2025-26 Target
Average processing planning application	18.3	21.6	33.7	45.2	$\nabla$	<15 weeks	
Average processing planning application		49.8	89	154.8	34.6	<b>⊗</b> △	<30 weeks
Percentage of plai cases progressed	nning enforcement within 39 weeks	46.9%	58.6%	60.0%	45.1%	$\bigcirc$	70%
Number of plannir the system for 12		187	228	352	437	© <b>\rightarrow</b>	170
Number of plannir the system for 12		825	934	1,154	1,092	(S) (A)	870
Number of enforcement cases in the system 12 months or more		486	503	599	593	(S) (A)	580
What you will see by March 2026	<ul> <li>A more efficient and effective planning service</li> <li>Improved processing times for local and major planning applications</li> <li>Improved processing times for planning enforcement cases</li> <li>Reduction in the number of live planning applications and enforcement cases in the system</li> <li>An empowered and motivated workforce</li> <li>Increased confidence in the Planning system</li> <li>Sustainable development and regeneration of the District</li> <li>Commencement of public representation on the Draft Plan Strategy</li> </ul>						
Alignment Corporate Plan							
2024-27	Deliver sus	stainable s	ervices				
Community Plan	All people in Newry, Mourne and Down benefit from prosperous communities						
Programme for Government	<ul> <li>Provide More Social, Affordable and Sustainable Housing</li> <li>Reform and Transformation of Public Services</li> </ul>						
7 aspects of improvement	Strategic Service Service quality Efficiency			ciency			
Responsible Officer			omy, Reg	generatio	n and To	urism	

# **Strategic Alignment**

Performance Improvement Objective	Corporate Objective(s)	Community Planning Outcome(s)	Duty of Improvement
We will support the health and wellbeing of local people by improving our leisure facilities and services	Improve the health and wellbeing of everyone in the district	All people in Newry, Mourne and Down enjoy good health and wellbeing	Strategic effectiveness Service quality Service availability Fairness
We will contribute to growing the economy by supporting local businesses and job creation	Support the continued growth and development of our local economy	All people from Newry, Mourne and Down benefit from prosperous communities	Strategic effectiveness Service quality Service availability Innovation
We will improve the cleanliness of our District by continuing to promote recycling and addressing littering, fly tipping and dog fouling incidents	Protect and enhance our environment to secure a sustainable future	All people from Newry, Mourne and Down benefit from a clean, quality and sustainable environment	Strategic effectiveness Service availability Innovation Sustainability
We will improve our sustainability and reduce our impacts in relation to climate change	Protect and enhance our environment to secure a sustainable future	All people from Newry, Mourne and Down benefit from a clean, quality and sustainable environment	Strategic Effectiveness Efficiency Innovation Sustainability
We will improve the processing times of planning applications and enforcement cases by implementing the Planning Service Improvement Programme	Deliver sustainable services	All people in Newry, Mourne and Down benefit from prosperous communities	Strategic effectiveness Service availability Service quality Efficiency

# **Statutory Performance Indicators and Standards**

Section 89 of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014 requires the Council to publish the results of the performance indicators and standards that are set by central government around economic development, planning and waste management.

The seven statutory performance indicators and standards, as outlined in the Local Government Performance Indicators and Standards Order (2015), are set out below:

Ref	Statutory Performance Indicator	Annual Standard
Economic	Development	
ED1	The number of jobs promoted through business start-up activity	>155 173* (updated target)
Planning		
P1	The average processing time of major planning applications	<30 weeks
P2	The average processing time of local planning applications	<15 weeks
P3	The percentage of enforcement cases processed within 39 weeks	70%
Waste Mai	nagement	
W1	The percentage of household waste collected by District Councils that is sent for recycling (including waste prepared for reuse)	70% by 2030 Interim: 55% by 2025
W2	The amount (tonnage) of biodegradable Local Authority Collected Municipal Waste that is landfilled	<20,954 tonnes (2019-20 target)
W3	The amount (tonnage) of Local Authority Collected Municipal Waste arisings	85,500 tonnes

<sup>\*</sup>Updated 'Go Succeed' programme target for the number of jobs promoted in Newry Mourne and Down: 173. An amendment to the standard set out in the Local Government (Performance Indicators and Standards) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 is awaiting legislative passage and approval.

The Council has put in place the following arrangements to monitor progress against the standards set for the statutory performance and indicators:

- Inclusion within the Performance Improvement Plan, with progress being monitored on a bi-annual basis by the Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee and Audit Committee.
- Inclusion within Directorate Business Plans, with progress being monitored on a bi-annual basis by the relevant Council Committee.
- Data submissions to Government Departments, with reports being issued to monitor the performance of each Council, outlining regional trends and comparisons.

# **Self-Imposed Performance Indicators**

The Council has identified the following self-imposed performance indicators to measure progress in delivering the Corporate Plan 2024 - 27.

<b>Draft Corporate</b>	Draft Measure of Success			
Objective				
Support the continued growth and	Number of jobs created and businesses supported through Council programmes			
development of our local economy	Number of jobs promoted through business start-up activity			
	Amount of investment secured and distributed by Council			
Improve the health and wellbeing of	Number of people participating in targeted health programmes			
everyone in the district	Number of attendances at Council indoor leisure facilities			
	Number of users of community trails			
Protect and enhance our environment to	Level of street cleanliness across the District (Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful Street Cleanliness Index)			
secure a sustainable	Level of compliance with Sustainable Development Duty			
future	Percentage of waste recycled			
	Percentage of EV charging points			
Support regenerative tourism opportunities	Level of visitor spend			
	Number of overnight stays			
which promote our	Level of visitor satisfaction			
culture, heritage and environment	Number of visitors to Council's Arts Centres and Museums			
Empowering communities to play an active part in civic	Percentage of residents who agree that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together			
life	Percentage of residents who agree 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 of financial assistance projects funded.			
	Number of people accessing the Ethnic Minority Support Office services			
Develop and revitalise	Number of BRCD projects delivered.			
our district	Number of small settlement schemes delivered.			
	Number of new/upgraded public conveniences.			
Deliver sustainable	Level of citizen satisfaction.			
services	Compliance with the Duty of Improvement.			

	Number of users registered to Council corporate social media channels.  Number of visits to Council's corporate website.
Represent the voice of the District with our partners	Compliance with the Duty of Community Planning Percentage of residents who are satisfied with their local area as a place to live
	Number of training events provided to elected members

The Council has put in place the following arrangements to monitor progress against the self-imposed performance indicators:

- Inclusion within the Performance Improvement Plan, with progress being monitored by the Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee and Audit Committee through the annual Assessment of Performance.
- Some performance indicators are included within Directorate Business Plans, with progress being monitored on a bi-annual basis by the relevant Council Committee.

These performance indicators are aligned to community planning outcomes. This will ensure the Council continues to address the needs and aspirations of local communities and deliver sustainable outcomes for all, now and in the future.

# **Identifying the Performance Improvement Objectives 2025-26**

All the five performance improvement objectives 2025-26 have been carried forward from 2024-25, as they remain relevant and meaningful. A number of changes and additions have been made however, to the actions and measures that support these objectives. They have been developed, reviewed and updated in close liaison with Elected Members, Senior Management Team, Corporate Management Team and employees across the organisation. Each objective is underpinned by a suite of 'supporting actions', 'measures of success' and outcomes for stakeholders. They are clearly aligned to the Community Plan and Corporate Plan 2024-27, as well as other regional and local plans, particularly the Council's Business Plans which have been developed by each Directorate. These plans influence and guide the overall direction of travel for the organisation.

- Programme for Government 2024-2027
- Community Plan for Newry, Mourne and Down 2017-2030, Priority Action Areas and District Electoral Area (DEA) Action Plans
- Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Corporate Plan 2024-27
- Thematic plans and strategies, including the IT Strategy and Regeneration and Economic Development Strategy
- Annual Directorate Business Plans 2025-26

The Council has also taken into consideration performance information from the following sources to support the development of the performance improvement objectives:

- The Northern Ireland Audit Office Audit and Assessment Reports and 'proposals for improvement', which are currently being progressed
- The Assessment of Performance 2024-25, including progress against performance improvement objectives, measures of success within the Corporate Plan 2024-27 and statutory performance indicators and standards for economic development, planning and waste management.

The reasons for objectives being carried forward and/or amended are detailed in the table below:

PIO's -2024-25	PIO's 2025-26	Progress / Rationale	Status Proposed
PIO 1: We will improve the health and wellbeing of local people by improving our leisure facilities and services	PIO 1: We will improve the health and wellbeing of local people by improving our leisure facilities and services	<ul> <li>During 2024-25 progress was made against a number of key actions under this objective including: <ul> <li>Increase in the number of paid attendances at some of Council's 6 main leisure centres.</li> <li>Increase in the number of people participating in targeted health programmes .</li> <li>Increase in the number of leisure centre memberships</li> </ul> </li> <li>However, there is still improvements to be made, and the 2022 residents survey ranked 'Improving people's health and wellbeing (and reducing health inequalities) as a high priority for improving the local area.</li> </ul>	Retain This performance improvement objective to be carried forward to 2025-26.
PIO 2: We will contribute to growing the economy by supporting local businesses and job creation	PIO 2: We will contribute to growing the economy by supporting local businesses and job creation	<ul> <li>During 2024-25 progress was made against a number of key actions including:</li> <li>Number of business plans created for start-up businesses and employer enterprises</li> <li>Number of jobs promoted via business start-up activity</li> <li>Number of new enterprises created as a result of support</li> </ul> However there is still improvements to be made, and the 2022	Retain This performance improvement objective to be carried forward to 2025-26.
		residents survey ranked 'improvements to be made, and the 2022 residents survey ranked 'improving skills, employability, and job prospects' and 'supporting local businesses, attracting investment and jobs' as the 1 <sup>st</sup> and 3 <sup>rd</sup> highest priorities for improving the local area.	

#### **PIO 3:**

We will improve the cleanliness of our district by continuing to promote recycling and addressing littering, flytipping and dog fouling incidents

#### **PIO 3:**

We will improve the cleanliness of our district by continuing to promote recycling and addressing littering, flytipping and dog fouling incidents During 2024-25 progress was made against some key actions under this objective including:

- Promoting responsible dog ownership through publicity campaigns and dog licences
- Promoting the 'Live Here, Love Here' campaign through the funding of 15 environmental projects.

However, improvement is still needed in a number of areas including increasing the Council's recycling rate and decreasing the level of municipal waste arising.

The 2022 residents survey ranked 'dog mess and fouling' and rubbish or littering lying around' as the top two perceived problems in their local areas by residents.

#### Retain

This performance improvement objective to be carried forward to 2025-26.

## **PIO 4:**

We will improve our sustainability by reducing our impacts in relation to climate change

#### **PIO 4:**

We will improve our sustainability by reducing our impacts in relation to climate change During 2024-25 some progress was made against a number of key actions and measures including:

- Progressing the development of a Climate Change and Sustainable Development Strategy
- Completing the 2024-25 fleet replacement programme

However, more improvement is still needed. The number of Council vehicles with an alternative fuel source needs to increase and a number of baselines need to be established in relation to the Council's carbon footprint and energy consumption.

## Retain

This performance improvement objective to be carried forward to 2025-26.

PIO 5:
We will improve
the processing
times of planning
applications and
enforcement cases
by implementing
the Planning
Service
Improvement
Programme.

# PIO 5: We will improve the processing times of planning applications and enforcement cases by implementing the Planning Service Improvement Programme

During 2024-25 progress continued to be made against a number of key actions including:

- Working with agents and architects to improve the standard of planning applications submitted.
- Supported employees to deliver service improvements through ongoing training, capacity building and 'planning surgeries'.
- Decrease in the average processing time of major planning applications

#### Retain

This performance improvement objective to be carried forward to 2025-26

However, much improvement is still required as the statutory standards for the average processing times of major and local planning applications and enforcement cases is still not being met.

## **Community Plan for Newry, Mourne and Down**

The Community Plan has been developed and agreed by the Community Planning Partnership Board. Entitled 'Living Well Together', the Community Plan provides a framework for collaborative working to deliver positive change for our communities, and sets out the following long term overarching vision for the District:

'Newry, Mourne and Down is a place with strong, safe and vibrant communities where everyone has a good quality of life and access to opportunities, choices and high quality services which are sustainable, accessible and meet people's needs'.

The Community Plan sets out the following five positive outcomes:



## **Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Corporate Plan 2024-27**

The Corporate Plan 2024-27 sets out the following mission statement and eight strategic objectives:

#### **Council Mission Statement**

'To deliver sustainable services and empower our communities through transparent governance and collaboration'

# **Council Strategic Objectives**



# **Alignment with the Strategic Aspects of Improvement**

In accordance with the Local Government Act (NI) 2014, each performance improvement objective seeks to bring about improvement in at least one of the following aspects:

- Strategic effectiveness
- Service quality
- Service availability
- Fairness
- Sustainability
- Efficiency
- Innovation

The table below outlines how Newry, Mourne and Down District Council's performance improvement objectives 2025-26 are aligned with the seven specified aspects of improvement:

	Seven Aspects of Improvement			t			
Performance Improvement Objective	<b>Strategic</b> <b>Effectiveness</b>	Service Quality	Service Availability	Fairness	Sustainability	Efficiency	Innovation
We will support the health and wellbeing of local people by improving our leisure 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 reducing littering, fly tipping and dog fouling	✓		✓		✓		✓
We will improve our sustainability and reduce our impacts in relation to climate change	✓				✓	✓	✓
We will improve the average processing times of planning applications and enforcement cases by implementing the recommendations from the Planning Service Review	✓	✓	✓			✓	

The Council has also assessed the performance improvement objectives against the following criteria, and considers them to be:

- Legitimate
- Clear
- Robust
- Deliverable
- Demonstrable

# **Equality Screening and Rural Needs Impact Assessment**

In accordance with the Section 75 requirements of the Northern Ireland Act (1998), whereby the Council must carry out its functions having due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and regard for the desirability to promote good relations, the Performance Improvement Plan has been subject to an equality screening. The outcome of the equality screening process determined that the Performance Improvement Plan 2025-26 is not subject to an equality impact assessment, with no mitigating measures required.

In accordance with the Rural Needs Act Northern Ireland (2016), the Council has given due regard to rural needs by carrying out a Rural Needs Impact Assessment of the Performance Improvement Plan 2025-26.

# **Consultation and Engagement**

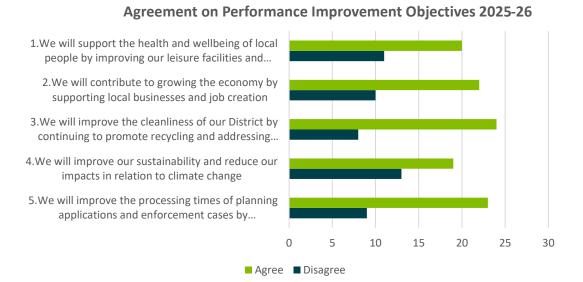
The Council is committed to listening to local people and taking on board their views. Since 2017, the Council has carried out extensive consultation and engagement, inviting key stakeholders, including Elected Members, residents, local businesses and community planning partners to put forward their views on the proposed performance improvement objectives.

The Council website was host to the consultation and engagement process. Under the consultations section of the website, an electronic survey in relation to the draft performance improvement objectives 2025-26 was published and promoted. The consultation and engagement process was promoted further through the Council's social media channels and circulated to key internal and external stakeholders.

The overall consultation and engagement process resulted in 33 completed surveys and engagement with 60 stakeholders through the Newry DEA Forum, Downpatrick DEA Forum, Slieve Croob DEA Forum and Rowallane DEA Forum, Newry, Mourne and Down Youth Voice and the Cedar Foundation. These responses have been supplemented by the input of 764 respondents to the Residents Survey in 2022.

Electronic documentation, survey on the draft performance improvement objectives 2025-26 on the consultation section of the Council website	Survey: 33 responses
<ul> <li>Engagement with the:</li> <li>Section 75 groups, including the Newry, Mourne and Down Youth Voice and the Cedar Foundation</li> </ul>	23 consultees
Engagement with:  • 4 DEA's across the District	37 members
Residents Survey (September 2022)	764 respondents

The consultation responses revealed support for the proposed performance improvement objectives, with the majority of respondents agreeing with each of the five objectives.



The areas for improvement and issues raised through the overall consultation and engagement processes are clearly aligned to the five performance improvement objectives 2025-26, and will be addressed through the Performance Improvement Plan, and as part of the Council's business planning process.

# **Achieving Continuous Improvement**

Transforming and improving how the Council delivers services is a key objective within the Corporate Plan. Newry, Mourne and Down District Council is committed to developing a 'can do' culture, where managing performance and achieving improvement is everyone's responsibility. In pursuing the corporate vision and objectives, the Council has identified the following five draft core values:

	What this means:
Respect	We will demonstrate respect for all people in our attitudes, behaviours and working relationships.
Transparency	We will be transparent in how we make decisions.
Excellence	We will take pride in our work and be passionate about the standards we strive to achieve.
Integrity	We want the people of our district to trust us to do the right thing.
Accountability	We will be accountable to the public for our decisions and actions. We will be accountable for how we plan and use resources sustainably.

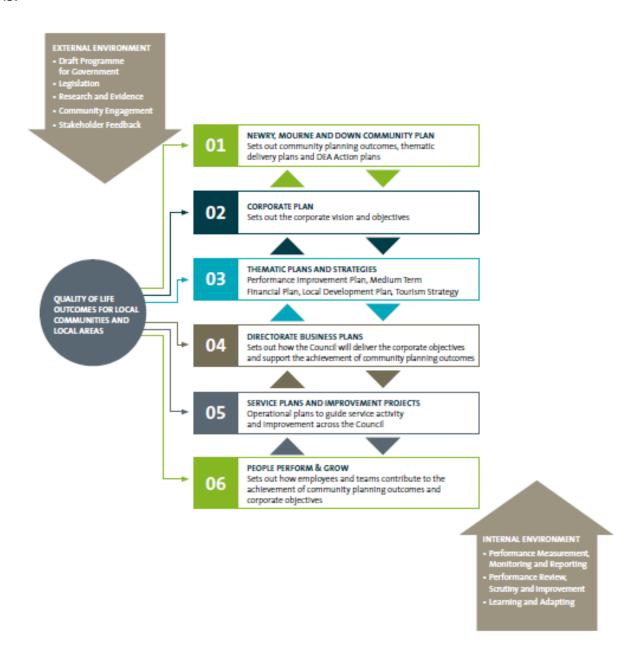
The Council has put in place a number of frameworks and systems to drive forward continuous improvement and facilitate a performance improvement culture. These include the Business Planning and Performance Management Framework, Policy Development Framework, Equality Scheme, Governance Framework and Risk Management Policy.

The Council also assesses how performance compares with other Councils. Newry, Mourne and Down District Council is working with the Association of Public Service Excellence to benchmark performance against the performance of Councils across Northern Ireland and other jurisdictions. This information is being used to collate a robust and reliable evidence base, to help identify and address future areas for improvement.

The Performance Improvement Plan underpins the Council's overall approach to effective performance management. It supports the Council in identifying more efficient and effective ways of working to facilitate the achievement of community planning outcomes, corporate objectives and Directorate objectives, which together support the continued implementation of the Business Planning and Performance Management Framework.

# **Business Planning and Performance Management Framework**

The Council's Business Planning and Performance Management Framework drives and provides assurance that community planning outcomes, corporate objectives and performance improvement objectives are being delivered, with the primary goal of making life better for our citizens.



The Community Plan and Corporate Plan sit within a hierarchy of plans that informs the Council's overall direction of travel and guides all activity within the organisation. Community planning outcomes and corporate objectives are cascaded across the organisation through thematic plans and strategies and Directorate Business Plans. Performance indicators continue to be developed at all levels across the Business Planning and Performance Management Framework, in order to ensure performance is measured, monitored and evaluated on a continuous basis.

During 2025-26, the Council will continue to progress and mainstream the development, implementation and review of Service Plans and roll out of Individual Performance (People Perform Grow), both of which seek to demonstrate the 'line of sight' between the work of employees and how they contribute to the achievement of community planning outcomes and corporate objectives.

Through the Business Planning and Performance Management Framework, the Council will manage performance at all levels across the organisation, in order to ensure the necessary steps are taken to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of functions. Each level of the Business Planning and Performance Management Framework is, and will be, accompanied by a relevant set of performance measures to monitor and assess the Council's progress in improving the quality of life for local communities.

The table below provides a description of the various plans and strategies that form part of the Council's Business Planning and Performance Management Framework.

Community Plan	The Community Plan for Newry, Mourne and Down sets out the long-term vision for improving the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the District. Developed in collaboration with partners across the statutory, business and voluntary sectors, the Community Plan is underpinned by Priority Actions Areas and seven DEA Action Plans, which seek to deliver the five community planning outcomes at a local level. Progress in implementing the Community Plan is reviewed on a biennial basis.
Corporate Plan	The Corporate Plan 2024-27 sets out the proposed vision, values and strategic objectives for the Council. Each strategic objective is underpinned by 'supporting actions' and 'measures of success'. Progress in delivering the Corporate Plan is reported annually through the Assessment of Performance.
Thematic Plans and Strategies	The Council has put in place a number of Thematic Plans and Strategies to support the implementation of the Community Plan and Corporate Plan, including the Performance Improvement Plan, Medium Term Financial Plan and Regeneration and Economic Development Strategy. These plans provide the strategic context for multiple programmes of work across the organisation.
Directorate Business Plans	Business Plans are developed annually to demonstrate how Directorates contribute to the achievement of community planning outcomes, corporate objectives and performance improvement objectives.  Directorate Business Plans include suites of key performance measures to

	measure progress and drive continuous improvement, with performance being monitored and reviewed bi-annually by the relevant Committee.
Service Plans and Improvement Projects	Service Plans and Improvement Projects are operational and set out the direction for service areas across the Council. They outline how each service contributes to the delivery of community planning outcomes, corporate objectives and performance improvement objectives, include key performance measures and provide a mechanism to manage performance consistently across the organisation.
People Perform Grow	The Council recognises the significant role employees play in contributing to the achievement of the Community Plan, Corporate Plan, Thematic Plans and Strategies, Directorate Business Plans and Service Plans. People Perform Grow demonstrates the link between the work of employees and how they contribute to the achievement of key plans and strategies, as well as the outcomes experienced by local communities.

The Business Planning and Performance Management Framework is complemented by the integrated cycle of activity outlined in the diagram below.

# **Governance Arrangements**

Reviewing performance and reporting progress to Elected Members and other key stakeholders is very important, as it facilitates transparency, accountability and improvement in everything the Council does. The governance arrangements to develop, monitor, report and review the Council's progress in implementing the Performance Improvement Plan 2025-26 are outlined below:

#### Full Council

- · Approval of the annual Performance Improvement Plan
- · Mid year progress report
- Annual performance assessment

#### Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee

- · Scrutiny, challenge and approval of the annual Performance Improvement Plan
- · Mid year progress report
- · Annual performance assessment

#### **Audit Committee**

- · Provide assurance that performance management arrangements are robust and effective
- Mid year progress report
- · Annual performance assessment

## Senior Management Team

- · Lead the development of the annual Performance Improvement Plan
- · Mid year progress report
- · Annual performance assessment

The Council must publish an Assessment of Performance by 30 September 2025 which will provide an overview of how the Council has performed during 2024-25. The Assessment of Performance will be published on the Council's website and is supplemented by the Mid Year Progress Report for the Performance Improvement Plan 2025-26.

The arrangements the Council has put in place to secure continuous improvement are subject to an annual audit and assessment by the Northern Ireland Audit Office. Subject to the General Duty of Improvement being met, the Northern Ireland Audit Office will issue a Letter of Assurance to both the Council and Department for Communities.

# **How to Propose New Performance Improvement Objectives**

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council welcomes your ongoing feedback on the performance improvement objectives 2025-26, as well as any suggestions you may have on how services can be improved in the future.

The Council can be contacted in the following ways:

**In writing:** Catherine Hughes

Head of Performance and Improvement (Acting)

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council

O'Hagan House Monaghan Row

Newry Co Down BT35 8DJ

**Telephone:** 0300 013 2233

**Email:** performance@nmandd.org

# Ag freastal ar an Dún agus Ard Mhacha Theas Serving Down and South Armagh

0330 137 4000 (Council) council@nmandd.org www.newrymournedown.org

Oifig an Iúir Newry Office O'Hagan House Monaghan Row Newry BT35 8DJ Oifig Dhún Pádraig Downpatrick Office Downshire Civic Centre Downshire Estate, Ardglass Road Downpatrick BT30 6GQ