August 13th, 2026

Notice Of Meeting

You are requested to attend the meeting to be held on **Thursday, 13th August 2026** at **6:00 pm** in **Mourne Room, Downshire Civic Centre.**

Committee Membership 2026-27

Councillor C Bowsie **Chairperson**

Councillor O Hanlon **Deputy Chairperson**

Councillor Pete Byrne

Councillor Martin Hearty

Councillor Roisin Howell

Councillor Tierna Howie

Councillor Aurla King

Councilor Cathal King

Councillor Aidan Mathers

Councillor Declan McAteer

Councillor Siobhan O'Hare

Councillor Henry Reilly

Councillor Michael Rice

Councillor David Taylor

Councillor Jill Truesdale

Agenda

1.0 Apologies and Chairperson's Remarks

2.0 Declarations of Interest

3.0 Action Sheet of Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee Meeting held 11 June 2026

Attachment: SPR-Action Sheet arising from 2026 06 11.pdf ***Page 1***

For Discussion/Decision

4.0 Officer report on Notice of Motion: All-Island Citizens Assembly

For Decision

Attachment: Officer report on Notice of Motion - All-Island Citizens' Assembly.pdf ***Page 4***

5.0 BRCD Tourism Event

Attachment: SPR BRCD Tourism Project - Project Board.pdf ***Page 7***

Attachment: Appendix 1 - BRCD Tourism Project .pdf ***Page 11***

6.0 Assessment of Performance 2025-26

For Information

Attachment: SPR Cover Report Assessment of Performance 2025-26.pdf ***Page 12***

Attachment: Appendix 1 - Assessment of Performance 2025-26.pdf ***Page 15***

Attachment: Appendix 2 - NMD Performance Doc 2026 SA5.pdf ***Page 111***

7.0 Aids to Navigation repairs on Strangford Lough

For Decision

Attachment: SPR Report - Aids to Navigation repairs on Strangford Lough.pdf ***Page 123***

Exempt Appendicies

7.1 Aids to Navigation repairs on Strangford Lough Exempt Appendix

For Information

This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local

Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information) and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.

Attachment: Appendix 1 - Business case Aids to Navigation Repairs.pdf ***Not included***

Items deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014

8.0 Business Case - IDOX IT systems

For Decision

This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information) and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.

Attachment: 13082026 Report Continued use of IDOX Line of Business IT systems.pdf ***Not included***

Attachment: 13082026 Business Case v1-0 Continued use of IDOX Line of Business IT systems.pdf ***Not included***

9.0 Health Cash Plan and Employee Assistance Programme

For Decision

This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information) and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.

Attachment: SPRC August 2026 OBC - Health Cash Plan and Employee Assistance Programme.pdf ***Not included***

Attachment: Appendix 1 Outline Business Case - Health Cash Plan and EAP.pdf ***Not included***

10.0 FMA / SLA Proposals

For Decision

This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information) and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.

Attachment: SPR - FMA SLA Extensions.pdf ***Not included***

Attachment: Appendix1CurrentFMAsSLAs.pdf ***Not included***

11.0 Annalong Harbour

For Decision

This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information) and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.

Attachment: SPR Committee Report - Business Case for Annalong Harbour South Pier.pdf ***Not included***

Attachment: Business Case - Annalong Harbour.pdf ***Not included***

12.0 Tyrella Winter Grazing and Kilbroney Park Conacre

For Decision

This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information) and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.

Attachment: SPR Report - Winter Grazing Tyrella Beach and Kilbroney Park Conacre Agreement.pdf ***Not included***

Attachment: Appendix 1 Tyrella - conservation grazing map.pdf ***Not included***

Attachment: Appendix 2 - Kilbroney Park Conacre.pdf ***Not included***

13.0 Charged Parking Automation at Forest Parks

For Decision

This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information) and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.

Attachment: SPR Report - Automated Charged Parking.pdf ***Not included***

Attachment: Full Economic Appraisal.pdf ***Not included***

14.0 Funding Repayment

For Decision

This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information) and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.

Attachment: SPR Report - Kilclief Ben Derg GAC.pdf ***Not included***

15.0 Industrial Relations Update

For Decision

This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information) and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.

Attachment: SPRC August 2026 Industrial Relations Update.pdf ***Not included***

Attachment: Appendix 1 - Constitution of the Joint Negotiating and Consultative Committee (JNCC) 2026.pdf ***Not included***

Attachment: Appendix 2 - JNCC - Arrangements and conditions for the appointment, role and functions of Trade Union Co-ordinators 2026.pdf ***Not included***

16.0 Lease of Library Space at Crossmaglen Community Centre

For Decision

This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information) and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.

Attachment: SPR 13 Aug 2026 Lease of Library Space at Crossmaglen Comm Centre.pdf v2.pdf ***Not included***

Attachment: NM050-B-1-15 Library at Crossmaglen CC Map.pdf ***Not included***

17.0 Lease of Land Adjacent to Meigh Community Centre

For Decision

This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information) and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.

Attachment: SPR 13 Aug 2026 Lease of Land adjacent to Meigh Community Centre.pdf ***Not included***

Attachment: Appx - Lands at Meigh CC Map.pdf ***Not included***

18.0 Request for Easement at Lighthouse Car Park Castlewellan

For Decision

This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information) and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.

Attachment: SPR 13 Aug 2026 Request for Easement at Lighthouse Car Park Castlewellan for Electricity Cable.pdf V2.pdf ***Not included***

Attachment: BDC004-G-1-10 Easement for Cables.pdf ***Not included***

19.0 Licence for Portion of Burren Village Green

For Decision

This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information) and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.

Attachment: SPR 13 Aug 2026 Licence for Portion of Burren Village Green.pdf v2.pdf ***Not included***

Attachment: NM036-G-1-00 Burren village Green.pdf ***Not included***

20.0 Surrender of Lease at Burrenbridge Road Castlewellan

For Decision

This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act

(Northern Ireland) 2014 - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information) and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.

Attachment: SPR 13 Aug 2026 Surrender of Lease of Land at Burrenbridge Road Castlewellan.pdf V2.pdf	***Not included***
Attachment: MAP of L;ands at Burrenbridge Road Castlewellan.pdf	***Not included***

21.0 Boundary Rectification at Ameracam Lane, Cranfield

For Decision

This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information) and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.

Attachment: SPR 13 Aug 2026 Boundary Rectification at Ameracam Lane Cranfield v1.pdf	***Not included***
Attachment: SPR Map - Ameracam Lane.pdf	***Not included***

FOR NOTING Items deemed to be exempt under Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014

22.0 NILGA Annual Subscription

For Information

This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information) and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.

Attachment: NILGA Subscription.pdf	***Not included***
Attachment: NMDDC - Marie Ward.pdf	***Not included***

23.0 Local Authority Deeds

For Information

This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information) and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this

item of business.

Attachment: SPR Committee Report -Noting - Local Authority Deeds for Closed Landfill Sites.pdf ***Not included***

Attachment: Appendix 1 - Local Authority Deed - NMD - Aughnagunn Landfill Site.pdf ***Not included***

Attachment: Appendix 2 - Local Authority Deed - Drumnakelly Landfill Site.pdf ***Not included***

For Noting

24.0 Reporting

For Information

24.1 Section 75 Policy Screening Quarterly Report for period April – June 2026 and Newry, Mourne and Down District Council and Public Authority Statutory Equality and Good Relations Duties Annual Progress Report 2025-2026

For Information

Attachment: Statutory reporting - Quarterly Policy Screening Report for period April - June 2026 & Annual Report to ECNI.pdf ***Page 126***

Attachment: Appendix I - Section 75 Policy Screening Report Quarterly Report for period April - June 2026.pdf ***Page 129***

Attachment: Appendix II - NMDDC Public Authority Statutory Equality and Good Relations Duties Annual Progress Report 2025-2026.pdf ***Page 131***

24.2 Rural Needs Annual Monitoring Report for period 1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026

For Information

Attachment: Statutory reporting - Rural Needs Annual Monitoring Report for period 1 April 2025 - 31 March 2026.pdf ***Page 160***

Attachment: Appendix I - Rural Needs Impact Assessments undertaken during the period 1 April 2025 31 March 2026.pdf ***Page 163***

24.3 Annual report for the period 1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026 on requests related to naming Council facilities, planting trees and to locate artworks/sculptures on Council property

For Information

Attachment: Annual report for the period 1 April 2025 - 31 March 2026 on requests related to naming Council facilities planting trees and to.pdf ***Page 164***

24.4 Assessment of Community Wealth Building Actions and Measures – Directorate Business Plans 2025-2026

For Information

Attachment: Assessment of Community Wealth Building Actions and Measures Directorate Business Plans 2025-2026.pdf ***Page 167***

Attachment: Appendix I - Assessment of Community Wealth Building Measures 2025-2026.pdf ***Page 170***

24.5 2025/26 FOI/EIR/RM Monitoring Statistics

For Information

Attachment: SPRC Compliance Team 2025-26 Year End Report.pdf ***Page 183***

Minute Ref	Subject	Decision	Lead Officer	Actions taken / progress to date	Remove from Action Sheet? Y/N
ACTION SHEET – STRATEGY, POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING (SPR) – Thursday 14 August 2025					
SPR/135/2025	Business Case – Residual Waste Contract	It was agreed that the requested rates per tonnage be brought back before Members as discussed.	S Murphy	**New rates not available until Procurement Process completed Update tabled at March 26 meeting.**	N
ACTION SHEET – STRATEGY, POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING (SPR) – Thursday 20 April 2026					
SPR/058/2026	Castlewellan Forest Park NLHF Project	It was also agreed that a paper be brought to the next SPR Committee outlining the compensation events and the reporting structures for the project.	C Boyd	**Ongoing**	N
ACTION SHEET – STRATEGY, POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING (SPR) – Thursday 14 May 2026					
SPR/071/2026	LDP Revised Timetable	It was also agreed that the Council would write to the Planning Performance Improvement Forum requesting that it consider LDP development across the North and examine what legislative changes could be introduced to improve and shorten the LDP timeline.	J McGilly	**Ongoing**	N
ACTION SHEET – STRATEGY, POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING (SPR) – Thursday 11 June 2026					
SPR/091/2026	Action sheet of SPR meeting held 14/05/2026	It was agreed to note the action sheet	M Ward	**Agreed**	Y
SPR/092/2026	Proposed Start Times of SPR Committee for 2026/27	It was agreed to approve the start times of SPR Committee for 2026/27	M Ward	**Agreed**	Y
SPR/093/2026	Directorate Business Plans	The following was agreed: - The assessment of the CX-CS Directorate Business Plan 2025/26 - The CX-CS Directorate Business Plan 26/27	M Ward	**Agreed**	Y
SPR/094/2026	Unreasonable Behaviour Policy	It was agreed to approve the Unreasonable Behaviour Policy and Procedures for adoption and introduction through Council.	C Haughey	**Agreed**	Y

SPR/095/2026	Annual Complaint Handling Process	It was agreed to approve the following: - To approve the transition to financial year reporting for Council's Annual Complaints Report - To note that the 25/26 Annual Complaints Handling Report	E Kirk	**Agreed**	Y
SPR/096/2026	Greenway Feasibility and Design: Warrenpoint to Newcastle	The following was agreed: - To note the LoO from DFI and Dept. of Transport. - To approve the appointment of a design team through an existing framework to progress the feasibility study on the proposed Greenway from Warrenpoint to Newcastle.	C Mallon	**Agreed**	Y
SPR/097/2026	Meigh Community Centre	It was agreed to approve the capital budget and to approve the appointment of the preferred contractor to deliver the works as detailed within the report	A Robb	**Commencement/site possession by Contractor 3 August 2026 and works completion programmed for 8 October 2026.**	Y
SPR/098/2026	Sustainability & Environment Resources	It was agreed to approve the additional staff resources as detailed at section 2.2 of the officer's report	S Murphy	**Agreed**	Y
SPR/099/2026	Strangford & Lecale Landscape Connections	The following was agreed, subject to a positive funding decision by the NLHF Board of Trustees on 24/06/2026: - To accept and execute the LoO and all associated documentation required to commence the Development Phase. - To approve the Council's 2026/27 revenue contribution. - To commence recruitment for the approved externally funded posts.	C Mallon	**Agreed**	Y
SPR/100/2026	Finance Structure	It was agreed to approve the proposed structure for the Finance & Performance Dept. as detailed in section 2 and Appendix 1 of the officer's report.	G Byrne	**Agreed**	Y
SPR/101/2026	Communications Resources	The following was agreed: - To approve, under the Corporate Services Directorate, Digital & Communications Department, the associated business case and recommended option 3 - To approve the extension of the two temp. Communications & Marketing Officer positions to maintain operational capacity while the recruitment process is undertaken.	M Ward	**Agreed**	Y
SPR/102/2026	Year End Management Accounts	It was agreed to note the year end management accounts position for 25/26 and to approve the recommendations as set out in section 2.5 of the officer's report regarding the future allocation of	G Byrne	**Agreed**	Y

		reserves.			
SPR/103/2026	LPSNI Valuations 2026	It was agreed to note the payment to LPSNI for the 2026 valuations. Expenditure is included within revenue budgets.	G Byrne	**Agreed**	Y
SPR/104/2026	Newry Town Hall Closure	It was agreed to note the update on management of assets to date, and to agree to the proposals for the remaining identified assets within Newry Town Hall.	C Mallon	**Agreed**	Y
SPR/105/2026	NIAO Audit Fee	It was agreed to note the update in relation to the increased Audit Fees.	G Byrne	**Agreed**	Y
SPR/106/2026	Kilkeel Leisure Centre Update	It was agreed to note the contents of the report	A Patterson	**Agreed**	Y
SPR/107/2026	Minutes of NCCR Programme Board Meeting 23/03/2026	It was agreed to note the minutes	C Mallon	**Agreed**	Y

Report to:	Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee
Date of Meeting:	13 August 2026
Subject:	Officer report on Notice of Motion: All-Island Citizens Assembly
Reporting Officer (Including Job Title):	Elaine Kirk, Assistant Director Legal & People
Contact Officer (Including Job Title):	Colin Moffett, Head of Corporate Policy Suzanne Rice, Corporate Policy and Equality Officer

Confirm how this Report should be treated by placing an x in either:-

For decision	**X**	**For noting only**	

1.0	**Purpose and Background**
1.1	The following Notice of Motion in the name of Councillor A Quinn was referred to the Councillors' Equality and Good Relations Reference Group in accordance with Standing Order 16.1.6: Reference C/154/2025 – All-Island Citizens' Assembly *"This Council notes the growing public discussion on the constitutional future of this island and recognises the provision within the Good Friday Agreement for the people of Ireland to decide that future through referendums. Accordingly, this Council agrees to write to the Office of An Taoiseach, urging the Irish Government to plan and prepare for Irish unity through the following actions:* • *Establish an all-island Citizens' Assembly and a Joint Oireachtas Committee on Irish Unity;* • *Produce and publish a plan towards Irish unity in conjunction with civic society and key stakeholders, including local government;* • *Work to secure a date for a referendum on unity, as provided for in the Good Friday Agreement.* *This Council further commits to ensuring that the voices of people across Newry, Mourne and Down are heard as part of this important conversation about the future of our island."* The Notice of Motion was discussed at the Councillors' Equality and Good Relations Reference Group meeting on 25 June 2026.
	Key issues
2.1	Councillor Quinn was in attendance and presented the motion to Members. Further to detailed discussion Members did not reach consensus on the motion's proposals.

	Members were advised that the Notice of Motion and an Officer report advising the Reference Group had failed to reach consensus would be tabled for consideration at the next Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee meeting.
3.0	**Recommendations**
3.1	That the Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee give consideration to the Notice of Motion noting the members of the Councillors' Equality and Good Relations Reference Group at its meeting on 25 June 2026 did not reach consensus on the motion's proposals.
4.0	**Resource implications**
4.1	Should Council approve the Notice of Motion, there may be potential resource implications associated with actions agreed, "…. *to ensuring that the voices of people across Newry, Mourne and Down are heard as part of this important conversation about the future of our island."*
5.0	**Due regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations (complete the relevant sections)**
5.1	***General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes*** It is not anticipated the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations ☒
5.2	***Proposal relates to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision*** Yes ☐ No ☒ If yes, please complete the following: The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) has been equality screened ☐ The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) will be subject to equality screening prior to implementation ☐
5.3	***Proposal initiating consultation*** Consultation will seek the views of those directly affected by the proposal, address barriers for particular Section 75 equality categories to participate and allow adequate time for groups to consult amongst themselves ☐ Consultation period will be 12 weeks ☐ Consultation period will be less than 12 weeks (rationale to be provided) ☐

	Rationale:
6.0	**Due regard to Rural Needs (please tick all that apply)**
6.1	Proposal relates to developing, adopting, implementing or revising a policy / strategy / plan / designing and/or delivering a public service Yes ☐ No ☒ If yes, please complete the following: Rural Needs Impact Assessment completed ☐
7.0	**Appendices**
	N/A
8.0	**Background Documents**

Report to:	SPR Committee
Date of Meeting:	13th August 2026
Subject:	BRCD Tourism Project – Programme Board
Reporting Officer and Job Title:	Marie Ward, Chief Executive
Contact Officer and Job Title:	Conor Mallon, Director Economy, Regeneration and Tourism

Purpose of Report:

For Decision

1.0	**Purpose and Background**
1.1	The Tourism and Regeneration projects within BRCD aim to enhance the attractiveness of Northern Ireland, increasing out of state visitors and supporting the regeneration of towns and villages across the region and deliver economic benefits to a range of businesses across NI by generating demand for accommodation, hospitality, recreational, cultural activities and transport services and spread sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits around the region, so that communities in all parts of Northern Ireland benefit, all year round. A paper was presented to SPR in April 2026 seeking approval to appoint a multi-disciplinary team to deliver the Outline Business Case for the BRCD Tourism project. The multi-disciplinary team was appointed in May 2026, and programme/project development has been ongoing. A timeline for delivery is attached at Appendix 1. Further to the elected member engagement sessions held on • 8 September 2025 • 4 November 2025 • 13 January 2026 A business engagement session was held on 1st July 2026 in Warrenpoint and a wider business survey running across the District throughout July. There is wider community engagement scheduled for Autumn 2026 and site-specific engagement which will be held throughout development of the project proposal. The proposal is a new immersive tourism trail featuring world class visitor amenities stretching from Carlingford Lough to Strangford Lough as part of a major investment proposal under the Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD). The project will connect Kilbroney Forest Park with Slieve Gullion Forest Park and Delamont Country Park. Investment is aimed at transforming the facilities into international standard tourist facilities that will appeal to global visitors and provide a boost for towns, villages and businesses across the region. Castlewellan Forest Park has seen significant investment in the last 3 years and will be the site where Northern Ireland's first treetop walk is proposed. The concept plan aims to harness the spectacular beauty of the district's stunning landscape as part of a unique tourism journey delivering sustainable growth through

	investment in world class tourism attractions. The focus is on enhancing family-based tourism facilities and enriching already outstanding attractions. The new Narrow Water Bridge linking Warrenpoint with Omeath, due to open at the end of next year, is viewed as an important contributor to the concept plan, with new greenway links from the bridge into Warrenpoint being developed, providing a spectacular journey through land boasting breathtaking scenery. Approval for the Council to progress the plan to the outline business case stage has been agreed by the BRCD's Executive Board and its partners, including the Department for the Economy, Department of Finance and Tourism Northern Ireland. The BRCD recommendation was endorsed by Newry, Mourne and Down District Council's in May 2026 and the outline business case will then be presented to BRCD before the end of the year. With 100 miles of coastline, three Blue Flag beaches, four Green Flag Country and Forest Parks, a municipal park, three Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and a UNESCO Global Geopark, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council aims to utilise the area's unique combination of mountains, forests and waterways to deliver a high value tourism offering with a measurable regional impact. Separately, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council has secured money from the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) for a feasibility study on extending the greenway from Warrenpoint to Newcastle. In tandem with the new tourism proposition, it's proposed a Challenge Fund will be made available to provide an opportunity for local tourism businesses to apply for grant aid to help enhance what they do as part of the focus to attract more international visitors to world class facilities and encourage them to stay longer.
2.0	**Key Issues**
2.1	An officer stakeholder engagement working group has been established and meetings will be held on a fortnightly basis. The Stakeholder Engagement Working group (SEWG) will be responsible for overseeing stakeholder engagement and consultation activities and making recommendations within its agreed remit. A stakeholder engagement strategy is being developed in partnership with a multi-disciplinary team to ensure that all relevant parties are involved in the concept design and development and that decisions are informed by technical, operational, financial and community perspectives. In line with Council governance arrangements for major project, it is recommended to establish a project board of seven Councillors in line with agreed membership of other programme boards. The Project Board will be responsible for the overall direction and management of the BRCD Tourism project. The Project Board will identify strategic decisions and control the project at a high level, making recommendations to and seeking approval from the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee as necessary. The Board

	is established by the BRCD Tourism Project Senior Responsible Officer and its prime purpose is to drive delivery of the project outcomes and benefits. Membership is recommended as seven Councillors: Two Sinn Fein, Two SDLP, One DUP, One Alliance, One UUP/Independent Councillor. Decisions and approvals process will remain with the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee. The limits of the Project Board's authority are bound by time, cost, risk and quality requirements. The SRO will seek to gain consensus on decisions with the Project Board.
3.0	**Recommendations**
3.1	To note the ongoing work in relation to the development of the BRCD Outline Business Case and project timeline. To agree to the establishment of a Project Board for the management of the BRCD Tourism project with 7 Councillors and membership to be formed as follows: 2 Sinn Fein 2 SDLP 1 DUP 1 Alliance 1UUP/Independent
4.0	**Resource Implications**
4.1	Officer and Councillor time, and expenses where relevant.
5.0	**Due Regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations**
5.1	General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes It is not anticipated the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations
5.2	Does the proposal relate to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision No If yes, please select one of the following: Choose an item.
5.3	Proposal initiating consultation The consultation seek the views of those directly affected by the proposal, address barriers for particular Section 75 equality categories to participate and allow adequate time for groups to consult amongst themselves Please select the consultation period: Choose an item. Rationale:

6.0	**Due regard to Rural Needs**
6.1	Does the proposal relate to developing, adopting, implementing or revising a policy / strategy / plan / designing and/or delivering a public service. No – The policy / strategy / plan / public service is not influenced by rural needs
7.0	**Appendices**
7.1	Appendix 1 -
8.0	**Background Documents**
8.1	

Appendix 1

Timeline for Delivery

Timeline

1st July 2026	Business Engagement session with feedback captured independently by AECOM
July 2026	Online business survey open - keep an eye out for it. Spread the word!
Autumn 2026	Wider programme development and public engagement
December 2026	Outline Business Case submitted
March 2027	BRCD executive board & lead Department approval

Stay involved - share your details at the sign-in table or scan the QR code to opt in to future communications

Delivery Timeline

*Note, all dates are indicative

NOW	DEC 2026	MAR 2027	2027	2029	2031 onwards
Listen & build the case	**Submit**	**BRCD Approval**	**Full Business Case & contract**	**Planning**	**Build & open**
Engagement, evidence gathering, master planning and business case development.	Ambition to submit an Outline Business Case (OBC) to the Belfast Region City Deal.	BRCD Executive Board and lead Government Department approve the investment through Investment Decision Making (IDM).	Full Business Case (FBC) developed and approved. Contract for funding signed. Design development begins at all three sites. Ongoing community engagement.	Planning applications submitted. Statutory pre-application consultation with communities. Ongoing community engagement.	Construction begins. Ongoing community engagement. Target opening: circa 2032.

A programme built with communities, not just for them.

Report to:	Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee
Date of Meeting:	13 August 2026
Subject:	Assessment of Performance 2025-26
Reporting Officer (Including Job Title):	Marie Ward – Chief Executive
Contact Officer (Including Job Title):	Catherine Hughes – Acting Head of Performance and Improvement

Confirm how this Report should be treated by placing an x in either:-

For decision	**X**	**For noting only**	

1.0	**Purpose and Background**
1.1	Part 12 of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014 requires District Councils to put in place arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of their functions. Through the Act, the Council has a statutory requirement to produce and publish an Assessment of Performance before 30 September each year. The legislation states that the Assessment of Performance must outline the Council's progress in relation to the General Duty of Improvement, as well as planned improvements against the previous year's: • Performance improvement objectives • Statutory performance indicators and standards for economic development, planning and waste management • Self imposed performance indicators
2.0	**Key issues**
2.1	The Assessment of Performance 2025-26 is attached at **Appendix 1** and therefore provides an overview of the: • Council's progress in meeting the General Duty of Improvement • Achieving the 'measures of success' within the Corporate Plan 2024-27 • Achieving the 'measures of success' within the Performance Improvement Plan 2025-26 • Meeting the statutory performance indicators and standards for economic development, planning and waste management The publication of the finalised annual planning statistics 2025-26 from the Department of Infrastructure (DfI) has been delayed until the end of August which means the data reported in this document remains unvalidated. It is the intention of Council if agreed, to include the finalised results from DfI in the publication that is published on the website by 30 September and the Head of Performance and Improvement will send through a summary of any changes from what was reported to all members of the SPR Committee. Where possible, performance has been tracked against set targets, trends over time and compared with other local authorities across Northern Ireland. 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. Progress

	has also been aligned to the outcomes within the Community Plan for Newry, Mourne and Down and reported accordingly throughout the Assessment of Performance.
2.2	Each year, the Council produces the user friendly, accessible document 'Our Performance Looking Back Going Forward', which summarises the retrospective Assessment of Performance and forward-looking Performance Improvement Plan. This document is attached at **Appendix 2**.
2.3	There is a statutory requirement to publish the Assessment of Performance 2025-26 on the Council's website by 30 September 2026. The Assessment of Performance will form a key part of the Performance Audit and Assessment which is carried out by the NIAO, and focuses on the following six themes, using a compliance based approach: • General duty to improve • Improvement objectives • Consultation on improvement duties • The Improvement Plan • Collection of information relating to performance • Use and publication of performance information Through the Performance Audit and Assessment, the NIAO will determine how effective and robust the Council's performance management arrangements are, as well as the Council's likelihood to comply with the duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in future years.
3.0	**Recommendations**
3.1	To consider and agree: • The Assessment of Performance 2025-26, including the summary document 'Our Performance Looking Back Going Forward' • That the finalised planning statistics 2025-26 be included in the final report to be published on the website and that any changes from the unvalidated data reported be sent to all members for information.
4.0	**Resource implications**
4.1	The cost of the design of the summary document 'Our Performance Looking Back Going Forward' in both Irish and English is £840.00 and is funded through the existing Performance and Improvement budget.
5.0	**Due regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations (complete the relevant sections)**
5.1	***General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes*** It is not anticipated the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations ☒

5.2	***Proposal relates to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision*** Yes ☐ No ☒ If yes, please complete the following: The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) has been equality screened ☐ The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) will be subject to equality screening prior to implementation ☐
5.3	***Proposal initiating consultation*** Consultation will seek the views of those directly affected by the proposal, address barriers for particular Section 75 equality categories to participate and allow adequate time for groups to consult amongst themselves ☐ Consultation period will be 12 weeks ☐ Consultation period will be less than 12 weeks (rationale to be provided) ☐
	Rationale: Consultation not required.
6.0	**Due regard to Rural Needs (please tick all that apply)**
6.1	Proposal relates to developing, adopting, implementing or revising a policy / strategy / plan / designing and/or delivering a public service Yes ☐ No ☒ If yes, please complete the following: Rural Needs Impact Assessment completed ☐
7.0	**Appendices**
	Appendix 1: Assessment of Performance 2025-26 Appendix 2: Our Performance Looking Back, Going Forward
8.0	**Background Documents**
	• Local Government Act (NI) 2014 (Part 12) • Performance Improvement Plan 2025-26 • Corporate Plan 2024-27

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council

Assessment of Performance 2025-26

Comhairle Ceantair
an Iúir, Mhúrn
agus an Dúin
Newry, Mourne
and Down
District Council

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Overall Assessment of Performance 2025-26

The Council remained steadfast in delivering high-quality services for everyone across the district. Residents and visitors alike continued to prioritise their health and wellbeing, with more than 930,000 paid visits to our leisure centres. Attendance at our cultural venues also improved, welcoming nearly 100,000 visits to our museums and arts centres.

We achieved 6 green flag and 3 blue flag accreditations for our beaches and parks, supported 100% of all community clean up requests and increased the number of issued fixed penalty notices to address environmental crime.

We continued to progress a number of key priorities, including the start of construction of the new Theatre and Conference Facility. Through the BRCD (Belfast City Region Deal) a number of skills and employability initiatives were carried out to meet the needs of the local community.

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. There was a slight decrease in the percentage of Council fleet younger than 8 years, and no EV charging points were installed during 2025-26, however the Council did establish its carbon baseline emissions footprint. 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, reducing our impacts in relation to climate change by improving the efficiency of our fleet and buildings, and improving the performance of our Planning Service.

As we look forward to 2026-27, 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 5 planned improvements that have been achieved, analysing year on year performance trends and comparisons with the performance of other Councils, where possible.

The Assessment of Performance 2025-26 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

All five performance improvement objectives 2025-26 have been carried forward from 2024-25, as they remain relevant and meaningful, 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 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

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 2024-27.

Corporate Objective	Measure of Success
Support the continued growth and development of our local economy	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
Improve the health and wellbeing of everyone in the District	Number of people participating in targeted health programmes
	Number of attendances at Council indoor leisure facilities
	Number of users of community trails
Protect and enhance our environment to secure a sustainable future	Level of street cleanliness across the District (Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful Street Cleanliness Index)
	Level of compliance with Sustainable Development Duty
	Percentage of waste recycled
	Percentage of EV charging points
Support regenerative forms of tourism opportunities which promote our culture, heritage and environment	Level of visitor spend
	Number of overnight stays
	Level of visitor satisfaction
	Number of visitors to Council's Arts Centres and Museums
Empowering communities to play an active part in civic life	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 of financial assistance projects funded
	Number of people accessing the Ethnic Minority Support Office Services

Develop and revitalise our district	Number of BRCD projects delivered
	Number of small settlement schemes delivered
	Number of new/upgraded public conveniences
Deliver sustainable services	Level of citizen satisfaction
	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

Where possible, progress in delivering the 'measures of success' within the Performance Improvement Plan 2025-26 and Corporate Plan 2024-27 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 2024-27 and Performance Improvement Plan 2025-26 is highlighted further in Appendix 2.

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 and sustainable environment	

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



A snapshot of 2025-26

Performance Improvement Objective	Progress	Status Trend
We will support the health and wellbeing of local people by improving our leisure facilities and services	26.7% increase in paid attendances at Council leisure centres	☺ △
	39% increase in the number of people participating in targeted health programmes	☺ △
	£225,000 worth of financial assistance funding was allocated to sports clubs across the District	☺
	11.4% increase in the number of Council leisure centre memberships	☺ △
	4 capital leisure projects progressed	☺
	7 play parks upgraded across the District	☺
We will contribute to growing the economy by supporting local businesses and job creation	236* new jobs promoted through business start activity	☺ △
	12 new social enterprise businesses supported, and 16 new social enterprise jobs created	☺ ▷
	188* new enterprises created as a result of support	☺ △
	215* existing businesses supported to progress growth and scaling ambitions	😐 ▷
	4,719 participants engaged across all 'Go Succeed' activity in 2025-26	☺ △
We will improve the cleanliness of our District by continuing to promote recycling	35 fixed penalty notices issued and 32 paid	☹ △
	91% of all fixed penalty notices issued have been paid	☺
	100% of community clean up requests supported	☺
	Decrease in the rate of recycling, to 48.3%*	😐 ▷
	Increase in the amount of biodegradable Local Authority Collected Municipal Waste that is landfilled	☺ ▽

and addressing littering, fly tipping and dog fouling incidents	10 'Live Here, Love Here' environmental projects supported	▽
We will improve our sustainability and reduce our impacts in relation to climate change	1 vehicle within the Council fleet that has an alternative fuel source	☹
	0 Council supported EV charging points installed in 2025-26	☹
	78% of Council fleet younger than 8 years.	😐 ▷
	The Baseline Emissions Footprint for Newry Mourne and Down was established and is 5,246 tCO2e (Tonnes of CO2 equivalent).	☺
	2,800 trees planted on Council managed estate	☺ △
We will improve the processing times of planning applications and enforcement cases by implementing the Planning Service Improvement Programme	Based on the 2024-25 annual finalised results, which is the only one publicly available, The Council received the third highest number of planning applications across the 11 Councils.	☺
	The processing time for local planning applications increased from 45.2 weeks in 2024-25 to 60.2 weeks*** in 2025-26	☹ ▽
	The processing time for major planning applications increased from 29.6 weeks in 2024-25 to 100.3 weeks*** in 2025-26	☹ ▽
	The percentage of enforcement cases progressed within the statutory timescale decreased by 11.2% from 47.6% in 2024-25 to 36.4%*** in 2025-26	☹ ▽
	Based on the 2024-25 annual finalised results, which is the only one publicly available, the number of planning applications in the system for 12 months or more increased from 352 by year end 2023-24 to 408 by year end 2024-25.	☹ ▽
	Based on the 2024-25 annual finalised results, which is the only one publicly available, the number of enforcement cases in the system for 12 months or more decreased from 599 by year end 2023-24 to 574 by year end 2024-25.	☹ △

* The 2025/26 figures are in draft, to be finalised following monitoring and verification of data by Go Succeed lead BCC

**The 2025-26 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 2026-27.

*** The 2025-26 data in relation to the statutory performance indicators for planning remains provisional and subject to change, as the end of year validated data will not be published by DfI until the end of August 2026-27.

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 2025-26, 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 2025-26, the Local Government Auditor concluded that:

Improvement planning and publication of improvement information

> 'As a result of my audit, I believe the Council has discharged its duties in connection with (1) improvement planning and (2) publication of improvement information in accordance with Section 92 of the Act and has acted in accordance with the Department for Communities' guidance sufficiently.'

Improvement assessment

> 'As a result of my assessment, I believe the Council has discharged its duties under Part 12 of the Act and has acted in accordance with the Department for Communities' guidance sufficiently.
> In my opinion, the Council has demonstrated a track record of ongoing improvement and I believe that the Council is likely to comply with Part 12 of the Act during 2025-26.'

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.

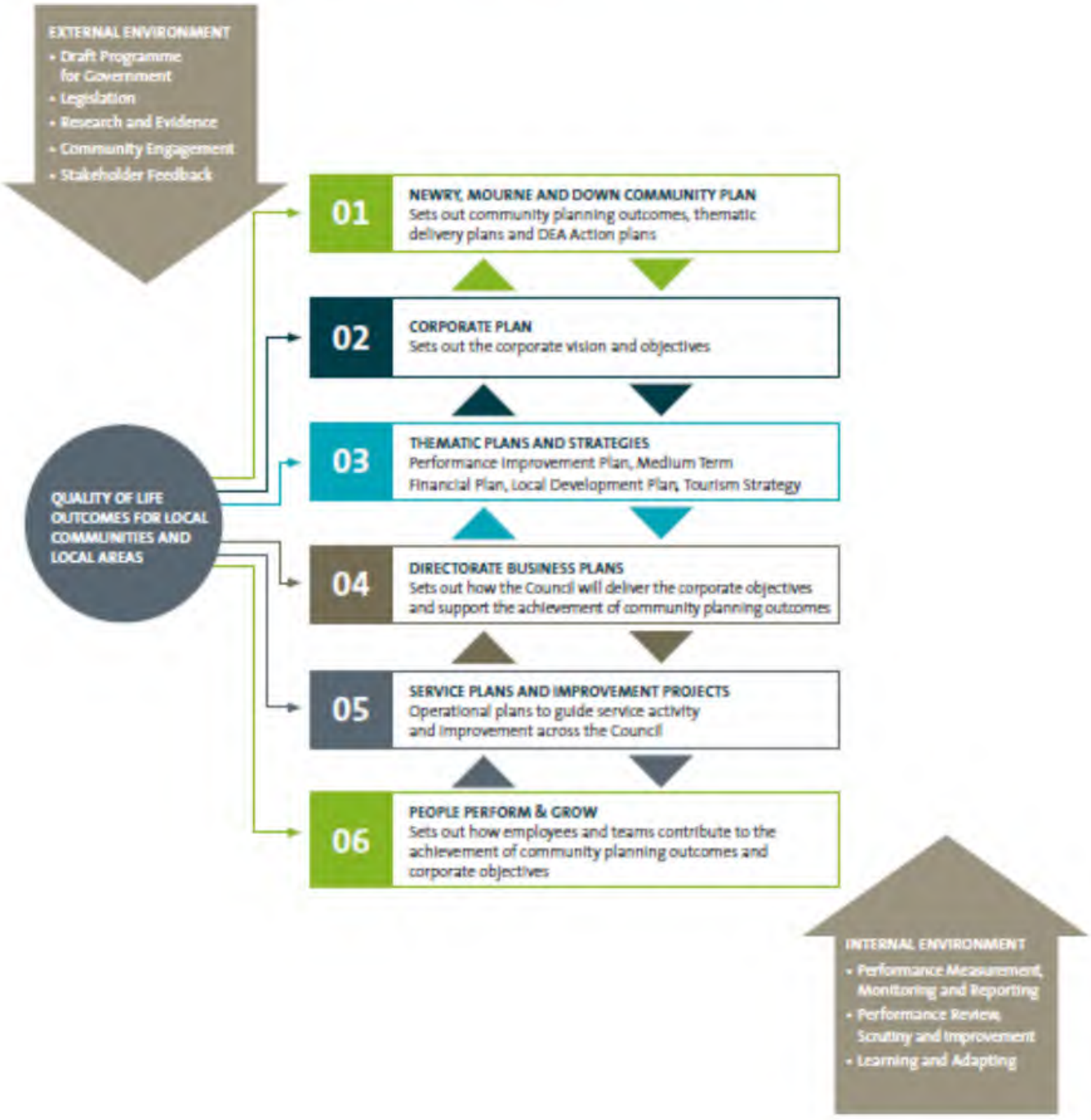
Over the past nine years, the Council has continued to implement and embed the Business Planning and Performance Management Framework:

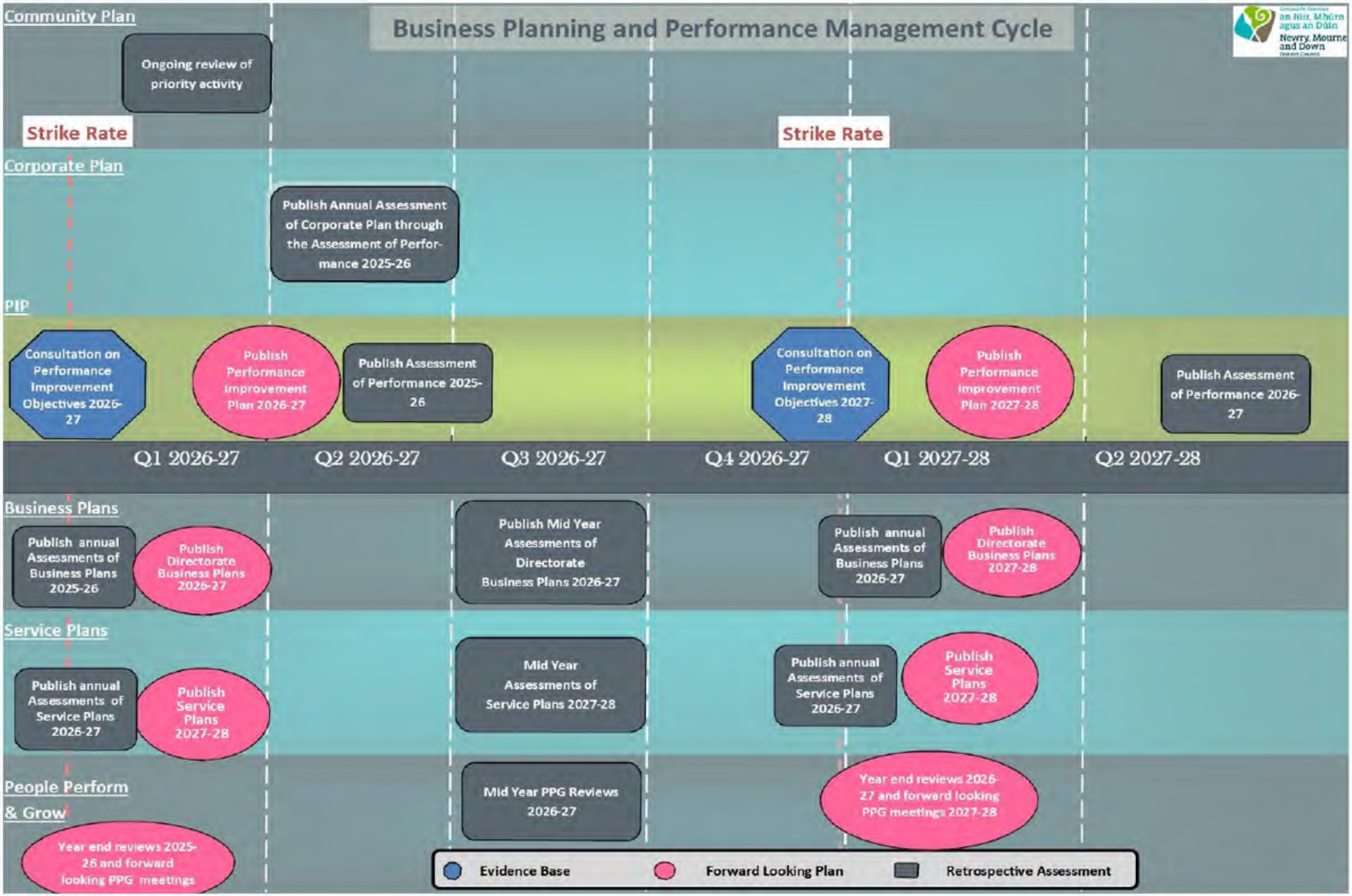
- The Council has developed and agreed integrated planning, monitoring and reporting cycles, which have been aligned to ensure everyone in the organisation is working towards shared objectives, with progress being monitored and reported on a regular basis. This integrated timeline of activity is outlined 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.
- The Chief Executive organised a business planning day with senior and corporate management tiers in 2025 - 26 to engage Directors and Assistant Directors in reviewing performance during 2025-26, setting direction in 2026-27 and communicating the objectives within the Corporate Plan.
- Similarly, all Directorates also organised business and service planning sessions to engage officers in reviewing performance during 2025-26, setting direction for 2026-27 and communicating the objectives within the Corporate Plan.
- All departments produced Service Plans in 2025-26, 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. Development and delivery of a third residents survey is currently underway to be completed by year end 2026-27.

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




Business Planning and Performance Management Cycle
Community Plan
Ongoing review of priority activity
Strike Rate
Strike Rate
Corporate Plan
Publish Annual Assessment of Corporate Plan through the Assessment of Performance 2025-26
PIP
Consultation on Performance Improvement Objectives 2026-27
Publish Performance Improvement Plan 2026-27
Publish Assessment of Performance 2025-26
Consultation on Performance Improvement Objectives 2027-28
Publish Performance Improvement Plan 2027-28
Publish Assessment of Performance 2026-27
Q1 2026-27
Q2 2026-27
Q3 2026-27
Q4 2026-27
Q1 2027-28
Q2 2027-28
Business Plans
Publish annual Assessments of Business Plans 2025-26
Publish Directorate Business Plans 2026-27
Publish Mid Year Assessments of Directorate Business Plans 2026-27
Publish annual Assessments of Business Plans 2026-27
Publish Directorate Business Plans 2027-28
Service Plans
Publish annual Assessments of Service Plans 2026-27
Publish Service Plans 2027-28
Mid Year Assessments of Service Plans 2027-28
Publish annual Assessments of Service Plans 2026-27
Publish Service Plans 2027-28
People Perform & Grow
Year end reviews 2025-26 and forward looking PPG meetings
Mid Year PPG Reviews 2026-27
Year end reviews 2026-27 and forward looking PPG meetings 2027-28
Evidence Base
Forward Looking Plan
Retrospective Assessment

Performance Improvement Objectives 2025-26

Performance Improvement Objective 1

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

Linked to and Supporting:

- Community Planning Objective – All people in Newry, Mourne and Down enjoy good health and wellbeing
- Corporate Objective – Improve the health and wellbeing of everyone in the District

Key action	Status	Update
Leisure-Safe Accreditation being worked towards for all indoor leisure facilities	Target / Progress	Sep 25: march 2026 — Progress: Amber; Mar 26: Amber
	Notes:	1 management met with DS ni and have completed major works to date to meet standards with a new list compiled and works programmed in next 6 months 2 Progress ongoing
'Mystery Visitor' Programme implemented and baseline established	Target / Progress	Sep 25: 1 — Progress: 1; Mar 26: Amber
	Notes:	1 external provider appointed and a customer survey questionnaire agreed and compiled to be carried out mid nov and mystery shopper complete end of nov 2 Programme to complete in July 2026

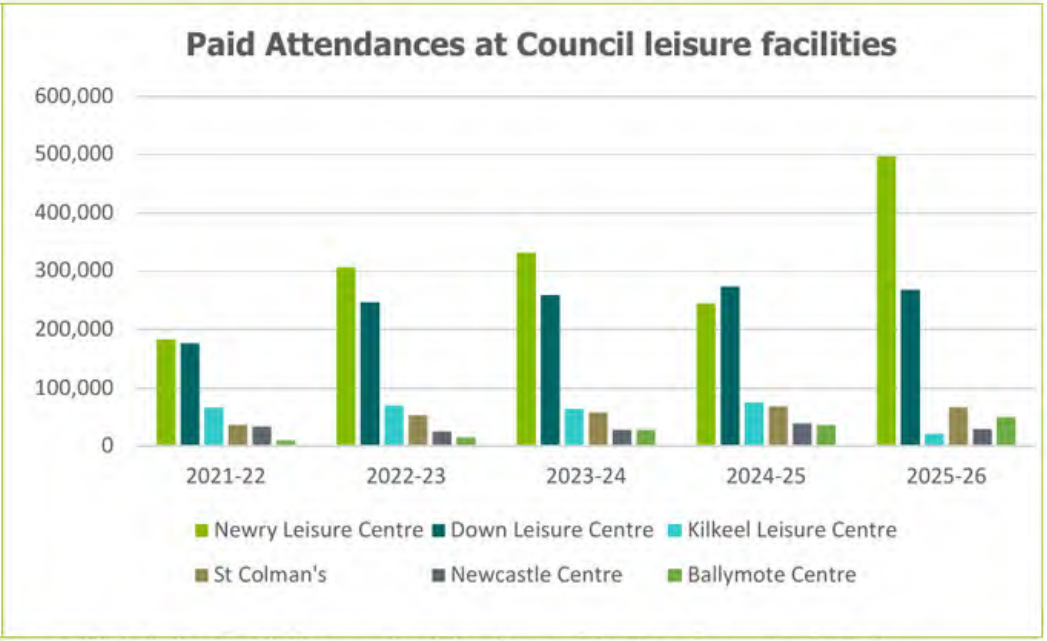
Works to be commenced on Kilkeel centre upgrade	Target	Sep 25: Yes	Mar 26: Yes
	Actual	Sep 25: Yes *1	Mar 26: Yes *2
Notes:	1 Kilkeel Leisure Centre has now closed and works are in progress. 2 Works in progress and on track as per programme		
Planning permission and contract tender agreed for Jennings park upgrade	Target	Sep 25:	Mar 26:
	Progress	Sep 25: Green *1	Mar 26: Amber *2
Notes:	1 Jennings Park work is now progressing. 2 Project progressing through the planning process.		
Sustain the number of paid attendances at indoor leisure facilities	Target	Mar 26: Yes	
	Actual	Mar 26: Yes *1	
Notes:	1 The number of paid attendances for 2025-26 exceeded those achieved during 2024-25		
Continue to deliver a range of targeted, sustainable health programmes to encourage participation in physical activity	Target	Mar 26: Yes	
	Actual	Mar 26: Yes *1	
Notes:	1 Council has supported and delivered targeted health and wellbeing programs including the Exercise Referral and Be Active for Life schemes, along with cancer-specific and inclusive one-to-one sessions for individuals with autism, to encourage participation in physical activity.		

Measure of success	2021-22 Actual	2022-23 Actual	2023-24 Actual	2024-2025 Actual	2025-26 Actual	Status Trend	Explanatory note
Number of paid attendances at:		698,864	768,842	737,439	934,517 (Target: 757,500)	☺ △	A total of 934,517 paid attendances were recorded in 2025-26. This is 23% above the target set for 2025-26 of 757,500. An overall increase across all leisure facilities of 26.7% between 2024-25 and 2025-26 in the number of paid attendances was recorded. This is largely in part due to the full re-opening of the pool at Newry Leisure Centre in March 2025.
Newry Leisure Centre	183,224	306,802	331,546	244,929	497,295	☺	

					(Target: 335,000)	△	Across the sites, increases in paid attendances were recorded for Newry Leisure Centre and Ballymote Sports and Wellbeing Centre of 103% and 40% respectively. Both Down Leisure Centre and St. Colmans Sports Complex experienced a slight decline in paid attendances of approximately 2% each, while the Newcastle Centre recorded a decrease in paid attendances of 24%. This decrease was in part due to poor summer 2025 weather which resulted in lower than expected attendances for the Newcastle Centre and Tropicana Outdoor Swimming Complex. Kilkeel Leisure Centre experienced a significant decrease between 2024-25 and 2025-26 of 72%, however this was expected as the site was closed for a complete refurbishment at the start of September 2025.
Down Leisure Centre	177,496	227,156	259,473	273,783	268,839 (Target: 275,000)	😐 ▷	
Kilkeel Leisure Centre	66,987	69,797	63,811	74,988	21,208 (Target: 15,000)	☺ ▽	
St. Colmans Sports Complex	36,717	54,024	58,491	68,662	67,376 (Target: 68,700)	😐 ▷	
Newcastle Centre & Tropicana Outdoor Swimming Complex	33,801	25,517	27,765	39,128	29,649 *(Target: 27,800)*	☺ ▽	
Ballymote Sports and Wellbeing Centre	10,309	15,365	27,756	35,949	50,150 *(Target: 36,000)*	☺ △	
Number of people participating in targeted health programmes	322*	9,309	10,805	20,421	28,399 *(Target: 22,000)*	☺ △	There has been an increase of 39% in the number of people participating in targeted health programmes increasing from 20,421 in 2024-25 to 28,399 in 2025-26 and exceeds the target set by over 29%.
Value of financial assistance funding	New measure				£225,000	☺	During 2025-26, £225,000 worth of financial assistance funding was given out to successful sports clubs for minor capital funding works.

allocated to sports clubs					*(Target: £225,000)*		
Number of leisure centre memberships	New Measure	9,534	9,923	10,050	11,192 *(Target: 10,100)*		Between 2024-25 and 2025-26 the number of leisure centre memberships increased by 11.4% from 10,050 in 2024-25 to 11,192 whilst also exceeding the target set of 10,100 by 10.8%.
Number of capital leisure projects progressed	New Measure		5	4	4 *(Target: 2)*		During 2025-26, Council continued to progress the delivery of key capital projects, including Newry City Park (planning permission submitted and tender launched for a contractor award), Year 1&2 complete and year 3 commenced of the Play Strategy upgrades, and the refurbishment works at Kilkeel Leisure Centre are underway. The Newcastle Rock Pool and Newcastle Centre projects have secured approval to appoint design and ICT teams, ICT team appointed for Newcastle centre and the multi-Sports Hub project continues to advance.
Number of play parks upgraded	New Measure				7 *(Target: 2)*		Council has completed the initial five-year Play Strategy and delivered Year 1 of the current review, with Year 2 works now completed and year 3 works well underway. During 2025-26, 7 upgrades were carried out at: Derrybeg, Newry Ardross, Crossmaglen Rathview, Crossmaglen Whitecross Slievegullion Bishop Court, Downpatrick Bridge Street, Downpatrick Island Park, Mournes





*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.

Performance Improvement Objective 2

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

Linked to and Supporting:

- Community Planning Outcome – All people from Newry, Mourne and Down benefit from prosperous communities
- Corporate Objective – Support the continued growth and development of our local economy

Key action	Status	Update
Invest in employability and skills through the implementation of a Labour Market Partnership Action Plan		Target / Progress: Sep 25 – Green *1; Mar 26 – Green *2
		Notes: 1 LMP initiatives are underway. Progress to date includes: • Get Work Ready pre-employment programme launched with 27 participants enrolled. • HGV Employment Academy launched with 32 participants enrolled. • Employment Pathway Job Fair event on 19th June with 50 employers; 16 support organisations; and 388 attendees, over 450 jobs were on offer and 63% of attendees were aged 19-44. 2 Approval from DfC for additional funding of £142,626.36 • Labour Market Partnership meetings conducted x 4 • Get Work Ready pre-employment programme concluded with 67 participants completing of 68 enrolled • Enterprise Pathway Programme concluded with 40 completers of 41 enrolments • Employability Academies concluded with 40 completers of 70 enrolments • Three "Place to Work" events held with 276 attendees • Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity Masterclass held with 10 local employers • Disability Employment Programme delivered to 10 participants • Upskilling for Growth initiatives delivered to 113 participants • Employment Pathway events delivered to 2217 attendees • Apprenticeship events held with 973 attendees • Promotion of Employability and Skills Events delivered to 150 attendees • To date a total of 96 participants have gained employment as a result of participating in an NMD LMP initiative. Skills conference hosted with 150 people in attendance.

Invest in the creation of good jobs, productivity growth, decarbonisation and regional balance through the implementation of a Local Economic Partnership Action Plan

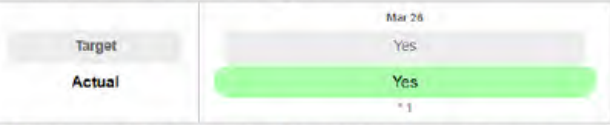


Notes:

1 LEP Established LEP Action plan agreed by Partnership - Sept 2025 LEP Action plan approved by Council - Oct 2025 LEP Action plan submitted to DfE for consideration - Oct 2025

2 LEP LoO received in November 2025 following Council approval of the action plan. Officer appointed in November, Manager in February 2026. LEP meetings hosted in November, January and March. 2 AI Workshops delivered, officers are progressing with procurement and UK Subsidy registration

Invest in the social economy through the Social Enterprise programme

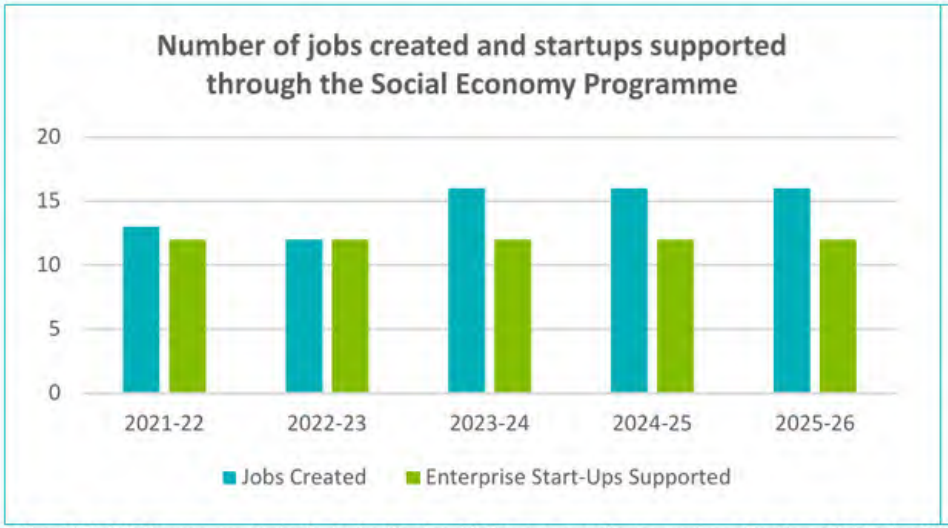


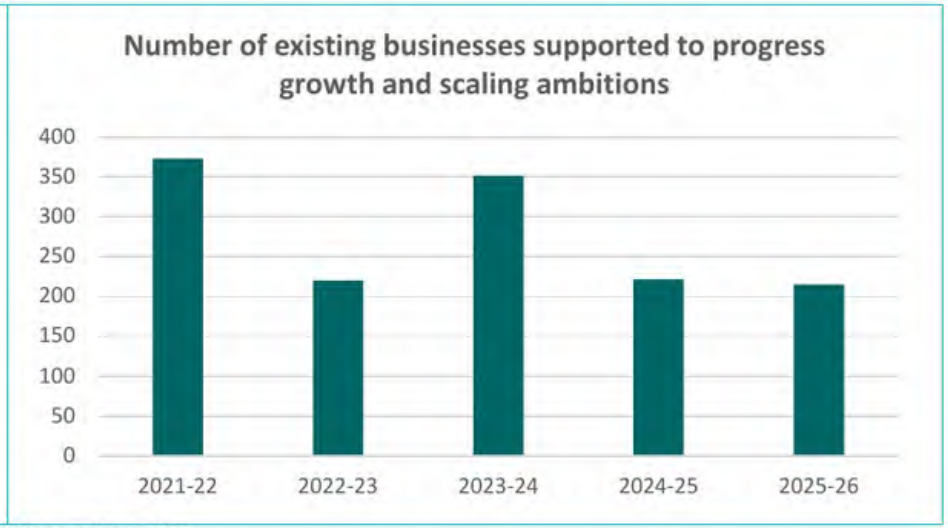
Notes:

1 The Council achieved all targets set through the Social Economy programme, supporting the creation of 12 new start-up businesses, 16 new jobs as well as 30 new volunteering roles created.

Measure of success	2021-22 Actual	2022-23 Actual	2023-24 Actual	2024-25 Actual	2025-26 Actual	Status Trend	Explanatory Note
Number of social enterprise start-ups supported	12	12	12	12 (Target: 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 2025-26, the Council supported 12 new social enterprise start-ups, created 16 new social enterprise jobs, as well as 30 new volunteering roles.
Number of social enterprise jobs created	13	12	16	16 (Target: 12)	16 (Target: 12)	☺ ▷	
Number of participants engaged across all 'Go Succeed' activity	New measure			839 (Target: 712)	4,719* *(Target: 712)*	☺ △	There was a total of 4,719 participants engaged across all 'Go Succeed' activity during 2025-26.
Number of business plans created for start-up businesses and employer enterprises	358	361	151	332 (Target: 361)	393* (Target: 289)	☺	The number of business plans created for start-up businesses and employer enterprises increased by 18.4% compared to 2024-25, rising from 332 in 2024-25 to 393

							in 2025-26. The target set of 289 was also exceeded during this period by 36%.
Number of jobs promoted via business start-up activity	215	187	90 (Target: 155)	206 (Target: 170)	236* *(Target: 173)*		During 2025-26, Newry, Mourne and Down promoted 236 jobs through business start-up activity. This is an increase of 14.6% when compared to the 2024-25 figure of 206. This figure also exceeds the target set of 173 for 2025-26 by 36.4%. In 2025-26, Newry, Mourne and Down ranked 2/11 for the number of jobs promoted across NI, behind Belfast City Council. Newry, Mourne and Down also approved 393 business plans in 2024-25 placing the Council 2/11 across NI for business plan approvals again behind Belfast City Council.
Number of new enterprises created as a result of support	215	187	90	175 (Target: 195)	188* *(Target: 119)*		During 2025-26, 188 new enterprises were created as a result of support. This is an increase of 7.4% when compared to the 175 new enterprises supported during 2024-25. This figure also exceeds target set for 2025-26 of 119, by 58% in 2025-26.
Number of existing businesses supported to progress growth and scaling ambitions	373	220	351	221 (Target: 220)	215* (Target: 220)		The number of existing businesses supported to progress growth and scaling ambitions decreased slightly between 2024-25 and 2025-26 falling from 221 to 215 which represents a decrease of 2.7%. The target set for 2025-26 of 220 was marginally missed during this period, with the Council achieving 97.7% of the target.





*The 2025/26 figures are in draft, to be finalised following monitoring and verification of data by Go Succeed lead BCC

**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. Methodology for calculating based on business and enterprise action plans * 0.6.

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

Linked to and Supporting:

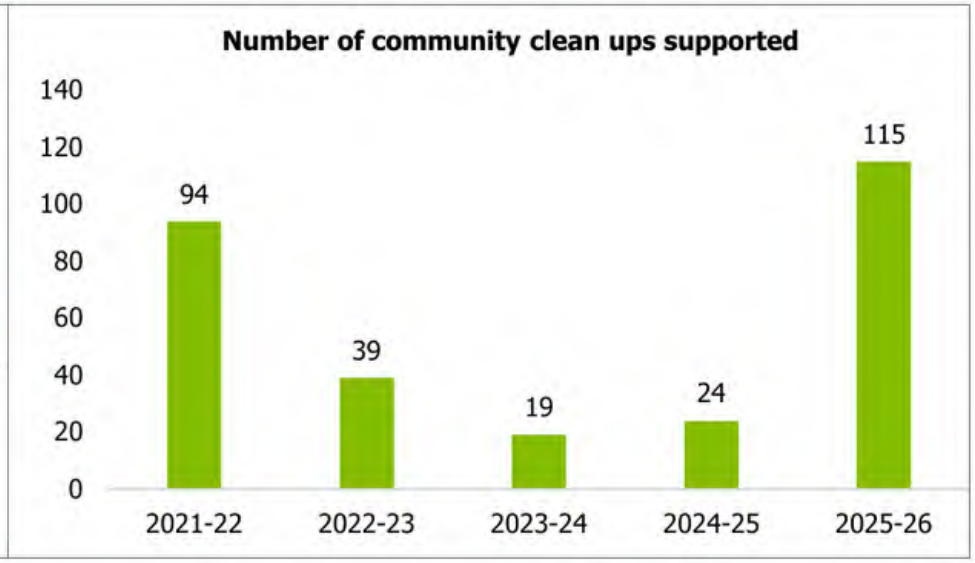
- Community Planning Outcome – All people from Newry, Mourne and Down benefit from a clean, quality and sustainable environment
- Corporate Objective – Protect and enhance our environment to secure a sustainable future

Key action	Status	Update
Rollout of environmental awareness campaign displayed on Council fleet highlighting simple messages on recycling, littering and dog fouling	Target / Progress	Sep 25: Green *1; Mar 26: Green *2
	Notes:	1 Complete. 2 The rollout of environmental awareness campaign displayed on Council fleet highlighting simple messages on recycling, littering and dog fouling was completed by 31.03.2025.
Exploring options to determine levels of street cleanliness and identify emerging issues and hotspots	Target / Progress	Sep 25: Green *1; Mar 26: Green *2
	Notes:	1 Introduction of LAMS app approved at ITPG, meeting with APSE for demonstration in November 25. 2 The Council is at the final stages of a cleansing review and part of this will be the implementation of the LAMS (Land Audit Management System) APP. It is a simple and effective performance measuring system that monitors street cleansing for a total street scene quality score.

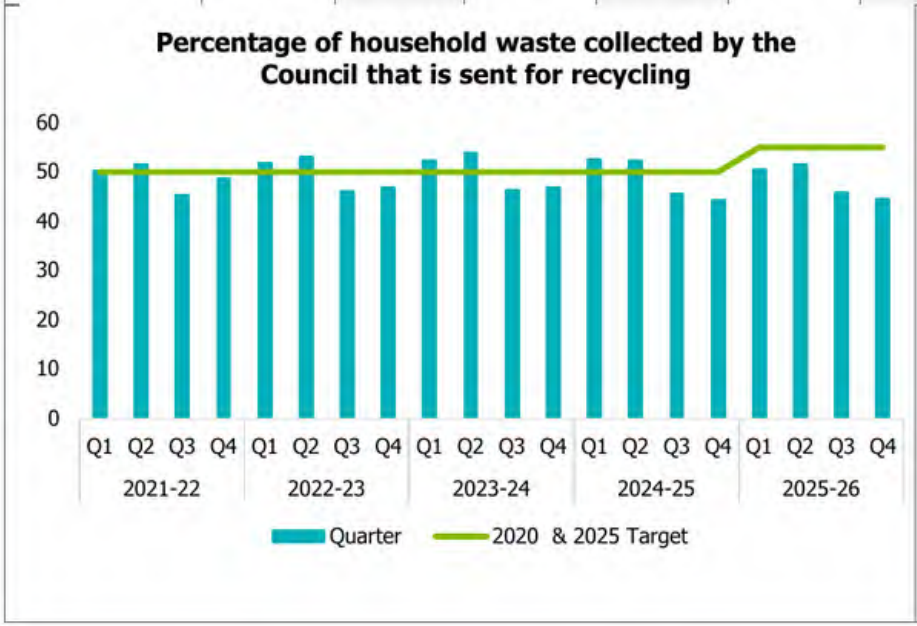
Continued implementation of a Paint Re-Use Scheme at a further 2 Household Recycling Centres		Sep 25	Mar 26
	Target		
	Progress	Red *1	Red *2
Notes:	1 Extension of scheme to two further HRCs to be initiated 2 No progress has been made on the roll out of the Paint Re-Use Scheme at a further 2 Household Recycling Centres within the District.		
Continuing to implement the Enforcement Improvement Plan		Sep 25	Mar 26
	Target		
	Progress	Red *1	Green *2
Notes:	1 Development and implementation of Enforcement Improvement Plan is linked with the successful recruitment to the post of Education and Enforcement Manager. Further recruitment exercise to take place in Q3. 2 This is ongoing and forms part of the recently launched three-year education and enforcement action plan activities.		
Promoting responsible dog ownership through publicity and social media campaigns		Sep 25	Mar 26
	Target		
	Progress	Green *1	Green *2
Notes:	1 Responsible dog ownership promoted through publicity and social media campaigns. Online reporting form being developed to enable dog fouling incidents to be reported, resolved and mapped to target future action. 2 This is ongoing and forms part of the recently launched a three-year education and enforcement action plan activities.		
Encouraging residents to bring properly sorted surplus recyclable waste to our Household Recycling Centres		Sep 25	Mar 26
	Target		
	Progress	Green *1	Green *2
Notes:	1 Information provided on website to inform residents what they can bring to the HRC sites. HRC attendants actively encouraging residents attending sites to properly sort surplus waste. 2 This is ongoing and forms part of the recently launched a three-year education and enforcement action plan activities. additionally, information is provided on the Council website to inform residents what they can bring to the HRC sites. HRC attendants actively encouraging residents attending sites to properly sort surplus waste.		

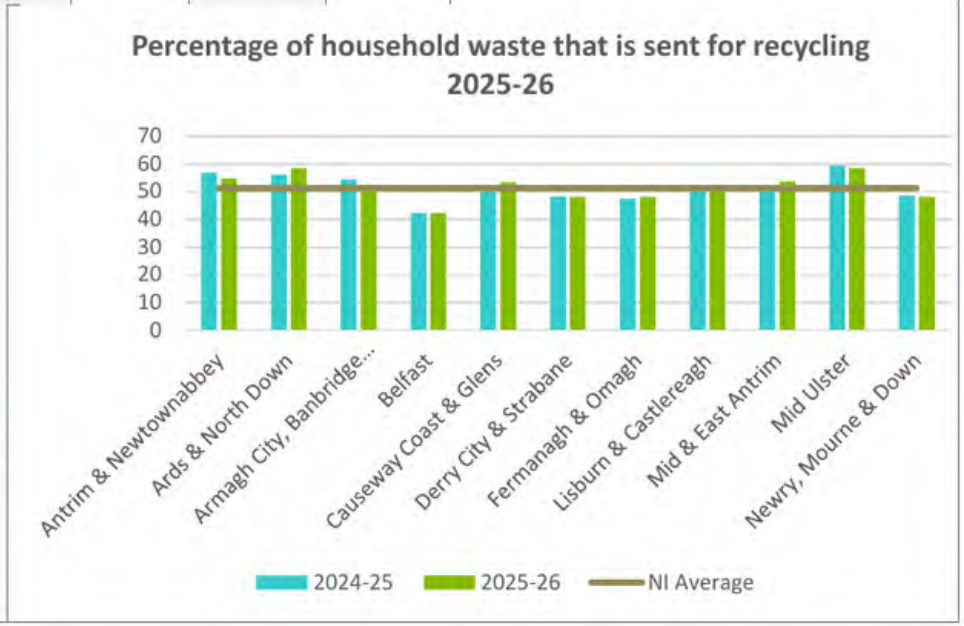
Measure of success	2022-23 Actual	2023-24 Actual	2024-25 Actual	2025-26	Status Trend	Explanatory Note
Number of fixed penalty notices issued	110	25	31 (Target: 120)	35 *(Target:100)*	☹ △	Between 2024-25 and 2025-26 the number of illicit dumping incidents reported to Council increased by 4.6%, from 647 to 677 incidents, whilst the number of littering and dog fouling incidents reported also increased from 212 to 328 during this period, resulting in an increase of 54.7%.
Number of fixed penalty notices paid	91	19	26 (Target: 96)	32 *(Target:80)*	☹ △	The number of fixed penalty notices issued increased by 12.9% in the past year, from 31 in 2024-25 to 35 in 2025-26. 32 of the fixed penalty notices issued were paid in 2025-26, an increase of 23% from the number paid las year. This accounts for 40% of the target set.
Percentage of fixed penalty notices issued that are paid	New Measure			91% *(Target: 80%)*	☺	During 2025-26, 32 of the 35 fixed penalty notices (FPN) issues were paid. This equates to 91% of all issued FPN's being paid which exceeds the 80% target set.
Percentage of community clean ups supported	New measure		100% (Target: 90%)	100% *(Target: 90%)*	☺	The Council actively supports clean ups which are carried out by local community groups and residents. Between 2018-19 and 2025-26, the Council supported 518 clean ups across the District, including 115 during 2025-26. The Council supported 100% of all community clean up requests during 2025-26.
Number of 'Live Here Love Here' environmental projects	10	9	15	10	▽	Since 2018-19, the Council has supported 145 'Live Here Love Here' environmental projects, including ten during 2025-26. Successful projects used their funding for numerous projects involving recycling, planting flowers and installing picnic tables.


Number of fixed penalty notices issued and paid
140
120
100
80
60
40
20
0
118
100
110
91
25
19
31
26
35
32
2021-22
2022-23
2023-24
2024-25
2025-26
Number of fixed penalty notices issued
Number of fixed penalty notices paid

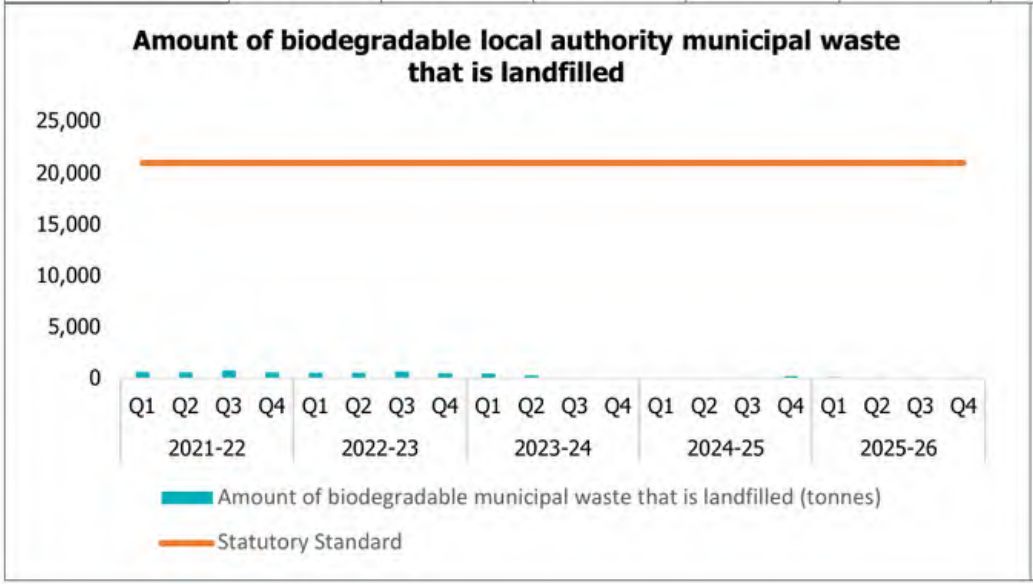

Number of community clean ups supported
140
120
100
80
60
40
20
0
94
39
19
24
115
2021-22
2022-23
2023-24
2024-25
2025-26

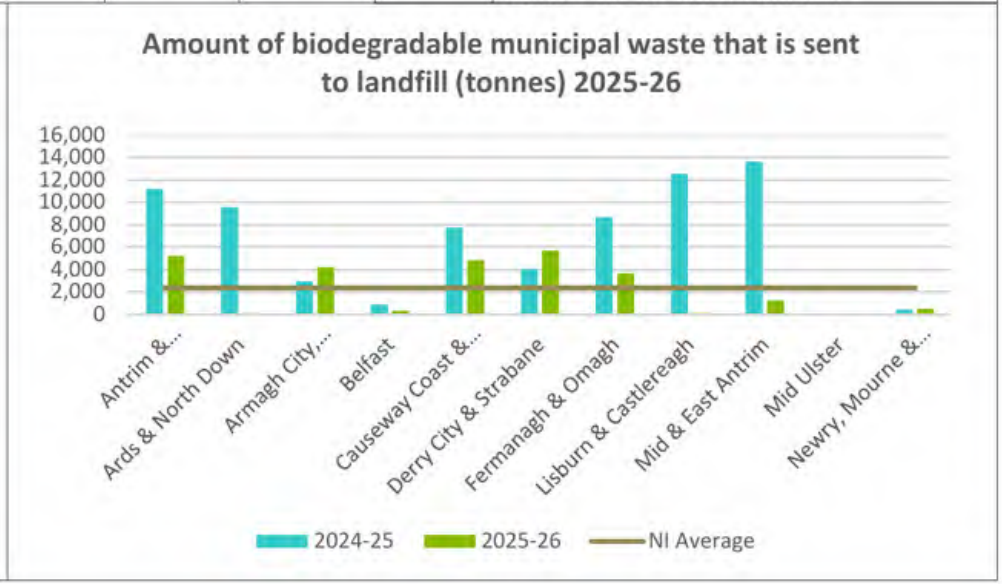
Measure of success	2022-23		2023-24		2024-25		2025-26		Status Trend	Explanatory note
	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual		
The percentage of household waste collected by District Councils that is sent for recycling	50% by 2020	49.6%	50% by 2020	50.1%	50% by 2020	48.7%	55% by 2025	48.3%	😐 ▷	Since 2017-18, the Council has increased the overall rate of recycling by 2.2% to 48.3%, however it falls below the 2025 target of 55%. It is also below the 2025-26 regional average of 51.3% and ranks the Council joint 9/11 across Northern Ireland alongside Derry City and Strabane District Council. Between 2024-25 and 2025-26, the overall rate of recycling in the District decreased by 0.4% This is in contrast to the overall regional increase of 0.3% that was experienced between 2024-25 and 2025-26.





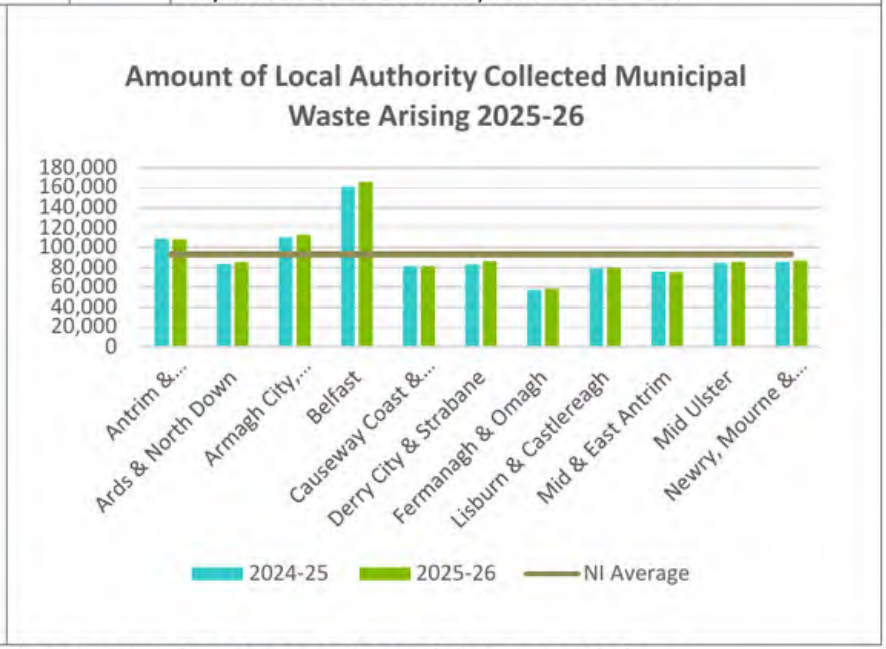
Measure of success	2022-23		2023-24		2024-25		2025-26		Status Trend	Explanatory note
	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual		
The amount of biodegradable Local Authority Collected Municipal Waste that is landfilled	<20,954	2,319t	<20,954	932t	<20,954	429t	<20,954	509t	☺ ▽	Since 2015-16, the amount of biodegradable local authority collected municipal waste that is sent to landfill reduced by 96.9%, to 509 tonnes, and the Council only used 2.4% of the 2019-20 Northern Ireland Landfill Allowance Scheme allowance**. This falls below the 2025-26 regional average of 2,375 tonnes with Newry, Mourne and Down ranked 5/11 across Northern Ireland. Between 2024-25 and 2025-26, Newry, Mourne and Down recorded an 18.6% increase (80 tonnes) in the amount of waste that is sent to landfill.





Measure of success	Actual 2022-23	Actual 2023-24	Actual 2024-25	2025-26	Trend	Explanatory note
The amount of Local Authority Collected Municipal Waste arisings	82,842t	84,636t	85,383t	86,635t (Target: 85,500t***)	😐 ▷	Since 2017-18, the amount of local authority collected municipal waste arisings has increased by 6.3% to 86,635 tonnes, however it does fall below the 2025-26 regional average of 93,304 tonnes. Newry, Mourne and Down is currently ranked 8/11 across Northern Ireland. 2025-26 seen an increase in the amount of Local Authority Collected municipal waste collected, rising by 1.5% from 85,363t in 2024-25 to 86,635t in 2025-26.





*The 2025-26 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 2026-27. 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
***2019-20 Target.

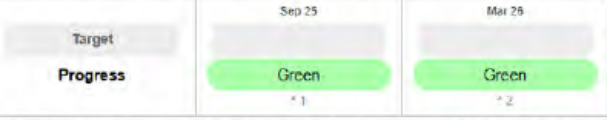
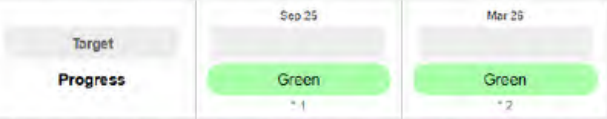
Performance Improvement Objective 4

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

Linked to and Supporting:

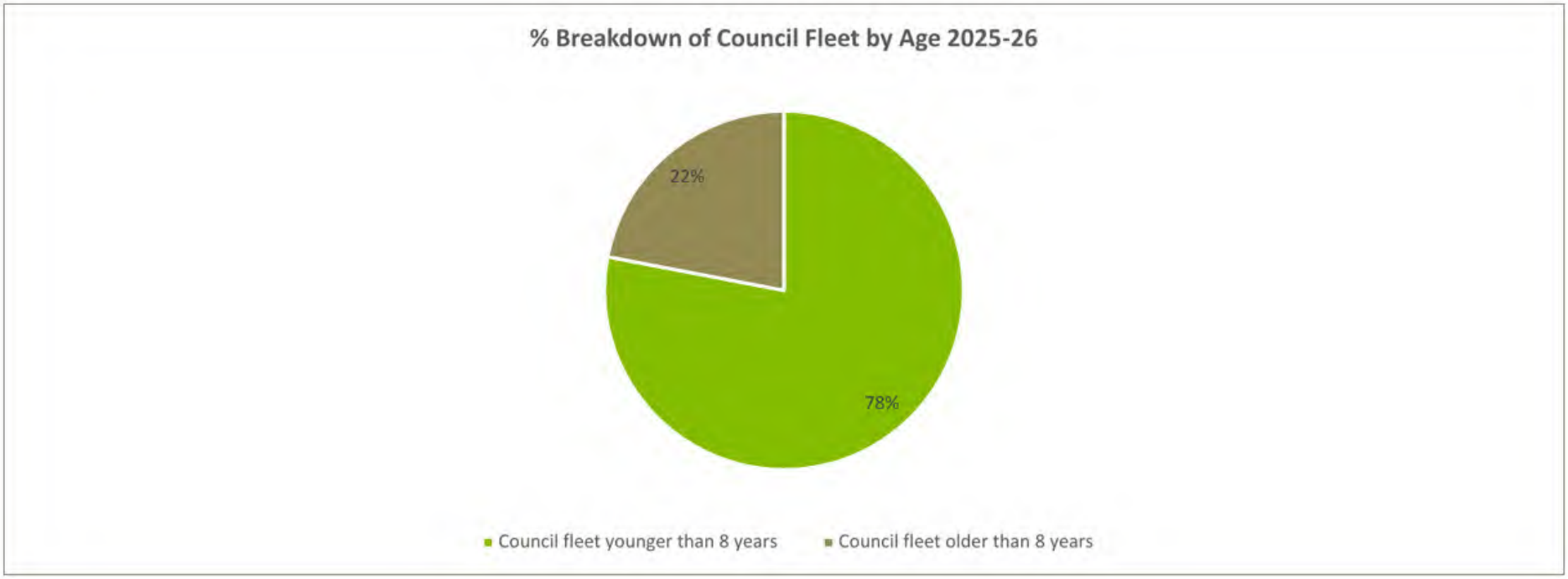
- Community Planning Outcome – All people from Newry, Mourne and Down benefit from a clean, quality and sustainable environment
- Corporate Objective – Protect and enhance our environment to secure a sustainable future

Key action	Status	Update
Publication of the Council's Climate Change and Sustainable Development strategy	Target / Progress	Sep 25: Green *1; Mar 26: Amber *2
	Notes:	1 Completed the Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy in draft which was presented to elected members at the SE Working group in September 2025. Approval to be sought at SE Committee in October 2025 for launch of public consultation. 2 Strategy reviewed and rewritten and went to SMT Committee and public consultation and design is complete and final draft to go to S&E in May – launch in June
Publication of the Council's Climate Change Adaption Plan	Target / Progress	Sep 25: Green *1; Mar 26: Amber *2
	Notes:	1 Work has commenced on the Climate Adaptation Report which is due to be submitted to DAERA by 31 March 2026. 2 Draft climate adaptation plan has been developed

Complete and Implement the Council's Tree Strategy		
	Notes:	1 Ongoing 2 Council have now included trees under a theme within the Biodiversity Strategy, where actions will be updated as part of the Biodiversity Annual Action Plan.
Implementing the newly published Biodiversity Strategy 2024-30		
	Notes:	1 Progressed the action plan contained within the development of the Newry, Mourne and Down Biodiversity Strategy (2024-30) 2 Internally the Biodiversity Officer worked closely with other departments and teams across Council to improve how we manage our own green spaces for biodiversity through tree planting, changing our mowing regimes, wildflower planting and managing invasive species. Work also continued with local community groups to support their efforts and raise awareness among schools and the public of the importance of our environment. There have been several successful projects and actions benefitting biodiversity achieved in the past year including the Castlewellan HLF project, the Geopark and AONB projects, as well as the huge pots of funding successfully secured through PEACEPLUS for CMAP, Peat+ and Bloom and Branch (biodiversity PEACE funding for communities). A Review of the Biodiversity Action Plan was undertaken and presented to S&E Committee in March 2026.
Preparing the Climate Change Mitigation Report in accordance with The Climate Change (Reporting Bodies) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024		
	Notes:	1 Climate Mitigation report (which includes carbon baseline reporting) currently being finalised for submission to DAERA by 31 October 2025 2 Report submitted to DAERA by 31/10/25
Continue to implement Council's fleet replacement programme		
	Notes:	1 Continued to implement the Fleet Replacement Programme. Fleet modernisation will deliver a significant reduction in CO2 emissions particularly with the procurement of 13 no. electric battery vehicles by the Council before the end of 2025-26. 2 Ongoing

Measure of success	2022-23 Actual	2023-24 Actual	2024-25 Actual	2025-26	Status Trend	Explanatory Note
Carbon footprint of Council estate	To be established			5,246 tCO2e	☺	The Baseline Emissions Footprint for Newry Mourne and Down is 5,246 tCO2e (Tonnes of CO2 equivalent).
Renewable energy generation	To be established			154,684kWH	☺	The Council has 21 Solar PV sites across the District. The Baseline figure for Generation of renewable energy is 154,684 kWh which is currently how much renewable electricity we produce from our solar systems.
Energy consumption baseline	To be established			• Electricity: 4,584,089 kWH • Mains Gas: 4,996,994 kWH • Heating Oil (Kerosene): 12,499,723 litres • Fleet Use (Diesel): 837,901 litres. • Fleet Use (Unleaded Petrol): 4,995 litres	☺	The Baseline energy usage which was established using 2024-25 data is as follows: Electricity - 4,584,089 kWh Mains Gas - 4,996,992 kWh Heating Oil (Kerosene) - 449,723 litres Fleet Use (Diesel) - 837,901 litres Fleet Use (Unleaded Petrol) - 4,995 litres
Percentage of Council fleet younger than 8 years	New measure	75%	79% (Target: 85%)	78% (Target: 85%)	😐 ▷	In 2025-26, 153 of the Council's 197 vehicles were eight years or younger, representing 78% of the total. This represents a 1% decrease on the figure recorded in 2024-25 and is 7% below the target set by Council.
Number of vehicles within the Council	New measure	1 (Target: 10)	1 (Target: 10)	1 *(Target: 10)*	☹	Currently, Council still only has 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

fleet that have an alternative fuel source						vehicle. Approval has been granted for the replacement of a proportion of existing small and medium sized diesel vans with electric vehicles which are due to be delievered in Q2/Q3 2026-27. Plans are also progressing for the transition of all Council diesel vehicles to HVO (Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil).
Number of trees planted on Council managed estate	New measure	2,800	257 (Target: 2,800)	2,800 (Target: 2,800)		In 2025-26, 2,800 trees were planted across the Council managed estate achieving the target set for the year.
Number of Council supported EV charging points	New measure	20	0 (Target: 18)	0 *(Target: 18)*		Council currently supports 19 EV charging points across its estate. Another 18 were due to be installed as part of the ORCS (On street residential charge point scheme) during 2025-26, however due to delays this is now due to be completed in 2026-27. A further 12 EV charge points are currently in the process of being stalled at 3 Council facilities for Council fleet operations


% Breakdown of Council Fleet by Age 2025-26
22%
78%
Council fleet younger than 8 years
Council fleet older than 8 years



Performance Improvement Objective 5

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

Linked to and Supporting:

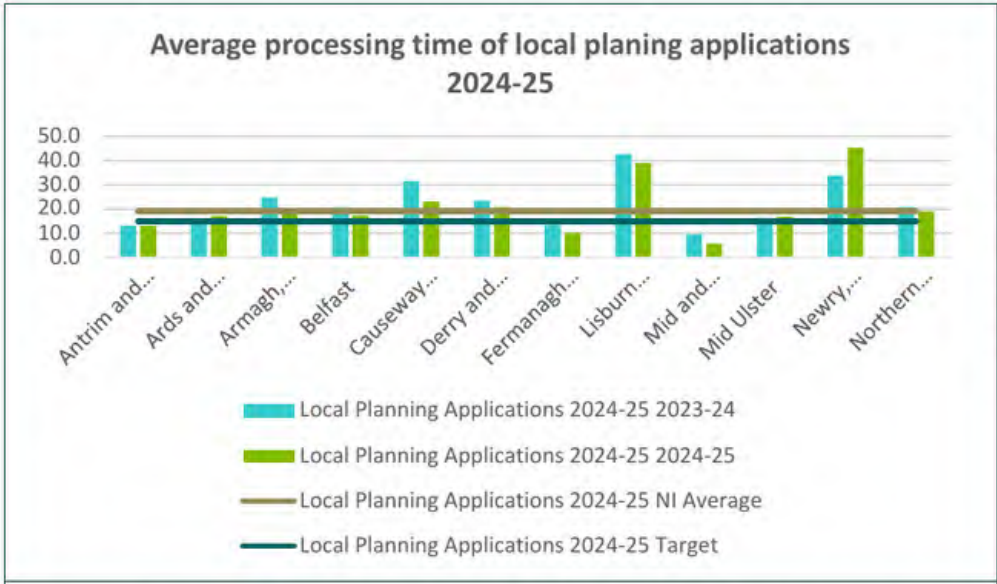
- Community Planning Outcome – All people in Newry, Mourne and Down benefit from prosperous communities
- Corporate Objective – Deliver sustainable services

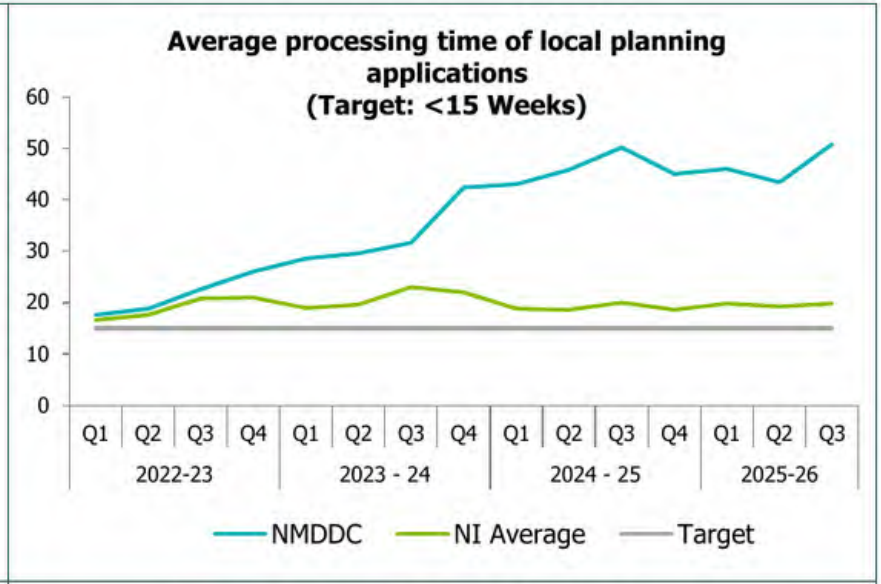
Key action	Update		
Launch of the Council's Draft Plan Strategy		Sep 25	Mar 26
	Target	June 2025	
	Progress	Green *1	Green *2
	Notes:	1 Council's Draft Plan Strategy launched in June 2025 2 Representations made and reviewed and responses now out to consultation	

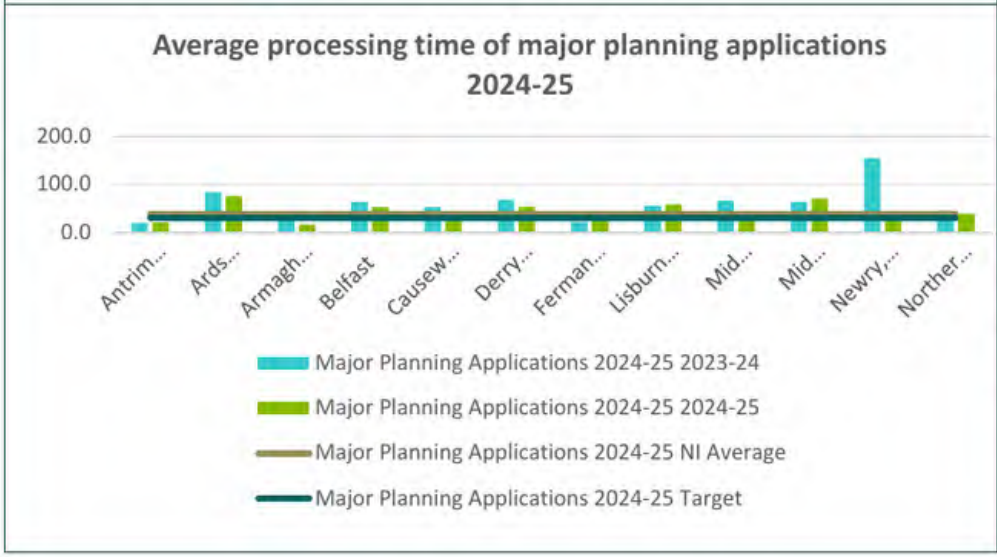
Ongoing work with agents and architects to improve the standard of planning application submissions		Sep 25	Mar 26
	Target		
	Progress	Green *1	Green *2
	Notes	1 Ongoing 2 This remains ongoing. Validation Check List (VCL) due to be launched in June 2026	
Support employees to deliver service improvements through ongoing training, capacity building and 'planning surgeries'.		Sep 25	Mar 26
	Target		
	Progress	Green *1	Green *2
	Notes	1 Ongoing 2 Ongoing training on Validation Check List (VCL) planned for May 2026 for staff. Forward training plan for 2026-27 being developed.	

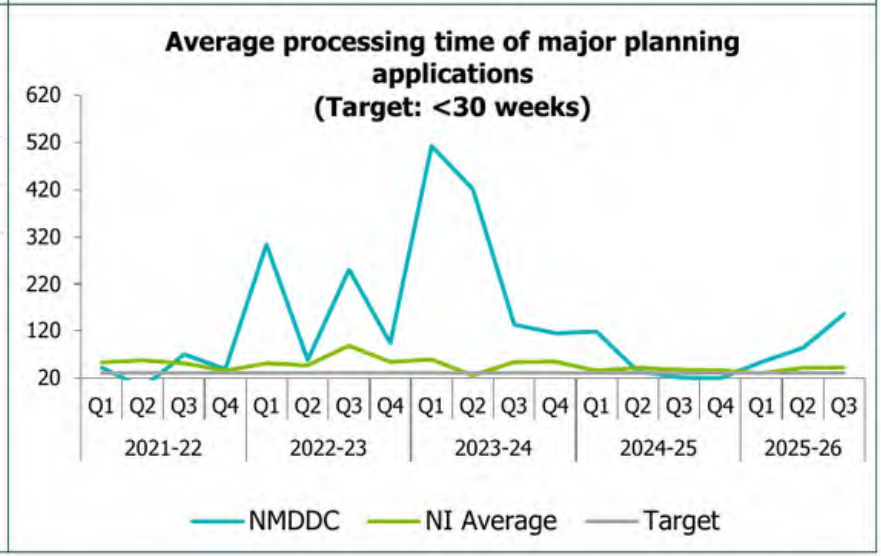
Measure of success	2022-23 Actual	2023-24 Actual	2024-25 Actual	2025-26	Status Trend	Explanatory Note
Average processing time for local planning applications (weeks)	21.6	33.7 (Target: <15 weeks)	45.2 (Target: <15 weeks)	60.2* (Target: <15 weeks)	☹ ▽	During 2025-26, Newry, Mourne and Down received 1,078* local planning applications which represents a 5.5% decrease when compared to the 1,141 applications received in 2024-25. The processing time for local planning applications increased from 45.2 weeks in 2024-25 to 60.2* weeks in 2025-26, which is above the 2024-25 regional average of 19.0 weeks and exceeds the statutory standard of <15 weeks. Newry, Mourne and Down processed 2.6%* of local planning applications within the statutory standard for 2025-26, a decrease of 1.8% compared to 2024-25. Based on the 2024-25 annual finalised results, which is the only one publicly available, Newry, Mourne and Down is ranked 11/11 across Northern Ireland for processing local planning applications.
Average processing time of major planning	89.0	154.8	29.6	100.3*	☹	During 2025-26, Newry, Mourne and Down received seven major planning applications, seven less applications than what was received during 2024-25. The processing time for major planning applications increased from 29.6 weeks in 2024-25 to

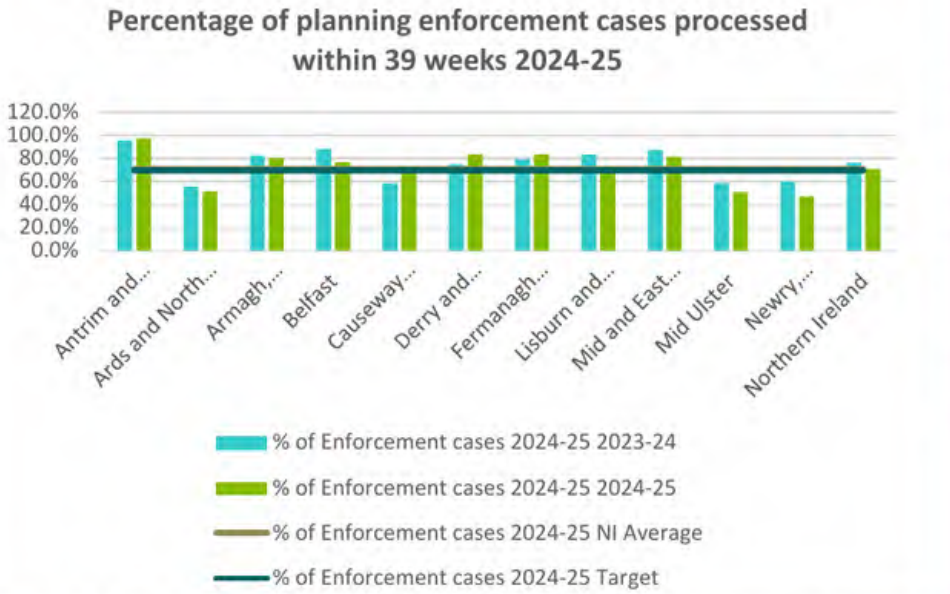
applications (weeks)		(Target: <30 weeks)	(Target: <30 weeks)	(Target: <30 weeks)	▽	100.3 weeks in 2025-26. It is above the 2024-25 regional average of 39.6 weeks and is above the statutory standard of <30 weeks. 3.3% of major planning applications were processed within the statutory standard, a decrease of 50.5% compared to 2024-25. Based on the 2024-25 annual finalised results, which is the only one publicly available, Newry, Mourne and Down is ranked 5/11 across Northern Ireland for processing major planning applications.
Percentage of planning enforcement cases progressed within 39 weeks	58.6%	60.0% (Target: 70%)	47.6% (Target: 70%)	36.4%* (Target: 70%)	☹ ▽	Within Newry, Mourne and Down in 2025-26 there were 313* enforcement cases opened, representing an increase of 19% compared to the 263 cases opened in 2024-25. The percentage of enforcement cases progressed within the statutory timescale decreased by 11.2% from 47.6% in 2024-25 to 36.4% in 2025-26 and it remains below the statutory target of 70% and below the 2024-25 regional average of 70.7%. Based on the 2024-25 annual finalised results, which is the only one publicly available, Newry, Mourne and Down is ranked 11/11 across Northern Ireland for the percentage of enforcement cases progressed.
Number of planning applications in the system for 12 months or more	228	352 (Target: 150)	408 (Target: 150)	Data not available (Target: 150)	-	The Department of Infrastructure (DfI) have not yet released their 2025-26 annual finalised planning statistics and therefore this information is currently not available. Once the finalised and validated report is published by the Department, this information will be updated in this report and published on the Council's website.
Number of planning applications in the system for 12 months or less	934	1,154 (Target: 700)	1,118 (Target: 700)	Data not available (Target: 700)	-	The Department of Infrastructure (DfI) have not yet released their 2025-26 annual finalised planning statistics and therefore this information is currently not available. Once the finalised and validated report is published by the Department, this information will be updated in this report and published on the Council's website.
Number of enforcement cases in the system 12 months or more	500	599 (Target: 450)	574 (Target: 450)	Data not available (Target: 450)	-	The Department of Infrastructure (DfI) have not yet released their 2025-26 annual finalised planning statistics and therefore this information is currently not available. Once the finalised and validated report is published by the Department, this information will be updated in this report and published on the Council's website.

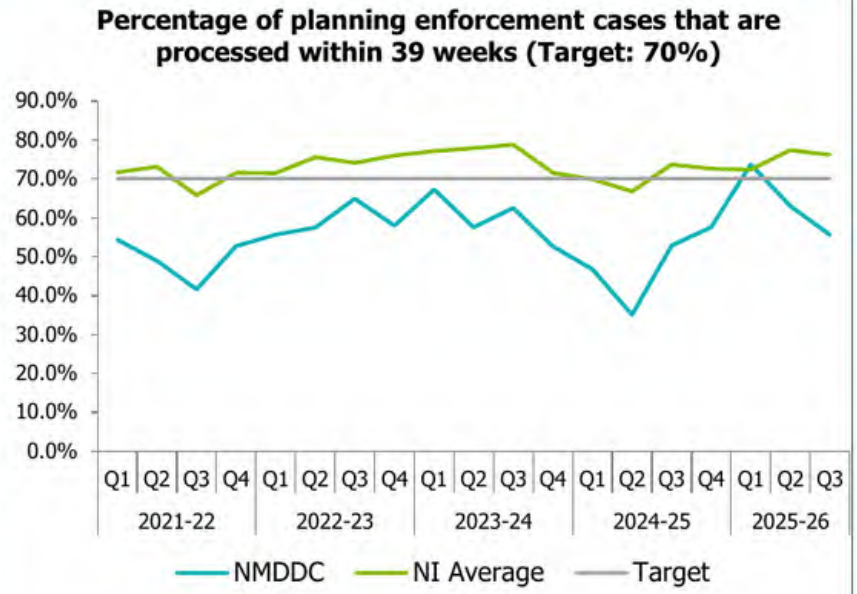

Average processing time of local planing applications 2024-25
50.0
40.0
30.0
20.0
10.0
0.0
Antrim and...
Ards and...
Armagh,...
Belfast
Causeway...
Derry and...
Fermanagh...
Lisburn...
Mid and...
Mid Ulster
Newry,...
Northern...
Local Planning Applications 2024-25 2023-24
Local Planning Applications 2024-25 2024-25
Local Planning Applications 2024-25 NI Average
Local Planning Applications 2024-25 Target


Average processing time of local planning applications (Target: <15 Weeks)
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
Q1 Q2 Q3 Q4 Q1 Q2 Q3 Q4 Q1 Q2 Q3 Q4 Q1 Q2 Q3
2022-23
2023 - 24
2024 - 25
2025-26
NMDDC
NI Average
Target


Average processing time of major planning applications 2024-25
200.0
100.0
0.0
Antrim...
Ards...
Armagh...
Belfast
Causew...
Derry...
Ferman...
Lisburn...
Mid...
Mid...
Newry,...
Norther...
Major Planning Applications 2024-25 2023-24
Major Planning Applications 2024-25 2024-25
Major Planning Applications 2024-25 NI Average
Major Planning Applications 2024-25 Target


Average processing time of major planning applications (Target: <30 weeks)
620
520
420
320
220
120
20
Q1 Q2 Q3 Q4 Q1 Q2 Q3 Q4 Q1 Q2 Q3 Q4 Q1 Q2 Q3 Q4 Q1 Q2 Q3
2021-22
2022-23
2023-24
2024-25
2025-26
NMDDC
NI Average
Target





* The 2025-26 data in relation to the statutory performance indicators for planning remains provisional from the Council's planning section and subject to change, as the end of year validated data will not be published by DfI until the end of August 2026-27.

Corporate Plan 2024-27: Self-imposed performance indicators

Corporate Objective

Support the continued growth and development of our local economy

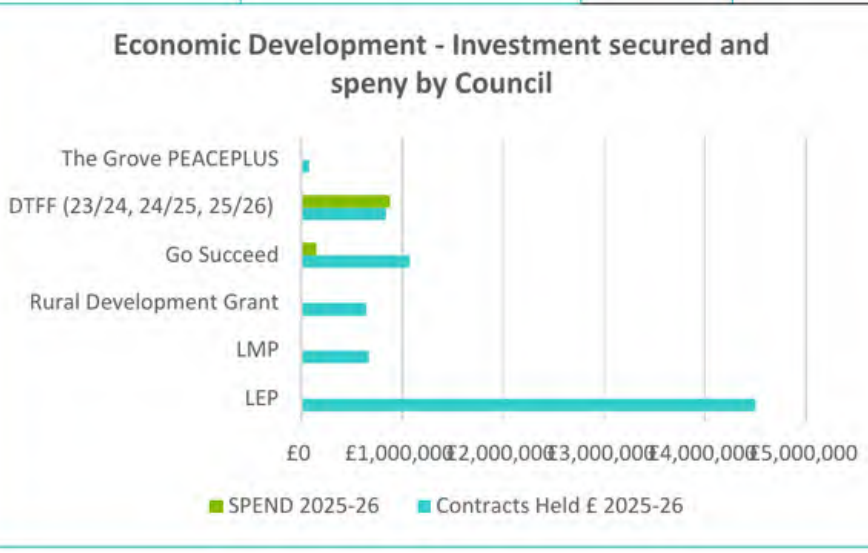
Key action	Update
Principal Project: Belfast Region City Deal Projects including skills and innovation	Jun 26 Target Progress: Amber *1
	Notes: 1 Theatre & Conference Facility: Contractor appointed; pre-construction period completed June 2026; Construction underway summer 2026. Grade A Office Accommodation: Open for applications May - November 2026 Civic Hub: Progression remains subject to Judicial Review
Implement a programme of support that will increase growth and investment for new and established businesses and social enterprises across the district.	Jun 26 Target Progress: Green *1
	Notes: 1 Go Succeed is a business support initiative led by Northern Ireland's eleven local councils, the services provide expert advice and resources to entrepreneurs at Engage and Growth stages of their business journey. Go Succeed issued £145,765.40 of grants in 25/26. Council supports NMEA to deliver Innovate Accelerate and Social Enterprise start up support via NMD SE programme. Council supports Down Business Centre deliver a programme for Women Networking.

Through the Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) partnership, and other programmes, implement a range of skills and employability initiatives that meets the needs of local economy	Target **Progress**	Jun 26 Green 1
Notes:	**1** The following is a range of LMP initiatives: Get Work Ready pre-employment programme concluded with 67 participants completing of 68 enrolled • Enterprise Pathway Programme concluded with 40 completers of 41 enrolments • Employability Academies concluded with 52 completers of 99 enrolments • Three "Place to Work" events held with 291 attendees • Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity Masterclass held with 10 local employers • Disability Employment Programme delivered to 10 participants • Upskilling for Growth initiatives delivered to 113 participants • Employment Pathway events delivered to 2217 attendees • Apprenticeship events held with 973 attendees • Promotion of Employability and Skills Events delivered to 257 attendees • To date a total of 118 participants have gained employment as a result of participating in an NMD LMP initiative. Skills conference hosted with 150 people in attendance.	
Support the growth of new and existing businesses through the delivery of innovative and digital focused initiatives.	Target **Progress**	Jun 26 Green 1
Notes:	**1** NMDDC is the lead Council on the Digital Transformation Flexible Fund, the programme is delivering digitally driven innovation which is a shared ambition across the NI City and Growth Deals. The Digital Transformation Flexible Fund has been developed to assist small and micro businesses and social enterprises to be active in digital transformation, supporting inclusive growth. DTFF has awarded funding to 36 applicants in the district to the value of £600,947.53 across funding calls 1-5	

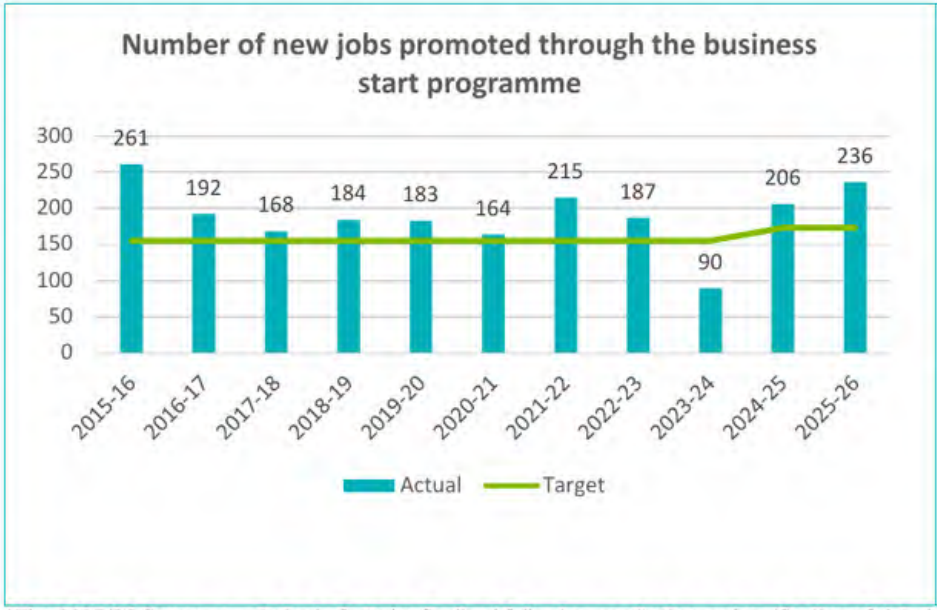
Through Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor (DBEC) and other cross–border linkages, maximise the district's location as a cross–border gateway to Great Britain, EU, Ireland and international markets	Target **Progress**	Jun 26 Green 1
Notes:	1 DBEC have created an Industry Advisory Panel which enables DBEC to listen directly to industry and understand industries point of view to what is required to ensure DBEC achieves our aim of becoming a leading economic corridor in Europe. The Industry Advisory Panel have three strategic priorities. 1. Enhancing DBEC placemaking and corridor branding. 2. Advocate for improved infrastructure, including enabling infrastructure, along DBEC. 3. Collaboration as a cross-cutting theme necessary to achieve all DBEC priorities. The Industry Advisory Panel meet quarterly, organised and facilitated by DBEC. DBEC have been successful with a Peace Plus application for funding, exploring cross-border skills and equivalence of qualifications in Ireland and Northern Ireland, including linking cross border apprenticeships. DBEC are a partner in the process which is led by Belfast Metropolitan College. DBEC continue to promote the region and have entered a contract with a communication provider who promotes DBEC and the activities of DBEC. Included in this is the production of a Communication Plan with a key aspect being the production and distribution of a quarterly DBEC newsletter.	
Continued growth of our area's infrastructure through a responsive planning system	Target **Progress**	Jun 26 Amber 1
Notes:	1 Planning targets remain a challenge however the department still receives and processes the second highest number of applications across the 11 Planning Authorities. A number of initiatives are ongoing via the planning improvement programme to deal with challenges within the service and Council has recruited external providers to provide support and increased mentoring for staff. Work remains ongoing to work with developers and agents to improve the service and react to priority projects that address key corporate priorities namely Economic Development, Tourism and Health and Wellbeing .	

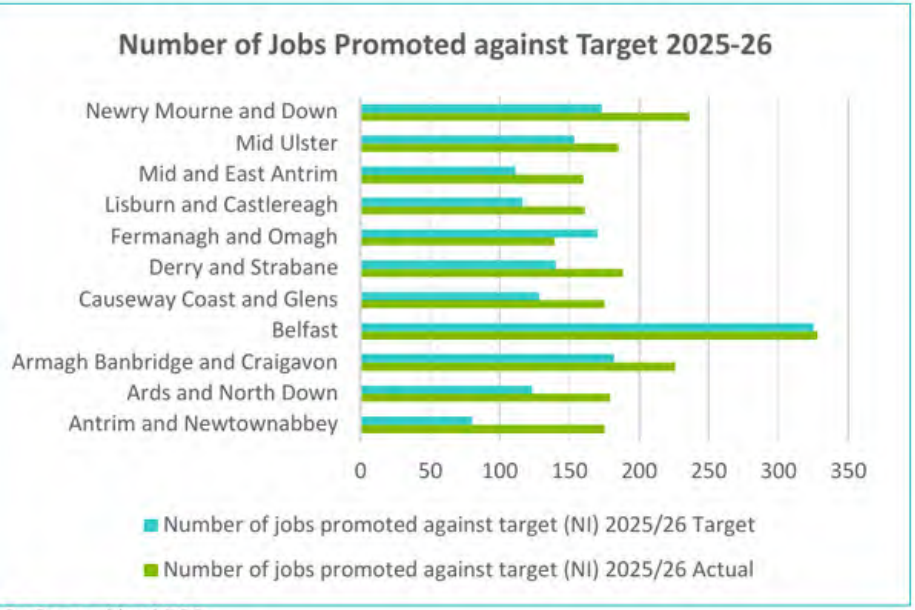
Measure of Success	2024-25		2025-26		Status Trend	Explanatory Note
Number of jobs created and businesses supported through Council programmes	**Jobs created**	**Businesses supported**	**Jobs created**	**Businesses supported**		Through the new NI 'Go Succeed' programme and the Social Economy programme 252 jobs were created with 317 businesses supported. This represents an increase of 13.5% in relation to the number of jobs created and an increase of 37.2% in the number of business supported. During 2025-26, the Social Economy programme supported 12 social enterprises while 16 new social enterprise jobs were created. Go Succeed supported the creation of 307 Business Plans and 86 Enterprise Action plans which equates to 236 jobs promoted. 81 Foundation businesses, 215 Growth businesses, 2 Scaling businesses and 7 businesses supported via Innovate Accelerate were supported through the programme.
	222	231	252*	317*	△ △	
Number of jobs promoted through business start-up activity	**Target**	**Actual**	**Target**	**Actual**		During 2025-26, Newry, Mourne and Down promoted 236 jobs through business start-up activity. This is an increase of 14.6% when compared to the 2024-25 figure of 206. This figure also exceeds the target set of 173 for 2025-26 by 36.4%. The Council recorded the second highest number of actual jobs promoted across all the Council areas, ranking it 2/11 across Northern Ireland behind Belfast City Council.
	173	206	173	236*	☺ △	
Amount of investment secured and distributed by the Council	**Investment**		**2024-25**	**2025-26**		**<u>Economic Development Investment</u> -** LEP £4.5m LMP £522,963.29 plus an additional £142,626.36 Rural Development Grants £641,178 Go Succeed £1,071,861.92 **Grants issued -**
	Economic Development - Total Value of Funding Contracts Held:		£1.8m	£6.3m	△	
	Economic Development – Annual Spend:		£775,283	£1,025,808.40		
	Regeneration – Total Value of Funding Contracts Held:		£2.7m	£2.7		

	Regeneration – Annual Spend:	£2.7m	£2.7m	▷	DTFF - Issued 51 LoO across funding calls 1-6 £880,043 Go Succeed - Issued £145,765.40 **Regeneration** The Grove PEACEPLUS €74,130.00 NLHF – Castlewellan Forest Park £110,000 Capturing the collection at DCM £4,733 Mourne Esplande Beach Access £5,000 CMap €700,636.20 Ballynahinch Christmas Lighting £20,000 PeacePlus £1,879,737









*The 2025/26 figures remain in draft, to be finalised following monitoring and verification of data by Go Succeed lead BCC

Corporate Objective

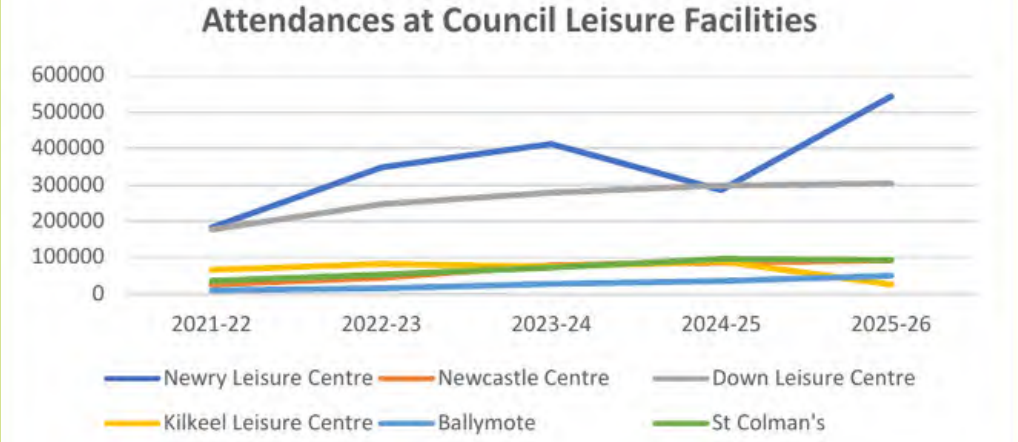
Improve the health and wellbeing of everyone in the district

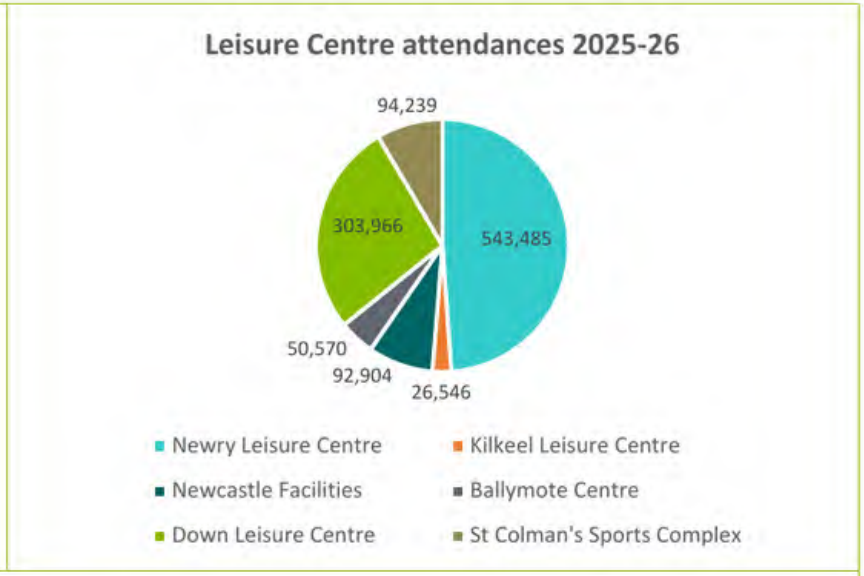
Key Action		Update
Principal Project: Progress Warrenpoint Health and Wellbeing Centre	Target **Progress**	Jun 26 Green
	Notes:	**1** In progress - planning approval obtained
Continue to implement our Active Travel Masterplan	Target **Progress**	Jun 26 Green
	Notes:	**1** The Carlingford Greenway was completed in 2025-26 and is now open. There are 5 greenways across the District currently being developed with several active travel shared walking/cycle paths in progress.
Continue to implement our Age Friendly Strategy 2021-2031	Target **Progress**	Jun 26 Amber
	Notes:	**1** This work continues through the Age Friendly Co-ordinator and yearly action plans that align to PHA funding.
Continue to implement our Sports Facilities Strategy	Target **Progress**	Mar 26 Green
	Notes:	**1** We continue to implement our Sports Facilities Strategy, noting that we are progressing through the facilities plan and carrying out works in each area as funding and budgets become available.

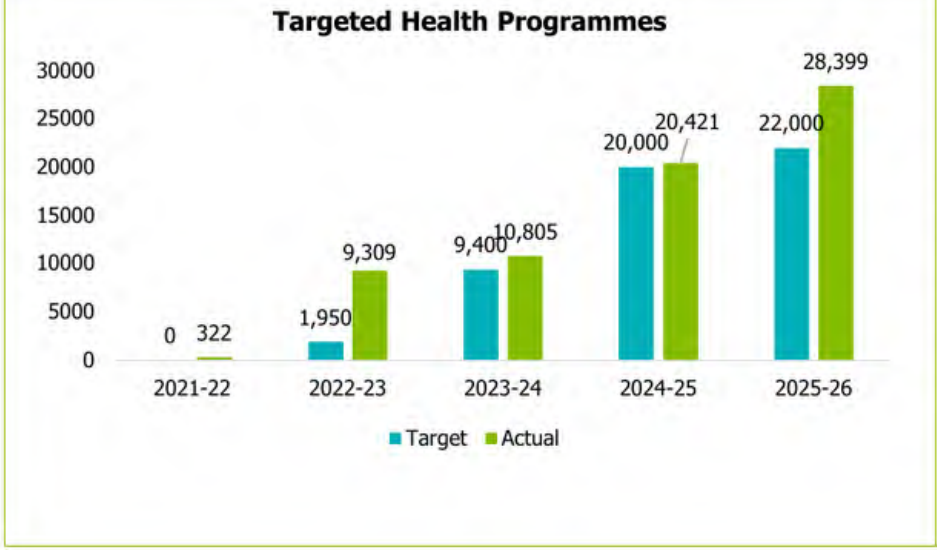
Continue to implement our Play Strategy		Target	Jun 26
		Progress	Green [1]
	Notes:	**1** We continue to implement our Play Strategy (2024–2029), with all Year 1 and Year 2 actions completed and approximately 80% of Year 3 works now delivered.	
Continue to implement our Community Trails Development Plan		Target	Jun 26
		Progress	Green [1]
	Notes:	**1** We continue to implement our Community Trails Development Plan, noting that the core trails are now complete and a prioritised list of potential future routes has been identified, subject to external funding opportunities.	
Carry out initiatives to tackle health inequalities across the district		Target	Jun 26
		Progress	Green [1]
	Notes:	**1** We are carrying out initiatives to tackle health inequalities across the district, through continued delivery of a range of health programmes and low-intensity classes, currently exceeding our targets for the GP referral funded program while participation in our Be Active for Health program continues to grow.	

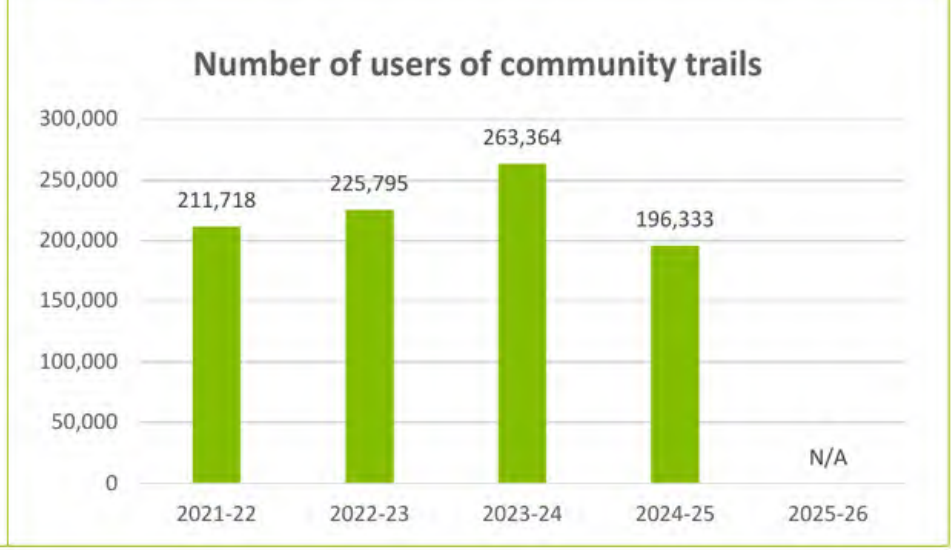
Establish an Open Spaces Strategy		Target **Progress**	Jun 26 Green 1
	Notes:	**1** The LDP Open Space Strategy sets out the Council's approach to the protection, enhancement and management of open space in the district. The Council commissioned a review of existing open space as part of preparing the Plan Strategy. The review not only identifies existing facilities but highlights future needs in terms of the provision of quality open space, sport and outdoor recreational facilities in the council area. The review includes an audit of existing open space and provides a draft Open Space Strategy. The open space strategy forms part of the Draft Plan Strategy which was launched in June 2025 and was open for 12 weeks consultation period via on line submissions and district wide workshops. All views have been taken on board and counter representations have been consulted on also ahead of final strategy being submitted to DfI for independent examination.	
Delivery of projects within the PeacePlus Action Plan addressing wellbeing, social prescribing and opening of shared spaces.		Target **Progress**	Jun 26 Green 1
	Notes:	**1** Tender documentation for social prescribing were issued and awarded. Work has commenced. PEACEPLUS projects for shared spaces capital projects are currently undergoing procurement and site work will commence at the end of June 2026	

Measure of Success	2022-23		2023-24		2024-25		2025-26		Status Trend	Explanatory note
Number of people participating in targeted health programmes	**Target**	**Actual**	Target	**Actual**	Target	**Actual**	Target	**Actual**	☺ △	There has been an increase of 39% in the number of people participating in targeted health programmes increasing from 20,421 in 2024-25 to 28,399 in 2025-26. This figure exceeds the target set for this measure by 29%. This figure includes all health programmes and Be Active camps.
	1,950	9,309	9,400	10,805	20,000	20,421	22,000	28,399		
Number of attendances at Council leisure facilities	**Target**	**Actual**	**Target**	**Actual**	**Target**	**Actual**	**Target**	**Actual**	△	There has been an increase of 23% in the number of attendances at Council Leisure facilities between 2024-25 and 2025-26. The figure increased from 903,717 in 2024-25 to 1,111,386 in 2025-26. This increase can be primarily attributed to the re-opening of Newry swimming pool in March 2025.
	-	803,517	-	954,912 (Paid Attendances: 768,842	-	903,717 (Paid attendances: 737,439		1,111,386 (Paid attendances (934,517)		
Number of users of community trails	**Target**	**Actual**	**Target**	**Actual**	**Target**	**Actual**	Target	**Actual**		The Council no longer records figures for community trails as this was part of the 4-year funding supporting evidence which has now concluded.
	120,000	225,795	225,000	263,364	265,000	196,333	-	-		


Attendances at Council Leisure Facilities
600000
500000
400000
300000
200000
100000
0
2021-22
2022-23
2023-24
2024-25
2025-26
Newry Leisure Centre
Newcastle Centre
Down Leisure Centre
Kilkeel Leisure Centre
Ballymote
St Colman's


Leisure Centre attendances 2025-26
94,239
303,966
543,485
50,570
92,904
26,546
Newry Leisure Centre
Kilkeel Leisure Centre
Newcastle Facilities
Ballymote Centre
Down Leisure Centre
St Colman's Sports Complex


Targeted Health Programmes
30000
25000
20000
15000
10000
5000
0
0
322
1,950
9,309
9,400
10,805
20,000
20,421
22,000
28,399
2021-22
2022-23
2023-24
2024-25
2025-26
Target
Actual


Number of users of community trails
300,000
250,000
200,000
150,000
100,000
50,000
0
211,718
225,795
263,364
196,333
N/A
2021-22
2022-23
2023-24
2024-25
2025-26

Corporate Objective

Protect and enhance our environment to secure a sustainable future

Key action	Update	
Principal Project: Progress the Local Development Plan Strategy	Target Progress	Jun 26 Green
Notes.	1 Local Development plan Drat strategy was launched in June 2025 and a12 week consultation was held with online feedback and a series of workshops. Representations were made and reviewed and counter representations then consulted on. The plan strategy will be submitted to Dfl for Independent Examination by end of 2026 as per the timetable agreed by Council and submitted to Dfl	
Develop and implement a Climate Change and Sustainability Srategy	Target Progress	Jun 26 Green
Notes.	1 Completed the Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy in draft which was presented to elected members at the SE Working group in September 2025. Approval was sought at SE Committee in October 2025 for launch of public consultation. Strategy reviewed and rewritten and went to SMT Committee and public consultation and design is complete and final draft to go to S&E in August with a view to launch in September.	
Develop and implement a Local Climate Change Adaptation Plan	Target Progress	Jun 26 Amber
Notes.	1 Work has commenced on the Climate Adaptation Report which was submitted to DAERA by 31 March 2026. Draft climate adaptation plan is currently being developed.	

Develop and implement a Biodiversity Strategy	Target Progress	Jun 26 Green
Notes:	1 The Biodiversity strategy was published and launched in January 2025. Within Council the Biodiversity Officer worked closely with other departments and teams across Council to improve how we manage our own green spaces for biodiversity through tree planting, changing our mowing regimes, wildflower planting and managing invasive species. Work also continued with local community groups to support their efforts and raise awareness among schools and the public of the importance of our environment. There have been several successful projects and actions benefitting biodiversity achieved in the past year including the Castlewellan HLF project, the Geopark and AONB projects, as well as the huge pots of funding successfully secured through PEACEPLUS for CMAP, Peat+ and Bloom and Branch (biodiversity PEACE funding for communities). A Review of the Biodiversity Action Plan was undertaken and presented to S&E Committee in March 2026.	
Develop and implement a Tree Strategy	Target Progress	Jun 26 Green
Notes:	1 Council has now included trees under a theme within the Biodiversity Strategy, where actions will be updated as part of the Biodiversity Annual Action Plan.	
Undertake a baseline assessment of the Council's carbon footprint and set targets to reduce our carbon emissions.	Target Progress	Jun 26 Green
Notes:	1 Baseline has been completed with the Climate Mitigation Report submitted to DAERA in October 2025 which included the baseline assessment of carbon emissions and associated targets for carbon reduction.	
Support the implementation of new Electric Vehicle (EV) charging points.	Target Progress	Jun 26 Green
Notes	1 Council currently supports 19 EV charging points across its estate. A further 18 points are due to be installed as part of the regional ORCS project. 12 EV charge points are currently in the process of being stalled at 3 Council facilities for Council fleet operations.	

Keep under review the actions to address sustainability and the climate change emergency declared by Council.		Target	Jun 26
		Progress	Green
	Notes:	1 Council has now completed the Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy in draft which was presented to elected members at the Sustainability and Environment (SE) Working group in September 2025. Approval was then granted to launch a public consultation which took place for 12 weeks ending in March 2026. Following the public consultation the strategy has been reviewed and rewritten with a final draft to go to S&E in August with a view to launch in September.	
Contribute to the delivery of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Management Action Plans and the Marine Protected Area Management Plans.		Target	Jun 26
		Progress	Green
	Notes:	1 Significant progress has been made in delivering the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Management Action Plans and the Marine Protected Area (MPA) Management Plans through a wide range of conservation, access, habitat restoration, community engagement, education and partnership initiatives. Delivery has included biodiversity enhancement, invasive species control, path and access improvements, volunteer programmes, coastal and marine awareness activities, and collaborative projects with statutory agencies, local communities and environmental organisations. This work continues to protect and enhance the district's internationally and nationally important landscapes and seascapes, while supporting biodiversity recovery, sustainable access, climate resilience and community wellbeing in line with Council priorities.	

Develop and implement a District Enforcement Action Plan for controlling environmental crime and reducing littering, fly tipping and dog fouling incidents.	Target **Progress**	Jun 26 Green 1
Notes:	**1** Newry, Mourne and Down District Council has launched a three-year education and enforcement action plan to address key issues of fly-tipping, littering and dog fouling aimed at protecting the environment for future generations. A recommendation to implement the action plan was agreed at a meeting of the Council's Sustainability and Environment Committee on 17 June and was approved by the full Council in July 2026.	
Develop and implement the Local Development Plan.	Target **Progress**	Jun 26 Green 1
Notes:	**1** LDP is developing as per agreed timetable and will be submitted to DfI by end of 2026 for IE	
Implementation of Building Regulations and licensing obligations in partnership with our customers and stakeholders.	Target **Progress**	Jun 26 Green 1
Notes:	**1** This work remains ongoing as per agreed regulations which are reviewed and agreed by relevant departments with performance reported to Council bi annually	

Measure of Success	2022-23		2023-24		2024-25		2025-26		Status Trend	Explanatory Note
	Target	**Actual**	**Target**	**Actual**	**Target**	**Actual**	**Target**	**Actual**		
Level of street cleanliness across the District (KNIB street cleanliness score)	-	Data unavailable	64	Data unavailable	64	Data unavailable	64	Data unavailable	-	The Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful (KNIB) Cleaner Neighbourhoods Report for 2024-25 was published in Q4 2024-25. While a new regional average of 73 has been provided for 2024-25, which is a decrease of 2% on the 2023-24 score of 75%, an individual Council LEAMS score has not been provided within the report. Contact has been made with KNIB asking if this information can be made available and we are currently awaiting a response. Council has however been exploring other options to determine levels of street cleanliness and have had a LAMS (Land Area Management System) app through APSE (Association for Public Service Excellence) approved for use through the Council's IT Performance Group.
	Target	**Actual**	**Target**	**Actual**	**Target**	**Actual**	**Target**	**Actual**		
Percentage of waste recycled	50% by 2020	49.6%	50% by 2020	50.1%	70% by 2030 55% by 2025	48.7%	70% by 2030 55% by 2025	48.3%	😐 ▷	Since 2017-18, the Council has increased the overall rate of recycling by 2.2% to 48.3%, however it falls below the 2025 target of 55%. It is also below the 2025-26 regional average of 51.3% and ranks the Council joint 9/11 across Northern Ireland alongside Derry City and Strabane District Council. Between 2024-25 and 2025-26, the overall rate of recycling in the District decreased by 0.4% This is in contrast to the overall regional increase of 0.3% that was experienced between 2024-25 and 2025-26.
Percentage of EV charging points	New measure						-	0%	😐	Council currently supports 19 EV charging points across its estate. A further 18 points are due to be installed as part of the regional ORCS project during 2026-27. 12 EV charge points are currently in the process of being

Back to Agenda

					installed at 3 Council facilities for Council fleet operations.
Level of compliance with sustainable development duty		Council continues to make significant progress in addressing the impact of climate change locally. The Council's Climate Change Strategy has been through public consultation with a target date for launch in September 2026. The Council is involved in several projects to increase the availability of EV charging points across the District, including the installation of 12 EV charging points for Council fleet at 3 Council facilities across the District. Council has also established its carbon emissions baseline and developed associated targets for carbon reduction. Council are also working towards a transition to zero emission vehicles for small and medium fleet with 16 vehicles ordered and due to be delivered in 2026/27.			

Corporate Objective

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

Key Action	Update	
Principal Project: Newcastle tourism and recreation facilities	Target **Progress**	Jun 26 Green
Notes:	1 Feasibility Study completed on active travel routes Concept proposal underway on active travel hub / park and ride facility Active Travel route being progressed for Tipperary Woods and Castle Park	
Deliver the Council's Tourism Strategy.	Target **Progress**	Jun 26 Green
Notes:	1 Significant progress has been made in delivering the Tourism Strategy through the launch of the new destination brand, Mourne Gullion Strangford – Ireland's True Nature, alongside enhanced destination marketing, interpretation and signage improvements. Council continues to strengthen collaboration with tourism businesses and communities through the development of a Sustainable Tourism Network and the appointment of a dedicated facilitator approved. New tourism experiences have been introduced, including a Food and Drink Experience in Warrenpoint and a Mindfulness Experience within the Forest Parks. New events such as Restaurant Week Newcastle and The Garden Sessions at Slieve Gullion have further enhanced the district's tourism offering. Major investment continues across Council's Forest Parks and beaches, improving visitor infrastructure and accessibility. These initiatives are supporting sustainable tourism growth, strengthening the visitor economy and enhancing the district's profile as a leading tourism destination	

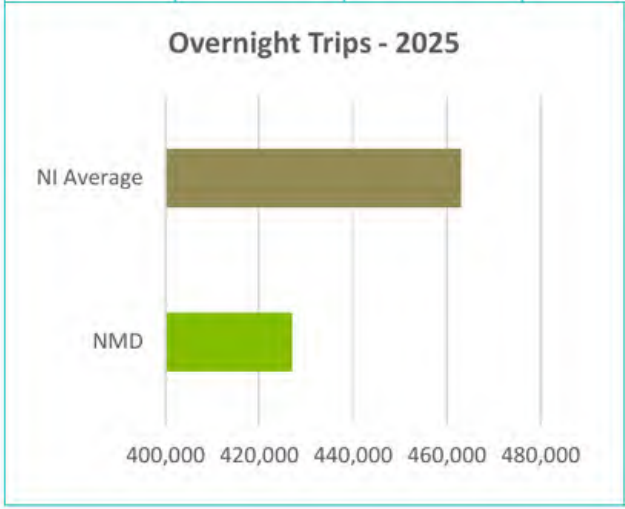
Develop the tourism proposition for the district and new visitor experiences with industry in line with Tourism Experience Brands	Target **Progress**	Jun 26 Green 1
	Notes:	**1** Significant progress has been made in raising the profile of the district through the launch of the new destination brand, Mourne Gullion Strangford – Ireland's True Nature, providing a unified identity for tourism promotion across the district. 4 new experiences have been delivered and 2 existing experiences reviewed
Continue to progress the Mourne Mountains Gateway Project as part of the BRCD investment programme, and other major tourism capital projects throughout the district.	Target **Progress**	Jun 26 Green 1
	Notes:	**1** Following decision by National Trust not to grant a lease, NMDDC working with key stakeholders to explore an alternative tourism proposition. Grade A Hotel Accommodation grant for £1 million was launched 19th September and 3 projects have been successful. Council approved the Outline Business Case for the Castlewellan Treetop Walk Project, representing an investment of approximately £6.8 million by Council, alongside a proposed £5 million investment from EAK. Progress is continuing on lease and legal agreements, together with the development of ancillary infrastructure required to support the project. Complementary investment is also being delivered through the National Lottery Heritage Fund's and Council of circa £7million investment in Castlewellan Forest Park, which has facilitated the reopening of the Annesley Arboretum and Walled Garden, while restoration works at the Grange Yard are nearing completion. Visitor improvement works have also been completed at Tyrella Beach Amenity Building, with the Mae Murray Accessible Beach facility now fully operational, improving accessibility and inclusivity for residents and visitors alike.

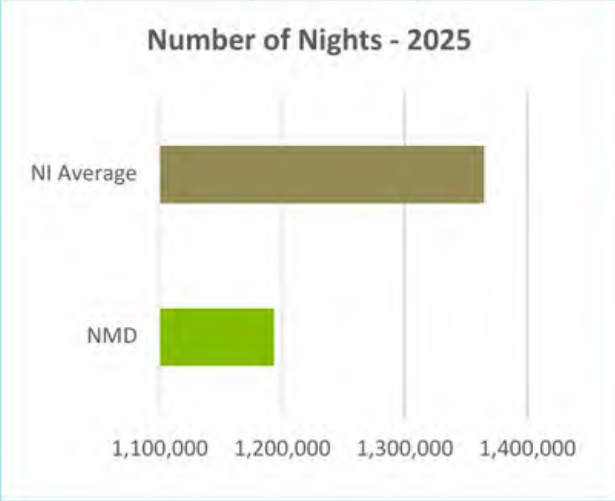
Implement the Mourne Gullion Strangford UNESCO Global Geopark Masterplan 2020–2023 and Business Plan 2021–2025.	Jun 26 Target Progress Green * 1
Notes:	1 Significant progress has been made in implementing the Mourne Gullion Strangford UNESCO Global Geopark Strategy, Management Plan and Action Plan. Delivery has included a broad programme of biodiversity conservation, climate resilience initiatives, heritage interpretation, education and youth engagement, sustainable tourism development, volunteer programmes, research, and community participation activities across the district. This work continues to deliver against Council objectives by enhancing biodiversity, increasing community participation, strengthening partnerships and supporting sustainable economic growth through the UNESCO Global Geopark designation.
Continue to deliver the Council's Arts, Culture & Heritage Strategy to grow our audiences, increase engagement and enhance our Arts, Museums and Events' offering.	Jun 26 Target Progress Green * 1
Notes:	1 Successful delivery of Giant Adventures and community events programme, schools engagement programme at the museums, and comprehensive Arts programme at Down Arts Centre.

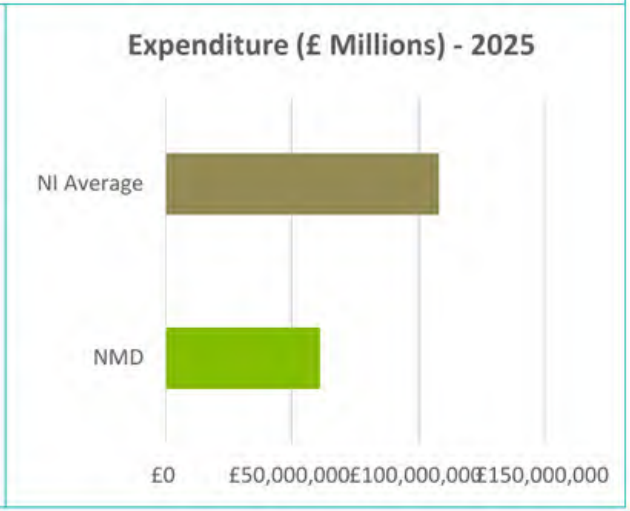
Measure of Success	2018	2019	2023	2024	2025	Trend	Explanatory Note
Number of overnight stays	449,953	455,876	482,585	443,776	427,157	▷	There was a break in tourism statistics between 2020 and 2023 due to the unprecedented impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. While 2023 data shows an increase in the number of overnight stays of 5.9% from 2019, NISRA has advised that the data wouldn't be directly comparable as there have been methodological changes in the surveys (including a change in source). Between 2024 and 2025 there was approximately a 3.7% decrease in the number of overnight stays recorded in Newry, Mourne and Down. Newry, Mourne and Down was one of 5 Council areas to experience a decrease during this period.

Level of visitor spend	£69,345,336	£67,983,191	£79,139,615	£73,277,005	£60,817,412	▽	There was a break in tourism statistics between 2020 and 2023 due to the unprecedented impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. While 2023 data shows an increase in the level of visitor spend of 16.4% from 2019, NISRA has advised that the data wouldn't be directly comparable as there have been methodological changes in the surveys (including a change in source). Between 2024 and 2025 there was approximately a 17% decrease in the level of visitor spend recorded in the District. Newry, Mourne and Down was one of only 3 Councils to record a decrease in expenditure between 2024 and 2025.
Measure of Success	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**	**2025**	**Trend**	**Explanatory Note**
Number of visitors to Council's Arts Centres and Museums	**New measure**			75,244	97,866	△	During 2025-26 there was a total of 97,866 visitors recorded across all Council's Arts Centres and Museums. This is an increase of 30% on the 75,244 visitors recorded in 2024-25. The breakdown of visitors across all the Council sites is as follows: Down Arts Centre: 28,096 Down County Museum: 14,378 Newry & Mourne Museum: 9,121 Newry Townhall: 32,099 Warrenpoint Townhall: 14,172

Measure of Success	2020	2021	2023	2024	2025	Trend	Explanatory Note
Level of visitor satisfaction		Satisfaction with Parks 83% (Baseline)	Satisfaction with Parks 76%	-	-	😐	A Visitor satisfaction survey was developed and deployed on the Council website in 2025 however but there was no response to the survey. To ensure this does not happen again the Council is re-launching the survey in Q2 2026/27, placing posters with QR codes at all relevant sites and issuing officers with mobile devices to complete face to face surveys. There was however feedback provided through the Council's Camp manager online booking system which received 400+ feedback messages on facilities and services associated with Forest Parks and over 90% feedback was 4 and 5 star rating.
		Satisfaction with Beaches 67% (Baseline)	Satisfaction with Beaches 52%		-		







Corporate Objective

Empowering communities to play an active part in civic life

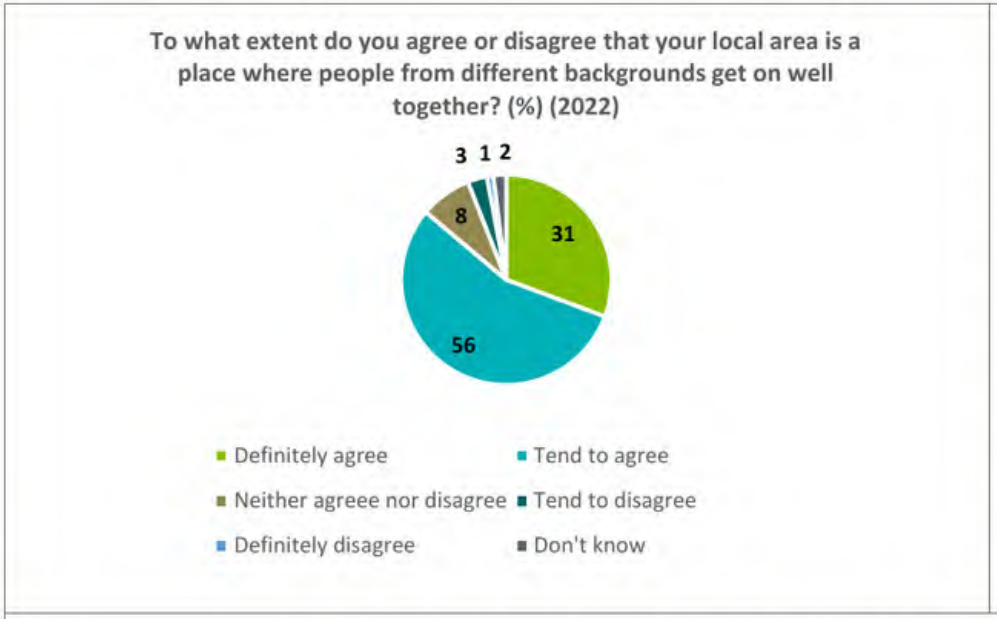
Key action	Update
Development and delivery of the District Electoral Area Action Plans	Jun 26 Target Progress: Green *1
Notes:	1 Programme delivery complete as per the 2025/26 DEA Action Plans
Development and delivery of the Policing & Community Safety Partnership Action Plan	Jun 26 Target Progress: Green *1
Notes:	1 Programme delivery complete as per the 2025/26 PCSP Action Plan
Development and delivery of the Good Relations Programme Action Plan	Jun 26 Target: Programme delivery complete Progress: Green
Development and delivery of the Downpatrick and Newry Neighbourhood Renewal Areas Action Plan	Jun 26 Target Progress: Green *1
Notes:	1 Programme delivery complete as per the 2025/26 Downpatrick & Newry NR Action Plans

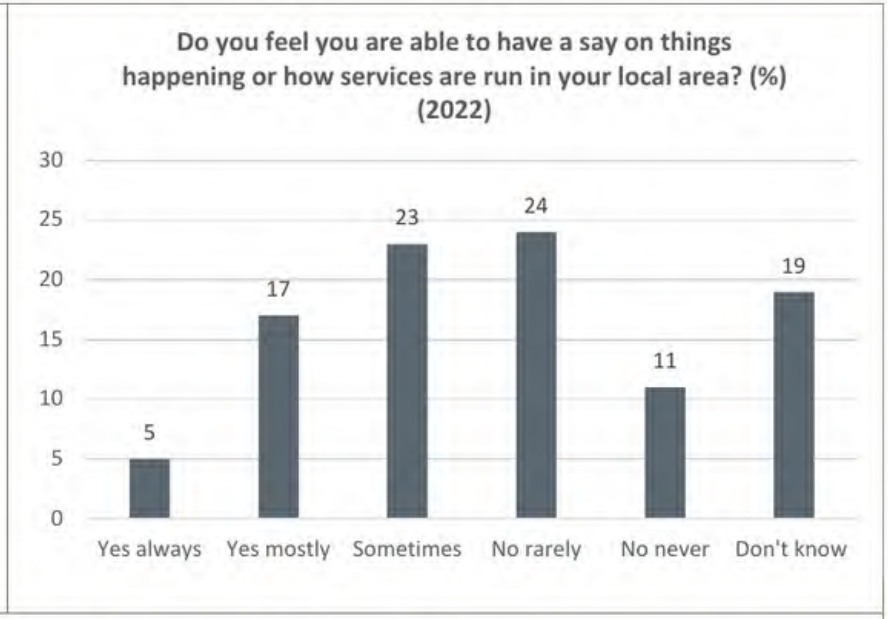
Development and delivery of the Social Inclusion Action Plan including the delivery of the Ethnic Minority Support Centre		Jun 26 Target **Progress** Green * 1
	Notes:	**1** Social Inclusion Action Plan completed.
Development and delivery of the PeacePlus Action Plan		Jun 26 Target **Progress** Green * 1
	Notes:	**1** The programme is on target for delivery with delays on capital expenditure accounted for and a plan in place to ensure timely delivery in line with the action plan.
Development and delivery of the Community Wealth Building Action Plan		Jun 26 Target **Progress** Green * 1
	Notes:	**1** Community Wealth Building actions have been mainstreamed within Directorate Services Plans as a cross-cutting theme.

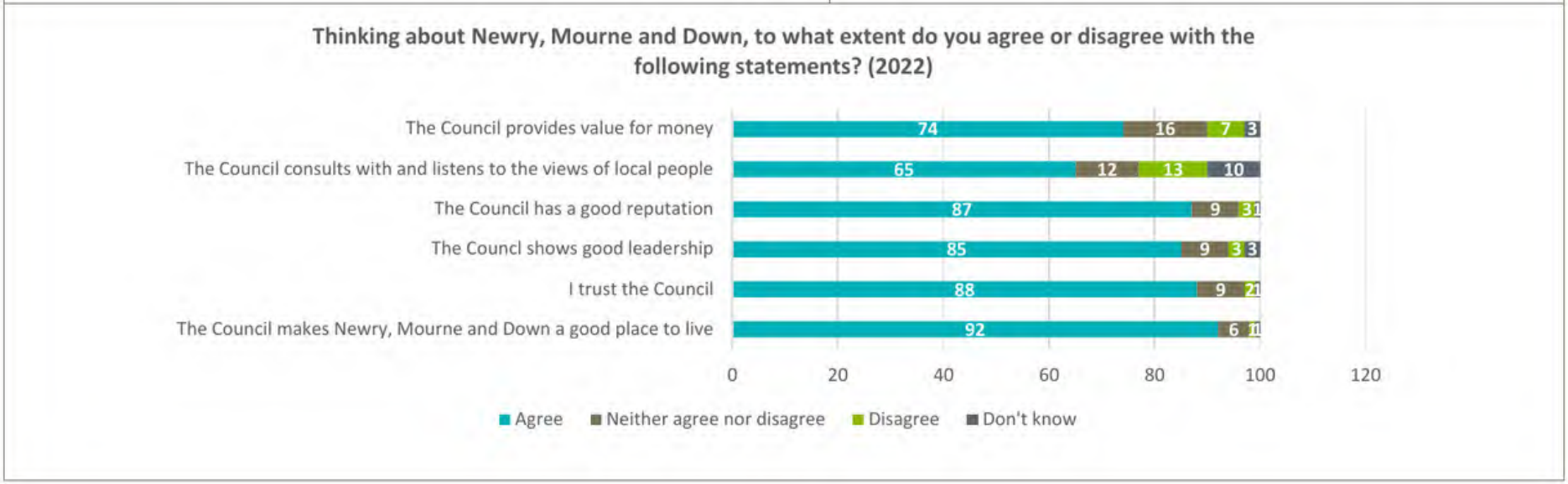
Implementation of the Community Plan	Target / Progress	Jun 26 / Green
Notes:	1 Implementation of the Community Plan continued in 2025-26 including progressing the priorities within the Health and Wellbeing Action Plan; delivery of Rural Housing Workshops; DEA based Participatory Budgeting events and the publication of the Community Planning Statement of Progress.	
Development of a Community Facilities Strategy	Target / Progress	Jun 26 / Amber
Notes:	1 Community Facilities being considered as part of Community Development Strategy which is currently being drafted	
Delivery of the Financial Assistance Programme	Target / Progress	Jun 26 / Green
Notes:	1 All calls were completed and claims finalised with the new site verification visits undertaken by budget holders	

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: • 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%.
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%		• 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. • 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. 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.
Measure of Success	**2024-25 Actual**	**2025-26 Actual**	**Status**	**Explanatory Note**
Number of financial assistance projects funded	391 projects awarded funding	361		During 2025-26, The Council awarded £1.97 million in funding to 361 successful applications for financial assistance. This was done through 5 different funding calls run throughout the year. This represented a success rate of 61% from a total of 588 applications made throughout the year.
Number of people accessing the Ethnic Minority Support Office services	2343 (Target: 2000)	2212 (Target: 2000)		There were 2,212 contacts recorded through the Ethnic Minority Support Centre during 2025-26, exceeding the target set.


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)
3 1 2
8
31
56
Definitely agree
Tend to agree
Neither agreee nor disagree
Tend to disagree
Definitely disagree
Don't know


Do you feel you are able to have a say on things happening or how services are run in your local area? (%) (2022)
30
25
20
15
10
5
0
5
17
23
24
11
19
Yes always
Yes mostly
Sometimes
No rarely
No never
Don't know


Thinking about Newry, Mourne and Down, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (2022)
The Council provides value for money
74
16
7
3
The Council consults with and listens to the views of local people
65
12
13
10
The Council has a good reputation
87
9
3
1
The Councl shows good leadership
85
9
3
3
I trust the Council
88
9
2
1
The Council makes Newry, Mourne and Down a good place to live
92
6
1
0
20
40
60
80
100
120
Agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Disagree
Don't know

Corporate Objective

Develop and revitalise our district

Key action	Update	
Principal Project: Newry City Centre Regeneration	Target Progress	Jun 26 Amber
Notes:	1 Full Business Case approved by DfC. Planning Approval in place. Civic Centre delayed following receipt of Pre Action Protocol Newry City Centre Regeneration Theatre/Conference Project- The theatre received planning permission 18 December 2024 and listed building consent August 2025. Woodvale Construction appointed, additional funding secured from Shared Island. Contractor due to mobilise in June 2026. Grade A Office Accommodation grant £3 Million Office accommodation grant was launched 19th September however with nil applications received. Development grant to reopen in 26/27. Hotel Accommodation grant £1 Million Office accommodation grant was launched 15th September with 4 applications submitted and now under assessment. Regional Innovation Hub MoU created and signed between Newry, Mourne and Down District Council and Queens University Innovation Oversight Board as an academic partner on the Regional Innovation Hub project. Potential partnership opportunities being explored with Digital Catapult that could also support the operation of a regional innovation hub in Newry City	
Principal Project: Downpatrick Regeneration	Target Progress	Jun 26 Green
Notes:	1 PSNI/Irish Street marketing brief prepared. Outline Business Case with DfC's economist. Council has committed capital funding to the regeneration of Irish Street. DRWG meet monthly to progress projects identified in the Living High Streets action plan. Following the launch of the Urban Park in Dunleath, additional funding was secured from DfC for linkages to open up Dunleath to St. Patrick's Avenue. Following engagement with DfI there is no funding available for a traffic survey, alternative sources of funding are being investigated. Engagement with NI Water regarding purchase of lands to enable development of toilets in Market Street. Letter of Offer received for Church Street & DeCourcy Place Public Realm from DfC. Pre-contract works ongoing with utilities. Contractor appointed following procurement (McQuillan Contracts), task and finish meetings continue along with monthly meetings with key stakeholders.	

Implement a Small Settlement regeneration scheme in partnership with Government Departments.	Target Progress	Jun 26 Green
Notes:	1 Small Settlements Scheme completed EI Schemes in Rostrevor, Castlewellan, Saintfield and Bessbrook. 7 seven revitalisation schemes in the villages of Annalong, Dundrum, Hilltown, Killyleagh, Meigh, Newtownhamilton, Strangford and Killough. Several of these regeneration projects, including shop front and dereliction enhancement schemes, and Make it Local campaigns.	
Implement regeneration initiatives across urban centres and develop forward work programme for future regeneration initiatives.	Target Progress	Jun 26 Green
Notes:	1 Quarterly meetings with DfC on urban centre development for Ballynahinch, Downpatrick, Kilkeel, Newry, Newcastle, and Warrenpoint. Kilkeel River Walk EI Scheme progressing through RIBA Stage 2	
Progress the Belfast Region City Deal.	Target Progress	Jun 26 Amber
Notes:	1 Theatre & Conference Facility: Contractor appointed, pre-construction period completed June 2026. Construction underway summer 2026. Grade A Office Accommodation: Open for applications May - November 2026 Civic Hub: Progression remains subject to Judicial Review	
Update existing masterplans and village plans in line with the emerging Local Development Plan.	Target Progress	Jun 26 Green
Notes:	1 Officers undertake Master Plan reviews bi annually. Village plans were reviewed in October 2025 on projects complete, project relevance and suitability for Shaping Sustainable Places. Crossmaglen Improvement Plan complete in March 2026.	
Implement our Public Convenience Strategy	Target Progress	Jun 26 Green
Notes:	1 Implementation of the public convenience strategy continues. 50% of the condition surveys have been completed. The outcome of these surveys will be used to prioritise which facilities will be refurbished or replaced through the Council's capital programme.	

Measure of success	2024-25	2025-26	Status Trend	Explanatory Note
Number of BRCD projects delivered	Progress underway	2		Grade A Office Accommodation launched and open for applications. Theatre and Conference Facility commenced, with contractor appointed and commencement of construction Q2 2026/27
Number of small settlement schemes delivered	4 complete	11	△	Small Settlements Scheme completed EI Schemes in Rostrevor, Castlewellan, Saintfield and Bessbrook. 7 seven revitalisation schemes in the villages of Annalong, Dundrum, Hilltown, Killyleagh, Meigh, Newtownhamilton, Strangford and Killough
Number of new/upgraded public conveniences	4	0	▽	6 public conveniences have been refurbished/upgraded thus far however no new build or upgraded public conveniences were carried out in 2025-26. 50% of the condition surveys have now been completed and the outcome of these surveys will be used to prioritise which facilities will be refurbished or replaced through the Council's capital programme.

Corporate Objective

Deliver sustainable services

Key action	Update
Principal Project: Organisational transformation and delivery of sustainable services	Jun 26 Target Progress: Green
Notes	1 Resources, funded from the Extended Producer Responsibility for packaging (pEPR) payments scheme, have been approved to be utilised within the Sustainability and Environment Directorate (S&E) to support the Council in proactively improving the effectiveness and efficiency of its Waste Collection and Recycling Services, as required by the funding scheme. Introduction of a new HR system is progressing with final business case approved and work on system project implementation plan progressing. Procurement policy reviewed and updated and staff trained in implementation of the Procurement Act 2023.
Develop a robust and reliable evidence base to inform decision making, policy development and service provision.	Jun 26 Target Progress: Green
Notes:	1 Council ran a number of public engagements including the draft performance improvement objectives and draft Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy. Community Planning indicator data has been updated and published as part of the Community Planning Statement of Progress 2026.

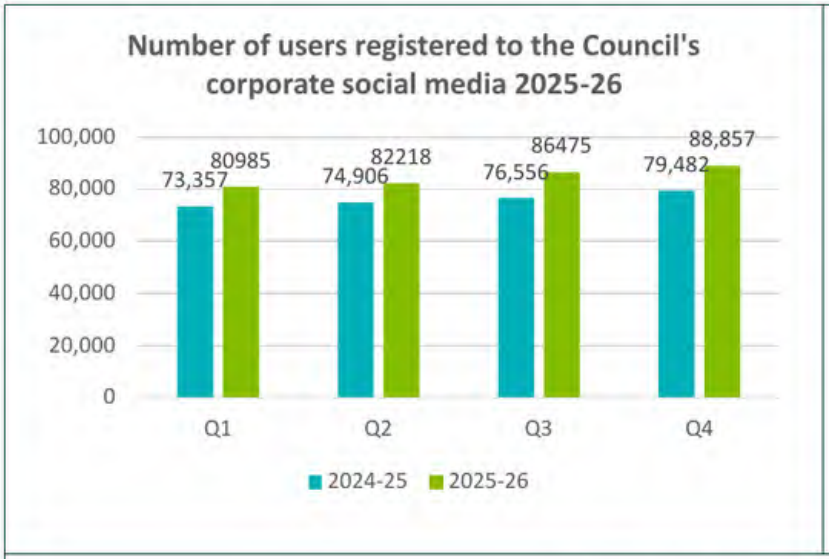
Effectively manage performance and align individual contribution with corporate objectives and better outcomes for all.		Target **Progress**	Jun 26 Green
	Notes.	1 The Council continues to mainstream and embed the Business Planning and Performance Management Framework. During 2025-26, the performance officer presented two sessions on the framework and the significant contribution of employees in achieving the corporate objectives to staff taking part in ILM Levels 2 and 3. An SMT/CMT Business Planning Day was also organised in April 2025 which involved the development of new Directorate Business Plans and how they would contribute to the achievement of the overall corporate plan objectives and better outcomes for all. These were agreed by Committee in June along with the Assessment of the 2024-25 Directorate Business Plans and published on the Council's website. The Performance Improvement Plan was developed and published before the statutory deadline of 30 June 2025 and the Council's Assessment of Performance was formulated and published before the statutory deadline of 30 September 2025.	
Establish accurate data collection arrangements to inform actions related to sustainability and climate change.		Target **Progress**	Jun 26 Green
	Notes.	1 Assessment of the carbon baseline has been completed through the collection of Council's energy data. This will be carried out on an annual basis for benchmarking purposes. Further investigations are underway into the potential procurement of an energy management system.	

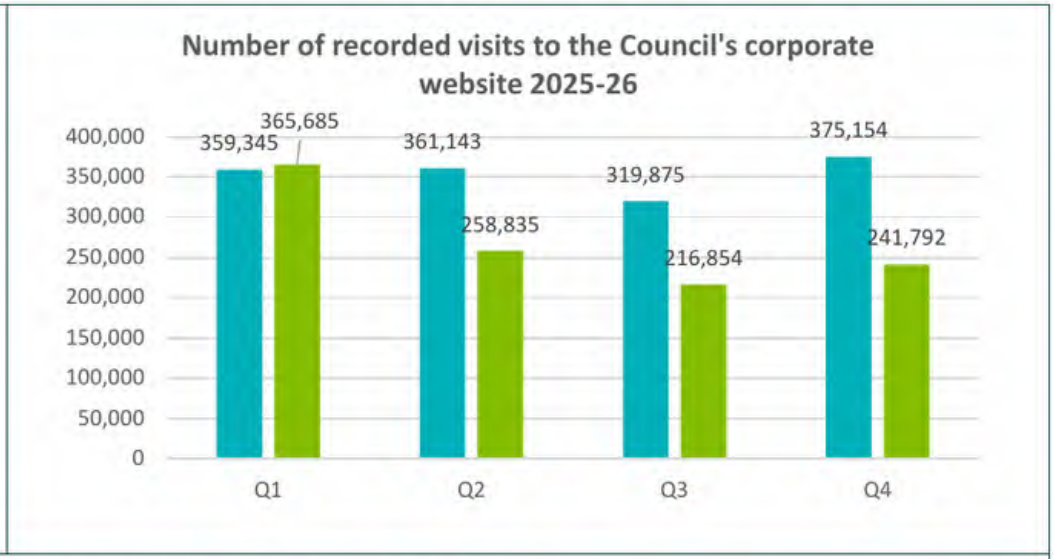
Implementation of People Perform Grow (PPG).		Target	Jun 26
		Progress	Green
	Notes:	1 People Perform Grow introduced across all services, with comprehensive training and support provided to managers, employees and teams. 25/26 PPG initiatives included: • PPG chat refresher campaign launched with new updates to simplify the process and make it easier to focus on key areas. New updates included: o New PPG Form o New PPG Tracker o New PPG Hub with resources/videos to support the PPG process • PPG eLearning module promoted as mandatory for all employees, to date over 735 skillgate users have completed this module. • PPG Leaders Coaching Workshops promoted as mandatory for line managers, workshops are designed to support managers to have effective, structured and supportive PPG conversations, this is now part of the corporate training programme • L&D collaboration with Business Support Managers to promote and support completion of PPG conversations in each directorate.	
Utilise our website and digital channels to enhance service delivery.		Target	Jun 26
		Progress	Green
	Notes:	1 Expanded website and digital channel use to improve accessibility, information clarity and self-service supporting enhanced service delivery. Key achievements: • 1,083,166 visits to corporate website. • 340 significant content updates on the corporate website • Launch of new Council LinkedIn Channel • Delivery of fully accessible Council website achieving WCAG 2.2 AA compliance in January 2026 • 88,857 users registered to the Council's corporate social media, an increase of 11.8% by comparison with 2024-25 • 3,261 social media notifications issued during 2025-26, an increase of 19.1% compared with 2024-25.	

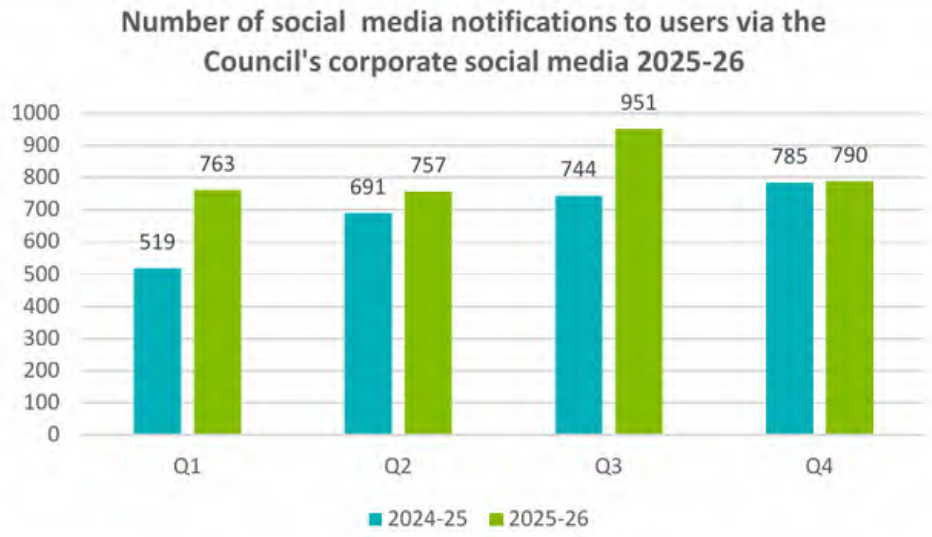
To embed a digital culture across the organisation.		Target	Jun 26
		Progress	Green
	Notes:	1 Demonstrated progress in embedding a digital-first culture through targeted staff engagement initiatives, structured training programmes, and increased adoption of digital tools to enable modern ways of working. • Established a Managed Security Operations Centre (SOC) to provide continuous monitoring, protection, and rapid response to emerging cyber threats and security incidents. • Successfully deployed Windows 11, alongside the replacement and modernisation of end-user computing devices. • Implemented a new endpoint security platform to enhance device-level protection and strengthen the overall security posture. • Achieved improved compliance with cybersecurity eLearning programmes, reinforcing organisational awareness and resilience. • Introduced a Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) framework to support flexible and agile working practices. • Developed and implemented a comprehensive suite of IT policies and procedures to underpin governance and operational excellence. • Maintained zero downtime throughout the year, despite the execution of significant platform upgrades and technology changes.	
Implement our Equality Action Plan		Target	Jun 26
		Progress	Green
	Notes:	1 Ongoing implementation of actions during the period including preparation and submission of annual progress report to Equality Commission for Northern Ireland by 31 August 2025, Quarterly Policy Screening reports considered by Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee, forwarded to equality consultees and all screening reports made available online.	
Implement our Disability Action Plan		Target	Jun 26
		Progress	Green
	Notes:	1 Ongoing implementation of actions during the period which were recorded and reported in the annual progress report submitted to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland by 31 August 2025..	
Implement our Irish Language Strategy		Target	Jun 26
		Progress	Green
	Notes:	1 Ongoing implementation of positive actions within the strategy. Six-monthly report on progress tabled at Irish Language Strategy Cross Party Working Group meeting 3 March 2026.	

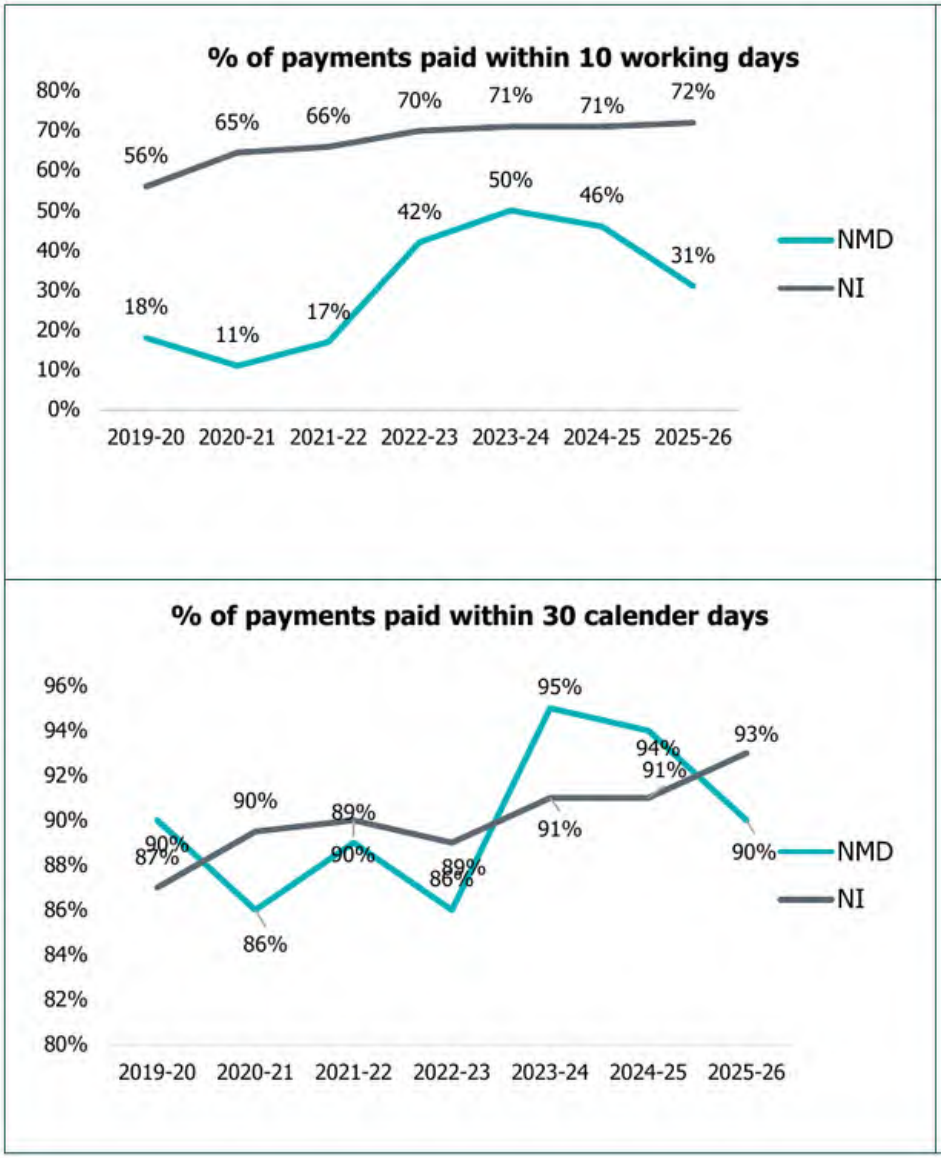
Measure of Success	Status Trend	Explanatory Note
Level of citizen satisfaction	☺	The 2022 Residents Survey revealed that: • 88% are satisfied with the Council overall, an increase of 1% on the 87% figure recorded in 2018. • 92% agree that the Council helps to make Newry, Mourne and Down a good place to live, an increase of 17% on the 75% recorded in 2018. • 88% trust the Council, an increase of 15% on the 73% recorded in 2018. • 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.
Compliance with Duty of Improvement	☺	The certificate of Compliance was received from the Local Government Auditor in relation to the Duty of Improvement 2025-26. 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.
Number of users registered to Council corporate social media channels	△	By the end of 2025-26, there were 88,857 users registered to the Council's corporate social media. This is an increase of 11.8% on the 79,482 users registered by the end of 2024-25. Council issued 3,261 social media notifications during 2025-26 which is an increase of 19.1% from the 2,739 notifications sent in 2024-25.
Number of visits to Council's corporate website	▽	During 2025-26, the Council recorded 1,083,166 visits to the corporate website. This represents a decrease of 23.5% when compared to the 1,415,517 visits recorded in 2024-25. It should be noted however that due to a new legal requirement under the Digital Marketing Act (DMA) adopted in late 2024, websites must now give users a clearer choice about whether they want to be tracked by cookies (which is how GA4 collects its data). Instead of automatically tracking visitors, users must now 'opt in' to allow cookies. Therefore, if people click "No" or ignore the cookie banner, their visits are not recorded in GA4 - even though they may still be using the site. Between June and August 2025, the Council reviewed and updated its Cookie Policy and introduced a more visible cookie pop-up that complies with the new law. This change went live in August 2025, so from that point onward, GA4 is reporting lower numbers, simply because fewer visitors are giving consent for tracking.

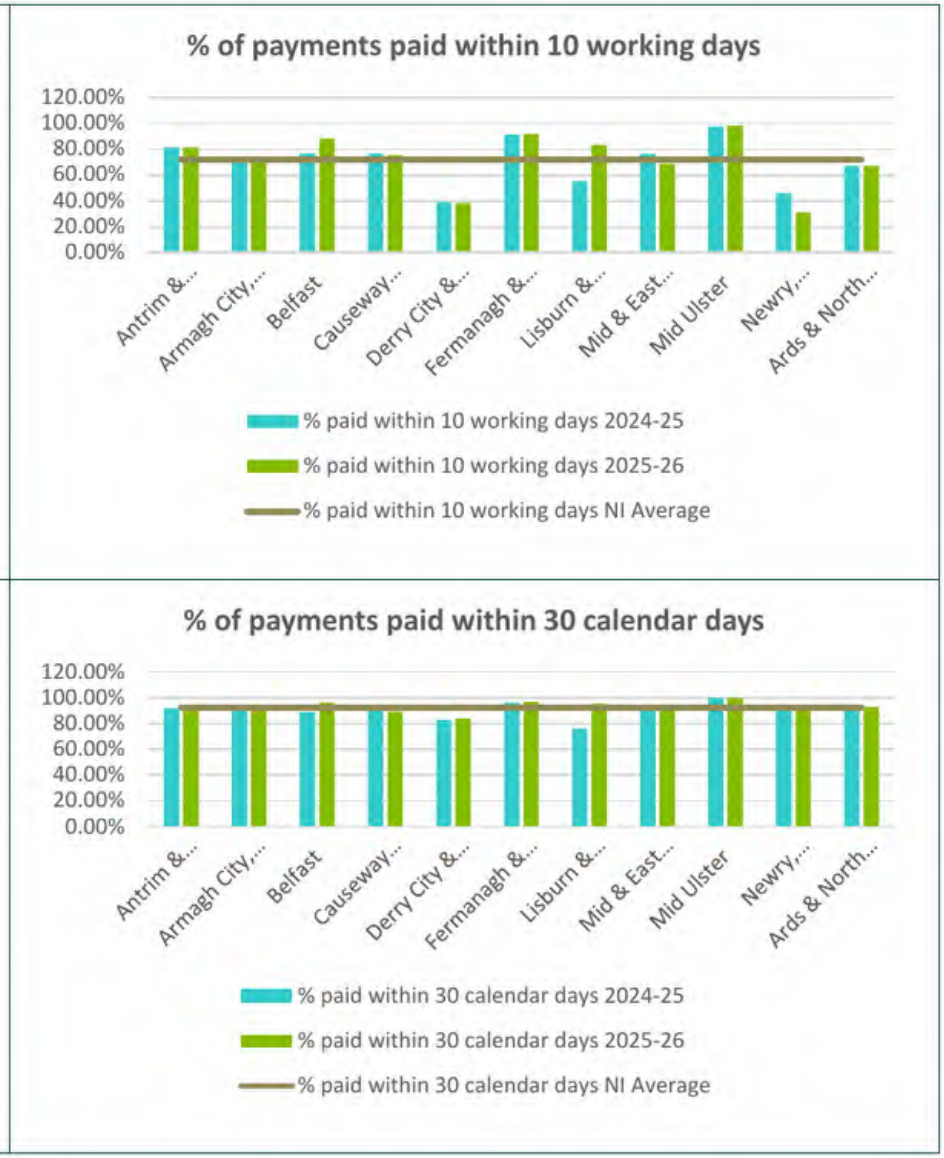
Level of absenteeism	▽	During 2025-26, Newry, Mourne and Down recorded an average of 24.93 days lost per full time equivalent employee. This is an increase of 3.43 days lost from the 21.5 days lost during 2024-25. Long term absence increased from 18.15 days in 2024-25 to 21.46 days per employee in 2025-26, while short term absence remained similar to last year at 3.47 days last per employee in 2025-26. 47% of the workforce had no recorded absence during 2025-26 which represents a decrease when compared to the 51% of employees with no recorded absence in 2024-25.	
Percentage of payments paid:		The percentage of payments made within 10 working days has decreased by 15% from 46% in 2024-25 to 31% in 2025-26 and was the lowest across all regional councils in 2025-26, ranking NMD 11/11 across Northern Ireland. The number of payments made within 30 calendar days has decreased by 5% between 2024-25 and 2025-26 falling from 94% to 90%. This is below the NI average of 93% of invoices paid within 30 calendar days and ranks Newry, Mourne and Down 8/11 across Northern Ireland. The Council has however, achieved the statutory target set of 90%. The percentage of payments paid outside 30 days has increased during this period from 6% in 2024-25 to 10% in 2025-26. This is above the regional average of 7% for payments paid outside 30 days with the Council ranked 8/11 across Northern Ireland.	
Within 10 working days	▽		
Within 30 calendar days	☺ ▷		
Outside 30 calendar days	▷		


Number of users registered to the Council's corporate social media 2025-26
100,000
80,000
60,000
40,000
20,000
0
73,357
80985
74,906
82218
76,556
86475
79,482
88,857
Q1
Q2
Q3
Q4
2024-25
2025-26


Number of recorded visits to the Council's corporate website 2025-26
400,000
350,000
300,000
250,000
200,000
150,000
100,000
50,000
0
359,345
365,685
361,143
258,835
319,875
216,854
375,154
241,792
Q1
Q2
Q3
Q4

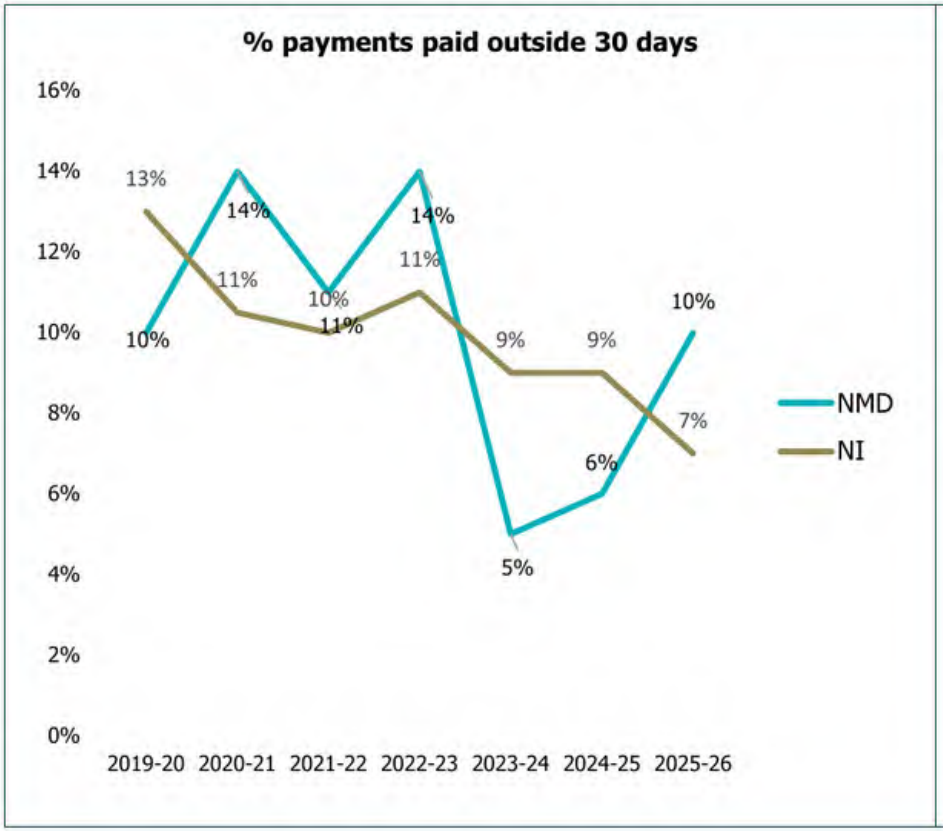

Number of social media notifications to users via the Council's corporate social media 2025-26
1000
900
800
700
600
500
400
300
200
100
0
519
763
691
757
744
951
785
790
Q1
Q2
Q3
Q4
2024-25
2025-26

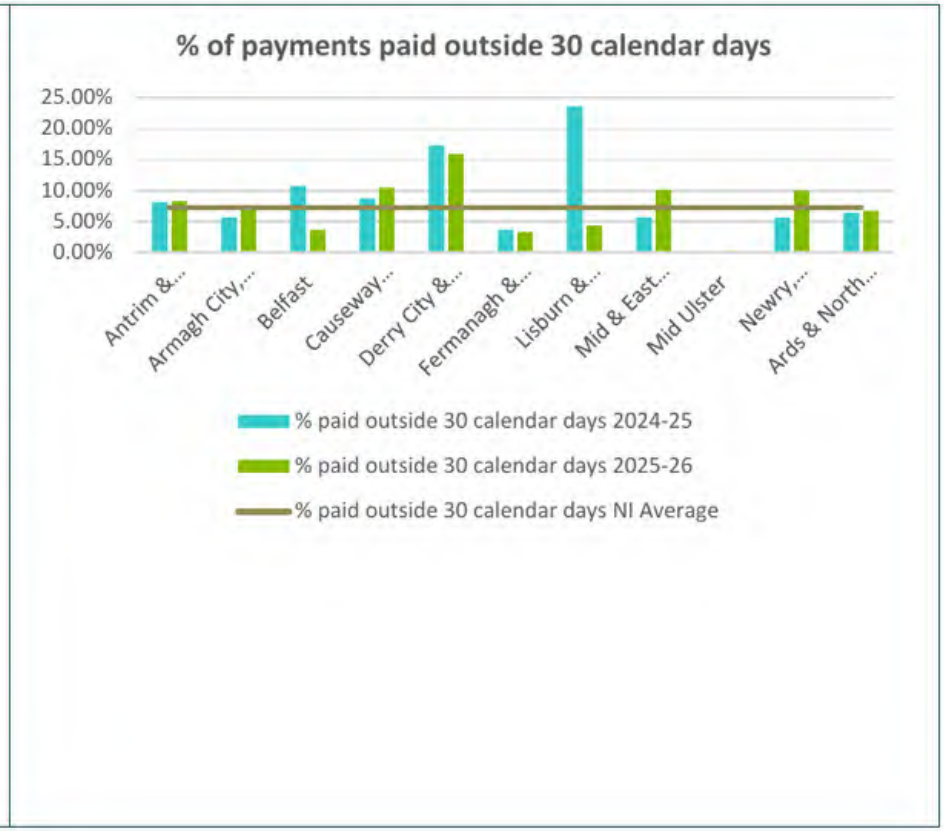

% of payments paid within 10 working days
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
56%
65%
66%
70%
71%
71%
72%
18%
11%
17%
42%
50%
46%
31%
2019-20
2020-21
2021-22
2022-23
2023-24
2024-25
2025-26
NMD
NI


% of payments paid within 10 working days
120.00%
100.00%
80.00%
60.00%
40.00%
20.00%
0.00%
Antrim &...
Armagh City,...
Belfast
Causeway...
Derry City &...
Fermanagh &...
Lisburn &...
Mid & East...
Mid Ulster
Newry,...
Ards & North...
% paid within 10 working days 2024-25
% paid within 10 working days 2025-26
% paid within 10 working days NI Average

% of payments paid within 30 calender days
96%
94%
92%
90%
88%
86%
84%
82%
80%
87%
90%
86%
90%
89%
86%
95%
91%
94%
91%
93%
90%
2019-20
2020-21
2021-22
2022-23
2023-24
2024-25
2025-26
NMD
NI

% of payments paid within 30 calendar days
120.00%
100.00%
80.00%
60.00%
40.00%
20.00%
0.00%
Antrim &...
Armagh City,...
Belfast
Causeway...
Derry City &...
Fermanagh &...
Lisburn &...
Mid & East...
Mid Ulster
Newry,...
Ards & North...
% paid within 30 calendar days 2024-25
% paid within 30 calendar days 2025-26
% paid within 30 calendar days NI Average


% payments paid outside 30 days
16%
14%
12%
10%
8%
6%
4%
2%
0%
2019-20
2020-21
2021-22
2022-23
2023-24
2024-25
2025-26
13%
10%
14%
11%
10%
11%
14%
11%
5%
9%
6%
9%
10%
7%
NMD
NI


% of payments paid outside 30 calendar days
25.00%
20.00%
15.00%
10.00%
5.00%
0.00%
Antrim &...
Armagh City,...
Belfast
Causeway...
Derry City &...
Fermanagh &...
Lisburn &...
Mid & East...
Mid Ulster
Newry,...
Ards & North...
% paid outside 30 calendar days 2024-25
% paid outside 30 calendar days 2025-26
% paid outside 30 calendar days NI Average

Corporate Objective

Represent the voice of the district with our partners

Key action	Update	
Continue to work with key stakeholders and our statutory partners to improve the health and wellbeing across the district.	Target	Jun 26
	Progress	Green
Notes:	1 All of the priorities within the Community Planning Health and Wellbeing Action Plan have been progressed, including priorities addressing Isolation and Loneliness, promoting Physical Activity amongst young people, Place Based approaches to Health and Wellbeing (led by the Strategic Stakeholder Forum) and Participatory Budgeting. Under Communities Leading Change Participatory Budgeting project, a pooled budget of £08,000 was distributed to 98 local community and voluntary groups to deliver health and wellbeing events in their communities. The Council continue to support Health and Wellbeing activity of our Statutory and CV partners, including supporting the Integrated Care Systems (AIPB) and the projects of the Strategic Stakeholder Forum.	
Continue to work with key stakeholders and our statutory partners to identify appropriate actions in relation to the climate change emergency	Target	Jun 26
	Progress	Green
Notes:	1 The Council's Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan has been finalised, which included a number of workshops with key stakeholders. The target date for launch of the strategy and associated action plan is Q2 26/27. Council also continues to work with other Councils and stakeholders through various forums including: Sustainable NI, SOLACE, NILGA, NIE and APSE.	

Collaborate and engage with key tourism & hospitality sector stakeholders to reinforce a strong partnership approach to tourism growth and leadership – including tourism business clusters & industry associations	Target **Progress**	Jun 26 Green 1
Notes:	1 Collaboration with tourism businesses, community organisations and key stakeholders continues to be a central focus. A Sustainable Tourism Network has been established with 29 businesses across the tourism sector. To work with the Network and the wider tourism and community sector Council has agreed the appointment of a dedicated facilitator. This initiative will strengthen partnerships, encourage sustainable tourism practices and support collaborative destination development. Engagement with local businesses has also facilitated the introduction of new tourism experiences and events, helping to build local capacity and support year-round tourism activity.	
Work with partners to implement the Community Plan and deliver better outcomes / improve the quality of life for all	Target **Progress**	Jun 26 Green 1
Notes:	1 Priority Activity continues to be carried out through the delivery of actions from the PB action plan and the Health and Wellbeing Action Plan. The CPP continue to support Partner Led Projects such as the NMD Youth Voice, Community Support Partnership, LMPs and LEPs.	
Support elected members in their advocacy role around key local actions	Target **Progress**	Jun 26 Green 1
Notes:	1 By ensuring councillors are informed, resourced, and procedurally supported, Democratic Services helps them champion local priorities, hold decision-makers to account, and represent their communities effectively within and beyond the council	
Implementation of Elected Member Development programme	Target **Progress**	Jun 26 Green 1
Notes:	1 Initial consideration was given to commencing preparations for the re-attainment of the Elected Member Development Charter. Discussions were held with Party Leaders to review the value and timing of pursuing re-accreditation. Following these discussions, it was recommended by Party Leaders that the Council would not proceed with re-attainment at this stage. Despite this decision, I have continued to ensure that the principles of the Charter remain embedded within our approach to Elected Member development, particularly around identifying training needs, maintaining training records, and promoting continuous learning opportunities.	

Measure of Success	Status	Explanatory note
Compliance with the duty of Community Planning	☺	During 2025-26, the Council continued to comply with the statutory duty of community planning. The Community Planning Partnership met three time during the past year.
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.
Number of training events provided to elected members	▷	There were two training events run for elected members during 2025-2026 and included: Code of Conduct Training Audit Committee Training There were also numerous workshops held for Elected Members including: Corporate Presentation Local Development Plan Planning

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

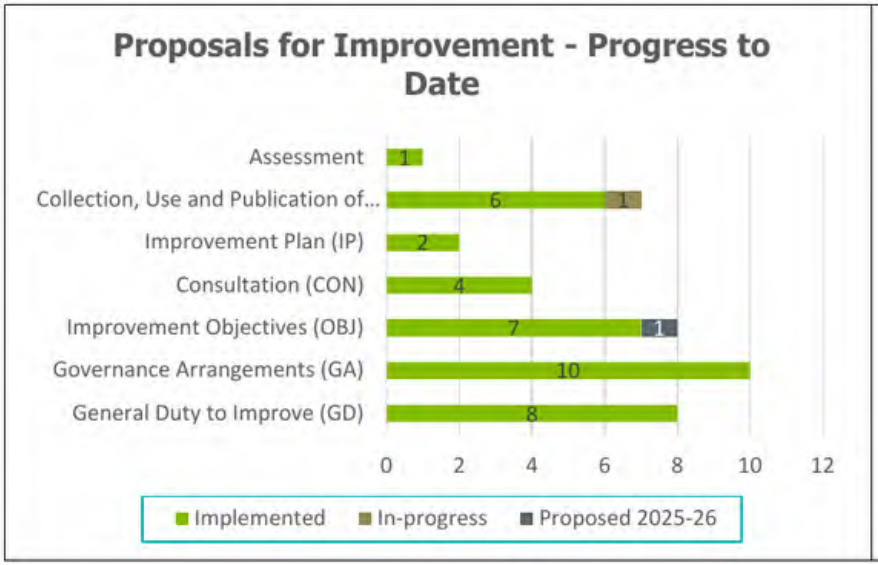
Performance Audit and Assessments: Proposals for Improvement - Progress Report

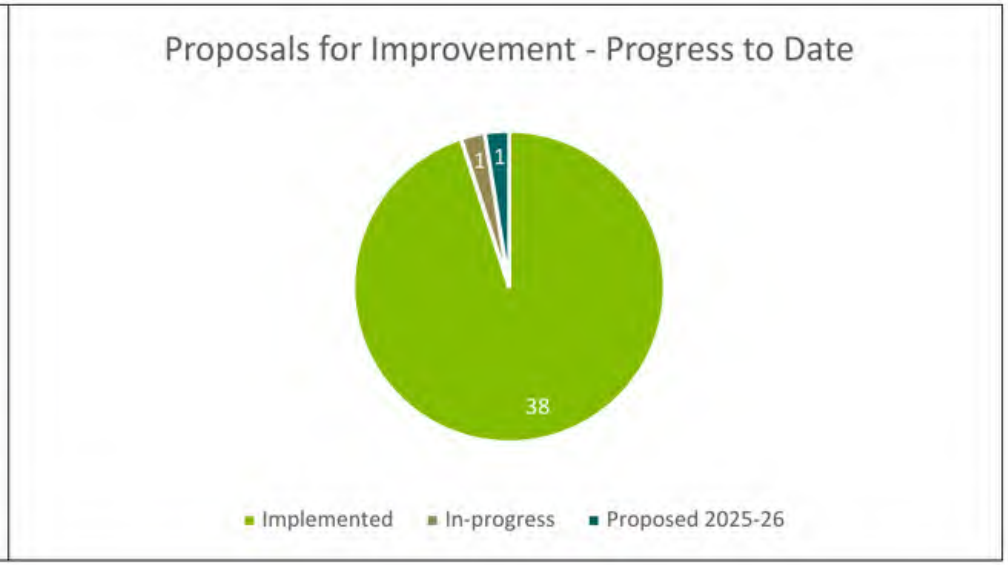
For the past seven years, the Local Government Auditor has put forward 'proposals for improvement' as part of the annual Performance Audit and Assessments which are carried out by the Northern Ireland Audit Office. The purpose of the 'proposals for improvement' is to support the Council in putting in 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

Legend	
Proposal implemented / on track to be implemented	
Proposal partially implemented / likely to be implemented	
Proposal not implemented	


Proposals for Improvement - Progress to Date
Assessment
Collection, Use and Publication of...
Improvement Plan (IP)
Consultation (CON)
Improvement Objectives (OBJ)
Governance Arrangements (GA)
General Duty to Improve (GD)
1
6
1
2
4
7
1
10
8
0
2
4
6
8
10
12
Implemented
In-progress
Proposed 2025-26


Proposals for Improvement - Progress to Date
1
1
38
Implemented
In-progress
Proposed 2025-26

Theme, Proposal and Progress to Date	
THEME: Improvement Objectives	
PROPOSAL FOR IMPROVEMENT: The Council should: • **consider the format of the future Self-Assessment Reports to ensure the Performance Improvement results are prominent and readily identifiable.** • **ensure targets and comparatives are in place for all measures of success, where this would be appropriate; and,** • **review how visuals are presented in the Self-Assessment Report.**	
Since 2016, the Council has provided its self-assessment in the same format, and this has not been raised as an issue. The indicators and measures within the Council's current corporate plan 2024-27, which we assess as part of the Council's self-imposed indicators for the Assessment of Performance, have not been prescribed targets and where visuals have been provided, where possible, the explanatory note makes the reader aware of why it has been presented as such.	
PROGRESS TO DATE	
Following the proposal for improvement from the 2025-26 Audit and Assessment, the Council has altered the layout of this year's self-assessment to make it more reader friendly and ensure a better flow. The Performance Improvement Objectives will now be assessed first in the report, followed by the self-imposed indicators which encompass the 8 corporate objectives from the Council's Corporate Plan 2024-27. Whilst no targets have been set for the measures within the corporate plan, where the measures are the same as those within the Performance Improvement Plan, the same targets have been imposed. Similarly, where one of the seven statutory indicators of economic development, waste and planning has been included as a measure within the corporate plan the statutory target has been assigned. Where there is a comparative analysis available for a corporate plan measure from the previous year this has been included with an arrow used to indicate improvement or otherwise in performance. Where a visual has been provided the explanatory note will, where possible, explains why that specific visual has been prescribed.	

THEME: Collection, use and publication of performance information	
PROPOSAL FOR IMPROVEMENT: The Council should ensure that its improvement plan and self-assessment report are approved in line with the Council's governance framework before publication	
Since 2015, the Council has requested through the Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee, authority to publish the Performance Improvement Plan before 30 June every year, ahead of full Council ratification. This issue has never been brought up by the Northern Ireland Audit Office in any previous self-assessments.	
PROGRESS TO DATE	
The 2026-27 Performance Improvement Plan was agreed by the Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee in May 2026 following a 9-week public consultation. This was then ratified by full Council at the start of June 2026 before being published on the Council's website before the 30 June 2026 in line with our statutory obligation and the Council's governance framework. The 2024-25 Self-Assessment was agreed by the Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee in August 2025 followed by ratification of full Council at the start of September and was published by 30 September 2025 in line with the Council's governance framework.	
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	
Targets, where set, have now been included since 2024-25 and sit below the actual figure recorded for the assessment year in question. This will also be carried forward for all future Assessment of Performance reports.	

THEME: Assessment	
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	
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.	
PROGRESS TO DATE	
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. 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.	
THEME: General duty to improve	**Status**
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	
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 down to Service Plans. Training has also been provided to all relevant staff, and this training has been recorded for continuous reference. Reports have now begun to be completed on the system and sent to committee for approval.

The performance management system is available for relevant employees to access on the Council's managed favourites

PROGRESS TO DATE

The Council has continued to embed the Business Planning and Performance Management Framework, 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 the continued implementation of the Community Plan in 2025/26 which included:

Participatory Budgeting events carried out in each of the 7 District Electoral Areas (DEA's).

Targeting Isolation and Loneliness Workshops held across the District.

Rural Housing Workshops held in each of the 7 DEA's.

Other partnership priorities

Corporate Plan
The Council's Corporate Plan 2024-27 was approved through the Council's committee structure in August 2024. Implementation has continued, and this is the second assessment of the objectives, actions and measures through the Council's Assessment of Performance report 2025-26.

Performance Improvement Plan
The Council published the Performance Improvement Plan 2026-27 ahead of the statutory deadline and after full ratification of Council. Three of the Performance Improvement Objectives were carried forward from 2025-26, while the wording of the economic development and climate change objectives has been refined to make them more succinct, meaningful, and better reflect the evolving work taking place across these areas. A number of new measures and supporting actions have also been included across the objectives following consultation with relevant officers and the public consultation. 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 a public consultation process between February-April 2026.

Directorate Business Plans
Four Directorate Business Plans 2026-27 were developed and approved by the Senior Management Team and relevant Council Committees. Each Business Plan also includes objectives, key actions and measures for success which are aligned to the corporate objectives. 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 2025-26, and some departments, particularly the Sustainability and Environment Department were very proactive in engaging employees in the development of the 2026-27 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, 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.

People Perform Grow has now been introduced across all services, with comprehensive training and support provided to managers, employees and teams. During 25/26 PPG initiatives included:

- **PPG chat refresher campaign** launched with new updates to simplify the process and make it easier to focus on key areas. New updates included:
    - **New PPG Form**
    - **New PPG Tracker**
    - **New PPG Hub** with resources/videos to support the PPG process
- **PPG eLearning module** promoted as mandatory for all employees, to date over 735 skillgate users have completed this module.
- **PPG Leaders Coaching Workshops** promoted as mandatory for line managers, workshops are designed to support managers to have effective, structured and supportive PPG conversations, this is now part of the corporate training programme
- **L&D collaboration with Business Support Managers** to promote and support completion of PPG conversations in each directorate.

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 is also 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 2025-26 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**
PROPOSAL: The Council should consider using Internal Audit to review the performance improvement arrangements.	
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 Performance Indicators 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.	
PROGRESS	
The Performance section had another 'Performance Data and Validations' audit take place in Q4 2025-26 which looked at a number of measures within the Performance Improvement Plan 2025-26. The review looked specifically at three measures which included: • the number of people participating in targeted health programmes – performance improvement objective 1; • the percentage of Council fleet younger than 8 years – performance improvement objective 4; • the average processing time of major planning applications (weeks) (statutory performance indicator) – performance improvement objective 5. Whilst the audit identified some improvements which could be incorporated into the Council's systems for the performance data and validation process the Council did receive a **satisfactory** level of assurance regarding the effective and efficient achievement of the Council's objectives. The Performance section had a 'Performance Data and Validations' audit take place in Q4 2024-25, which looked at a number of measures within the Performance Improvement Plan 2024-25. The review looked specifically at the validation processes for certain measures including statutory indicators as well as internally collected data and measures. Whilst the audit identified some improvements which could be incorporated into the Council's systems for the performance data and validation process, the Council did receive a **satisfactory** level of assurance regarding the effective and efficient achievement of the Council's objectives.	

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 **satisfactory** 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.

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 2026-27.

THEME: Improvement Objectives	Status
PROGRESS	

Three of the 2025-26 performance improvement objectives have been carried forward to 2026-27 whilst the wording of our economic development and climate change objectives have been refined to make them more succinct, meaningful, and better reflect the evolving work taking place across these areas. 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 Q4 2025-26 and Q1 2026-27. These objectives are considered to be specific, focused and measurable, and were approved by the Senior Management Team and Strategy Policy and Resources Committee in May 2026 and ratified by full Council in June 2026 and published before 30 June 2026, in order to meet the statutory deadline.

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, job creation and pathways to employment
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 reduce our contribution to climate change by cutting carbon emissions and improving the efficiency of our fleet and buildings.
5. We will improve the processing times of planning applications and enforcement cases by implementing the Planning Service Improvement Programme

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.

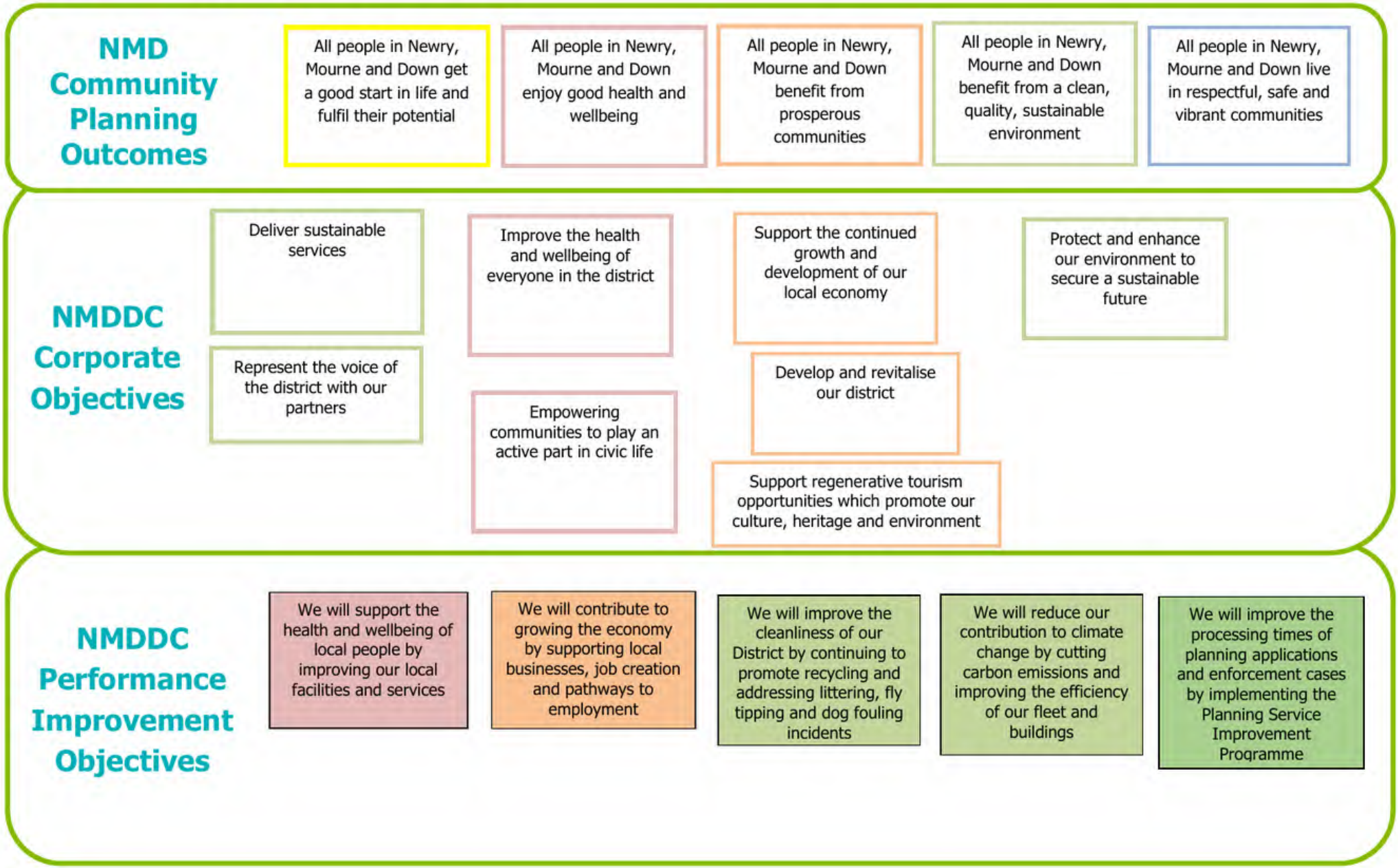
As part of the process to redefine the current suite of performance improvement objectives, the Council reviewed the 'supporting actions' and 'measures of success' which underpin each objective, in order to ensure they remain meaningful and that their achievement can demonstrate improvement. Where possible and appropriate, baseline data for each 'measure of success' has been included in the Performance Improvement Plan 2026-27, to demonstrate performance trends over time and targets for improvement have also been agreed.

THEME: Consultation
PROGRESS
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 2026-27 consultation and engagement process resulted in 54 completed surveys and engagement with 68 stakeholders through the Crotlieve DEA Forum, Downpatrick DEA Forum, Slieve Croob DEA Forum, Rowallane DEA Forum and The Mournes DEA Forum as well as Section 75 groups, including Newry, Mourne and Down Youth Voice and the Age Friendly Alliance. This consultation and engagement process was launched through the Council's website, under its consultations page, publicised through public notices in local newspapers and through the Council's social media channels and supplemented by the 764 responses to the Residents Survey in 2022. The majority of consultees agreed with the proposed performance improvement objectives 2026-27.
THEME: Improvement Plan
PROGRESS
The Council published the Performance Improvement Plan 2026-27 ahead of the statutory timescale of 30 June 2026. The Council has also published the summary document 'Our Performance Looking Back Going Forward', to provide a user-friendly overview of retrospective performance during 2025-26 and the forward-looking performance objectives for 2026-27.
THEME: Arrangements to Improve
PROGRESS
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.

THEME: Collection, Use and Publication of Performance Information	Status
PROGRESS	
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.	

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, 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.

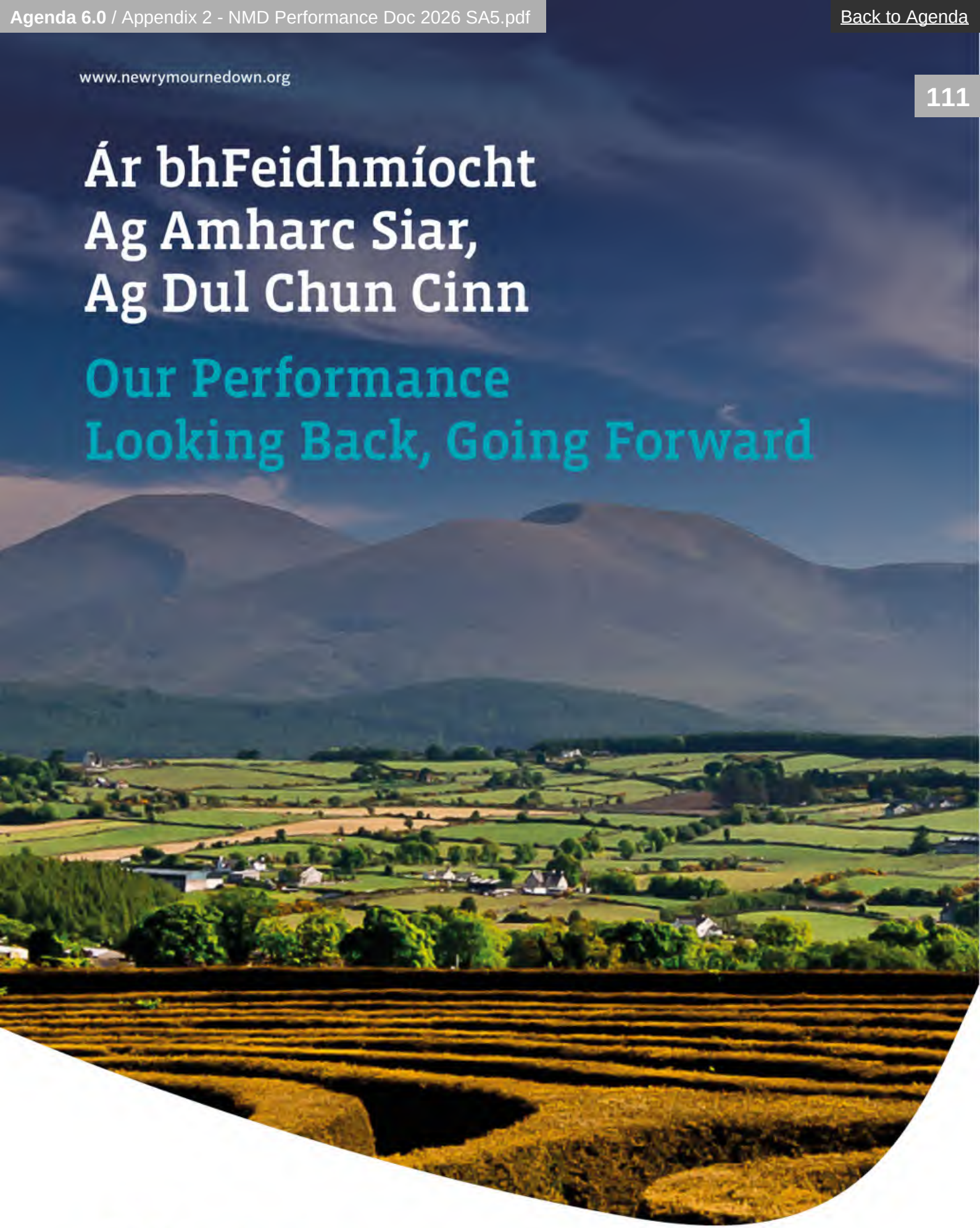
Appendix 2: The Golden Thread



www.newrymournedown.org

Ár bhFeidhmíocht Ag Amharc Siar, Ag Dul Chun Cinn

Our Performance Looking Back, Going Forward



Comhairle Ceantair
an Iúir, Mhúrn agus an Dúin
Newry, Mourne and Down
District Council

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

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.



Looking Back

Assessment of Performance 2025-26

Every year, we are required to publish an Assessment of Performance to demonstrate whether planned improvements have been achieved. The Assessment of Performance sets out progress against the current 'measures of success' within the:

- **Corporate Plan 2024-27**
- **Performance Improvement Plan 2025-26 (including the statutory performance indicators and standards)**

Our performance has been tracked against set targets and trends over time, using the legend below.

Status		Trend	
☺	Target or objective achieved / on track to be achieved	△	Performance has improved since the previous year
😐	Target or objective partially 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: 183,115

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: 79.0 years /
Female: 82.9 years

Age Profile: Based on NISRA Mid-Year Estimates.
0-15 years: 21.7%
65+ years: 18%

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

£14.27m awarded through the Financial Assistance Scheme since 2015



Tourism

In 2025:

Numbers of overnight stays 427,157

Level of visitor spend - £60,817,412

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

Over 930,000 paid attendances recorded across our 6 leisure centres during 2025-26

£225,000 of financial assistance funding allocated to sports clubs across the District in 2025-26



Economy

Employment rate: 78.2%

9,525 VAT Registered Businesses

23.1% of the population aged 16 years and over have no qualifications

236 new jobs promoted through business start activity

215 existing businesses supported to progress growth and scaling ambitions



Environment

Recycling is important to 91% of residents

Top perceived problem for residents: Dog mess and fouling

Recycling rate: 48.3%

100% of Community Clean up requests supported

Fifth lowest level of waste to landfill across all NI Councils



Performance at a Glance

A snapshot of the past year

Performance Improvement Objective	Progress	Status Trend
We will support the health and wellbeing of local people by improving our leisure facilities and services	**26.7%** increase in paid attendances at Council leisure centres	☺ △
	39% increase in the number of people participating in targeted health programmes	☺ △
	£225,000 worth of financial assistance funding was allocated to sports clubs across the District	☺
	11.4% increase in the number of Council leisure centre memberships	☺ △
	4 capital leisure projects progressed	☺
	7 play parks upgraded across the District	☺
We will contribute to growing the economy by supporting local businesses and job creation	**236*** new jobs promoted through business start activity	☺ △
	12 new social enterprise businesses supported and **16** new social enterprise jobs created	☺ ▷
	188* new enterprises created as a result of support	☺ △
	215* existing businesses supported to progress growth and scaling ambitions	😐 ▷
	4,719 participants engaged across all 'Go Succeed' activity in 2025-26	☺ △
We will improve the cleanliness of our District by continuing to promote recycling and addressing littering, fly tipping and dog fouling incidents	**35** fixed penalty notices issued and **32** paid	☹ △
	91% of all fixed penalty notices issued have been paid	☺
	100% of community clean up requests supported	☺
	Decrease in the rate of recycling, to **48.3%****	😐 ▷
	Increase in the amount of biodegradable Local Authority Collected Municipal Waste that is landfilled.	☺ ▽
	10 'Live Here, Love Here' environmental projects supported	▽

Performance Improvement Objective	Progress	Status Trend
We will improve our sustainability and reduce our impacts in relation to climate change	**1** vehicle within the Council fleet that has an alternative fuel source	☹
	0 Council supported EV charging points installed in 2025-26	☹
	78% of Council fleet younger than 8 years.	😐▷
	The Baseline Emissions Footprint for Newry Mourne and Down was established and is 5,246 tCO2e (Tonnes of CO2 equivalent)	☺
	2,800 trees planted on Council managed estates	☺△
We will improve the processing times of planning applications and enforcement cases by implementing the Planning Service Improvement Programme	Based on the 2024-25 annual finalised results, which is the only one publicly available, The Council received the third highest number of planning applications across the 11 Councils	☺
	The processing time for local planning applications increased from **45.2** weeks in 2024-25 to **60.2** weeks *** in 2025-26	☹▽
	The processing time for major planning applications increased from **29.6** weeks in 2024-25 to **100.3** weeks*** in 2025-26	☹▽
	The percentage of enforcement cases progressed within the statutory timescale decreased by 11.2% from **47.6%** in 2024-25 to **36.4%**** in 2025-26	☹▽
	Based on the 2024-25 annual finalised results, which is the only one publicly available, the number of planning applications in the system for 12 months or more increased from **352** by year end 2023-24 to **408** by year end 2024-25	☹▽
	Based on the 2024-25 annual finalised results, which is the only one publicly available, the number of enforcement cases in the system for 12 months or more decreased from **599** by year end 2023-24 to **574** by year end 2024-25.	☹△

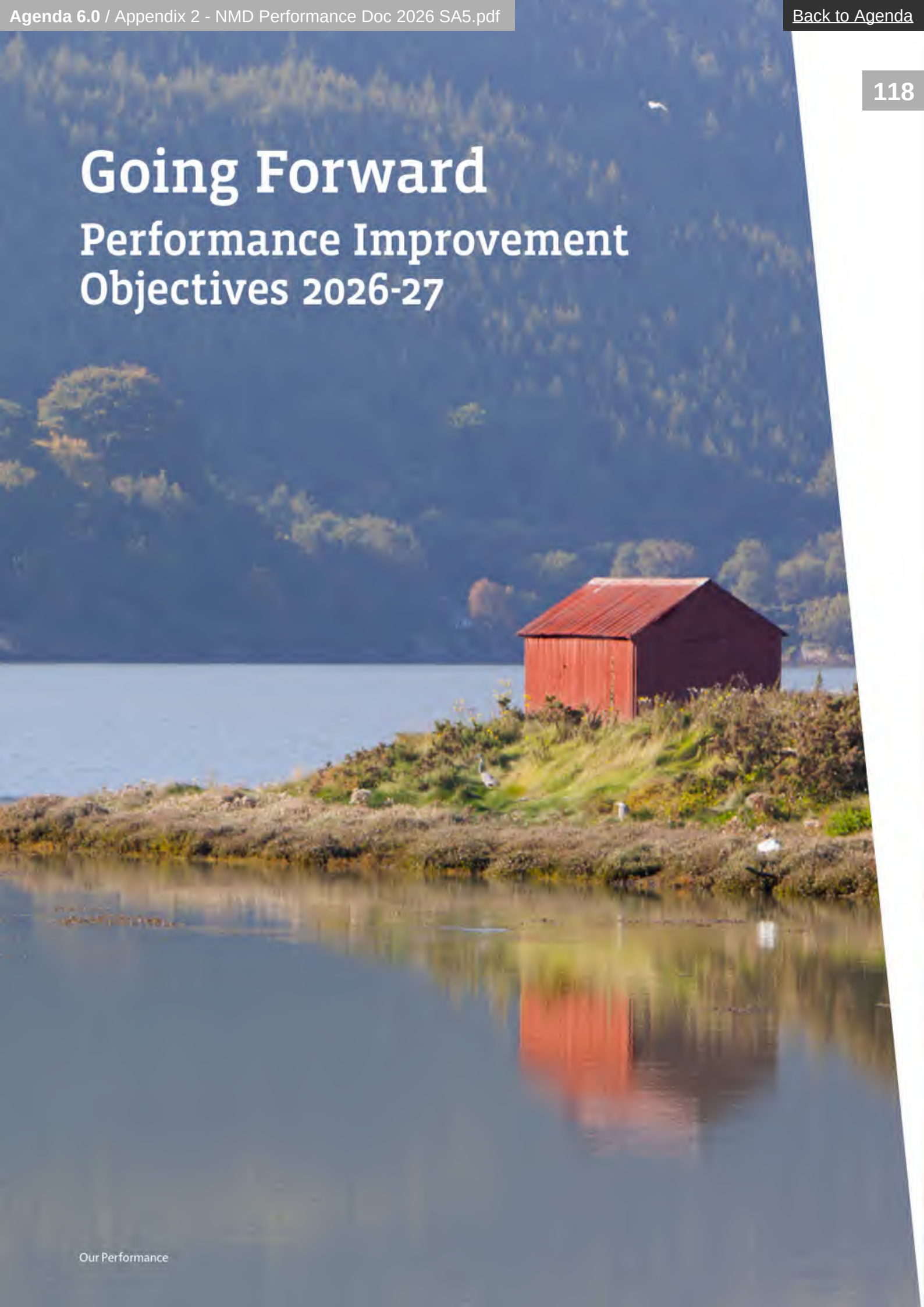
* The 2025/26 figures are in draft, to be finalised following monitoring and verification of data by Go Succeed lead BCC

**The 2025-26 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 2026-27.

*** The 2025-26 data in relation to the statutory performance indicators for planning remains provisional and subject to change, as the end of year validated data will not be published by DfI until the end of August 2026-27.'

Going Forward

Performance Improvement Objectives 2026-27



Every year, we are required to set performance improvement objectives for the services we provide, and to have in place arrangements to achieve these objectives. These objectives seek to address the issues which matter most to local people, and are:

Linked to the Community Plan, Corporate Plan and Directorate Business Plans	✔
Based on existing performance information	✔
Aligned to the seven strategic aspects of improvement	✔
Based on stakeholder consultation and engagement	✔

Objective 1

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

What you will see:

- 898,000 paid attendances at our six leisure centres by the end of 2026-27.
- 16,500 people participating in targeted health programmes across the District.
- 9,500 leisure centre memberships recorded.
- 2 play parks upgraded.
- 7 new build and/or upgraded capital leisure projects progressed including Kilkeel Leisure Centre, Newry City Park, Newcastle Centre, Rowallane Multisport hub, Crotlieve Multisport hub, Newry Multisport hub and Newcastle rock pool.
- Financial assistance allocated for sports clubs to the value of £225,000 for capital projects.
- Disability accreditation achieved in an identified tier 1 site.
- 30,000 recorded visits to Donard Park Multisport hub

Objective 2

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

What you will see:

- 279 business plans created for Start-Up businesses and employer enterprises.
- Over 700 participants engaged across all Go Succeed activity.
- Support provided to 188 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.
- 250 directly supported participants on employment pathway initiatives.
- 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.

Objective 3

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

What you will see:

- Increase in the number of fixed penalty notices issued and paid.
- Responsible dog ownership and reduced levels of dog fouling, littering and illicit dumping.
- Improved opportunities to report dog fouling and identify hotspots for enforcement patrols.
- Reduction in the disposal of paint from our Household Recycling Centre sites.
- Opportunities to engage in community clean ups.
- Increased awareness of environmental messaging including recycling, dog fouling and littering.
- Decrease in overflowing bins and reduction of street bin collections.
- A cleaner, greener District, with improved civic and community pride.

Objective 4

We will reduce our contribution to climate change by cutting carbon emissions and improving the efficiency of our fleet and buildings

What you will see:

- Council's Climate Change and Sustainable Development strategy launched and published.
- Council's Climate Change Adaptation Plan published.
- Annual assessments of the Council's carbon footprint and renewable energy output completed and reported.
- Reduction in Council's carbon footprint.
- Increase in Council's renewable energy generation.
- Continued implementation of Council's fleet replacement programme.
- Reduction in vehicle emissions from Council fleet through transition to HVO.
- New electric vehicles operating within Council fleet.
- New EV charging points installed across the District.

Objective 5

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

What you will see:

- A more efficient and effective planning service.
- Improved processing times for local and major planning applications.
- Improved processing times for planning enforcement cases.
- Reduction in the number of live planning applications and enforcement cases in the system.
- Validation checklist introduced and processing time for validating planning applications improved.
- A review of representations made during the consultation period for the Draft Plan Strategy.
- A training course developed for Council staff and members in collaboration with DfI.
- Council's enforcement strategy reviewed and agreed.
- An empowered and motivated workforce.
- Sustainable development and regeneration of the District.

Have your say

We welcome your feedback and suggestions on how Council services can be improved in the future. Full copies of the following documents are available to download from our website **www.newrymournedown.org** as follows:

- **Performance Improvement Plan 2026-27**
- **Assessment of Performance 2025-26**

This document is available in alternative formats upon request.

For more information, contact:

Performance and Improvement
Newry, Mourne and Down District Council
McGrath House, 1 Margaret Street
Newry, Co Down BT34 1DF

0330 133 2233
performance@nmandd.org

0330 137 4000
info@nmandd.org
www.newrymournedown.org

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Oifig an Iúir
Newry Office
Haughey House
Rampart Road, Greenbank
Newry BT34 2QU

Oifig Dhún Pádraig
Downpatrick Office
Downshire Civic Centre
Downshire Estate, Ardglass Road
Downpatrick BT30 6GQ



Comhairle Ceantair
an Iúir, Mhúrn agus an Dúin
Newry, Mourne and Down
District Council

Report to:	Strategy, Policy and Resources
Date of Meeting:	Thursday 13th August 2026
Subject:	Aids to Navigation repairs on Strangford Lough
Reporting Officer (Including Job Title):	Conor Sage: Assistant Director – S&E Amanda Smyth: Assistant Director – Economy, Growth & Tourism
Contact Officer (Including Job Title):	Aveen McVeigh, Head of Regeneration and Business Development

Confirm how this Report should be treated by placing an x in either:-

For decision	**x**	**For noting only**	

1.0	**Purpose and Background**
1.1	Purpose To approve the recommendation in section 3 of this report. Background As a Local Lighthouse Authority, Council has a statutory responsibility to provide a system of navigational aids that is safe, effective, and fit for purpose within Strangford Lough. Safe navigation is fundamental to the operation and sustainability of Strangford Lough as a popular tourist and leisure destination.
2.0	**Key issues**
	In July 2024, AECOM completed a Review of Navigational Aids, commissioned by Council, to inform the development of a safer and more resilient navigational aid system within the Council's area of Strangford Lough. The review identified that the existing Aid to Navigation (AtoN) network within the Council area of Strangford Lough is inconsistent and does not fully meet current navigational requirements. The review found that some aids are obsolete or require repair and identified locations where additional aids are needed to improve navigational safety. The key findings of the AECOM Review of Navigational Aids are now required to be progressed, this will include: • Stakeholder engagement and consultation with sailing clubs and other marine users; • Finalisation of technical specifications, procurement and appointment of contractors and suppliers; • Manufacture, repair and installation of new and upgraded Aids to Navigation; and

	• Inspection and commissioning of the completed works, notification of the relevant statutory bodies and updating of navigational charts.
3.0	**Recommendations**
3.1	Approve the business case and associated budget to enable Council to implement the key findings of the Review of Navigational Aids to improve navigational safety and ensure that the Council fulfils its responsibilities as the Local Lighthouse Authority for its area of Strangford Lough.
4.0	**Resource implications**
4.1	Capital Budget is required as per business case.
5.0	**Due regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations (complete the relevant sections)**
5.1	***General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes*** It is not anticipated the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations ☒
5.2	***Proposal relates to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision*** Yes ☐ No ☒ If yes, please complete the following: The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) has been equality screened ☐ The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) will be subject to equality screening prior to implementation ☐
5.3	***Proposal initiating consultation*** Consultation will seek the views of those directly affected by the proposal, address barriers for particular Section 75 equality categories to participate and allow adequate time for groups to consult amongst themselves ☐ Consultation period will be 12 weeks ☐ Consultation period will be less than 12 weeks (rationale to be provided) ☐

	Rationale:
6.0	**Due regard to Rural Needs (please tick all that apply)**
6.1	Proposal relates to developing, adopting, implementing or revising a policy / strategy / plan / designing and/or delivering a public service Yes ☐ No ☒ If yes, please complete the following: Rural Needs Impact Assessment completed ☐
7.0	**Appendices**
	This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 - Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information) and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business Appendix 1 – Business case
8.0	**Background Documents**

Report to:	Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee
Date of Meeting:	13 August 2026
Subject:	Statutory reporting: 1) Section 75 Policy Screening Report – Quarterly Report for period April – June 2026 2) Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Public Authority Statutory Equality and Good Relations Duties Annual Progress Report 2025-2026
Reporting Officer:	Elaine Kirk, Assistant Director Legal and People
Contact Officers:	Colin Moffett, Head of Corporate Policy Suzanne Rice, Corporate Policy and Equality Officer

Confirm how this Report should be treated by placing an x in either:-

For decision		**For noting only**	**X**

1.0	**Purpose and Background**
1.1	In line with Council's Section 75 statutory duties and commitments within our approved Equality Scheme; policy screening reports are published quarterly; and Council will prepare an annual report on the progress made on implementing the arrangements set out in its equality scheme to discharge its Section 75 statutory duties. The Quarterly Report for the period April to June 2026, including screening reports, is available on Council's website www.newrymournedown.org.
2.0	**Key issues**
2.1	As per the Council's approved Equality Scheme: • All policies Council proposes to adopt must be equality screened, prior to implementation, to assess the likely impact of the policy on the promotion of equality of opportunity and/or good relations. • Council must publish quarterly reports on equality screening which are available on Council's website and forwarded to equality scheme consultees. • The Section 75 annual progress report should be sent to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland by 31 August each year and will follow any guidance on annual reporting issued by the Equality Commission. • The latest Section 75 annual progress report should be available on Council's website.
3.0	**Recommendations**
3.1	I. To note the Section 75 Policy Screening Report – Quarterly Report for period April – June 2026. II. To note Newry, Mourne and Down District Council's Public Authority Statutory Equality and Good Relations Duties Annual Progress Report for the period 2025 -

	2026 for submission to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland by 31 August 2026.
4.0	**Resource implications**
4.1	No financial or resources implications are anticipated.
5.0	**Due regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations (complete the relevant sections)**
5.1	***General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes*** It is not anticipated the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations ☒
5.2	***Proposal relates to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision*** Yes ☐ No ☒ If yes, please complete the following: The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) has been equality screened ☐ The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) will be subject to equality screening prior to implementation ☐
5.3	***Proposal initiating consultation*** Consultation will seek the views of those directly affected by the proposal, address barriers for particular Section 75 equality categories to participate and allow adequate time for groups to consult amongst themselves ☐ Consultation period will be 12 weeks ☐ Consultation period will be less than 12 weeks (rationale to be provided) ☐
	Rationale:
6.0	**Due regard to Rural Needs (please tick all that apply)**
6.1	Proposal relates to developing, adopting, implementing or revising a policy / strategy / plan / designing and/or delivering a public service Yes ☐ No ☒ If yes, please complete the following:

	Rural Needs Impact Assessment completed ☐
7.0	**Appendices**
	Appendix I: Section 75 Policy Screening Report – Quarterly Report for period April – June 2026 Appendix II: Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Public Authority Statutory Equality and Good Relations Duties Annual Progress Report 2025-2026
8.0	**Background Documents**
	Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Equality Scheme.

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Section 75 Policy Screening Report Quarterly Report April – June 2026

Policy	Details of policy	Screening Outcome
New policies		
Newry, Mourne and Down District Council's Performance Improvement Plan 2026-27	The Performance Improvement Plan 2026-27 includes the following five objectives, all of which are linked to Community Plan and Corporate Plan 2024-27. 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 business growth, job creation and pathways to employment 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	No EQIA considered necessary
Introducing charging for entry at two Council events (Eats and Beats and Footsteps in the Forest) Summer 2026	Council delivers three Tourism events each year titled "Giant Adventures" which includes "Footsteps in the Forest" in Slieve Gullion (a traditional Halloween walking trail in a forest) and "Eats and Beats" (food and music festival) in Donard Park in Newcastle. Due to the increasing operational cost of delivering events, the Council is proposing to introduce a small charge for entry to these two events this year.	No EQIA considered necessary
NMDDC Draft Off-Street Parking (Public Car Parks) Order	This is an updated legal document, not a policy. The original legislation was in ownership of DFI with the function transferring across to Council.	No EQIA considered necessary

Consideration of maintaining Council's approach to continue requiring Blue Badge owners to pay the requisite parking charges at Tyrella Beach	Currently Blue Badge holders can access Tyrella Beach for a minimal parking fee. No other vehicles are permitted to access the beach. This proposal would maintain the current position for Blue Badge holders, including those who have booked to use inclusive beach equipment provided by the Mae Murray foundation, requiring them to pay the requisite fee for parking their vehicle.	No EQIA considered necessary
Reviewed policies		
Planning Enforcement Strategy April 2026	The Strategy aims to resolve enforcement issues informally where possible, control unauthorised development, remedy its impacts, take legal action when necessary, and act consistently and proportionately to maintain the integrity of the planning system. Revisions include the removal of anonymous complaints (unless they fall into Priority 1 category). Revised performance targets and changing the Priority Categories from 3 to 4.	No EQIA considered necessary

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council

Public Authority Statutory Equality and Good Relations Duties

Annual Progress Report

Contact details:

• Section 75 of the NI Act 1998 and Equality Scheme	Name: Suzanne Rice Telephone: 0330 137 4000 Email: suzanne.rice@nmandd.org
• Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and Disability Action Plan	As above ☒ Name: Click or tap here to enter text. Telephone: Click or tap here to enter text. Email: Click or tap here to enter text.
Documents published relating to our Equality Scheme can be found at:	www.newrymournedown.org
Signature:	Suzanne Rice

This report has been prepared using a template circulated by the Equality Commission.

It presents our progress in fulfilling our statutory equality and good relations duties and implementing Equality Scheme commitments and Disability Action Plans.

This report reflects progress made between April 2025 and March 2026

PART A – Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and Equality Scheme

1 In 2025-26, please provide **examples** of key policy/service delivery developments made by the public authority in this reporting period to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations; and the outcomes and improvements achieved.

The following examples summarise key policy and service delivery developments undertaken by Newry, Mourne and Down District Council during the 2025–2026 reporting period. These initiatives supported the Council's ongoing commitment to promoting equality of opportunity and good relations.

Equality and Good Relations Reference Group

Two meetings of the Councillors' Equality and Good Relations Reference Group took place during the reporting period. Discussions included the Council's approach to the development of Ulster Scots, town and village signage, a Notice of Motion on 'Autism-Friendly' towns, and proposals for the development of a Disability Forum.

These areas of work are continuing to progress and will be taken forward as part of the Council's wider equality and good relations commitments.

Ethnic Minority Support Centre

The Council's Ethnic Minority Support Centre continued to provide advice and assistance to members of the community. During the reporting period, the centres recorded 2,212 visits, alongside approximately 100 telephone queries each week.

- 45% of clients were Romanian/Bulgarian Roma.
- 55% of clients were Polish, Lithuanian, Ukrainian and Latvian nationals.

The most common requests for support related to housing, benefits, education and immigration. A weekly Arabic Clinic also takes place at Newry Town Hall, offering tailored support to Arabic-speaking clients.

Accessibility Guides

The Council is working with AccessAble to develop 18 accessibility guides. AccessAble provides detailed accessibility information about venues, helping disabled people and others plan visits with greater confidence by knowing what to expect before they travel.

This initiative is expected to be completed during the 2026–2027 financial year and will be reported in next year's annual return.

City of Sanctuary Membership

The Council continued to progress work relating to 'City of Sanctuary' membership during the reporting period. City of Sanctuary Uk is a grassroots charitable organisation and movement dedicated to building a culture of welcome, safety and inclusion for asylum seekers and refugees. Further details will be added in next year's annual report as this work develops.

Ulster Scots public consultation

In May 2025, Council undertook an extensive public consultation exercise to gather community perspectives on the promotion and development of Ulster Scots people, culture and language across the district. The survey aimed to identify meaningful actions and priorities that reflect the needs and aspirations of those who completed the survey. 444 responses were received with the clear majority of respondents believing that Council has a role in promoting Ulster Scots development. This was the basis for the development and establishment of an Ulster Scots/Ulster British working group.

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Traveller Forum

Four meetings of the Traveller forum took place during the reporting period. Representatives on the forum included Elected Members, Council Officials, representatives from housing associations and executive, PSNI and Education Authority. Issues discussed included Irish Traveller Accommodation Strategy, housing needs and educational support for young people.

Section 1: Equality and good relations outcomes, impacts and good practice

2 Please provide **examples** of outcomes and/or the impact of **equality action plans/** measures in 2025-26 (*or append the plan with progress/examples identified*).

Below are some examples of outcomes of the Equality Action Plan measures in 2025-2026. The positive action measures have been set out under the following five principles of the Local Government Staff Commission's Equality and Diversity in Local Councils Framework to which Council have signed up to:

- Principle 1: Ensuring we work in a non-discriminatory environment, promote equality, and model best practice in equality and good relations.
- Principle 2: Ensuring all our decisions are based on evidence to assess the likely impact of a policy on the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations.

- Principle 3: Providing access to services, facilities, and information.
- Principle 4: Recruiting and employing people fairly.
- Principle 5: Responding to and learning from complaints and incidents in a positive and proactive way.

Financial Assistance

Financial support for organisations and community groups remained a key priority for the Council during the reporting period. Through the financial assistance programme, funding was awarded across numerous themes including the following:

- Good Relations: 31 groups received a total of £44,615.
- Irish Language: 16 groups received a total of £46,455.
- Minority Communities: 14 groups received a total of £12,410.

Equality and Good Relations Reference Group

The Council's Equality and Good Relations Reference Group continued to provide a safe and constructive forum for elected representatives to discuss potentially sensitive and contentious issues.

Two meetings of the Reference Group took place during the reporting period. One key area of discussion was the Council's approach to Ulster Scots. Following agreement, the Council established an Ulster Scots/Ulster British Working Group. Progress on the Working Group will be reported in next year's annual return.

Good Relations Action Plan

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council continues to implement its key actions detailed in the Good Relations action plan. Initiatives supported include a Good Relations funding programme, financial support for the Ethnic Minority Support Centre and the Councillor's Equality and Good Relations Reference Group as well as coordination of the Council's Bonfire committee which consists of Councillors, officials and representatives from several statutory organisations. The aim of the committee is to engage and liaise with groups and statutory agencies to ensure the safety of cultural celebrations.

Diversity Ambassadors

Three elected members and one Council officer continue their advocacy roles as Diversity Ambassadors across the Council and district. They participate in the Local Government Staff Commission events sharing best practice and learning. One example of this was presenting to members to Council's position on bilingualism.

Access to Information

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council continues to ensure that access to information is a priority for residents and services users. Work began during the reporting period on ensuring that the Council's website is meeting accessibility requirements. Translation services also continue to be available through the Ethnic Minority Support Centre as well as an inhouse Irish language translation portal for staff to ensure Council is fulfilling the bilingualism policy guidelines. Work is also ongoing o the Council's website to ensure it meets the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2018 (WCAG).

DEA Forum Initiatives and Campaigns

The Council's DEA Forums continued to develop and deliver initiatives and campaigns that support the actions set out in the Council's Equality Action Plan. Examples included:

- A Silver Screening programme was delivered in December 2025 to help reduce isolation and loneliness, with approximately 200 older people attending.
- An Ending Violence Against Women and Girls drama programme was delivered, and its aim was to raise young people's awareness of healthy relationships and the dangers of domestic violence. More than 1,500 students took part across all the District Electoral Areas.
- A Shared schools programme, delivered from September 2025 to March 2026 across post-primary schools' district-wide, supporting engagement with young people and involving approximately 150 participants.
- A Four-week good relations programme delivered with seven primary schools. The workshops for 9–11-year-olds used creativity and play to celebrate diversity, foster mutual respect, and promote messages of empathy, inclusion and anti-racism.

Council Civic Light up events

The Council continued to raise awareness of, and show support for, local charities and organisations by lighting up civic buildings during the reporting period. A total of 32 light-up events took place. These events promoted civic engagement and demonstrated the Council's ongoing support for Section 75 organisations.

PART A

3 Has the **application of the Equality Scheme** commitments resulted in any **changes** to policy, practice, procedures and/or service delivery areas during the 2025-26 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

☐ Yes

☒ No (go to Q.4)

☐ Not applicable (go to Q.4)

Please provide any details and examples:

Click or tap here to enter text.

3a With regard to the change(s) made to policies, practices or procedures and/or service delivery areas, what **difference was made, or will be made, for individuals**, i.e. the impact on those according to Section 75 category?

Please provide any details and examples:

Click or tap here to enter text.

3b What aspect of the Equality Scheme prompted or led to the change(s)? *(tick all that apply)*

☐ As a result of the organisation's screening of a policy *(please give details):*

Click or tap here to enter text.

☐ As a result of what was identified through the EQIA and consultation exercise *(please give details):*

Click or tap here to enter text.

☐ As a result of analysis from monitoring the impact *(please give details):*

Click or tap here to enter text.

☐ As a result of changes to access to information and services *(please specify and give details)*:

Click or tap here to enter text.

☐ Other *(please specify and give details)*:

Click or tap here to enter text.

Section 2: Progress on Equality Scheme commitments and action plans/measures

Arrangements for assessing compliance (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 2)

4 Were the Section 75 statutory duties integrated within job descriptions during the 2025-26 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

☒ Yes, organisation wide

☐ Yes, some departments/jobs

☐ No, this is not an Equality Scheme commitment

☐ No, this is scheduled for later in the Equality Scheme, or has already been done

☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Recruitment process continued during the 2025-2026 financial year. Examples of specifically relevant duties and responsibilities listed in new job descriptions include the following:

- Promote diversity across the organisation by adhering to the Council's Equal Opportunity policies and procedures and avoiding all forms of discrimination both as an employer and a service provider.
- Promote Equality and Diversity across the organisation by demonstrating an open commitment to and actively promoting and celebrating diversity, promoting social inclusion and community cohesion.

PART A

- Work towards improving equality and diversity by ensuring that allocated targets to reduce inequalities and promote good relations are achieved.

5 Were the Section 75 statutory duties integrated within performance plans during the 2025-26 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

☒ Yes, organisation wide

☐ Yes, some departments/jobs

☐ No, this is not an Equality Scheme commitment

☐ No, this is scheduled for later in the Equality Scheme, or has already been done

☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Directorate Business Plans are produced annually and detail the work and initiatives to be undertaken each financial year. Council's Section 75 duties are detailed in the Council's Corporate Services and Active and Healthy Communities Business Plans 2025-2026. The Performance Improvement Plan is also equality screened.

6 In the 2025-26 reporting period were **objectives/ targets/ performance measures** relating to the Section 75 statutory duties **integrated** into corporate plans, strategic planning and/or operational business plans? *(tick all that apply)*

☐ Yes, through the work to prepare or develop the new corporate plan

☒ Yes, through organisation wide annual business planning

☒ Yes, in some departments/jobs

☒ No, these are already mainstreamed through the organisation's corporate plan

☐ No, the organisation's planning cycle does not coincide with this 2025-26 report

☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council's equality and Policy functions are located in the Corporate Services Directorate. The Directorate Business Plan makes specific reference to the Equality and Disability Action Plans. The Council's corporate reporting template has also been developed to ensure that Equality and Good Relations implications are considered in every decision/recommendation undertaken by Council. As stated in question 5, Directorate Business Plans are produced annually and detail the work and initiatives to be undertaken in each financial year. The Corporate Services Business Plan 2025-2026 makes reference to Council's Section 75 statutory duties. The Performance Improvement Plan is also Equality Screened. Newry, Mourne and Down District Council's Good Relations responsibilities sit within the Council's Active and Healthy Communities Directorate and is integrated within the section's Business Plan.

Equality action plans/measures

7 Within the 2025-26 reporting period, please indicate the **number** of:

Actions completed:

5

Actions ongoing:

18

Actions to commence:

2

Please provide any details and examples (*in addition to question 2*):

It should be noted that the majority of actions within the Equality Action Plan are ongoing work ensuring that Section 75 continues to be mainstreamed within and across the organisation.

8 Please give details of changes or amendments made to the equality action plan/measures during the 2025-26 reporting period *(points not identified in an appended plan)*:

No amendments were made to the Equality Action plan/measures during the reporting period.

PART A

9 In reviewing progress on the equality action plan/action measures during the 2025-26 reporting period, the following have been identified: *(tick all that apply)*

☒ Continuing action(s), to progress the next stage addressing the known inequality

☒ Action(s) to address the known inequality in a different way

☒ Action(s) to address newly identified inequalities/recently prioritised inequalities

☐ Measures to address a prioritised inequality have been completed

Arrangements for consulting (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 3)

10 Following the initial notification of consultations, a targeted approach was taken – and consultation with those for whom the issue was of particular relevance: *(tick one box only)*

☒ All the time

☐ Sometimes

☐ Never

11 Please provide any **details and examples of good practice** in consultation during the 2025-26 reporting period, on matters relevant (e.g. the development of a policy that has been screened in) to the need to promote equality of opportunity and/or the desirability of promoting good relations:

Council continues to utilise its Equality database for consultation. This includes sending the quarterly screening reports and specific consultation processes such at the Council's Performance Improvement Plan. Council also engages with specific section 75 groups such as the local Youth councils, the Cedar Foundation user groups as well as the Council's District Electoral Area forums.

The Corporate Policy section worked with the Evidence and Research Team to produce an extensive online consultation survey to gather the views of residents on Ulster Scots development within Council and the district. The survey was launched in May 2025 and closed in July 2025. Following and extensive online campaign, 444 responses were

received and the comments put forwarded by residents requesting further support and assistance have ensured the introduction of an Ulster Scots/Ulster British working group within Council. Further initiatives and support will be reported on in next year's annual report.

12 In the 2025-26 reporting period, given the consultation methods offered, which consultation methods were **most frequently used by consultees**: *(tick all that apply)*

☒ Face to face meetings

☒ Focus groups

☒ Written documents with the opportunity to comment in writing

☐ Questionnaires

☒ Information by email with an opportunity to opt in/out of the consultation

☐ Internet discussions

☐ Telephone consultations

☐ Other *(please specify)*: Click or tap here to enter text.

Please provide any details or examples of the uptake of these methods of consultation in relation to the consultees' membership of particular Section 75 categories:

As stated above, the Cedar Foundation continues to be an important consultation group for Council. The group has played a key role in the development of Council's Performance Improvement objectives for the 2026-2027 financial year. The Education Authority (through the district's Youth Councils) continue to be extremely supported of Council and support consultation processes.

13 Were any awareness-raising activities for consultees undertaken, on the commitments in the Equality Scheme, during the 2025-26 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

☐ Yes

☒ No

☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Click or tap here to enter text.

14 Was the consultation list reviewed during the 2025-26 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

☒ Yes

☐ No

☐ Not applicable – no commitment to review

Arrangements for assessing and consulting on the likely impact of policies (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 4)

www.newrymournedown.org/corporate-policy-and-equality

15 Please provide the **number** of policies screened during the year (*as recorded in screening reports*):

26

16 Please provide the **number of assessments** that were consulted upon during 2025-26:

0 Policy consultations conducted with **screening** assessment presented.

0 Policy consultations conducted **with an equality impact assessment** (EQIA) presented.

0 Consultations for an **EQIA** alone.

PART A

17 Please provide details of the **main consultations** conducted on an assessment (as described above) or other matters relevant to the Section 75 duties:

Not applicable.

18 Were any screening decisions (or equivalent initial assessments of relevance) reviewed following concerns raised by consultees? *(tick one box only)*

☐ Yes

☐ No concerns were raised

☒ No

☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Click or tap here to enter text.

Arrangements for publishing the results of assessments (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 4)

19 Following decisions on a policy, were the results of any EQIAs published during the 2025-26 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

☐ Yes

☒ No

☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Click or tap here to enter text.

Arrangements for monitoring and publishing the results of monitoring (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 4)

20 From the Equality Scheme monitoring arrangements, was there an audit of existing information systems during the 2025-26 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

PART A

☐ Yes

☐ No, already taken place

☒ No, scheduled to take place at a later date

☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details:

Click or tap here to enter text.

21 In analysing monitoring information gathered, was any action taken to change/review any policies? *(tick one box only)*

☐ Yes

☒ No

☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Click or tap here to enter text.

22 Please provide any details or examples of where the monitoring of policies, during the 2025-26 reporting period, has shown changes to differential/adverse impacts previously assessed:

There are no examples of the monitoring of policies, which has shown changes to differential/adverse impacts during the reporting period.

23 Please provide any details or examples of monitoring that has contributed to the availability of equality and good relations information/data for service delivery planning or policy development:

The Council's Evidence and Research section continues to provide relevant statistics and data to inform and assist the development of the Equality Screening process. The team

undertake an extensive resident survey every 4 years which gathers the views of the public on several issues of importance and concern including section 75 themes. In line with OFMDFM requirements in the delivery of Good Relations, monitoring data is also gathered and reported on a quarterly basis.

Staff Training (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 5)

24 Please report on the activities from the training plan/programme (section 5.4 of the Model Equality Scheme) undertaken during 2025-26, and the extent to which they met the training objectives in the Equality Scheme.

Council's Learning and Development section deliver an extensive range of training each year and below are examples of training undertaken which met the training objectives of the Equality Scheme.

- All Inclusive: Championing Accessible Museums
- Annual review of employment law training programme
- British Sign Language Course
- Conflict Resolution Training
- Crisis communication course
- Leadership and Management Course
- Corporate induction training
- Deaf awareness training
- Dealing with difficult customers – Conflict Resolution
- Drug awareness training
- Investigating officer training
- Introduction to mentoring
- Irish Language Corporate Programme
- Code of conduct training
- Disability Awareness training
- People Perform Grow training
- Project Management in local government training
- Promoting dignity at work training
- Recruitment and selection training
- Safeguarding training
- Transformative leader programme
- Women in Leadership programme

25 Please provide **any examples** of relevant training shown to have worked well, in that participants have achieved the necessary skills and knowledge to achieve the stated objectives:

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council delivered a six-week Irish Language Level 1 and Level 2 training programme for Council employees. The training in partnership with the University of Ulster gave employees the opportunity to begin or continue their Irish language development. It was delivered both online and in person to ensure those you wished to attend could access the course.

Public Access to Information and Services (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 6)

26 Please list **any examples** of where monitoring during 2025-26, across all functions, has resulted in action and improvement in relation **to access to information and services**:

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council began a review of its website and online platforms in the last reporting period to ensure it met it accessibility standards outlined in the WCAG 2018. Key actions/training delivered will be reported on in next year's annual return to the Equality Commission.

Complaints (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 8)

27 How many complaints **in relation to the Equality Scheme** have been received during 2025-26?

Insert number here: 1

Please provide any details of each complaint raised and outcome:

Complaint under Paragraph 10 of Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 alleging failure(s) by Newry Mourne and Down District Council (the Council) to comply with its approved Equality Scheme.

This related to a request by Locals First Initiative for the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland to investigate an alleged failure(s) of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council to comply with the commitments of our approved Equality Scheme.

The background to the complaint related to a Council decision to join the City of Sanctuary Local Authority Network and for Council to work towards formal recognition as a 'Council of Sanctuary'. Newry and Mourne District Council have been informed by the Equality Commission that the complaint is not being investigated further.

PART A

Section 3: Looking Forward

28 Please indicate when the Equality Scheme is due for review:

The Equality Scheme is due for review in 2030.

29 Are there areas of the Equality Scheme arrangements (screening/consultation/training) your organisation anticipates will be focused upon in the next reporting period? *(please provide details)*

The importance of screening will continue to be focused upon with the Council's Senior Leadership Team to ensure this message is mainstreamed across the organisation.

30 In relation to the advice and services that the Commission offers, what **equality and good relations priorities** are anticipated over the next reporting period? *(please tick any that apply)*

☒ Employment

☒ Goods, facilities and services

☒ Legislative changes

☐ Organisational changes/ new functions

☐ Nothing specific, more of the same

☐ Other (please state):

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council will continue to utilise the services, advice and guidance of the Equality Commission going forward.

PART B - Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended) and Disability Action Plans

1. Number of action measures for this **reporting period** that have been:

18	Click or tap here to enter text.	**5**
Fully achieved	Partially achieved	Not achieved

2. Please outline below details on all **actions that have been fully achieved** in the reporting period.

2 (a) Please highlight what **public life measures** have been achieved to encourage disabled people to participate in public life at National, Regional and Local levels:

Level	Public Life Action Measures	Outputs[i]	Outcomes / Impact[ii]
National[iii]	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Regional[iv]	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Local[v]	Newry, Mourne and Down District Council directly promotes positive attitudes towards disabled people through service delivery and programming which includes a disability sports initiatives and inclusive events	Disability programme membership was 863 across the leisure facilities in the district. Be Active for Health is a 12-week physical activity referral	Supports people with disabilities or reduced mobility to access leisure facilities, Council events and dedicated programmes that meet their individual needs.

		programme delivered across Newry, Downpatrick, Newcastle and Kilkeel for inactive adults, including people living with long-term health conditions, disabilities and reduced mobility. Activities are adapted to individual ability and need and include gym-based exercise, circuits, strength and balance, Pilates, chair-based activity and walking. Additional support can be provided for participants with lower confidence, mobility limitations or other support requirements. During 2025/26, 386 participants completed the programme across the district: 150 in Newry, 106 in Downpatrick, 70 in Newcastle and 60 in Kilkeel. Phase IV Cardiac Rehabilitation programme supported people progressing from clinical cardiac	Increased participation in targeted programmes, supporting wider access to activities designed to meet individual needs. Increased participation in health-focused initiatives, with improved

		rehabilitation into safe and supported community-based physical activity. During 2025/26, 57 participants completed the programme. Council continues to provide dedicated physical activity opportunities for people living with and recovering from cancer. Approximately 40 participants currently attend the two weekly classes. Council provides a range of accessible and adapted bikes to enable people with disabilities and reduced mobility to experience and participate in cycling. The bikes are brought into local communities to provide inclusive cycling opportunities and are also loaned to local community groups, enabling organisations to use the equipment to provide accessible activities within their own communities.	awareness of activities that support people during rehabilitation. Dedicated equipment enabled people to participate in accessible programmes and activities.

		Dedicated Autism friendly swim sessions continued to be delivered in the three leisure centres in the district. Disability Leisure Membership and Buddy Access provided significantly reduced-cost leisure opportunities for adults and children with disabilities to help ensure that cost does not become a barrier to participation. Council leisure facilities host and support a number of established disability and inclusive sports clubs and activities, including Special Olympics Clubs, a junior Wheelchair Basketball Club and an all-inclusive Trampoline Club. Council provided targeted opportunities to encourage women and girls to become more physically active. During 2025/26 this included an International Women's Day outdoor activity at Mourne	One to one support provided at a reduced cost to support and assist individual's specific needs. Improved access to Council events through dedicated programmes and adjustments that support people with specific needs.

		Park and delivery of a physical activity taster as part of a six-week women's programme in Kilkeel. All activities including Christmas switch on events are fully accessible with toilet/changing places available across locations. The sensory hub was a key initiative of the Wake the Giant festival. This was a dedicated quite time for those to participate in the festival in a quiet relaxing space. The Footsteps in the Forest festival held dedicated Autism Friendly sessions each day. These sessions had adjusted lighting and reduced noise levels. Eats and Beats festival had dedicated area with ramped access, viewing platform for	Reduced barriers to participation, helping more people take part in accessible activities and events.

PART B

		those who wished to avail of this as well as dedicated parking for blue badge holders. ADHD Summer scheme programme supported by the DEA'S to promote health and wellbeing support to children with ADHD and learning needs.	

2(b) What **training action measures** were achieved in this reporting period?

	Training Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
1	Delivery of an online Disability and Brain injury awareness training at detailed in the Disability Action Plan 23-27	Mandatory online training for all employees to complete. The training has been developed and produced in	Council employees equipped with the necessary skills to ensure the active inclusion of all council customers and employees.

PART B

		partnership with the CEDAR Foundation.	
2	Deaf awareness training	Training programme requested by and delivered to specific council department.	Council employees equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge when communicating with people with who are deaf or have hearing difficulties.
	All Inclusive: Championing Accessible Museums	Training programme embedding inclusive practices for museum employees.	Greater understanding and awareness of inclusive and accessible practices and initiatives for cultural spaces.

2(c) What Positive attitudes **action measures** in the area of **Communications** were achieved in this reporting period?

	Communications Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
1	Access to information	Information is available in alternative formats on request, both digitally and in person. Requests can be made by contacting the Council by telephone, email or in person at a Council office, and staff will advise on the most appropriate format to meet individual access needs.	People requesting information can access it in a format that meets their needs, supporting equal access to Council information and services.

PART B

2	Council civic light up events	The Council promoted and raised awareness of disability organisations through its civic light-up programme. During the reporting period, 32 organisations were highlighted.	The civic light-up programme increased public awareness and visibility of disability organisations across the district.
	Access Able	Council has completed the first stage of the accessibility guide programme with Access Able. Together, a Council homepage has been produced which will provide details on all 18 accessibility guides completed on council locations across the district.	Visitors and customers can make informed decisions about the locations they wish to visit. The access guides, produced by trained surveyors, provide factual information, measurements and photographic evidence on available facilities, including ramps, parking and toilets.

2 (d) What action measures were achieved to '**encourage others**' to promote the two duties:

	Encourage others Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
1	Development of a Disability Forum	The Community Planning Partnership has been asked to consider the development of a Disability Forum. Currently the statutory partners are engaged in discussions on how the forum could operate.	Dedicated space for support, discussion and advocacy for disability organisations from across the district.

PART B

2	Autism Reality Experience bus	The Council's DEA Forums organised for the bus to be in attendance in February 2026 with over 70 participants working with children and young people to increase understanding and knowledge of working with people with neurodiverse complexities in a learning environment.	Greater understanding and awareness of neurodiverse complexities.
	Carers Event	Two carers' events held in May and December 2025 with 75 people in attendance from the Downpatrick, Slieve Croob, Rowallane and Mournes DEA.	Provide support and guidance by statutory/voluntary organisations. Reduce isolation and support emotional encouragement.

2 (e) Please outline **any additional action measures** that were fully achieved other than those listed in the tables above:

	Action Measures fully implemented (other than Training and specific public life measures)	Outputs	Outcomes / Impact
1	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
2	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.

3. Please outline what action measures have been **partly achieved** as follows:

	Action Measures partly achieved	Milestones/ Outputs	Outcomes/Impacts	Reasons not fully achieved

PART B

1	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
2	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.

4. Please outline what action measures **have <u>not</u> been achieved** and the reasons why.

	Action Measures not met	Reasons
1	Production of a corporate 'making information accessible' guide and training	Timescale moved to a later date. Creating accessible word documents and PDF guides have been produced by the Council's Communication team for employees.
2	Develop an online support organisation directory	Activity to take place in the 26-27 reporting period.
3	Ensuring the new civic and theatre and conference centre are DDA compliant	Building timeframe moved.
4	Every Customer Counts Campaign	This campaign is to be reconsidered as part of an overall Autism Friendly initiative campaign currently being considered by Council.
5	Diversity Ambassadors PR Campaign	Moved to a later date.

PART B

5. What **monitoring tools** have been put in place to evaluate the degree to which actions have been effective / develop new opportunities for action?

(a) Qualitative

- Evaluation / feedback from training sessions
- Discussion / consultation with disability groups and individuals

(b) Quantitative

- Number of employees who have received training
- Number of Elected Members who have received training
- Number of documents requested in alternative formats
- Number of complaints received

6. As a result of monitoring progress against actions has your organisation either:

- made any **revisions** to your plan during the reporting period or
- taken any **additional steps** to meet the disability duties which were **not outlined in your original** disability action plan / any other changes?

Please select

If yes please outline below:

PART B

	Revised/Additional Action Measures	Performance Indicator	Timescale
1	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
2	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
3	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
4	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
5	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.

7. Do you intend to make any further **revisions to your plan** in light of your organisation's annual review of the plan? If so, please outline proposed changes?

No

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[i] **Outputs** – defined as act of producing, amount of something produced over a period, processes undertaken to implement the action measure e.g. Undertook 10 training sessions with 100 people at customer service level.

[ii] **Outcome / Impact** – what specifically and tangibly has changed in making progress towards the duties? What impact can directly be attributed to taking this action? Indicate the results of undertaking this action e.g. Evaluation indicating a tangible shift in attitudes before and after training.

[iii] **National** : Situations where people can influence policy at a high impact level e.g. Public Appointments

[iv] **Regional**: Situations where people can influence policy decision making at a middle impact level

[v] **Local :** Situations where people can influence policy decision making at lower impact level e.g. one off consultations, local fora.

Report to:	Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee
Date of Meeting:	13 August 2026
Subject:	Statutory reporting – Rural Needs Annual Monitoring Report for period 1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026
Reporting Officer:	Elaine Kirk, Assistant Director Legal & People
Contact Officers:	Colin Moffett, Head of Corporate Policy Suzanne Rice, Corporate Policy and Equality Officer

Confirm how this Report should be treated by placing an x in either:-

For decision		**For noting only**	**X**

1.0	**Purpose and Background**
1.1	The Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 (the Act) became operational for government departments and district councils on 1 June 2017 and for the remaining public authorities listed on the schedule to the Act on 1 June 2018. In order to fulfil its statutory duty under the Act, the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) must publish a Rural Needs Annual Monitoring Report detailing the information compiled by public authorities on how they have exercised the due regard duty under section 1 (1) of the Act. DAERA has forwarded a note commissioning the annual returns for the period 1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026. DAERA have requested that completed returns be sent to rural.needs@daera-ni.gov.uk by 2 October 2026.
1.2	During 2025-2026 a new online portal system was introduced by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA). This portal must now be used by officers / policy leads within each Department as part of the rural needs impact assessment reporting process.
1.3	Appendix I sets out the rural needs impact assessments undertaken during the 2025-2026 reporting period details of which will be submitted to DAERA through the new online portal.
2.0	**Key issues**
2.1	There is a duty on public authorities to monitor and report. Under section 3(1) of the Rural Needs Act, Council must, in such manner as may be directed by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA): • compile information on the exercise of its functions under section 1 of the Act, • include that information in the public authority's own annual report; and

	• send a copy of that information to DAERA.
3.0	**Recommendation**
3.1	To note the rural needs impact assessments undertaken during the 2025-2026 reporting period (Appendix I) details of which will be submitted to DAERA through the new online portal to meet their requested deadline of 2 October 2026.
4.0	**Resource implications**
4.1	No financial or resources implications are anticipated.
5.0	**Due regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations (complete the relevant sections)**
5.1	***General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes*** It is not anticipated the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations ☒
5.2	***Proposal relates to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision*** Yes ☐ No ☐ If yes, please complete the following: The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) has been equality screened ☐ The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) will be subject to equality screening prior to implementation ☐
5.3	***Proposal initiating consultation*** Consultation will seek the views of those directly affected by the proposal, address barriers for particular Section 75 equality categories to participate and allow adequate time for groups to consult amongst themselves ☐ Consultation period will be 12 weeks ☐ Consultation period will be less than 12 weeks (rationale to be provided) ☐
	Rationale:
6.0	**Due regard to Rural Needs (please tick all that apply)**
6.1	Proposal relates to developing, adopting, implementing or revising a policy / strategy / plan / designing and/or delivering a public service

	Yes ☐ No ☒ If yes, please complete the following: Rural Needs Impact Assessment completed ☐
7.0	**Appendices**
	Appendix I: Rural Needs Impact Assessments undertaken during the period 1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026
8.0	**Background Documents**
	• The Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016

Appendix I: Rural Needs Impact Assessments undertaken during the period 1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026

Reference	Rural Needs Impact Assessment
001	Active and Healthy Communities Business Plan 2025-2026
002	Reserves Policy
003	Asbestos Management Policy
004	Bilingualism Policy
005	Chief Executives – Corporate Services Business Plan 2025-2026
006	Sports and Community Facility Management and Leasing Policy
007	Performance Improvement Objectives 2026-2027
008	Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Directorate Business Plan 2025-2026
009	Fire Safety Management Policy
010	IT Policies
011	Local Economic Partnership Action Plan
012	Media Policy
013	Pavement Cafes Designation Policy
014	Policy for the use of play inflatables on Council premises
015	Policy on new Arts/Sculptures on Council property
016	Policy on naming Council facilities
017	Policy on requests to plant a tree on council property
018	Portable Appliance Management and Testing Policy
019	Procurement Policy
020	Reserves Policy
021	Social Media and Acceptance Use Policy
022	Supporting Community Events Policy
023	Sustainability and Environment Directorate Business Plan 2025-2026
024	NMDDC Temporary Road Closures on a Public Road for the Purpose of holding a Special Event Policy
025	Unreasonable Behaviour Policy
026	Policy on access to and use of NMDDC Indoor Leisure Facilities
027	Volunteer Policy

Report to:	Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee
Date of Meeting:	13 August 2026
Subject:	Annual report for the period 1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026 on requests related to naming Council facilities, planting trees and to locate artworks/sculptures on Council property
Reporting Officer:	Elaine Kirk, Assistant Director Legal and People
Contact Officers:	Colin Moffett, Head of Corporate Policy Suzanne Rice, Corporate Policy & Equality Officer

Confirm how this Report should be treated by placing an x in either:-

For decision		**For noting only**	**X**

1.0	**Purpose and Background**
1.1	Requests related to naming Council facilities, planting trees and to locate artworks/sculptures on Council property fall within the scope of the following Council policies: • Policy on naming Council facilities • Policy on requests to plant a tree on Council property • Policy on new Artworks/Sculptures on Council property Applications are administered as per each policy's specific agreed guidelines and associated procedure.
1.2	During the reporting period Council received five applications; two related to the policy on naming Council facilities, one related to the policy on requests to plant a tree on Council property and two related to the policy on new Artworks/Sculptures on Council property.
1.3	The following table sets out details related to the applications received and considered during the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026:

Applicant	Relevant Policy	Detail of request	Decision
1	Policy on naming Council facilities	Request to install a British Heart Foundation bench in 'somewhere urban and busy or beautifully green in nature'	Approved
2	Policy on naming Council facilities	Request that the new theatre building in Newry retains the name of Sean Hollywood	To be assessed

	3	Policy on requests to plant a tree on Council property	Request to plant a tree in Strangford village in memory of Sean Woods	Approved
	4	Policy on new Artworks/Sculptures on Council property	Application to place a mural at the handball courts, Drumaness Playpark, Dan Rice Hall	Approved
	5	Policy on new Artworks/Sculptures on Council property	Request to place an artwork in The Bridge Centre, Killyleagh	Approved

2.0	**Key issues**
2.1	No issues have been identified.
3.0	**Recommendations**
3.1	Members are asked to note Annual report for the 1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026 period on requests related to naming Council facilities, plant trees and locate artworks/sculptures on Council property.
4.0	**Resource implications**
4.1	No financial or resource implications.
5.0	**Due regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations (complete the relevant sections)**
5.1	***General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes*** It is not anticipated the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations ☒
5.2	***Proposal relates to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision*** Yes ☐ No ☐ If yes, please complete the following: The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) has been equality screened ☐ The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) will be subject to equality screening prior to implementation ☐

5.3	***Proposal initiating consultation*** Consultation will seek the views of those directly affected by the proposal, address barriers for particular Section 75 equality categories to participate and allow adequate time for groups to consult amongst themselves ☐ Consultation period will be 12 weeks ☐ Consultation period will be less than 12 weeks (rationale to be provided) ☐
	Rationale:
6.0	**Due regard to Rural Needs (please tick all that apply)**
6.1	Proposal relates to developing, adopting, implementing or revising a policy / strategy / plan / designing and/or delivering a public service Yes ☐ No ☒ If yes, please complete the following: Rural Needs Impact Assessment completed ☐
7.0	**Appendices**
	N/A
8.0	**Background Documents**
	N/A

Report to:	Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee
Date of Meeting:	13 August 2026
Subject:	Assessment of Community Wealth Building Actions and Measures – Directorate Business Plans 2025-2026
Reporting Officer:	Elaine Kirk, Assistant Director Legal and People
Contact Officers:	Colin Moffett, Head of Corporate Policy Alan Beggs, Head of Evidence and Research Catherine Hughes, Head of Performance and Improvement Suzanne Rice, Corporate Policy and Equality Officer

Confirm how this Report should be treated by placing an x in either:-

For decision		**For noting only**	**X**

1.0	**Purpose and Background**
1.1	A CLES / DTNI Report – Newry, Mourne and Down Pioneering the potential of community wealth building was considered and approved at the 11 August 2022 Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee. This Report set out key actions to deliver upon five recommendations and sub-recommendations which meaningfully progressed what was agreed in respect of the following two notices of motion: SPR/146/2020 Notice of Motion – Social Value Strategy, and C/205/2021 Notice of Motion – Community Wealth Building. As a practical way forward for Council to mainstream the principles of Community Wealth Building (CWB), CWB is now one of three cross-cutting themes within all Directorate Business Plans. The purpose of the report is to provide Members with an assessment of the Directorate Business Plan CWB actions and measures for the period 2024-2025.
2.0	**Key issues**
2.1	**Community Wealth Building** is an approach to the way that economies function, retaining more wealth and opportunity for the benefit of local people. **Social Value** refers to the wider financial and non-financial impacts on the wellbeing of individuals, communities and the environment. Themes include increasing secure employment and skills; building ethical and resilient supply chains; delivering zero carbon; and promoting wellbeing.
3.0	**Recommendations**
3.1	Members are asked to note the Assessment of Community Wealth Building Measures 2025-2026 as set out in Appendix I.

4.0	**Resource implications**
4.1	The majority of the key actions relate to current ongoing activities of Council which will be assessed to demonstrate their contribution to community wealth building.
5.0	**Due regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations (complete the relevant sections)**
5.1	***General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes*** It is not anticipated the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations ☒
5.2	***Proposal relates to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision*** Yes ☐ No ☒ If yes, please complete the following: The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) has been equality screened ☐ The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) will be subject to equality screening prior to implementation ☒
5.3	***Proposal initiating consultation*** Consultation will seek the views of those directly affected by the proposal, address barriers for particular Section 75 equality categories to participate and allow adequate time for groups to consult amongst themselves ☐ Consultation period will be 12 weeks ☐ Consultation period will be less than 12 weeks (rationale to be provided) ☐
	Rationale:
6.0	**Due regard to Rural Needs (please tick all that apply)**
6.1	Proposal relates to developing, adopting, implementing or revising a policy / strategy / plan / designing and/or delivering a public service Yes ☒ No ☐ If yes, please complete the following:

	Rural Needs Impact Assessment completed	☐
7.0	**Appendices**	
	Appendix I: Assessment of Community Wealth Building Measures 2025-2026	
8.0	**Background Documents**	
	CLES / DTNI Report – Newry, Mourne and Down Pioneering the potential of community wealth building	

CWB Actions & Measures 2025-26 - Assessment of Directorate Business Plans 2025-26

Active & Health Communities

- **Create a strong base to engage, empower and build the capacity of local communities, ensuring their views inform the work of the Council and its partners.**

10. Progress Capital Projects, including opportunities for digital innovation and transformation within key projects. (CWB) • Year 1 of the Mini-Digi Hub Project (Bessbrook Community Centre) • Annalong Community Centre • Cloughreagh Community Centre • Warrenpoint Health and Wellbeing Hub • Completion of Ballynahinch Community Centre

OWNER
Alison Robb (Ms)

Green

Result Due	Target	Progress	Notes	Files	Status
30th September 2025		Green	Progress continuing on all capital projects.	-	Green
31st March 2026		Green		-	Green

- **Develop a robust and reliable evidence base to underpin and inform future decision-making and policy development processes**

1. Undertake a pilot to ascertain how we could utilise the concept of social value to measure our performance via the work we undertake (CWB)

OWNER
Alison Robb (Ms)

Amber

Result Due	Target	Progress	Notes	Files	Status
31st March 2026	Pilot identified and commenced	Amber	In order to facilitate an effective social value pilot, a robust methodology is required. Strategic Investment Board (SIB) have been engaged to undertake an internal research project and make recommendations regarding the most appropriate methodological approach.	-	Amber

Chief Executive / Corporate Services

- **Provide efficient and professional HR services ensuring compliant integrated and sustainable services for all stakeholders that meet the corporate priorities and contractual obligations of the Council.**

		Sep 25	Mar 26
Continue to identify ways to increase the number of people from disadvantaged communities who are employed by council (CWB)	Target		
	Progress	Green	Green

- **Provide a professional and efficient finance service to deliver integrated sustainable services to meet our statutory and contractual obligations.**

		Sep 25	Mar 26
Pay 90% of invoices to suppliers within 30 days (CWB)	Target	90%	90%
	Actual	90% [1]	90% [2]

Notes:
1 average of 90% across first 2 quarters. details published on the Council Website
2 90% of invoices paid within 30 days from 1 April 2025 - 31 March 2026

➢ Deliver the Strategic Capital Plan & Estate Management Strategy to assist with the development and revitalisation of our district.

Deliver approved Capital projects through design, procurement and delivery stages providing regular updates and reports to directorates, project boards and committees. (CWB) (SCC)	Target	Sep 25	Mar 26
	Progress	Green *1	Green *2
Notes:	1 Regular Monthly reporting to SMT. Strategic projects in accordance with governance arrangements and Terms of Reference have monthly reporting at Project Boards & Programme boards to internal officers, members and external oversight bodies and funders. 2 Regular Monthly reports to SMT & Monthly reports to all project boards and programme boards. These have all been uploaded and recorded on decision time.		
Advise and assist departments in the identification of projects for consideration in the capital programme, including advising of project feasibility, costs, programme risks informing decision making and funding applications (CWB)	Target	Sep 25	Mar 26
	Progress	Green *1	Green *2
Notes:	1 Capital Project department advise & assist other directorates in the identification of viable projects and assisting with business case development, financial assistance assessment of projects in programmes unit, and cost reporting throughout all stages of the project lifecycle. 2 The Capital Projects Department supported directorates in identifying viable projects, developing business cases, assessing financial assistance requirements with the Programmes Unit, and providing cost reporting throughout the project lifecycle		
Continuation with the identification and disposal of council surplus assets, including the direct liaison with directorates, legals and external organisations. (CWB) (SCC)	Target	Sep 25	Mar 26 75% planning approval on surplus
	Progress	Green *1	Green *2
Notes:	1 Ongoing. The Surplus Assets register will be brought to SFWG in November for review by members and decisions where required. Estates team actively managing the planning applications, transfer, sale and disposals in accordance with council policies and the D1 process. 2 Continue to progress the identification, assessment, and disposal of surplus council assets, working closely with directorates, Legal Services, and external organisations to support efficient asset management, compliance, and the delivery of NMDDC Surplus Asset Disposal		

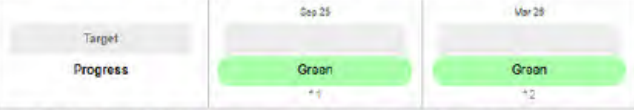
➢ Provide an effective procurement service to support council, including promoting and underpinning council sustainability & social value objectives

Increasing supplier outreach through attendance at Meet the Buyer type events and premarket engagement. (CWB) (SCC)	Target		Mar 26
	Progress		Amber *1
	Notes:	1 Working internally to develop pipeline of upcoming procurement opportunities. These will be collated and presented in 26/27 at event and also published on website / social media.	
Enhancing visibility of NMDDC Tender opportunities in the marketplace through social media campaign. (Q4) (CWB) (SCC)	Target		Mar 26
	Progress		Amber *1
	Notes:	1 Working internally to develop pipeline of upcoming procurement opportunities. These will be collated and presented in 26/27 at event and also published on website / social media.	
In line with the revised Procurement Policy, develop updated procedures and review systems. (CWB) (SCC)	Target	Sep 25	Mar 26
	Progress	Green *1	Green *2
	Notes:	1 New Procurement & Contract Management Procedures completed. Contracts Register has been reviewed and updated and is reported on internally. Meetings have been held internally with IT Dept. on migrating Contracts Register onto SharePoint and hosting this on dedicated Procurement Intranet System. 2 New Procurement & Contract Management Procedures completed. Contracts Register has been reviewed and updated and is reported on internally. Meetings have been held internally with IT Dept. on migrating Contracts Register onto SharePoint and hosting this on dedicated Procurement Intranet System.	

Economy Regeneration & Tourism

➢ To support opportunities for sustainable and prosperous economic growth across the district

Advance opportunities from Councils strategic location on the Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor. (CWB)		Sep 25	Mar 26
	Target		
	Progress	Green *1	Green *2
	Notes:	1 DBEC continues to explore cross border economic opportunities and has led on three cross border bids for funding. A proposal developing cross border tourism opportunities is currently being assessed, a decision on the outcome is expected in Q3 2025. The final application exploring circular economy is still in development and planning stage. DBEC is partnering on an application to SEUPB (PeacePlus) that will target cross-border labour market access and mobility of workers across the border. The project will also explore cross border skills equivalence of qualifications. DBEC has continued to develop an Industry Advisory Board, a Terms of Reference for this board has been created and approved, with the first meeting of the board due in Q3 2025. 2 Funding applications submitted included a cross-border innovation bid to InterTradeIreland (unsuccessful), a cross-border tourism strategy with a food and drink focus to PeacePlus (unsuccessful), and a circular economy / Industrial Symbiosis bid to InterTradeIreland, which is in development, with a decision expected in May 2026. Key programme activity has continued through Innovate+ (PEACEPLUS, ATU-led) €10million, with DBEC supporting SME engagement across the corridor in partnership with ATU, Catalyst, Queen's University Belfast, and Ulster University. The programme targets 955 SMEs, with 715 progressing into implementation, focusing on AI, ESG, sustainability, digital transformation, RegTech, and leadership development. The Innovation Support Network bid was also unsuccessful.	
Deliver against the ambitions and maximise the opportunities from investments arising from Belfast Region City Deal (CWB)		Sep 25	Mar 26
	Target		
	Progress	Amber *1	Green *2
	Notes:	1 NCCR Full Business Case approved by DfC Planning Approval in place Project delayed following receipt of Pre Action Protocol MMGP Following decision by National Trust not to grant a lease, NMDDC working with key stakeholders to explore an alternative proposal Grade A Office Accommodation grant £3 Million Office accommodation grant was launched 19th September Hotel Accommodation grant £1 Million Office accommodation grant was launched 15th September Regional Innovation Hub Potential partnership opportunities being explored that could support the operation of a regional innovation hub in Newry City 2 NCCR Full Business Case approved by DfC Planning Permission Secured Civic Hub Project delayed following receipt of Pre Action Protocol Theatre & Conference - Contractor appointed and pre-development works underway Concept for a new Tourism project as been approved by BCRD Exc Board, NMDDC, DfE and TNI, following withdrawal of MMGP as a BRCD project. Concept will be progressed to OBC. £1 Million development grant for Hotel Accommodation underway with 4 applications submitted. £3 Million development grant for Grade A Office Accommodation was launched, however with nil applications received. Development grant will be reopened in Q1 2026/27. Progression of concept for Regional Innovation Hub continues, with potential partnership opportunities being explored.	

Collaborate with key stakeholders on the advancement and delivery of opportunities that stimulate economic growth for the district. (CPP) (CWB)		
Notes:	1 Council established an Local Economic Partnership in Q1 2024/2025. The Partnership developed a range of Regeneration and Economic development programmes to increase productivity across the district. SLA with Newry Chamber to support 3 conferences. Delivery of Innovate Accelerate export programme and NMD Social Enterprise programmes. 2 Local Economic Partnership secured £4.5 Million Letter of Offer to support delivery against Regional Balance until March 2028. Go Succeed supported 486 businesses on their growth journey. DTFF has delivered successful letters of offer to 32 applicants in the district to the value of £583,433.	
Collaborate with key stakeholders on the advancement and delivery of opportunities that improve access to skilled labour appropriate to growth ambitions across the district (CPP) (CWB)		
Notes:	1 LoO for LMP £522,963.29. initiatives are underway. Progress to date includes: • Get Work Ready pre-employment programme launched with 27 participants enrolled. • HGV Employment Academy launched with 32 participants enrolled. • Employment Pathway Job Fair event on 19th June with 50 employers; 16 support organisations; and 368 attendees, over 450 jobs were on offer and 63% of attendees were aged 19-44. 2 Approval from DfC for additional funding of £142,626.36 • Labour Market Partnership meetings conducted x 4 • Get Work Ready pre-employment programme concluded with 67 participants completing of 68 enrolled • Enterprise Pathway Programme concluded with 40 completers of 41 enrolments • Employability Academies concluded with 40 completers of 70 enrolments • Three "Place to Work" events held with 276 attendees • Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity Masterclass held with 10 local employers • Disability Employment Programme delivered to 10 participants • Upskilling for Growth initiatives delivered to 113 participants • Employment Pathway events delivered to 2217 attendees • Apprenticeship events held with 973 attendees • Promotion of Employability and Skills Events delivered to 150 attendees • To date a total of 96 participants have gained employment as a result of participating in an NMD LMP initiative. Skills conference hosted with 150 people in attendance.	

➢ To deliver regenerative investments in infrastructure, tourism and cultural assets, that will revitalise the district as a place to live, work and invest.

Progress delivery of Council's ambitions under the Belfast Region City Deal tourism, regeneration and digital innovation projects (CPP) (CWB)	Target	Sep 25	Mar 26
	Progress	Amber *1	Green *2
Notes:	1 NCCR Full Business Case approved by DfC Planning Approval in place MMGP Following decision by National Trust not to grant a lease, NMDDC working with key stakeholders to explore an alternative proposal Grade A Office Accommodation grant £3 Million Office accommodation grant was launched 19th September Hotel Accommodation grant £1 Million Office accommodation grant was launched 15th September Regional Innovation Hub Potential partnership opportunities being explored that could support the operation of a regional innovation hub in Newry City 2 NCCR Full Business Case approved by DfC Planning Approval in place Project delayed following receipt of Pre Action Protocol Tourism Investment Concept for a new Tourism project as been approved by BCRD Exc Board, NMDDC, DfE and TNI, following withdrawal of MMGP as a BRCD project. Concept will be progressed to OBC. Grade A Office Accommodation grant £3 Million Office accommodation grant was launched 19th September however with nil applications received. Development grant will be reopened in Q1 2026/27 Hotel Accommodation grant £1 Million Office accommodation grant was launched 15th September with 4 applications submitted and now under assessment. Regional Innovation Hub MoU created and signed between Newry, Mourne and Down District Council and Queens University Innovation Oversight Board as an academic partner on the Regional Innovation Hub project. Potential partnership opportunities being explored with Digital Catapult that could also support the operation of a regional innovation hub in Newry City		
Collaborate with key stakeholders in order to progress delivery against the Downpatrick Regeneration Living High Streets Toolkit. (CPP) (CWB)	Target	Sep 25	Mar 26
	Progress	Green *1	Green *2
Notes:	1 Council provides secretariat to DRWG. Meetings occur monthly. Engagement with Ministers for Economy and Infrastructure. Engagement with Rivers Agency, DfI, DfC. Submission of an application to PEACEPLUS for The Grove. 2 Secretariat provided to DRWG, the group meet monthly to progress projects identified in the action plan. Church Street & De Courcy Public Realm underway with contractor appointed and task and finish meetings continue along with monthly meetings with key stakeholders Council has received funding for a Property Facade scheme in St. Patrick's Avenue, this will be implemented via LEP in 26/27. Following the launch of the Urban Park in Dunleath, additional funding was secured for linkages etc. Down Rally will take place summer 2026, supported by DRWG and NMDDC. Funding for The Grove secured from PEACEPLUS.		

Implementation of the PEACEPLUS Local Community Regeneration and Transformation theme. (CPP) (CWB)	Target	Sep 25	Mar 26
	Progress	Green *1	Green *2
Notes:	1 Legal agreements being developed and issued Procurement of civils undertaken 2 Legal documentation process ongoing with 2 fully completed. Procurement process has commenced with CPD for projects over £50k. ITT documents commenced.		
Sustainable investment in the protection and enhancement of Councils AONB's through implementation of NI Environment Funded action plan (CWB)	Target	Sep 25	Mar 26
	Progress	Green *1	Green *2
Notes:	1 Ongoing delivery of priority actions across biodiversity, access, and community engagement, with strong partner collaboration and successful event and volunteer programming supporting AONB objectives. EF Change Request LoO signed. 2 Ongoing delivery of priority actions		
Progress the implementation of the Geo Park Action plan and continued management and investment in Council's geo park assets (CWB)	Target	Sep 25	Mar 26
	Progress	Green *1	Green *2
Notes:	1 Progressed the integrated Strategy and Management Plan, aligned with council priorities and UNESCO guidance, and advanced partner engagement and communications to strengthen Geopark delivery. 2 Led development of the £11–12M Landscape Connections Strangford & Lecale AONB bid. Outcome of application - June 2026. Confirmed project partnership and contributed to development phase planning for the £12M Landscape Connections Mourne & Gullion bid, focused on habitat restoration, water management, and community reconnection.		

➢ **To facilitate opportunities that will empower and enable communities to deliver against Councils key thematic areas.**

Support Capacity building across community and business sectors in the application of financial assistance. (CWB)		Sep 25	Mar 26
	Target		
	Progress	Green *1	Green *2
Notes:	1 15 Pre Application workshops were delivered on financial assistance opportunities during open call for applications. Post assessment - workshops were held with successful applicants on the claim procedure and LoO terms and conditions. 2 15 Pre Application workshops were delivered on financial assistance opportunities during open call for applications. Post assessment - workshops were held with successful applicants on the claim procedure and LoO terms and conditions.		
Progress the implementation of the Local Co-designed Peace Plus Action Plans. (CPP) (CWB)		Sep 25	Mar 26
	Target		
	Progress	Green *1	Green *2
Notes:	1 Partnership Established Letter of Offer in place and deliver model established Implementation against action plan udnerway 2 The Partnership continues to meet and all strands of the programme have commenced delivery		

➢ **A statutory duty to apply the Building Regulations and Licensing obligations of Council.**

Engage with regional partners in relation to regulations to ensure continued alignment with emerging requirements (CWB)		Sep 25	Mar 26
	Target		
	Progress	Green *1	Green *2
Notes:	1 ongoing 2 BCNI and Licensing Forum		

➢ A statutory duty to apply the Planning Act / Development Management Regulations and enforcement.

		Sep 25	Mar 26
Engagement with key stakeholders and partners to develop a collaborative approach to planning improvements (CWB)	Target		
	Progress	Green *1	Green *2
Notes:	1 workshop with agent and public consultation held on validation checklists 2 validation checklist preparation completed and launch planned june 2026		
Continued capacity building and mentoring within the planning function (CWB)	Target		
	Progress	Amber *1	Amber *2
Notes:	1 ongoing with new staff and focus on group and 121 sessions etc 2 work remains ongoing		

➢ Prepare and delivery of the Local Development Plan (LDP)

		Sep 25	Mar 26
Ensure the LDP is reflective of Council's key strategic priorities as reflected in key strategies (CWB)	Target		
	Progress	Green *1	Green *2
Notes:	1 ongoing 2 yes activity remains ongoing as per plan		

Sustainability & Environment

- **Embed and align the new functions and services within the S&E Directorate structure and across Council. Review and transform current operational models to deliver efficient, effective and sustainable services that continue to meet our statutory obligations.**

		Sep 26	Mar 26
Progress recruitment of vacant posts and increase permanent Council employed staff in order to reduce reliance on agency staff and overtime to deliver frontline services. (CWB)	Target		
	Progress	Amber *1	Amber *2
Notes:	1 Progress in relation to appointment of staff required as part of the cleansing review. Further phases of recruitment to be progressed.		
	2 Further progress has been made in relation to appointment of staff required as part of the cleansing review. Second recruitment campaign planned with posts filled in Q1 2026/27. Review of vacant posts after second recruitment exercise will take place. Review and revision of Grounds Maintenance job descriptions and personnel specifications for Gardeners has increased reliance on agency recruitment.		

- **Develop and implement key sustainability strategies and action plans and advocate internally and externally to work towards net zero carbon, with an invest to save strategy, waste reduction, circular economy and green transportation programmes.**

		Sep 25	Mar 26
Research and develop options for a circular economy pilot project and explore funding opportunities (CWB) (Partner ERT)	Target		
	Progress	Amber *1	Amber *2
Notes:	1 In process of recruiting a new Sustainability Officer to progress this action.		
	2 A number of circular economy pilot projects have been identified. Potential projects to be developed further and funding opportunities explored in 2026/27.		

Report to:	Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee
Date of Meeting:	13 August 2026
Subject:	2025/26 FOI/EIR/RM monitoring statistics
Reporting Officer (Including Job Title):	Elaine Kirk Assistant Director: Legal and People
Contact Officer (Including Job Title):	Edel Cosgrove Head of Compliance

Confirm how this Report should be treated by placing an x in either:-

For decision		**For noting only**	**X**

1.0	**Purpose and Background**
1.1	The purpose of this paper is to present the monitoring statistics for the period 1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026 in relation to the: • 699 requests for information (RFI) received to Council and processed under either the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000 or Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) 2004; and • Internal Records Management project.
1.2	Annual monitoring of FOI/EIRs commenced in the 2018/19 financial year. 2020/21 was the first year we reported progress on our Records Management work. See section 8 for background information.
1.3	For this reporting period and moving forward, Council has adopted the ICOs FOI/EIR monitoring template.
2.0	**Key issues**
2.1	The collection and reporting of this information will enable Council to establish trends in requests for information and records management, allocate resource and determine staff training needs.
3.0	**Recommendations**
3.1	Councillors are asked to note the monitoring statistics.
4.0	**Resource implications**
4.1	None.
5.0	**Due regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations (complete the relevant sections)**
5.1	***General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes*** It is not anticipated the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations ☒

5.2	***Proposal relates to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision*** Yes ☐ No ☒ If yes, please complete the following: The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) has been equality screened ☐ The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) will be subject to equality screening prior to implementation ☐
5.3	***Proposal initiating consultation*** Consultation will seek the views of those directly affected by the proposal, address barriers for particular Section 75 equality categories to participate and allow adequate time for groups to consult amongst themselves ☐ Consultation period will be 12 weeks ☐ Consultation period will be less than 12 weeks (rationale to be provided) ☐
	Rationale:
6.0	**Due regard to Rural Needs (please tick all that apply)**
6.1	Proposal relates to developing, adopting, implementing or revising a policy / strategy / plan / designing and/or delivering a public service Yes ☐ No ☒ If yes, please complete the following: Rural Needs Impact Assessment completed ☐
	N/A
7.0	**Appendices**
	FOI/EIR and Records Management monitoring statistics.
8.0	**Background Documents**
	Access to Information Policy and Procedure A copy of the 2018/19 statistics was presented to the Committee on 13 June 2019 (page 219)

	2019/20 statistics on 11 June 2020 (page 234). 2020/21 statistics on 13 May 2021 (page 45), commencing collecting Records Management statistics. 2021/22 statistics on 12 May 2022 (page 65) 2022/23 statistics on 15 June 2023 (page 4) 2023/24 statistics on 15 August 2024 (page 87) 2024/25 statistics on 21 June 2025 (page 192) ICO - How to report on your performance on handling requests for information under FOIA 2000

The following tables provide a summary of FOI and EIR requests processed from 1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026.

The data was compiled on 21 July 2026 which has resulted in many cells with zero.

The ICO recommends collecting the 'Key FOI/EIR' data to comply, with the 'Additional data collection' and Exemptions/Exceptions data collection' tables optional in assisting measuring performance.

Key FOI/EIR data collection

Data to collect	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Total
Total requests received	164	195	154	186	699
Total open requests	0	0	0	0	0
Total of open requests with permitted extensions – public interest test	0	0	0	0	0
Total of open requests with permitted extensions – complex and voluminous	0	0	0	0	0
Total requests closed	164	195	154	186	699
Total requests closed within statutory timescale	162	192	154	185	693
Total requests closed with a permitted extension	20	17	14	10	61
Total requests closed outside statutory timescale	2	3	0	1	6
Total closed requests where information was granted in full	111	120	105	117	453
Total closed requests where information was withheld in full	9	9	14	10	42
Total closed requests where information was partially provided	29	29	20	25	103
Total internal reviews received	7	9	2	14	32
Total requests with a stopped clock for clarification	0	0	0	0	0
Total requests with a paused clock for fees notice	0	0	0	0	0

Additional data collection

Data to Collect	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Total
Compliance rate	99%	98%	100%	99%	N/A
Total FOI requests received	74	102	72	92	340
Total EIR requests received	90	93	82	94	359
Total of overdue requests	22	19	14	11	66
Total of overdue requests over one month old	0	0	0	0	0
Total of overdue requests over three months old	0	0	0	0	0
Total of overdue requests over six months old	0	0	0	0	0
Total of overdue requests over nine months old	0	0	0	0	0
Total of overdue requests over one year old	0	0	0	0	0
Exemptions and exceptions applied	See Exemptions and exceptions				
Total closed requests where information was withheld under the provision at section 12 (Cost)	3	4	5	3	15
Total closed requests where information was withheld under the provision at section 14 (Vexatious)	0	0	0	0	0
Total internal reviews closed	7	9	2	14	32
Total internal reviews closed within code of practice and statutory timescales	6	7	2	14	29
Total internal reviews closed outside code of practice and statutory timescales	1	2	0	0	3

Total internal reviews closed and fully upheld	3	7	1	8	19
Total internal reviews closed and partially upheld	4	0	0	3	7
Total internal reviews closed and overturned	0	2	1	1	4
Total internal reviews open	0	0	0	0	0

Exemptions applied (FOIA)				
Exemption	**Quarter 1**	**Quarter 2**	**Quarter 3**	**Quarter 4**
Section 21 - Information accessible by other means	1	4	4	1
Section 22 - Information Intended for Future Publication	0	2	0	0
Section 22A - Research Information	0	0	0	0
Section 23 - National Security (Security Bodies)	0	0	0	0
Section 24 - National Security	0	0	0	0
Section 26 - Defence	0	0	0	0
Section 27 - International Relations	0	0	0	0
Section 28 - Relations within the UK	0	0	0	0
Section 29 - The Economy	0	0	0	0
Section 30 - Investigations and Proceedings Conducted by Public Authorities	1	0	1	0
Section 31 - Law Enforcement	0	2	0	0
Section 32 - Court Records	0	0	0	0
Section 33 - Audit Function	0	0	0	0
Section 34 - Parliamentary Privilege	0	0	0	0

Section 35 - Formulation of government policy and Ministerial Communications	0	0	0	0
Section 36 - Effective Conduct of Public Affairs	0	2	0	0
Section 37 - Communications with the Royal Family and the granting of honours	0	0	0	0
Section 38 - Health and Safety	0	1	0	0
Section 39 - Environmental Information	0	0	0	0
Section 40(1) - Personal Information of the requester	0	0	0	0
Section 40(2) - Personal Information	4	9	7	9
Section 41 - Information provided 'In Confidence'	0	1	0	0
Section 42 - Legal Professional Privilege	0	0	0	1
Section 43 - Commercial Interest	8	9	9	9
Section 44 - Prohibitions on Disclosure	0	0	0	0

Exceptions applied (EIR)				
Exception	**Quarter 1**	**Quarter 2**	**Quarter 3**	**Quarter 4**
Regulation 12(4)(a) - Information not held	1	9	6	7
Regulation 12(4)(b) - Manifestly unreasonable requests	6	9	5	5
Regulation 12(4)(c) - Requests formulated in too general a manner	0	3	0	3
Regulation 12(4)(d) - Material in the course of completion, unfinished documents and incomplete data	1	2	1	1
Regulation 12(4)(e) - Internal communications	1	1	0	1

Regulation 12(5)(a) - International relations, defence, national security or public safety	0	0	0	0
Regulation 12(5)(b) – The course of justice and inquiries exception	3	4	4	6
Regulation 12(5)(c) - Intellectual property rights	0	0	0	0
Regulation 12(5)(d) - Confidentiality of proceedings		1	2	2
Regulation 12(5)(e) - Confidentiality of commercial or industrial information	13	4	0	3
Regulation 12(5)(f) - Interests of the person who provided the information to the public authority	0	0	0	0
Regulation 12(5)(g) - Protection of the environment	1	0	0	0
Regulation 13 - Personal information	9	8	6	13

Records Management 2025-26

Confidential Waste Paper Disposal

Year	Collections	Cost	Weight (approx.)	Trees Saved
2023/24	11	£1,013.00	22005 Kg	375
2024/25	18	£779.00	10170 Kg	174
2025/26	13	£662.00	8288 Kg	142

We entered the 3rd and final year of our contract with our current confidential waste provider Baile Waste Ltd. We will be completing a value-for-money exercise at the end of this quarter to award a new contract from October 26.

Retention and Disposal

The current version of the Retention and Disposal Schedule is currently under review as part of a potential regional retention and disposal schedule across all 11 councils. As one of the first councils to approve a new schedule NMDs was used as the template for the other Councils taking part in the project. This project is supported by PRONI (Pubic Records Office of Northern Ireland) and SOLACE.

Relocation

Records Management assisted with phase 2 and 3 of the relocation out of Monaghan Row in 2025/26 that was completed in June 2026. This involved the relocation of more than 300 boxes of records across various council sites.

