

January 10th, 2025

To Each Member of Council

NOTICE OF MEETING

You are requested to attend a Meeting of the

Mid and East Antrim Borough Council

to be held on Thursday, 16th January 2025 at 6:30 pm in Council Chamber, The Braid, 1-29
Bridge Street, Ballymena and via remote access.

Yours sincerely



Valerie Watts
Interim Chief Executive, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council

Agenda

1 FORMALITIES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

1.1 Notice of Meeting

1.2 Apologies

1.3 Declarations of Interest

Members and Officers are invited to declare any pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests, including gifts and hospitality, they may have in respect of items on this Agenda.

1.4 Minutes of Council Meeting

1.4.1 Council Meeting held on 25 November 2024 - Circulated

[11-24 Full Council Mins.pdf](#)

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1.5 Mayor's Announcements

2 QUESTIONS

2.1 Members

2.1.1 Tabled Question in the name of Cllr P Johnston

“Article 66 of the Pollution Control and Local Government (Northern Ireland) Order 1978 is legislation that deals with dilapidated or ruinous buildings and structures that are considered a serious detriment to the local community. Can council officers advise what recent assessment has been made of Prospect House with regards to Councils powers under this order and what action has been taken since the recent damage which has now left the building and roof in a very dangerous condition for the local residents and general public.”

Answer

“Council were made aware of a potentially dangerous structure at Prospect House on Sunday evening the 22 December 2024. The matter was referred to the Council's Building Control Team who attended site on Monday 23 December 2024 and liaised with the Council Facilities Team to have the area cordoned off. Contact with the owner was made via a local estate agent who confirmed that the owner was arranging for the site to be made safe.

In relation to an Article 66 notice served under the Pollution Control and Local Government (NI) Order 1978 if threshold for action is met, then an Article 66 notice requires the owner of the property to repair or restore or demolish the building.

Prospect House is a listed building and previous enquiries with the Historic Environment Division of Department of Communities advised that the owner would be committing an offence by demolishing a

listed building and this is the considered policy across the province.

Previous legal opinion stated that an Article 66 notice must give the option of demolition and therefore it is not appropriate for cases involving listed buildings.”

2.1.2 Tabled Question in the name of Cllr A Barr

"Does this Council intend to commemorate the following anniversaries: 80th anniversary to mark VE and VJ Days; and 75th anniversary to mark the start of the Korean War? If so, how can these momentous anniversaries be commemorated?"

Answer:

“The Council is developing a programme of activities to commemorate VE and VJ Days and other wartime anniversaries which proposes events in Ballymena, Larne and Carrickfergus and will include the marking of the 85th anniversary of the Battle of Britain, the 85th anniversary of Dunkirk, the 80th anniversary of the departure of the Belgian army from Northern Ireland, the 60th anniversary of the death of Winston Churchill as well as the 75th anniversary of the start of the Korean War.

It is proposed to re-prioritise the proposed annual Civic Event budget for next year to be able to fund these activities.

An update on this will be brought to the Events Sub-Committee in Jan 2025.”

2.2 Public

A period of up to 15 minutes will be available to allow questions that have been submitted by members of the public who live, work or study in the Borough. Any questions not answered within the timescale will be provided with a written response.

3 MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS

3.1 Planning Committee held on 28 November 2024 - Circulated

[11-24 Planning Minutes.pdf](#)

Page 16

3.2 Corporate Resources, Policy and Governance Committee held on 2 December 2024 - Circulated

[12-24 CRPG Mins.pdf](#)

Page 23

3.3 Neighbourhoods and Communities Committee held on 3 December 2024 - Circulated

[12-24 NC Mins.pdf](#)

Page 29

- 3.4 Environment and Economy Committee held on 9 December 2024 - Circulated**
📄 *12-24 Mins - Environment Economy .pdf* *Page 41*

- 3.5 Audit and Scrutiny Committee held on 10 December 2024 - Circulated**
📄 *12.24 Audit Scrutiny Committee Minutes.pdf* *Page 53*

4 POLICY FRAMEWORK AND BUDGET

- 4.1 Corporate Plan Update April - September 2024 - Report circulated**
📄 *Corporate Plan Update April-September 2024 - Full Council.pdf* *Page 58*

- 📄 *Appendix 1 Corporate Plan Update April-September 2024 compressed.pdf* *Page 60*

- 4.2 Performance Improvement Plan 2025/26 Consultation - Report circulated**
📄 *Performance Improvement Plan 2025-26 Consultation - FC.pdf* *Page 81*

- 📄 *Appendix 1 Performance Improvement Plan 2025-2026 Consultation document.pdf* *Page 84*

5 STRATEGIC ISSUES

6 ITEMS FOR DECISION - OPEN COUNCIL

7 MOTIONS

- 7.1 ****WITHDRAWN** (09.01.25) Notice of Motion proposed by Cllr L Gray, seconded by Cllr A Skinner****

“Mid and East Antrim Borough Council recognises the additional difficulties faced by parents and guardians of young children when trying to park in standard sized parking spaces.

Council recognises the benefits that ‘Parent and Toddler’ parking spaces can have in helping to facilitate easier access at high footfall locations and notes the implementation of such spaces at a number of private car parks locally.

I therefore propose that Council reviews the existing Car Parking Strategy for the borough and considers implementing an appropriate number of ‘Parent and Toddler’ parking spaces at all Council maintained car parks.”

8 SEALING

(i) Mid and East Antrim Borough Council - and - Hood McGowan Kirk LLP: Professional Services Contract Invitation to Tender, Tender for Appointment of a Project Manager Led ICT for BRCD - The Gobbins (Phase 2) - Form of Deed

Closed Council - In accordance with Council policy, members of the press will not be in attendance for this section of the Meeting.

7 MOTIONS - CLOSED COUNCIL

7.2 ****WITHDRAWN** Notice of Motion proposed by Cllr M Armstrong, seconded by Cllr L Philpott - Circulated (Deferred to next Full Council)**

[!\[\]\(74d4806277d7e73349d8e8c0897931e9_img.jpg\) Notice of Motion Cllr Armstong & Cllr Philpott.pdf](#)

Not included

9 STRATEGIC ISSUES - CLOSED

9.1 **Capital Plan for 2025/26 - Report circulated**

[!\[\]\(8bba887393ca45b761e5cb49e755e762_img.jpg\) Capital Plan - Financial Year 20252026.pdf](#)

Not included

[!\[\]\(47734e4656765d20df4fdbd5b7aff048_img.jpg\) Capital Plan FY 2025-2026 \(PT 19.12.24\).pdf](#)

Not included

10 ITEMS FOR DECISION - CLOSED

10.1 **Capital Contract Award – Pre Approval for Gracehill UNESCO Project - Report circulated**

[!\[\]\(41aea2746216b27a6939d696d8e035da_img.jpg\) Capital Procurement Contract Pre-Approval for the Gracehill UNESCO Report_.pdf](#)

Not included

10.2 **Contract Awards Facilities and Maintenance - Report circulated**

[!\[\]\(4436e6b00b9d5e62c2a161129eb3e4d0_img.jpg\) Contract Award - Facilities and Maintenance.pdf](#)

Not included

10.3 **Response to Notice of Motion re DFI Depot at Kilwaughter - Report Circulated**

[!\[\]\(e119fc79c8f448683d20ba4c873025a2_img.jpg\) Report - Notice of Motion - Kilwaughter Roads Depot.pdf](#)

Not included

[!\[\]\(5ddb2a112276baa148775929432349f9_img.jpg\) Appendix 1 - Letter to Dfl minister re Kilwaughter Road Depot 28 June 2024.pdf](#)

Not included

[!\[\]\(fb9e809951d718d0a8038dca8a708d54_img.jpg\) Appendix 2 - Response from Dfl Minister 08 July 2024.pdf](#)

Not included

OPEN COUNCIL

MID AND EAST ANTRIM BOROUGH COUNCIL

**Minutes of Meeting held on Monday 25 November 2024 at 6.30pm
in the Council Chamber, The Braid, 1-29 Bridge Street, Ballymena
and via remote access**

In the Chair: Ald Mrs B Adger, MBE, Mayor

Vice Chair: Cllr B Lyness, Deputy Mayor

Present: Ald T Gordon
Ald R Logan
Ald W McCaughey
Ald S McDonald
Ald Ms G Mulvenna
Ald P Reid
Ald A Wilson
Cllr M Armstrong
Cllr R Beggs
Cllr A Clarke (from 6.39pm)
Cllr D Clarke (from 6.42pm)
Cllr M Collins
Cllr M Donnelly
Cllr B Ferris
Cllr I Friary
Cllr J Gibson
Cllr R Glover
Cllr B Hadden
Cllr A Henry
Cllr T Hoey
Cllr C Jamieson
Cllr P Johnston
Cllr G McKeen
Cllr J Minford
Cllr L Philpott
Cllr R Quigley
Cllr A Rae
Cllr A Skinner
Cllr B Thompson

Present remotely: Ald B Ashe, MBE
Cllr A Barr (from 6.33pm)
Cllr C Harwood (from 6.31pm)
Cllr R Stewart (from 6.34pm)
Cllr M Warwick

Attendance: Mrs V Watts, Interim Chief Executive
Mrs L Donnan, Interim Director of Corporate Services
Mr J McGrandle, Acting Director of Development

Mr S Morley, Interim Director of Operations
 Mr P Thompson, Director of Community
 Mrs S Williams, Assistant Director - Business Support
 Mr J McVeigh, Head of Capital Works
 Ms C Grant, Acting Corporate Solicitor
 Mrs L Hunter, Democratic Services Manager
 Mrs L Graham-Metz, Committee Administrator

Attendance remotely: Miss P Blair, Committee Administrator

Public: There were no members of the public present.

Press: There were no members of the press present.

Item Minute

1. FORMALITIES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

1.1 Notice of Meeting

The Interim Chief Executive read the Notice of Meeting.

1.2 Apologies

Apologies were received from:

Ald Mrs M Morrow
 Cllr L Gray
 Cllr J McKeown
 Cllr Mrs A Smyth.

1.3 Declaration of Interest

Members and Officers were invited to declare any pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests, including gifts and hospitality they might have in respect of items on this Agenda.

The following declarations were received:

Cllr Hadden, item 9.1
 Cllr Johnston, items 4.3, 4.4, 7.1 and 10.6.

Noted.

1.4 Minutes of Council Meetings

1.4.1 Council Meeting held on 14 October 2024

On the proposal of Cllr Gibson, seconded by Cllr Minford, it was

Resolved: That the Minutes be approved and adopted.

1.5 Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor extended sympathies to the family and friends of:

- Amelia Kelly, former Deputy Mayor of legacy Larne Borough Council
- Ken Reid, well-known journalist and former UTV political editor
- Colin Wilkinson, past president of Larne Rotary Club and well-known businessman
- Cllr Gregg McKeen on the loss of his father
- Ald Paul Reid on the loss of his father-in-law.

The Mayor extended congratulations to:

- Alannah Williams from Clough for her success at the prestigious National Poultry Show
- Ballymena hairdresser, Simon Houston, who was named as Irish Hairdresser of the Year at the recent Beauty, Hair & Spa Awards 2024
- Larne FC on reaching the final of the County Antrim Shield

Congratulations were also extended to:

- Primrose Craig, Oakfield Primary School on being elected to the Youth Parliament for East Antrim

The Mayor referred to the Christmas Light switch ons across the Borough, thanking Ald Ms Mulvenna and Cllr Ferris for deputising for her in Carrickfergus and Larne respectfully. The carol service and switch-on would take place in Whitehead this weekend and in Greenisland in early December.

She extended Season's Greetings to the citizens of the Borough, Elected Members and staff. She also encouraged everyone to look out for their friends and neighbours at this time of year and encouraged all to shop local and support businesses within the Borough.

The Mayor's Christmas card, which would be distributed shortly, highlighted her two chosen charities - Cystic Fibrosis Trust and Air Ambulance NI.

A Member commended Council for the increased toilet provision at the Ballymena Christmas Light switch on.

Cllrs A and D Clarke joined the meeting during the above item.

2 QUESTIONS

2.1 Members

There were no Members' questions.

2.2 Public

The Mayor advised that one public question had been received and the previously agreed process would be followed.

One further question was incorrectly submitted, with no name and address, and was therefore rejected in accordance with the Protocol criteria.

During the timeslot available, the Interim Chief Executive read out the question and the Director of Community supplied the answer.

It was noted that details of all accepted questions and answers would be published within five working days on the Council website.

3 MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS

3.1 Planning Committee held on 17 October 2024

The item was originally seconded by Cllr Barr as Vice-Chair, however, as he had declared an interest in an Agenda item and had left the Planning Committee meeting for a time, an alternative seconder was sought.

On the proposal of Ald Reid, seconded by Ald Logan it was:

Resolved: the approval and adoption of the minutes and the noting of decisions taken under delegated authority.

3.2 Corporate Resources, Policy and Governance Committee held on 21 October 2024

On the proposal of Cllr Armstrong, seconded by Cllr Ferris it was:

Resolved: the approval and adoption of the minutes and the noting of decisions taken under delegated authority.

3.3 Neighbourhoods and Communities held on 22 October 2024

On the proposal of Cllr Donnelly, seconded by Cllr Philpott it was:

Resolved: the approval and adoption of the minutes and the noting of decisions taken under delegated authority.

3.4 Minutes of Environment and Economics Committee held on 28 October 2024

On the proposal of Cllr McKeen, seconded by Cllr Gibson it was:

Resolved: the approval and adoption of the minutes and the noting of decisions taken under delegated authority.

3.5 Minutes of Audit and Scrutiny Committee held on 29 October 2024

On the proposal of Ald Gordon, seconded by Cllr Harwood it was

Resolved: the approval and adoption of the minutes and the noting of decisions taken under delegated authority.

3.6 Personnel Committee held on 5 November 2024

On the proposal of Cllr Stewart, seconded by Ald Ms Mulvenna it was

Resolved: the approval and adoption of the minutes and the noting of decisions taken under delegated authority.

In response to a query, the Interim Chief Executive advised that she would present a report to the Committee pre-Christmas/early New Year regarding the Senior Management Restructure; this would include recruitment of a Chief Executive. All Members would be informed once the report was approved by the Personnel Committee.

4 POLICY FRAMEWORK AND BUDGET

4.1 Information Governance Framework (referred from Corporate Resources, Policy & Governance Committee)

Report circulated seeking Members' consideration and approval of the draft newly developed Information Governance Framework document.

The Assistant Director – Business Support provided Members with background on the Information Governance Framework. The Corporate Resources, Policy & Governance Committee asked for it to be referred to Full Council to ensure all Members were aware of its importance. Officers would receive training to enable them to support Members.

The Assistant Director – Business Support undertook to report back on a query reference the responsible disposal policy and whether this included device disposal.

The Recommendation to approve the Information Governance Framework document

was proposed by Ald McCaughey and seconded by Ald Wilson and agreed.

4.2 Scheme of Delegation Update - City Deal

Report circulated seeking approval of a necessary amendment to the Council's Scheme of Delegation, to increase the financial delegations for Directors as set out in Section C, Powers delegated to Officers, paragraph 3, General Delegated Functions – Financial Delegations to Directors, in a specific limited situation pertaining to the City Deal Projects,

The Interim Director of Corporate Services highlighted that this only related to City Deal and explained that the Acting Director of Development was the Senior Responsible Officer for the City Deal projects.

The Recommendation to approve the necessary amendment to the Scheme of Delegation

was proposed by Ald Reid and seconded by Ald Logan and agreed.

4.3 Local Development Plan - Supplementary Planning Guidance

Report circulated seeking approval to publish Supplementary Planning Guidance on three policy areas: Retention of Economic Development Land; Affordable Housing; and Retail and Town Centre Uses.

Ald Reid proposed acceptance of the recommendations as Chair of the Planning Committee.

The Acting Director of Development advised that this had been agreed by the Planning Committee in October and that it was not a new policy; it sought to ensure the existing policy was implemented and applied consistently and effectively through the development management process by providing further advice to landowners, developers and planning agents. No significant objections were received during the 8-week consultation.

In response to a query on the document, he advised that it had been issued in the format included with Members' papers.

Ald Logan seconded the proposal.

The Recommendation to approve the Supplementary Planning Guidance for publication on the Council website

was proposed by Ald Reid and seconded by Ald Logan and agreed.

4.4 Learnings - Assistant Commissioner For Standards Report

Members noted the circulated report referred from Planning Committee, which identified any learnings from the findings in a report of the Assistant Commissioner for Standards against a former Lisburn City and Castlereagh Councillor, with a view to minimising the risk and reputational damage to the Council in the future.

The Chair advised that Members could request further training if required.

5 STRATEGIC ISSUES

There were no Strategic Issues.

6 ITEMS FOR DECISION – OPEN COUNCIL

6.1 Ballymena Academy Board of Governors

Ballymena Academy had advised that the current Board term would complete on 31 December 2024 and were seeking confirmation of the MEA representatives for the new Board term commencing on 1 January 2025. Current representatives were Ald McCaughey, Cllrs Gibson and Minford.

The Recommendation that Ald McCaughey, Cllrs Gibson and Minford be reaffirmed as the MEA representatives for the new Board term commencing on 1 January 2025

was proposed by Cllr McKeen and seconded by Ald Wilson and agreed.

7 MOTIONS

7.1 Notice of Motion proposed by Cllr R Beggs and seconded by Ald A Wilson

Cllr Beggs proposed the following motion:

"Mid and East Antrim Borough Council strongly opposes the UK Government's recent Winter Fuel Payment policy change. We resolve to write to the Prime Minister, urging the Government to reverse this harmful decision, which will have a far-reaching and devastating impact on pensioner households across the UK. Furthermore, we seek assurance that, at the very least, the Pension Credit minimum income guarantee will be increased, ensuring that more low-income pensioner households, particularly those who narrowly miss out, become eligible for pension credit."

Cllr Beggs highlighted concerns with the Government's decision to end the universal payment of the winter fuel allowance to pensioners, which would

leave thousands of additional pensioners in fuel poverty each year and he wished to protect the most vulnerable and correct this mistake.

In a letter to the Works & Pensions Select Committee, the Secretary of State, the Rt Hon Liz Kendall MP, acknowledged that departmental modelling estimated that an extra 100,000 pensioners would move into relative poverty and 50,000 into absolute poverty across the UK, after housing costs were considered. He also highlighted potential additional healthcare costs for cold related illness due to not being able to heat their homes.

He compared Government action in relation to the recent train drivers pay award but noted they could not find funds to prevent pensioner poverty.

He stated that the Government did not want to make a U-turn but he sought Members' support to press them on the issue. He welcomed the NI Executive decision to pay £100 to those no longer eligible for winter fuel payments by March 2025 and encouraged pensioners to apply for pension credit, by ringing the Pensioners Credit application line (0808 100 6165) for advice on entitlement. He suggested Council promote advice numbers through the display of posters in Council properties.

Although previously not all those who received winter fuel payments needed them, the introduction of benefit qualification would see many vulnerable pensioners miss out on pension credit. At the very least, he called for the qualification threshold to be widened. Supporting pensioners should not involve expensive bureaucracy. HMRC should know pensioners earnings and he questioned why the Government could not use that information to allow payment of a winter fuel allowance to those in need.

Ald Wilson, in seconding the Motion, considered the decision by the Government to be a serious misjudgement. Referring to NISRA and Census data, he estimated that an additional 210 pensioners in the Borough would be living in relative or absolute poverty. He also welcomed the announcement of the NI Executive decision.

He thought it important that Councillors across the political spectrum in NI unite to protect the most vulnerable in society by doing everything possible to oppose this change. He called for the Prime Minister and Chancellor to commission a review of Pension Credit thresholds to ensure it included more low-income pensioner households. He considered a unified message to the UK Government would be powerful, citing the recent scenario regarding the agricultural property relief. In conclusion he remarked that winter fuel payments were not a luxury or a bonus but an essential form of support.

Several Members spoke in support of the motion, welcoming the decision for a £100 one-off fuel payment, and some remarked that the amount was inadequate, and they urged the Executive to pay it earlier to ensure

pensioners could heat their homes over the winter period. In addition, a Member urged the Minister for Communities to urgently bring forward anti-poverty and fuel poverty strategies.

In summing up, Cllr Beggs thanked Members for the cross-party support for the motion. Although the £100 payment was less than previous years, it was the most the devolved Government could afford. In response to a comment on the effectiveness of writing to the Government, he remarked that they had to try and hoped public opinion would bring about a change in policy.

On the proposal of Cllr Beggs, seconded by Ald Wilson, it was:

Agreed: the above Motion.

The Mayor advised that following support for this Motion, she would ask Officers to take the proposal forward.

7.2 Notice of Motion proposed by Cllr P Johnston, seconded by Cllr G McKeen

Cllr Johnston proposed the following motion:

"That this council acknowledges the increasing public concern around overgrown grass verges, paths and hedges and therefore utilise existing resources to GIS map the land in council ownership in order to:

- better understand responsibilities between statutory bodies in terms of ownership
- better engage with the public for reporting
- explore new models with other statutory agencies to ensure main arterial routes into our towns are better maintained."

Cllr Johnston commenced by commenting that all Members would have received complaints on this issue and highlighted that a key issue was that the land referred to in most cases was not Council's responsibility to maintain.

He stated that the current approach was not working and there was overgrown grass, bushes etc. detracting from the Borough; without a proper joined up approach, the current lack of budgets would only make the situation worse.

The Motion called for Officers to identify what land Council owned on the GIS resource and, if possible, annotate it with details of when it was cut. This could also support more efficient procurement, as what areas needed to be cut and when would be known. A digital reporting service would provide better and direct engagement with citizens, noting that Dfl already

did this and it was a useful tool. He urged Officers to engage with other Councils to share learnings.

In closing, he highlighted opportunities to collaborate with other statutory agencies who own green spaces in the Borough to create opportunities for efficiencies and new ways of delivery.

Cllr McKeen, in seconding the Motion, reiterated the issues in relation to complaints received by Members. Residents expected the roadsides to look presentable and this had not happened for a number of years.

They were raising the issue to try to improve how things worked and to do them differently without adding extra work for employees/contractors or additional cost to Council, by putting the onus of responsibility where it should belong; by working constructively with other stakeholders and perhaps even sharing responsibility for pieces of ground. He referenced situations where multiple contractors worked in the same area resulting in a duplication of time, money and effort.

He noted that due to Health & Safety, cutting the central reservations required lane or road closures, when in the past they had just been cut early morning every other week without incident. A review of how and when it was done was required to see if it could be done better.

He reminded Members that Council had written repeatedly to the Minister, who responded that two cuts would be done per year for environmental reasons, which he believed was a bit of a 'red herring'. Referring to DfI statements in relation to costs, he noted that with the closure of the Kilwaughter depot, Larne was now serviced out of Antrim, and the impact on the time taken to grit the roads.

Members welcomed the Notice of Motion and commented on the following:

- Challenges made to DfI Roads in relation to dirty road signs on the entries to Ballymena
- That the Notice of Motion complemented the one approved from the previous year, proposed by Cllr Harwood and seconded by former Cllr Hyland
- The impact of overgrown verges on the width of roads, especially in rural areas, and the need to make roads safer by making all the tarmac available
- Whether other Statutory Agencies could feed into Council's system
- The issue of clarification of ownership of land
- The state of the Ballymena to Antrim line, comparing with Scottish roads.

Cllr Johnston, in conclusion, thanked Members for their contributions, noting the rural impact and safety issue raised. It was clear that the issue

was widely felt across the Borough and that Officers were being given a strong mandate for change.

He spoke of the jeopardy it placed on Council's tourism product and highlighted comments made by a potential investor in the Borough, stating that the status quo should not be accepted as good enough.

On the proposal of Cllr Johnston seconded by Cllr McKeen, it was:

Agreed: the above Motion.

The Mayor advised that following support for this Motion, she would ask Officers to take the proposal forward with the relevant financial assessment to come back to a future Council meeting for final decision.

8 SEALING

There were no documents for sealing.

On the proposal of Cllr Glover, seconded by Cllr Hoey, it was

Agreed: That the Meeting goes into Closed Council.

In accordance with Council policy, members of the Press and the public were not in attendance for this section of the Meeting. The Mayor reminded Members that business discussed in Closed Council should remain confidential.

9 ITEMS FOR DECISION – CLOSED COUNCIL

9.1 Capital Plan Financial Year 2024/25 - Reprofile Options

Report circulated to seek Full Council approval for the re-profiling of the amount detailed in the report in approved FY 2024/25 Capital Funding, to address a number of emerging in-year project needs.

The item was determined to fall within Closed business as information falls under the prescribed exemptions: Part 1, Schedule 6 Local Government Act (NI) 2014 – commercially sensitive information. Publication is restricted until sometime in the future.

The Head of Capital Works provided a brief overview of the report.

The Recommendation to approve the re-profiling of the amount detailed in the report in approved FY 2024/25 Capital Funds, as set out in Table 2 of the circulated report

was proposed by Cllr Skinner and seconded by Cllr Gibson and agreed.

10 ITEMS FOR DECISION – CLOSED

10.1 Contract Tender Awards: Capital Projects

Report circulated seeking approval to enter into contract for the following Capital Projects:

- Play Park Refurbishment Programme (Fisherwick, Bardic Drive and Oakfield)
- MUGA Upgrade Programme (Larne Town Park, Sunnylands and Greenisland)
- Ballymena Showgrounds 3G 5aside and 2G to 3G Replacement
- Clough Cemetery Extension
- Greenisland FC Carpark Extension
- Carnfunnock Country Park.

The item was determined to fall within Closed business as information falls under the prescribed exemptions: Part 1, Schedule 6 Local Government Act (NI) 2014 – commercially sensitive information. Publication is restricted until sometime in the future.

The Head of Capital Works outlined the Officers' recommendations and, in response to Members' questions clarified the reason for the increase of the MUGA upgrade costs and the process to be followed for Carnfunnock should the price be above the pre-tender estimate.

Further to a query, the Interim Chief Executive confirmed that if significant changes were required for Carnfunnock as a result of increased prices, it would be brought back to Elected Members for approval.

The Recommendation to

- (i) give approval to enter into a contract with Garden Escapes for the sum as outlined in the report to deliver the Play Park Refurbishment Programme
- (ii) give approval to enter into a contract with Tony Patterson Sports Grounds Ltd., for the sum as outlined in the report to deliver the MUGA Refurbishment Programme
- (iii) give approval to enter into a contract with Civco Ltd for the sum as outlined in the report to deliver the Ballymena Showgrounds 3G 5aside and 2G to 3G Replacement
- (iv) give approval to enter into a contract with Adman Civils for the sum as outlined in the report to deliver the Clough Cemetery Extension
- (v) give approval to enter into a contract with Struell Contracts NI for the sum as outlined in the report to deliver the Greenisland FC Car Park Extension
- (vi) give delegated authority and pre-approval to enter into a contract provided Tender Returns received do not exceed the approved

Capital Plan budget to deliver the redevelopment of Carnfunnock Country Park

- (vii) approve that the Interim Chief Executive and Mayor execute and seal the contracts on behalf of Council.

was proposed by Ald Wilson and seconded by Ald McCaughey and agreed.

10.2 Lease of Spring House, Springwell Street, Ballymena

Report circulated seeking approval to lease 3,454 sq. foot of office space at Spring House, Springwell Street, Ballymena.

The item was determined to fall within Closed business as information falls under the prescribed exemptions: Part 1, Schedule 6 Local Government Act (NI) 2014 – commercially sensitive information. Publication is restricted until after Council decision and land disposal complete.

In response to Members' questions, the Interim Director of Operations confirmed that no other Council assets were available, how property was being fully utilised in Larne and savings to be made from improved energy efficiency in the new location.

The Recommendation to

- (i) approve the lease of Spring House, Springwell Street, Ballymena
- (ii) authorise the Mayor and Chief Executive to execute and seal the relevant contractual and legal documents on behalf of Council

was proposed by Cllr Gibson and seconded by Ald McCaughey and agreed.

10.3 Supply of Services Relating to the Treatment and Energy Recovery/Disposal of Residual Waste

Report circulated seeking approval to delegate authority to the Mayor and Chief Executive to approve and enter into a contract for the Supply of Services Relating to the Treatment and Energy Recovery/Disposal of Residual Waste Arisings.

The item was determined to fall within Closed business as information falls under the prescribed exemptions: Part 1, Schedule 6 Local Government Act (NI) 2014 – commercially sensitive information. Publication of the report will become unrestricted: never.

The Recommendation to approve the delegation of authority to the Mayor and Chief Executive to approve the award of the arc21 contract for The Provision of Services Relating to the Treatment and Energy Recovery/Disposal of Residual Waste - Lot 1 combined residual waste

collected from residual kerbside collections and residual waste from commercial/trade collections

was proposed by Cllr McKeen and seconded by Cllr Quigley and agreed.

10.4 Business Case for Purchase of Two no. 32T Hook Loaders

Report circulated seeking approval for a business case to purchase two no. Hook Loader Vehicles.

The item was determined to fall within Closed business as information falls under the prescribed exemptions: Part 1, Schedule 6 Local Government Act (NI) 2014 – commercially sensitive information. Publication of the report will become unrestricted: never.

The Recommendation to approve the Business Case for the purchase of two no. 32T Hook Loaders that meet the latest legislative standards, and in terms of our environmental policy these vehicles will be more fuel efficient therefore reducing emission and helping council achieve their Carbon reduction objectives

was proposed by Cllr McKeen and seconded by Ald Gordon and agreed.

10.5 Acquisition of Former Danske Bank Building, 21-23 High Street, Carrickfergus

Report circulated seeking approval for the purchase of the former Danske Bank Building at 21-23 High Street Carrickfergus to be the new Visitor Centre and Community Hub for the Carrickfergus City Deal Project.

The item was determined to fall within Closed business as information falls under the prescribed exemptions: Part 1, Schedule 6 Local Government Act (NI) 2014 – commercially sensitive information. Publication is restricted until after registration of title at Land Registry following completion of sale.

Further to a question, the Acting Director of Development advised that additional surveys would be undertaken prior to purchase.

The Recommendation to approve the purchase of the former Danske Bank building, 21-23 High Street, Carrickfergus through the City Deal Project

was proposed by Cllr Skinner and seconded by Cllr Collins and agreed.

10.6 Carrickfergus City Deal Contract for Funding Amendments

Report circulated seeking approval for the Mayor and Chief Executive to sign the Funding Agreement Addendum required in order to accept revisions to the contract for funding for the Carrickfergus City Deal Project and for the Council seal to be applied to the document.

The item was determined to fall within Closed business as information falls under the prescribed exemptions: Part 1, Schedule 6 Local Government Act (NI) 2014 – commercially sensitive information. Publication of the report will become unrestricted: never.

The Recommendation to approve for the Mayor and Chief Executive to sign the Funding Agreement Addendum and for the Council seal to be applied to the document

was proposed by Cllr Hadden and seconded by Ald Logan and agreed.

10.7 NIE Sub-station – Narrow Gauge Road Larne

Report circulated seeking approval to a lease, right of way, and cable easement for a new Northern Ireland Electricity Networks Limited (NIE) Sub-station at the Narrow Gauge Road car park in Larne.

The item was determined to fall within Closed business as information falls under the prescribed exemptions: Part 1, Schedule 6 Local Government Act (NI) 2014 – commercially sensitive information. Publication of the report will become unrestricted: never.

The Recommendation to

- (i) agree to enter into a new Lease, right of way and cable easement with NIE for a new sub-station at Narrow Gauge Road Car park in Larne as outlined in Appendix 1 of the report
- (ii) authorise the Chief Executive and the Mayor to execute and seal the new Lease, right of way and cable easement

was proposed by Ald Logan and seconded by Cllr McKeen and agreed.

OPEN COUNCIL

On the proposal of Cllr Glover, seconded by Cllr Henry it was:

Agreed: That the meeting returns to Open Council.

The Meeting terminated at 8.01pm.

----- Mayor

----- Interim Chief Executive

----- Date

**MID AND EAST ANTRIM BOROUGH COUNCIL
PLANNING COMMITTEE**

**Minutes of Meeting held on Thursday 28 November 2024 at 10.00am in the
Council Chamber, The Braid, 1-29 Bridge Street, Ballymena
and via remote access**

In the Chair:	Ald P Reid
Present:	Ald T Gordon Ald R Logan Cllr A Barr (Vice-Chair) Cllr R Glover Cllr T Hoey Cllr J Minford Cllr A Rae Cllr A Skinner
Attendance:	Mr J McGrandle, Acting Director of Development Mr K Patterson, Acting Head of Planning and Building Control Ms S Adams, Principal Planning Officer Mr G McGuinness, Principal Planning Officer Mr S Shiels, Solicitor One Planning Officer observing Mr D Adamson, Byrne Ó Cléirigh Consulting (to 10.16am) Ms C Bradley, Heron Storage Ltd (to 10.16am) Mr D O'Callaghan, Heron Storage Ltd (to 10.16am) Mr T Stokes, TSA Planning (to 10.16am) Ms A Beacom, Senior Committee Administrator Ms R Hosseini, Committee Administrator
Public:	Two members of the public were present to 10.16am.
Press:	No members of the press were present.

ITEM	MINUTE
1	Notice of Meeting

Members were advised that the meeting would be audio recorded and broadcast live on Council's website.

Those who had registered speaking rights would be given an opportunity to address the Committee in person or remotely. Each member and Officer introduced themselves.

The Acting Director of Development read the Notice of Meeting.

2 Apologies

Apologies were received from

Cllr J McKeown
Cllr Mrs A Smyth

3 Declarations of Interest

Members and Officers were invited to declare any pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests, including gifts and hospitality they might have in respect of items on this Agenda.

No declarations were received.

4 Schedule of Planning Applications

4.1 Planning Application No. LA02/2023/1577/F - Lands approx. 950m SE of Ballylumford Power Station and approx.40m south of No's 87 & 89 Ballylumford Road, Islandmagee. Proposed erection of a Battery Energy Storage System Facility 100MW (BESS) and associated 33kV transformers, including 2 no. switch houses with control rooms, lighting and Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) columns, new site boundary fencing and landscaping proposals, new site access and laneway and ancillary development works

Mr McGuinness, with the aid of visual display, detailed the site location plan and surrounding context, advising that it was predominantly agricultural with some roadside developments, however, there were a number of nearby industrial developments including Ballylumford Power Station and the North South Interconnector. Mr McGuinness highlighted the block plan, advising that the proposed layout was typical of a BESS facility; separation distances and siting of the switch and control rooms and batteries and transformers had been carefully considered. The main view of the facility from the road was limited due to existing mature vegetation which would be enhanced with the planting of additional trees, shrubs and bushes to aid integration.

Members were advised that DfI Roads did not have any objections, subject to conditions. DfI Rivers, Mutual Energy and Historic Buildings were satisfied. NI Fire and Rescue Service had made a number of recommendations and Mr McGuinness advised that the proposed layout would address these requests and be complemented by the

standard Condition number 4. The proposal met the criteria of Planning Policies TE1 and GP1.

Mr McGuinness noted that there had initially been 27 objections in respect of road safety, potential fire and health concerns, water run-off, impact on archaeological remains and lack of consultation with residents. The Planning department was satisfied that these issues had been addressed via the proposed layout, consultation responses and the attached conditions. Approval of the application was therefore recommended.

The Chair noted that Mr T Morrow had registered speaking rights in opposition to the Planning Department's decision to approve the application; Mr Morrow had withdrawn his speaking rights.

Mr Stokes, speaking in support of the Officer's recommendation to approve, advised that the applicant was one of few companies to have already successfully delivered a Battery Storage project in Northern Ireland, demonstrating their technical expertise in this area. He noted that Northern Ireland was legally committed to a net zero carbon emissions target by 2050 and 80% renewable generation by 2030 and Battery Storage facilities would be essential in order to meet these requirements. Mr Stokes remarked that Battery storage facilities were also essential to ensure a reliable energy supply and to modernise and stabilise the energy grid.

Members were advised that the site had been chosen due to its close proximity to Ballylumford Power station, the existing sub-station and the Moyle interconnector and gas pipeline. The natural topography of the site meant that the development would sit below road level and the existing vegetation and additional planting would provide effective screening from the road and for nearby residents.

Mr Stokes advised of detailed assessments which had been undertaken in order to ensure the highest safety and environmental standards, which related to noise, archaeological, lighting analysis, fire safety, emergency response and assessment of the gas network. Fire safety mitigation measures included 24/7 monitoring and separate fire and safety regulations would be addressed, as per Planning Condition 4. Mr Stokes concluded by highlighting that no objections had been received from statutory consultees.

Mr Patterson confirmed that a typographical error in respect of the Planning Application number on the report on Decision Time bore no impact upon the Planning Officer's report contents or the Planning system.

Resolved: that a decision on Planning Application No. LA02/2023/1577/F be deferred to the next Planning Committee so that

a site visit may be held to enable Elected Members to visualise the proposal on the ground

was proposed by Ald Logan and seconded by Cllr Minford and agreed by the Committee.

Mr Shiels confirmed that all aspects of the application would be up for consideration when the application next came before the Planning Committee.

Voting on the proposal was as follows –

For	Against	Abstain
7	2	-

4.2 Planning Application No. LA02/2024/0673/F - 7 Glendun Drive, Ballymena. Alteration and Extension to Existing Dwelling

With the aid of visual display, Mr McGuinness detailed the site location plan, surrounding context, existing elevations, proposed elevations and finishes of the two-storey, semi-detached dwelling. The proposed extension was located to the rear of the dwelling and was single storey in height. All criteria of Planning Policy HOU3 had been met, Appendix G of the Plan Strategy fulfilled and no objections had been received. Mr McGuinness noted that the application had come before the Planning Committee as the applicant was a senior Council employee. The Planning department was recommending approval of the application.

Resolved: the recommendation that Planning Application No. LA02/2024/0673/F be approved, subject to the conditions outlined in the report

was proposed by Cllr Barr and seconded by Cllr Glover and agreed by the Committee.

Voting on the proposal was as follows –

For	Against	Abstain
9	-	-

4.3 Planning Application No. LA02/2024/0672/F - 4 Wellington Court, Ballymena. Refurbishment, including internal and external alterations of redundant ground floor public WC accommodation to provide new office space and disabled WC provision

Mr Patterson noted that the applicant was Mid and East Antrim Borough Council, therefore the application had to come before the Planning Committee for consideration. With the aid of visual display, he detailed

the proposed refurbishment to provide office workspace for approximately 17 staff, including site location, wider context and view of the site and floor plans. The elevation changes were minor, in keeping with the character of the building, the proposal was appropriate for the use of the building and would subsequently bring more footfall to the town centre. No objections had been received and approval of the application was recommended.

In response to a query, Mr Patterson confirmed that the disabled WC would be available for use by all.

Resolved: the recommendation that Planning Application No. LA02/2024/0672/F be approved, subject to the conditions outlined in the report

was proposed by Cllr Glover and seconded by Cllr Hoey and agreed by the Committee.

Voting on the proposal was as follows –

For	Against	Abstain
9	-	-

4.4 **Planning Application No. LA02/2024/0661/F - The Braid Civic Building and Town Hall, Bridge Street Ballymena. Conversion of arts centre floorspace into office space**

Mr Patterson detailed the application, remarking that it was proposed to convert 229m² of internal arts floorspace to Class B1 office space. As the applicant was Mid and East Antrim Borough Council, the application must be considered by the Planning Committee. Members were advised in respect of the wider context, views of the site and proposed floor plans to accommodate 34 staff members. No external changes were proposed and the application would provide appropriate office space and provide benefit by increasing staff numbers in this town centre location.

Further to a query regarding NI Water's conditions and sewage requirements, Mr Patterson confirmed that Officers had engaged with NI Water, a Waste Water Impact Assessment had been undertaken and conditions agreed with NI Water, which would be attached to any approval of the application.

Resolved: the recommendation that Planning Application No. LA02/2024/0661/F be approved, subject to the conditions outlined in the report

was proposed by Cllr Hoey and seconded by Cllr Glover and agreed by the Committee.

Voting on the proposal was as follows –

For	Against	Abstain
9	-	-

5 Planning Appeals Update

5.1 New Appeals

No new appeals.

6 Planning Appeal Decisions

6.1 Decisions

One appeal was noted:

- LA02/2019/0496/F - Proposed extension to existing poultry unit to provide housing for 27,000 laying hens and construction of new ancillary building to store litter. Land approx. 350m NW of 34 Ballybogey Road, Clough.

Invalid appeal.

Season's Greetings

The Chair wished all present a Happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

Training

Mr Patterson reminded Members of the training on Retail and Town Centres which would follow the conclusion of this meeting.

The meeting ended at 10.27am.

..... Chair

..... Interim Chief Executive

7

22

_____ Date

DRAFT

MID AND EAST ANTRIM BOROUGH COUNCIL

CORPORATE RESOURCES, POLICY AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

**Minutes of Meeting held on Monday 2 December 2024 at 6.30pm
in the Council Chamber, The Braid, 1-29 Bridge Street, Ballymena
and via remote access**

Chair: Cllr M Armstrong (Chair)

Present: Ald W McCaughey
Ald Mrs M Morrow
Cllr R Beggs
Cllr A Clarke (from 6.34pm)
Cllr M Collins
Cllr M Donnelly
Cllr B Ferris (Vice Chair)
Cllr J Gibson
Cllr R Glover
Cllr T Hoey
Cllr C Jamieson
Cllr B Lyness
Cllr G McKeen
Cllr B Thompson

Present Remotely: Cllr L Gray (from 6.32pm)
Cllr R Quigley

Attendance: Mrs L Donnan, Interim Director of Corporate Services
Mrs N Waring, Committee Administrator

Attendance Remotely: Mrs S Williams, Assistant Director - Business Support
Mrs L Cowan, Strategic Tourism and Regeneration
Manager

Press: No members of the Press were in attendance.

Public: No members of the public were in attendance.

ITEM MINUTE

1 Notice of Meeting

The Interim Director of Corporate Services read the Notice of Meeting.

2 Apologies

Apologies were received from:

Ald Ms G Mulvenna

Cllr A Henry
Cllr J McKeown

3 Declarations of Interest

Members and Officers were invited to declare any pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests, including gifts and hospitality, they may have in respect of items on this Agenda.

No declarations were received.

4 Items for Consideration / Decision

4.1 Policy Briefing

Report circulated providing an update in respect of matters that fall within the remit of the Policy Team.

Resolved: to note the report

4.2 Communications and Events Activities Update December 2024

Report circulated providing a brief overview on the activities of Communications and events from 1 September 2024 to 1 December 2024.

The Interim Director of Corporate Resources responded to queries regarding engagement by the Communications Team with Community Clusters in relation to incorrect comments posted on social media.

The Officers were commended for the Christmas events.

Resolved: to note the report.

4.3 Sickness Absence (6 Monthly Update)

Report circulated providing an update on absence management for the period 01 April 2024 to 30 September 2024 and to highlight actions Officers continue to implement to support a positive attendance culture.

Resolved: to note the report.

4.4 Modern Slavery Act Annual Transparency Statement (1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025)

Report circulated seeking approval of the Annual Transparency Statement under the Modern Slavery Act 2015 for the period 1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025.

The recommendation to approve the annual statement for the period 1 April 2024 until 31 March 2025 for publication on the Council's website

was proposed by Ald McCaughey and seconded by Cllr Lyness and agreed.

4.5 Performance Improvement Plan Q2 Update

Report circulated providing Elected Members with the Performance Improvement Plan 2024/25 Quarter 2 Update Report for scrutiny and seeking approval to publish the report on the Council's website.

In regard to the statutory Planning Service targets, where at least 70% of enforcement cases were concluded within 39 weeks, the Interim Director of Corporate Services undertook to arrange to provide a response to a Member regarding the measures that Officers were putting in place to address the 30% of cases which exceeded 39 weeks.

The recommendation to approve the Performance Improvement Plan 2024/25 Quarter 2 Update Report for publication on the Council's website

was proposed by Cllr Gibson and seconded by Cllr McKeen and agreed.

4.6 Events Sub Committee Report Terms of Reference

Due to a technical difficulty, the Chair proceeded to items 4.7 and 4.8 to allow time for reconnection to the meeting.

4.7 Update on National Pay Awards

Report circulated providing an update on the Pay Award for 2024-25 in respect of:

- (i) staff covered under the National Joint Council (NJC) remit
- (ii) Chief Executives.

Resolved: to note the report.

4.8 Quarterly Complaints Update Q2 July – September 2024

Report circulated providing an overview of the complaints processed by Council in Q2 of the 24/25 year, i.e. between 1 July and 30 September 2024.

The Interim Director of Corporate Services responded to a query regarding provision of data to indicate trends in receipt of complaints, advising that the data provided for Q1 and Q2 was based on the new process for complaints as suggested by the Ombudsman.

She also undertook to arrange a report back to the Committee providing further detail on the nature and breakdown of the complaints for waste services and on an incident at Seven Towers Leisure Centre and the potential for this to recur.

Resolved: to note the report.

4.6 Events Sub-Committee Terms of Reference

As the previous technical issue had been resolved, item 4.6 was considered.

Report circulated providing an update on the formation of an Events Sub-Committee to support the delivery of Council's corporate events and to agree the Terms of Reference.

In response to queries, the Strategic Tourism and Regeneration Manager undertook to review the draft Terms of Reference for the Events Sub-Committee to include civic, key international and any other events, along with an amendment to the Sub Committee membership. She confirmed that the reporting mechanisms from the various Sub-Committees would continue and Access and Inclusion remained a focus at all Council delivered events.

The recommendation to:

- (i) Note the establishment of the Events Sub-Committee
- (ii) Revise the draft Terms of Reference for the Events Sub-Committee to include all civic, corporate, key international and any other events which Council supports, with a report to be submitted to the January Committee.

was proposed by Cllr McKeen and seconded by Cllr Collins and agreed.

4.9 Article 55 Report to Equality Commission for Northern Ireland

Report circulated providing an update on the actions identified in the Council's 'Article 55' Fair Employment Monitoring Report to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

Resolved; to note the report.

4.10 Boundary Rectification at Ballymena Showgrounds

Report circulated seeking approval to effect a boundary rectification with Radius Housing Association Limited in respect of lands at Ballymena Showgrounds.

The recommendation to:

- (i) agree to regularise the title position in respect of lands at Ballymena Showgrounds, by accepting a transfer in the form of a boundary rectification from Radius Housing Association Limited of the land as outlined
- (ii) authorise the Mayor and Chief Executive to execute the relevant deeds

was proposed by Ald McCaughey and seconded by Cllr Collins and agreed.

5 Items for Recommendation to Council

No items to consider.

6 Tabled Questions

There were no tabled questions.

On the proposal of Cllr Collins, seconded by Cllr Hoey, it was:

Agreed: That the Meeting goes into Closed Committee.

In accordance with Council policy, members of the press and the public were not in attendance for this section of the Meeting.

7 Items for Consideration / Decision – Closed Committee

7.1 Procurement Update

Report circulated on the outcome of Tenders and Direct Award Contracts (DACs) for the period from 4 October 2024 to 13 November 2024.

The item was determined to fall within Closed business under the prescribed exemptions: commercially sensitive information.
Publication is restricted until sometime in the future.

The Interim Director of Corporate Services drew Members' attention to and responded to queries on DAC 338, which had required urgent attention. She advised that in future this would go out to tender.

She undertook to arrange to report back to the Committee on best value for money for DAC 339.

Resolved: to note the report.

7.2 Technology One Programme Update

Report circulated providing an update to Members on the Technology One programme implementation including current status, the improvements made to date, and the planned actions still required for the Technology One (TECH1) Enterprise Resourcing Planning (ERP) system.

The item was determined to fall within Closed business under the prescribed exemptions: - Part 1, Schedule 6 (3) Local Government Act (NI) 2014 – Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person including Council.
Publication is restricted until sometime in the future.

The Interim Director of Corporate Services responded to queries regarding staffing requirements, training provision and the potential risk to core

activities. She gave details of the timetable for recruitment and further advised that Council would remain within the parameters of the projected cost.

Resolved: to note the report.

8 Items for Recommendation to Council – Closed Committee

No items to consider.

9 Forward Plan for Corporate Resources, Policy & Governance Committee

Members noted the circulated Forward Plan and Agenda for the next Corporate Resources, Policy & Governance Committee on 13 January 2025 (with any additional items being included following agreement with the Chair).

OPEN COMMITTEE

On the proposal of Cllr Donnelly, seconded by Cllr Glover, it was

Recommended: That the Meeting returns to Open Committee.

The Meeting ended at 7.15pm.

..... Mayor

..... Interim Chief Executive

..... Date

MID AND EAST ANTRIM BOROUGH COUNCIL

NEIGHBOURHOODS AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Minutes of Meeting held on Tuesday 3 December 2024 at 6.30pm in the Council Chamber, The Braid, 1-29 Bridge Street, Ballymena and via remote access

In the Chair: Cllr M Donnelly (Chair)

Present: Ald S McDonald
 Cllr M Armstrong (to 8.00pm)
 Cllr M Collins
 Cllr B Ferris
 Cllr R Glover
 Cllr L Gray
 Cllr B Lyness
 Cllr J Minford
 Cllr L Philpott (Vice Chair)
 Cllr A Rae
 Cllr B Thompson (to 7.29pm)

Present Remotely: Ald B Ashe, MBE
 Ald Ms G Mulvenna (from 7.16pm)
 Cllr I Friary
 Cllr T Hoey (to 7.09pm)

Attendance: Mr P Thompson, Director of Community
 Mr J McGrandle, Acting Director of Development
 Ms P Allen, Head of Public Protection, Health and Wellbeing (to 7.35pm)
 Ms C Black, Acting Head of Community Planning and Development
 Ms L Cowan, Strategic Tourism and Regeneration Manager
 Ms L Kirkwood, Outdoor Recreation Officer
 Miss P Blair, Committee Administrator

Also in attendance: Mr Declan Rogers, NIFRS (to 6.50pm)
 Mr Michael Lyttle, NIHE (to 7.08pm)

Press: There were no members of the press present.

Public: No members of the public were in attendance.

ITEM MINUTE

1 Notice of Meeting

The Director of Community read the Notice of Meeting.

2 Apologies

Apologies were received from:

Ald Mrs B Adger, MBE
Ald A Wilson
Cllr C Jamieson
Cllr Mrs A Smyth

3 Declaration of Interest

Members and Officers were invited to declare any pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests, including gifts and hospitality they might have in respect of items on this Agenda.

No declarations were received.

4 Items for Consideration/Decision – Open

4.1 Presentation from Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service on their Community Risk Management Plan

The Chair welcomed Mr Declan Rogers from Northern Area Command to present to the Committee.

Mr Rogers informed Members that the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) would be used to inform strategic operational resource deployment going forward. CRMP was underpinned by current guidance/advice from UK Fire Standards Board and National Fire Chiefs Council. By means of visual aid, he guided Members through his presentation on:

- Why CRMP is Important
- Informing CRMP
- Key Sections
- Understanding Risks is Important
- Key CRMP Deliverables:
 - Review the Service Delivery Model
 - Improve IT Systems
 - Introduce other interventions to support current prevention and protection
 - Strengthen planning, resilience and risk information
 - Strengthen support for staff
 - Strengthen governance systems.

Mr Rogers encouraged Members to complete the public consultation available via the NIFRS website, and to share it with communities and local businesses, to get as much feedback as possible by the closing date of 9 January 2025.

The Chair thanked him for his presentation and invited questions from Members.

In response to queries, Mr Rogers advised that the fire station in Carrickfergus was engaging actively with schools, PCSPs etc and that NIFRS was very willing to engage with the public. Reference the possibility of increasing retained firefighters, he advised that Year 3 of the CRMP would focus on resources and having the right people in the right places, based on risk.

He confirmed that new technologies/renewable energy did pose significant challenges and this was an emerging risk they were having to deal with.

The Chair thanked Mr Rogers and advised that the public consultation would be shared via Council's socials. Mr Rogers left the meeting at this point.

4.2 **Presentation from NIHE – Financial Inclusion Work**

The Chair welcomed Mr Michael Lyttle, Financial Inclusion Manager with the NI Housing Executive to present to the Committee.

Mr Lyttle began by providing details of his career background before guiding Members through his slide presentation on:

- The Role of the Financial Inclusion Manager
- Deputy Financial Inclusion Managers
- Key Themes
- Statistics
 - since April 2024, 904 referrals from North East area, 3,107 since the service began of which 1,087 were from MEA.
 - Since April 2024, had assisted tenants to gain £627k in unclaimed social security benefit
 - Since Sept 2021 helped tenants gain additional benefits of £6.4m
- Case Studies/examples
- Tenant Feedback

The Chair thanked Mr Lyttle for his presentation and the work being carried out to benefit so many tenants.

In response to queries, Mr Lyttle said he would be happy to receive referrals via Elected Members and would be willing to hold a workshop for a group of people, if requested. He further confirmed, in response to a request, that he would be willing to organise a workshop to inform Elected Members regarding PIP etc. so that they could signpost constituents to get the right help.

The Chair thanked Mr Lyttle for coming along and he left the meeting at this point.

4.3 Letter from Dfl on proposal to prohibit a Right Turn Movement from North Street onto Market Place, Carrickfergus, which is a pedestrianised zone

Correspondence circulated seeking Members' comments on the above proposal.

The Director of Community provided some background information. The Economic Development team had spoken to local traders regarding the Dfl proposal. Traders were keen to ensure that access for loading and unloading was maintained and wished to see the proposal aligned to permit access to West Street and Market Place during these times.

Members' comments included:

- that pedestrian safety had to be considered, especially for those with visual impairment, as vehicles exiting North Street traversed the pavement; there was no Give Way sign and the surface was level with no kerb so there were no queues for guide dogs.
- that the 'no right turn' sign was already in place and traders were concerned about inconsistency around controls as Market Place was supposed to be pedestrianised.
- when events were being held in Market Place, it was difficult to exit.

Officers would relay Members' comments to Dfl.

4.4 Letter from Dfl on proposal for an Accessible Parking Bay – in layby opposite SL No. 14 Ballystrudder Gardens, Islandmagee

Members noted the circulated correspondence and had no comments on the above proposal.

4.5 Grant of Entertainment Licence

Report circulated seeking approval for the licensing of entertainment at The Fuzzy Beak, Slaughterford Road, Whitehead.

The Department was satisfied that the above-named premise could be granted an annual entertainment licence as per the application details.

Resolved: the recommendation to approve the grant of an annual entertainment licence to The Fuzzy Beak, Slaughterford Road, Whitehead

was proposed by Cllr Collins and seconded by Cllr Ferris and agreed.

4.6 Grant of Petroleum Licence

Report circulated seeking approval to grant a petroleum licence to Curran Road Filling Station, 106 Curran Road, Larne, for 12 months.

The Department was satisfied that all the legal requirements had been met and the licence should be granted.

Resolved: the recommendation to approve the grant of a Petroleum licence to Curran Road Filling Station, 106 Curran Road Larne for 12 months

was proposed by Cllr Glover and seconded by Cllr Collins and agreed.

4.7 Impending Ban on XL Bully Dogs Update

Members noted the circulated report to provide a further update on the impending ban of XL Bully dogs within Northern Ireland and the current position within the Mid and East Antrim area.

The Head of Public Protection Health and Wellbeing undertook to report back on a query regarding requirements for an owner visiting Northern Ireland with an XL Bully Dog from the Republic of Ireland.

4.8 Community Health & Wellbeing Activities Report

Members noted the circulated report which updated on the valuable work of the Council Community Health and Wellbeing Team and summary outcomes report for 2023/24.

The report highlighted the work delivered by Council staff over a range of wellbeing initiatives within the Borough, largely funded by PHA and drew Members' attention to the potential for funding shortfall for delivery of these projects going forward.

The fantastic work by the team was acknowledged and Officers were encouraged to seek more budget from PHA to continue that work and to include this in the rate setting process if possible.

4.9 Environmental Crime 6-month Update

Members noted the circulated report which provided statistics for the first six months of 2024/25 and progress made on addressing fly-tipping within the Borough, following the approval of a new fixed penalty at the maximum amount of £400.

The Head of Public Protection Health and Wellbeing responded to Members' queries in relation to a rise in drugs paraphernalia being dumped in Larne; the onus on owners of deceased dogs to advise Council; on the lower level of dog fouling complaints received compared to the previous year; and on the current capacity of Enforcement Officers.

4.10 Asylum Seeker Full Dispersal Funding

Report circulated seeking approval to accept the offer of funding from The Executive Office Full Dispersal Funding and to sign the corresponding Memorandum of Understanding.

The Acting Head of Community Planning & Development advised that this was a continuation of monies previously given to Council to continue the work undertaken and the £15k was 100% funded, plus it would be possible to claim some administration costs.

The workshops on Trauma Informed Practice were welcomed following the recent Notice of Motion and it was hoped training would be rolled out to Elected Members also.

Cllr Ferris proposed acceptance of the recommendations, welcoming the additional funding and the trauma informed training.

Ald Ms Mulvenna seconded the proposal.

Cllr Armstrong wished his objection to continuation of the funding and acceptance of new funding to be recorded, given that the previous report had not referred to dispersal of asylum seekers to Mid and East Antrim.

In response, the Acting Head of Community Planning & Development advised that there were no asylum seekers currently in Mid and East Antrim (following the closure of the Loughshore Hotel). She added that it was difficult to stay updated with regard to numbers at a local level given that once refugee status is granted people move around. She added that the process of dispersal was housing and services led. She undertook to circulate the most recent information from the Home Office regarding asylum seekers/refugees within Mid and East Antrim.

Cllr Thompson left the meeting at this stage.

Ald McDonald requested a recorded vote on Cllr Ferris' proposal.

Voting was as follows:

Name	For	Against	Abstained
Ald S McDonald		✓	
Cllr M Armstrong		✓	
Cllr R Glover			✓
Cllr M Collins			✓
Ald B Ashe			✓
Ald Ms G Mulvenna	✓		
Cllr L Gray	✓		
Cllr A Rae	✓		
Cllr I Friary	✓		

Cllr B Lyness	✓		
Cllr B Ferris	✓		
Cllr J Minford	✓		
Cllr L Philpott (Vice Chair)			✓
Cllr M Donnelly (Chair)	✓		
Totals:	8	2	4

The result of the vote was 8 for, 2 against and 4 abstentions. The Chair declared the proposal carried.

Resolved: the recommendation to approve the acceptance of £15,000 from the Full Dispersal Fund and the subsequent signing of the Memorandum of Understanding with The Executive Office

was proposed by Cllr Ferris and seconded by Ald Ms Mulvenna and agreed.

4.11 Quarter 2 Grant Application Summary Report

Members noted the circulated report which provided a breakdown of the funding awards for applications through the Community Grants Scheme and Community Festivals Fund during July, August and September 2024.

In response to a query, the Acting Head of Community Planning and Development provided an explanation regarding staff resource.

4.12 Outcome of Bathing Water Season for Mid & East Antrim Borough Beaches 2024

Members noted the circulated report which updated on the recently announced bathing water results for MEA beaches in the 2024 season.

Concerns were raised about the amount of seaweed at Fisherman's Quay, Carrickfergus and the bad odour from it being a health hazard and detracting from the area. Officers had been asked to have the beach defined as a destination area for bathers.

The Outdoor Recreation Officer advised that the criteria set by the Department was for 45 bathers on one occasion/100 beach users on two occasions over a given period of time and it had been spot checked on five separate occasions by the Department but had not met the criteria. This would be kept under review.

Ald Ashe proposed that the seaweed was removed from the beach at Fisherman's Quay, Carrickfergus as and when required.

In response to queries, the Outdoor Recreation Officer commented on a BBC report on independent sampling of water quality, however as this was not a designated bathing water, Council did not receive results to

display. Council did issue social media posts about failures in water quality at Ballygally and Drain's Bay (designated bathing waters). She added that due to the manmade structure (Fisherman's Quay), seaweed was likely to gather there on an ongoing basis.

Cllr Collins seconded Ald Ashe's proposal.

Resolved: the recommendation to have the seaweed cleared from the beach at Fisherman's Quay, Carrickfergus as and when required

was proposed by Ald Ashe, seconded by Cllr Collins and agreed.

4.13 Museum's Collection Rationalisation Report – Next Phase

Report circulated to seek approval for the dispersal of poor condition, incomplete or domestic bygone artefacts currently held in Council's museum collection.

The repurposing of some of the collection for dispersal was welcomed.

Resolved: the recommendation to approve that

- (i) donors of domestic bygone artefacts identified for dispersal will be contacted and given up to sixty days to agree and arrange return of their donation if they wish to do so
- (ii) where artefacts are not accepted back by donors they will be repurposed for community use
- (iii) all remaining identified artefacts, including those in poor condition and beyond economic repair, which cannot be given to a new owner, should be destroyed by the Council's waste department

was proposed by Cllr Ferris and seconded by Cllr Minford and agreed.

5 Items for Recommendation to Council

No items to consider.

6 Tabled Questions

There were no tabled questions.

On the proposal of Cllr Glover, seconded by Cllr Lyness, it was:

Agreed: That the Meeting goes into Closed Committee.

In accordance with Council policy, members of the press and the public were not in attendance for this section of the Meeting.

7 Items for Consideration/Decision – Closed Committee

7.1 Funds from TEO for Ending Violence Against Women and Girls

Report circulated to update Elected Members on the Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy and the offer of funding for local Councils to progress work to contribute to the achievement of the outcomes of the strategy.

The item was determined to fall within Closed Committee as information falls under the prescribed exemptions: - Part 1, Schedule 6 Local Government Act (NI) 2014 – commercially sensitive information. Publication is restricted until - never.

The Acting Head of Community Planning and Development advised discussions on use and allocation of funding. If any Member had a particular request, she undertook to check that with TEO.

Members welcomed the funding and made a number of suggestions for consideration by Officers and asked to be kept updated on how the money was to be spent.

Further to a request for personal alarms, Members were asked to advise Officers of any requirements.

Resolved: the recommendation to

- (i) note the publication of the Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy and associated Delivery Plan
- (ii) accept the offer of funding, £50,000 Momentum Funding for period up to end of March 2025 plus £100,000 Local Change Fund monies for a grant scheme supporting work from April 2025 to the end of March 2026
- (iii) approve Officers to submit outline proposals for the use of the Momentum funding between Elected Member approval and end of March 2025
- (iv) approve for Officers to progress the development and launch of a Local Change Fund to open early in 2025 for activities within the fiscal year of 2025/26

was proposed by Ald Ms Mulvenna and seconded by Cllr Lyness and agreed.

7.2 Gobbins Sub-Committee Adoption of Minutes & Review of Terms of Reference

Report circulated seeking approval of the Terms of Reference for the Gobbins Sub-Committee and to agree the adoption of minutes.

The item was determined to fall within Closed Committee as information falls under the prescribed exemptions: Part 1, Schedule 6 Local Government Act (NI) 2014 – commercially sensitive information. Publication is restricted until - never.

Resolved: the recommendation to

- (i) note the revised Terms of reference for the Gobbins Sub-Committee
- (ii) approve the adoption of the Gobbins Sub-Committee Minutes from 21 March 2024

was proposed by Cllr Glover and seconded by Cllr Minford and agreed.

7.3 The Gobbins Operations Update & 2025 Plans

Report circulated to provide Members with an update on activity at The Gobbins during the summer season 2024 and to consider the operations for the new financial year, April 2025 to March 2026.

The item was determined to fall within Closed Committee as information falls under the prescribed exemptions: Part 1, Schedule 6 Local Government Act (NI) 2014 – commercially sensitive information. Publication is restricted until - never.

Resolved: the recommendation to

- (i) note the update provided in the report for the summer season and new staff posts
- (ii) agree to continue with additional tour capacity in 2025/2026

was proposed by Cllr Minford and seconded by Cllr Glover and agreed.

Cllr Armstrong left the meeting.

7.4 Gracehill UNESCO Site Update

Report circulated updating on development plans for Gracehill village as a designated UNESCO World Heritage site and seeking approval for the development of an economic appraisal to support the cultural centre plan subject to budget approval of £20,000 in the 2025/2026 Arts and Culture Estimates.

The item was determined to fall within Closed Committee as information falls under the prescribed exemptions: Part 1, Schedule 6 Local Government Act (NI) 2014 – commercially sensitive information. Publication is restricted until - never.

The report on the next steps for Gracehill was welcomed along with the opportunity for a tourist hub.

Resolved: the recommendation to

- (i) note the update provided in the report along with the work carried out by Tourism, Arts and Culture Officers to date, as part of the Local Management Steering Group.
- (ii) approve the development of an economic appraisal to support the cultural centre plan subject to budget approval of £20,000 in the 2025/2026 Arts and Culture Estimates
- (iii) note the request for £200,000 additional funding in the 2025/2026 Capital Plan to support further development of the site
- (iv) note the need for Council to recruit and contribute to the ongoing cost of a UNESCO Site Manager

was proposed by Cllr Lyness and seconded by Cllr Minford and agreed.

7.5 Strategic Arts and Culture Activity Update

Members noted the circulated report providing an overview of activity undertaken by the Arts, Culture, Museums and Heritage team from July to September 2024, in delivering a wide and varied programme of activity and the benefit this brought to the Borough.

The item was determined to fall within Closed Committee as information falls under the prescribed exemptions: Part 1, Schedule 6 Local Government Act (NI) 2014 – commercially sensitive information. Publication is restricted until - never.

7.6 The Gobbins 10th Anniversary Update

Report circulated updating Members on the plans for 2025 to celebrate the 10th anniversary of The Gobbins reopening and seeking approval for the proposed activities.

The item was determined to fall within Closed Committee as information falls under the prescribed exemptions: Part 1, Schedule 6 Local Government Act (NI) 2014 – commercially sensitive information. Publication is restricted until - never.

Members noted that the report was very encouraging and that it was a great opportunity to positively promote The Gobbins.

Officers were asked to consider involving local businesses in Larne in the anniversary programme.

Resolved: the recommendation to approve the proposed activities and associated expenditure, as detailed in the report, to celebrate the 10th anniversary of The Gobbins

was proposed by Ald Ms Mulvenna and seconded by Cllr Collins and agreed.

8 ITEMS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL – CLOSED

No items to consider.

On the proposal of Cllr Glover, seconded by Cllr Lyness, it was

Agreed: That the Meeting returns to Open Committee.

9 Forward Plan for Neighbourhoods and Communities Committee

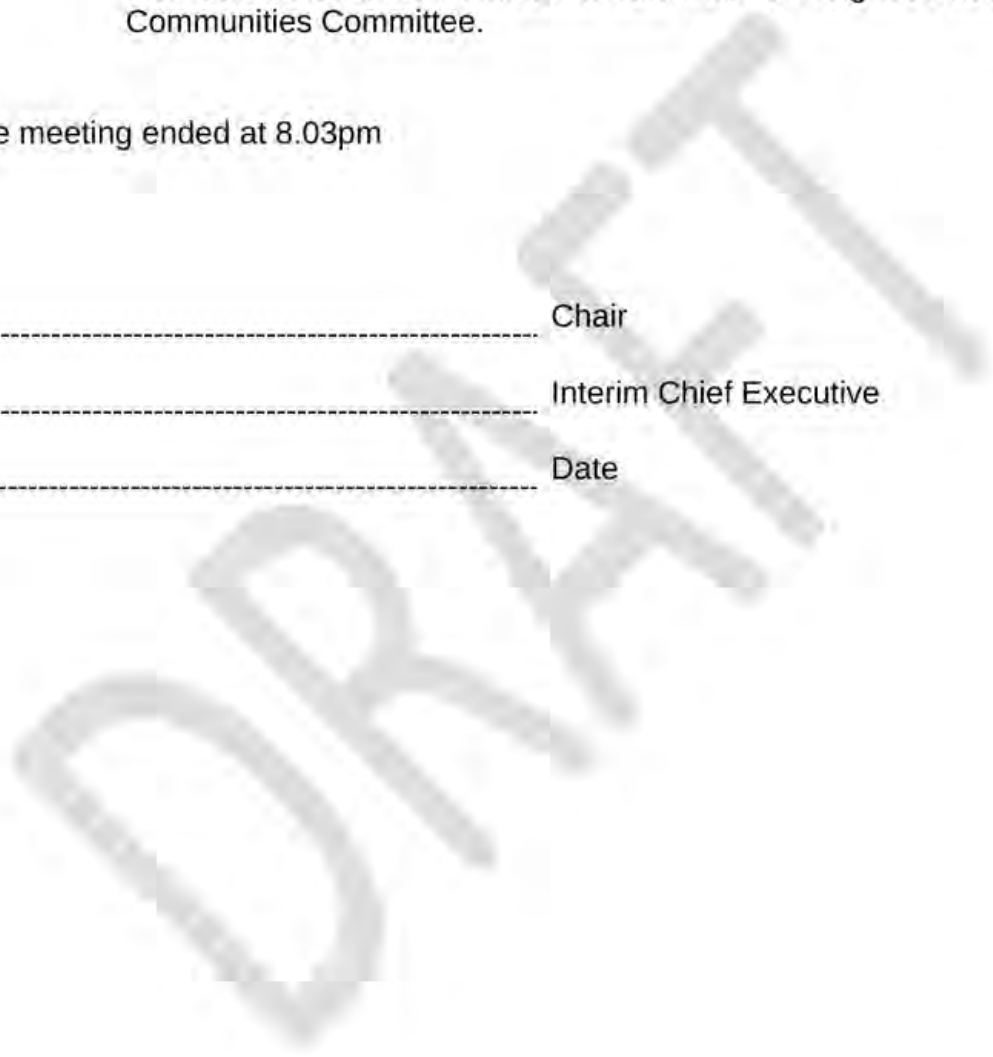
Members noted the circulated Forward Plan for Neighbourhoods and Communities Committee.

The meeting ended at 8.03pm

----- Chair

----- Interim Chief Executive

----- Date



MID AND EAST ANTRIM BOROUGH COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY COMMITTEE

**Minutes of Meeting held on Monday 9 December 2024 at 6.30pm
in the Council Chamber, The Braid, 1-29 Bridge Street, Ballymena
and via remote access**

In the Chair: Cllr G McKeen (Chair)

Present: Ald B Ashe, MBE (from 6.36pm)
Ald R Logan
Ald W McCaughey
Ald Mrs M Morrow (Vice-Chair)
Ald A Wilson
Cllr R Beggs
Cllr A Clarke (from 6.38pm)
Cllr B Hadden
Cllr C Harwood
Cllr A Henry
Cllr P Johnston
Cllr B Lyness
Cllr J McKeown
Cllr L Philpott
Cllr A Skinner
Cllr M Warwick

Present remotely: Cllr C Jamieson (6.57 - 7.34pm)
Cllr R Stewart

Attendance: Mr S Morley, Interim Director of Operations
Mr J McGrandle, Acting Director of Development
Mrs U O'Loughlin, Head of Economic Development
Mr J McVeigh, Head of Capital Works
Mrs C Hunter, Environmental Education Officer (to 8.12pm)
Mrs N Waring, Committee Administrator

Press: There were no members of the press in attendance.

Public: There were no members of the public in attendance

ITEM MINUTE

1 Notice of Meeting

The Interim Director of Operations read the Notice of Meeting.

2 Apologies

Apologies were received from:

Cllr J Gibson

3 Declaration of Interest

Members and Officers were invited to declare any pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests, including gifts and hospitality they might have in respect of items on this Agenda.

The following declaration was received:

Cllr P Johnston – Item 7.6

4 Items for Consideration / Decision

4.1 NI Water Presentation

The Chair welcomed Dr Steve Blockwell, Head of Investment Management, Engineering & Sustainability Directorate and Mr David McCullough, Head of Wastewater Services, Customer & Operations Directorate from NI Water to the meeting to provide an update on the work being undertaken, including achievements and current challenges.

Dr Blockwell provided an overview of the circulated report and discussed the following areas:

- The cost to deliver water services
- Due to underinvestment the wastewater system was at breaking point
- 3P's (Pee, Poo or Paper) and FOG (Fat, Oil and Grease) campaigns
- Proactive management working with NIEA that occurs at Lough Neagh that ensures water is safe to drink.
- PC21 Plan (Price Control period which runs from 2021-2027), to redress wastewater underfunding would now not be available resulting in a halt to wastewater recovery
- The planned PC21 Key Capital Investments for the Borough
- Areas affected by network constraints that are outside developer funded solutions
- Pre-Development Process
- Wastewater Impact Assessments
- Planning Statistics for the Borough

In concluding, he stated that while the existing independent economic regulatory process had clearly set out the funding required, the certainty of investment was not in place and the subsequent impact of the lack of investment on the wastewater system.

The Chair thanked Dr Blockwell for his presentation and sought questions from Members. Dr Blockwell and Mr McCullough answered Members' queries regarding the following topics and agreed to follow up, as appropriate:

- Constraints to developments
- Greenisland treatment works

Ald Wilson commented that "Given the issues raised in relation to water pollution, the need to increase the ability to build new homes and to attract new investors to the Borough", he proposed the following:

"Council write to the Minister for Infrastructure to highlight this Council's deep concern at the inadequate capital investment allocated to the publicly owned NI Water and that we call for urgent action on the funding model for NI Water to enable it to secure the required funding to invest in our water and wastewater infrastructure."

The Chair advised that this would be considered later in the meeting.

Other Members' queries included:

- A planning application for the Braid
- Larne treatment works
- Local Development Plan (LDP)
- Wastewater capacity
- Fisherman's Quay, Old Shore Road and Agnes Street in Carrickfergus.
- Borrowing finance for capital works
- Leakages
- Funding for Larne
- Treatment facility at Mullaghboy

In closing, Dr Blockwell advised that there was an Elected Representative Direct Line, which could be used when contacting NI Water.

The Chair advised that the previous proposal by Ald Wilson could be considered.

"Given the issues raised in relation to water pollution, the need to increase the ability to build new homes and to attract new investors to the Borough", Ald Wilson proposed the following:

Council write to the Minister for Infrastructure to highlight this Council's deep concern at the inadequate capital investment allocated to the publicly owned NI Water and that we call for urgent action on the funding model for NI Water to enable it to secure the required funding to invest in our water and wastewater infrastructure

was proposed by Ald Wilson and seconded by Cllr Philpott and agreed.

The Chair thanked Dr Blockwell and Mr McCullough for their presentation.

Dr Blockwell and Mr McCullough left the meeting at this point (7.25pm).

4.2 Environmental Benchmarking Survey 2024

Report circulated providing an update on the success of Council in the Northern Ireland Environmental Benchmarking Survey 2024 and to identify opportunities for improvement set out in the Gap Analysis Report.

The Environmental Education Officer responded to queries on the use and purchase of renewable energy and on EV infrastructure. She would provide a full response on these at a future meeting.

Officers were congratulated on Council's achievement of Platinum Level.

It was requested that the Energy Manager be present at a future meeting.

Resolved: to note the report.

4.3 Live Here Love Here Grants 2024 – Successful Projects

Report circulated updating on the Live Here Love Here Small Grant Scheme Awards made in 2024.

The Environmental Education Officer undertook to confirm for a Member, whether Cullybackey Community Partnership had received funding.

Resolved: to note the report

4.4 Consultation – on the Establishment of a Just Transition Commission for Northern Ireland

Report circulated updating on the proposed establishment of a Just Transition Commission for Northern Ireland and seeking approval of the draft response.

The Environmental Education Officer guided Members through the report. She undertook to include 'representation from the industrial sector' at question 11, Appendix 2.

Resolved: the recommendation to approve the draft response subject to the inclusion of 'representation from the industrial sector' at question 11, Appendix 2.

was proposed by Cllr Beggs and seconded by Ald Wilson and agreed.

4.5 NI Waste Management Statistics Annual Report 23-24

Report circulated providing an update on the annual NI Local Authority Municipal Waste Management Statistics 2023/24 issued on 28 November 2024 as provided.

Resolved: to note the report.

4.6 Waste Harmonisation Sub Committee Action Notes 12 November 2024

Members noted the Waste Harmonisation Action Notes of 12 November 2024.

The action notes to be amended to include the apology from Ald Wilson.

4.7 Climate Change Sub Committee Action Notes 26 November 2024

Members noted the Climate Change Sub Committee Action Notes of 26 November 2024.

The action notes to be amended to include the apology from Ald Wilson.

4.8 Glenarm Sub Committee Action Notes

Members noted the Glenarm Sub Committee Action Notes of 2 October 2024.

4.9 Go Succeed Update

Report circulated updating on delivery of the NI Enterprise Support Service (branded as Go Succeed) for the period August to October 2024.

The Chair congratulated Gemma McAllister from Wear Matter on her award and reminded Members that the programme was still open to applications.

Resolved: to note the report.

4.10 Economic Development Activity Report

Report circulated updating on current Economic Development activity.

The Head of Capital Works responded to queries on the closure of West Street in Carrickfergus following the storm on the previous Saturday (Storm Darragh), advising that Building Control were assessing the situation. He outlined that work was currently ongoing to provide a strategy on dereliction of buildings throughout the three main towns.

The Head of Economic Development was asked to provide more details regarding the training programmes/academies available, to enable Members to promote these, particularly in relation to the start dates.

The Head of Capital Works responded to queries regarding assistance for two newly opened shops in West Street. He would contact Building Control for an update on the road closure, undertook to contact the owner of the derelict building and would explore the potential use of Article 66.

It was suggested that support other than financial could be provided for the shops affected – i.e. advertising that they were still open.

The Head of Economic Development in response to a query in the decline in footfall figures for Larne, acknowledged that this was a challenge as the town centre budget was limited. She worked closely with the Head of Capital Works to lever funding from DfC for grants and events across the three towns

The Head of Capital Works confirmed that the teams were working together, and it was hoped to bring forward a detailed piece of work to pilot with colleagues in the business community in Larne.

Resolved: to note the report

4.11 Digital Transformation Flexible Fund

Report circulated providing an update to Members on the £7.5m Digital Transformation Flexible Fund grant (DTFF).

Resolved: to note the report

4.12 Balmoral Show – Expressions of Interest

Report circulated providing an update on preparations for local businesses attending Balmoral Show in 2025.

The Head of Economic Development responded to queries on the eligibility criteria and undertook to amend this to 'desirable eligibility criteria,' if permitted to do so by Food NI with 'an annual turnover of maximum £500,000' amended to 'up to an annual turnover of maximum £500,000'.

Resolved: to note the report

4.13 Larne Business Awards

Report circulated providing an update on the sponsorship package and detail of the Larne Business Excellence Awards event that is planned to take place in March 2025.

The Chair advised of a date change of the Business Awards to 27 March 2025.

Resolved: to note the report.

5 Items for Recommendation to Council

No items to consider

6 Tabled Questions

No tabled questions were received.

On the proposal of Cllr Lyness, seconded by Cllr Harwood, it was:

Agreed: That the Meeting goes into Closed Committee.

In accordance with Council policy, members of the press and the public were not in attendance for this section of the Meeting.

7 Items for Consideration/Decision – Closed Committee

7.1 Capital Plan FY 24-25 Q2 Update

Report circulated updating Elected Members on the delivery of the Financial Year (FY) 2024/25 Capital Plan at the end of Quarter 2 (period ending 30 September 2024).

The item is restricted as information falls under commercially sensitive information.

Publication is restricted until sometime in the future.

The Head of Capital Works responded to queries on Greenisland car park, Dunfane Feasibility and Cranny Falls advising that work would commence in January for Greenisland car park and in 2025 for Cranny Falls. In regard to the Dunfane Feasibility, a report would be presented to Ballymena DEA early in the New Year

Resolved: to note the report.

7.2 Business Case – Purchase of 2 Road Sweepers

Report circulated seeking approval for a business case to purchase 2 no Road Sweepers as outlined.

The item is restricted as information falls under the prescribed exemptions: Part 1, Schedule 6 Local Government Act (NI) 2014 – commercially sensitive information.

Publication is restricted until sometime in the future.

The Interim Director of Operations responded to queries on the proposed purchase.

The Head of Capital Works advised that reprofiling of the Capital Plan had facilitated the business case for the road sweepers.

Resolved: the recommendation to approve the business case for 2 no road sweepers

was proposed by Cllr Harwood and seconded by Cllr Beggs and agreed.

7.3 Business Case – Maintenance Contract Vehicles/Plant

Report circulated seeking approval for a business case to create a select list of maintenance contractors for council vehicles and plant.

The item is restricted as information falls under the prescribed exemptions: Part 1, Schedule 6 Local Government Act (NI) 2014 – commercially sensitive information.

Publication is restricted until sometime in the future

The recommendation to approve the business case to create a select list of maintenance contractors for council vehicles and plant

was proposed by Cllr Hadden and seconded by Cllr Skinner and agreed.

7.4 Rural Business Development Grant Scheme

Report circulated seeking approval to award funding to successful applicants under the Rural Business Development Grant Scheme (RBDGS) 2024 – 25 subject to available funds.

The item is restricted as the proposed funding allocations to businesses are subject to available funds and approval from the funder.

The report will become unrestricted when the funder issues Letters of Offer to successful businesses in early 2025.

In response to queries, the Head of Economic Development advised that the scheme had been actively promoted and all successful applicants were from the Borough as per DAERA guidelines. The DAERA definition of rural is restrictive and with a larger rural population in Ballymena the current geographic spread of successful applications reflects this eligibility.

Resolved: the recommendation to approve the recommendations from the scoring panel which will be forwarded to DAERA for final decision on Letters of Offer subject to available budget

was proposed by Cllr Harwood and seconded by Cllr Beggs and agreed.

7.5 Sub-Regional Economic Plan

Report circulated providing an update on the Department for Economy (DfE)/ Invest NI Sub-Regional Economic Plan which will be delivered via local Economic Partnerships (LEPs).

This item is in closed Council as it contains proposed membership of the Local Economic Partnership where representation has yet to be sought and confidential budgetary information.

This report will be released some time in the future after membership and budget is confirmed.

The Head of Economic Development responded to a query on the representative membership/stakeholders of the LEP, advising that subgroups could feed into the LEP when established similar to the approach adopted for PeacePlus. She advised of the bureaucracy and cost implications of an additional layer of subgroups across the three towns confirming that the requirement is to establish one LEP for Mid & East Antrim..

Cllr Skinner proposed that there should be three separate Sub-Committees, one for each of the main towns, Ballymena, Carrickfergus and Larne. Membership should be widened with clear membership criteria and selection procedure.

A recorded vote was taken on the proposal by Cllr Skinner, seconded by Cllr Stewart.

Votes were cast as follows:

Name	For	Against	Abstain
Cllr C Jamieson			
Cllr A Henry			✓
Cllr M Warwick			✓
Ald B Ashe, MBE		✓	
Cllr A Clarke		✓	
Cllr L Philpott		✓	
Ald W McCaughey		✓	
Cllr P Johnston		✓	
Cllr B Hadden		✓	
Cllr C Harwood	✓		
Ald R Logan	✓		
Cllr A Skinner	✓		

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Cllr J Gibson			
Cllr J McKeown		✓	
Cllr B Lyness		✓	
Ald A Wilson		✓	
Cllr R Beggs		✓	
Cllr R Stewart	✓		
Ald Mrs M Morrow (VICE - CHAIR)		✓	
Cllr G McKeen (CHAIR)		✓	
Totals	4	12	2

The Chair declared the proposal fallen.

Ald McCaughey proposed that the recommendation as noted in the report be approved.

Recommendation to:

- (i) approve the proposed membership of the LEP
- (ii) note that decisions on staffing and managing the LEP will be undertaken by Council Senior Management Team

was proposed by Ald McCaughey and seconded by Cllr Lyness and agreed.

Cllr Stewart was against the proposal.

7.6 Labour Market Partnership Action Plan 25/26 & 26/27

Report circulated seeking approval to submit the Labour Market Partnership Action Plans for 2025-2026 and 2026-2027 to Department for Communities for funding.

The report is in closed Council as it includes budgetary information which has not been approved by the funder.

This report will be released some time in the future after receipt of formal Letter of Offer.

The Head of Economic Development undertook to include advertisement/promotion of the Labour Market Action Plan to disability groups.

Recommendation to:

- (i) Note the work undertaken by the partnership and stakeholders to develop the LMP Action Plan for 2025-2026 and 2026-2027
- (ii) Approve the Labour Market Partnership Action Plans (2025-2027) to ensure drawdown of £512,101.47 per annum of funding

- (iii) Note that quarterly progress updates will be brought to this committee

was proposed by Cllr Philpott and seconded by Cllr Hadden and agreed.

7.7 Belfast Region City Deal Update

Report circulated providing an update on the Belfast Region City Deal programme.

Closed – Commercially sensitive.

If restricted from publication, when will the report become unrestricted: sometime in the future

The Acting Director of Development responded to queries on governance arrangements and inclusion of optimism bias and contingency to allow for cost inflation.

Resolved: to note the report.

7.8 St Patricks Barracks Update

Report circulated providing an update on the St Patrick's Barracks programme.

Closed – Commercially sensitive.

If restricted from publication, when will the report become unrestricted: sometime in the future

The Acting Director of Development advised that I4C would be delivered as part of the City Deal Project.

Resolved: to note the report.

OPEN COMMITTEE

On the proposal of Cllr Henry, seconded by Cllr Philpott it was

Agreed: That the Meeting returns to Open Committee

8 Forward Plan for Environment & Economy Committee

Members noted the circulated Forward Plan and Agenda for the next Environment & Economy Committee scheduled for 22 January 2024.

The meeting ended at 9.17pm.

..... Chair
..... Interim Chief Executive
..... Date

DRAFT

MID AND EAST ANTRIM BOROUGH COUNCIL

AUDIT & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of Meeting held on Tuesday 10 December 2024 at 6.30pm in the Council Chamber, The Braid, 1-29 Bridge Street, Ballymena and via remote access

- In the Chair:** Ald T Gordon
- Present:** Cllr C Harwood (Vice-Chair)
Mr E Kelly (Independent Member)
- Present remotely:** Ald P Reid
Cllr M Armstrong
Cllr A Barr
Cllr R Beggs (to 6.48pm and from 6.51pm)
Cllr R Quigley
Cllr G McKeen
- Attendance:** Ms M Hegarty, Assistant Director – Finance
Mrs L Graham-Metz, Committee Administrator
- Attendance remotely:** Mrs L Donnan, Interim Director of Corporate Services
Ms G Forster, Human Resources Project Manager
- Also in Attendance:** Ms C McDermott, Deloitte
Ms N Sammon, Deloitte
- Also in Attendance remotely:** Ms C Kane, Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO)
- Press:** There were no members of the press present.
- Public:** No members of the public were in attendance.

ITEM MINUTE

1 Notice of Meeting

The Assistant Director - Finance read the Notice of Meeting.

2 Apologies

No apologies were received.

3 Declaration of Interest

Members and Officers were invited to declare any pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests, including gifts and hospitality they might have in respect of items on this Agenda.

The following declaration was received:
Cllr R Beggs, Item 4.3.

4 Items for Consideration / Decision

4.1 MEABC Internal Audit Progress Report – September 2024

Report circulated providing an update on progress made to date in relation to the 2024-25 Audit Plan.

Ms McDermott provided an update on progress against plan and advised that it was expected that all would be completed in-year.

Resolved: The Committee to note the report.

4.2 Internal Audit - Recruitment & Retention Report

Report circulated in relation to the internal audit of Recruitment & Retention.

Ms McDermott provided an overview of the audit and detailed that the finding was a satisfactory level of assurance with one Priority 2 and three Priority 3 recommendations.

Further to Members' questions, Ms McDermott and the Interim Director of Corporate Services provided clarification in relation to the following: the procedure for equipment return on leaving; the completion of the work on the staffing establishment; the reason why retirees were excluded; and that community background and gender balance were required for recruitment panels.

The Assistant Director – Finance undertook to provide a Member with details in relation to how the target for internal promotions was developed.

Resolved: The Committee to note the report.

Cllr Beggs, having previously declared an interest, left the meeting.

4.3 Internal Audit – Policing and Community Safety Partnership (PCSP) Report

Report circulated in relation to the internal audit of the Policing and Community Safety Partnership (PCSP).

Ms McDermott provided an overview of the audit and detailed that the finding was a satisfactory level of assurance with one Priority 2 and one Priority 3 recommendation.

Resolved: The Committee to note the report.

Cllr Beggs re-joined the meeting.

4.4 Scrutiny Review – Sickness Absence

Report circulated with the findings of the Scrutiny Review into sickness absence for consideration.

The Vice-Chair, as Chair of the Scrutiny Panel, put on record her thanks to the team of Officers for the report, noting that it was the first review of the kind and set a high bar for future reviews.

She provided a detailed overview of the Scrutiny Review as follows:

- Areas for consideration as part of the review
- Key facts and figures
- Current Attendance Policy including support provided for line managers and staff
- Findings from the fieldwork
- Benchmarking and best practice
- Recommendations

The Interim Director of Corporate Services commented that this was the first Scrutiny Review undertaken by Council and highlighted that it was a trailblazing process in NI. She commended the Members involved in exploring the issue in such a detailed manner and reminded that the Committee had undertaken to do two Reviews per annum and a second subject would be selected at a future meeting.

Following questions being raised in relation to the reasons why NI figures were so much higher than those in GB, comparative employment terms and conditions and the use of ill-health early retirement, the Interim Director of Corporate Services and the HR Project Manager provided the relevant information and context.

The Recommendation to approve the referral of the recommendations as detailed in Appendix 2 of the circulated report to Corporate Resources, Policy & Governance Committee for action

was proposed by Cllr Beggs and seconded by Cllr Armstrong and agreed.

5 Items for Recommendation to Council

No items.

On the proposal of Ald Reid, seconded by Cllr Beggs, it was:

Agreed: That the Meeting goes into Closed Committee.

In accordance with Council policy, members of the press and the public were not in attendance for this section of the Meeting.

7 Items for Decision – Closed Committee

7.1 Procurement - DAC Update

Report circulated which outlined the Direct Award Contracts (DACs) that had been issued by Council, including data for Quarter 2 of 2024-25 to ensure ongoing transparency and oversight in this important area.

The item was determined to fall within Closed business under prescribed exemptions: Part 1, Schedule 6 Local Government Act (NI) 2014 – commercially sensitive information. Publication is restricted until sometime in the future.

In response to a query in relation to DAC 332, the Interim Director of Corporate Services provided relevant clarification.

Resolved: The Committee to note the report.

7.2 Annual Audit Letter 2023/24

Report circulated updating on the Annual Audit Letter issued by the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) following the audit of Council's 2023/24 financial statements.

The item was determined to fall within Closed business under prescribed exemptions: Part 1, Schedule 6 Local Government Act (NI) 2014 – personal data, commercially sensitive information and legal Professional Privilege applies. Publication is restricted until after the meeting when the Annual Audit Letter for 2023/24 will be published on Council's website.

Ms Kane advised that this document completed the Annual Audit process for 2023/24 and clarified it was only published on Council's website.

Resolved: The Committee to note the report.

8 Items for Recommendation to Council – Closed Committee

No items.

9 TABLED QUESTIONS – CLOSED COMMITTEE

9.1 Tabled Question in the name of Cllr A Barr (Additional item 09.12.24)

A response to the question in relation to a debt write-off agreed at the previous meeting had been uploaded to Decision Time.

Cllr Barr was content with the response and expressed his disappointment at the reasons why this occurred.

On the proposal of Cllr Harwood, seconded by Cllr Beggs, it was

Agreed: That the Meeting returns to Open Committee.

10 FORWARD PLAN FOR AUDIT & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Forward Plan for Audit & Scrutiny Committee circulated.

The Assistant Director - Finance sought approval to stand down the January meeting and outlined the reasons.

Members were content and it was therefore agreed to stand down the meeting scheduled for January 2025.

The meeting ended at 7.20pm.

----- Chair
 ----- Chief Executive
 ----- Date



Council/Committee:	Full Council
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Approver:	Laureen Donnan, Interim Director of Corporate & Support Services

1. Purpose

- 1.1. To seek Elected Member approval of the Corporate Plan Update April-September 2024 report, prior to publication on the Council website.

2. Background

- 2.1. The Corporate Plan, which was formally adopted by Council on 13 May 2024, sets out Council's vision for the borough for the period of 2024-2028.
- 2.2. The Plan, included at [Hyperlink 1](#), is being delivered under the four pillars of *People, Place, Planet and Performance*.
- 2.3. This report marks the first six months of delivery, covering April-September 2024.

3. Key Issues for Consideration

- 3.1. The report, included at [Appendix 1](#), sets out the progress made under each of the four pillars and their underlying objectives.
- 3.2. Additionally, the report highlights some of Council's key achievements over the reporting period, and the introduction of a new 'In the Spotlight' section, designed to highlight a key area of work. For this report, we have chosen to showcase the establishment and delivery of the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Network.
- 3.3. To support the delivery of our Strategic Objectives, we established a set of 61 measures to track our success. These measures are contained within departmental business plans.
- 3.4. The following table summarises our performance against achieving those measures, full details can be found within the body of the report.



	Number of Indicators	Percentage
Achieved or on track	52	85%
Delayed but progressing	7	12%
Not achieved	2	3%
	61	100%

4. General Considerations / Implications

- 4.1. The Corporate Plan sets out our objectives, ambitions and vision for the borough. Failure to progress against Council's strategic priorities has the potential to lead to poor service delivery, poor audit results and reputational damage.

5. Proposed Way Forward

- 5.1. Following Elected Member approval, the report will be published on Council's website.

6. Recommendation or Decision

- 6.1. Elected Members are asked to review and approve the Corporate Plan Update April-September 2024.

7. Appendices / Links

Hyperlink 1 – [Corporate Plan 2024-2028](#)

Appendix 1 - Corporate Plan Update April-September 2024



Corporate Plan 2024-2028

Update Report
April - September 2024

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**Mid & East
Antrim**
Borough Council

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Welcome

As the Interim Chief Executive, I am pleased to share with you the first six-month update on the delivery of our Corporate Plan 2024-2028.

Over the past few months, we've made significant progress, and I'm proud of the strides we've taken together as a council and as a community.

While there is still plenty of work ahead, it's clear that our citizens are already starting to see the benefits of our efforts.

This update highlights just some of the positive changes we've made so far and demonstrates our ongoing commitment to improving the quality of life for everyone across the borough.

I hope you find this update both informative and encouraging as we continue to work towards our shared goals.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your ongoing support, and I look forward to seeing what we can achieve together in the future.

Valerie Watts
Interim Chief Executive

Our Vision

Mid and East Antrim will be a strong, vibrant, safe and inclusive community, where people work together to improve the quality of life for all



Key Achievements



Over £300k of grant funding awarded to local groups across the borough.



Platinum Level achieved in the NI Environmental Benchmarking Survey.



Almost 2,000 items gifted to families across the borough via the School Uniform Scheme.



'Five Gold Anchor Award' secured for Carrickfergus Marina.

Nearly 2,000 litres of unwanted paint donated and redistributed to individuals, local schools and community groups through the Community Repaint Scheme.





Almost 5,000 people participated in 100 outdoor recreation activities.



Secured ISO14001 Environmental Management System accreditation.



Awarded Council of the Year, in a joint submission with Belfast City Council, at the Social Enterprise Awards.



Successful launch of our first Age-Friendly Strategy and Action Plan.



Larne Skate Park officially launched in October.



Carnlough, Glynn and Portglenone MUGAs/Kickabouts officially opened following redevelopment and installation of new facilities.



Over 350k trees planted across the borough through the Climate Canopy Project.



57 community arts events delivered.



118 museum and heritage events delivered.

In the Spotlight: EDI Network

Launched in January 2024, the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Network is an internal, cross-departmental initiative established to enhance the progression of our equality and diversity efforts.

The network serves as a collaborative hub, where departments can update each other on their efforts related to our Disability and Equality Action Plans, as well as other key strategies and programmes. It's a space for sharing best practice, offering advice, and seeking support from colleagues, fostering a more collaborative and cohesive approach to achieving equality and diversity across the organisation.

The network brings together approximately 30 members from a wide range of Council departments. This diverse representation ensures that all areas of the organisation are involved in the conversation and that inclusion is integrated across every function.

To ensure our equality and diversity initiatives are aligned with wider regional and national priorities, the network also connects with external stakeholders, including the Elected Member Inclusion & Equality Sub-Committee, the Statutory Duty Network, and the Local Government Equality and Diversity Group.

By breaking down silos, building relationships across departments, and sharing knowledge and insights, the network has quickly become an invaluable resource in supporting our ongoing commitment to a more inclusive and accessible borough for all.

Updates on our progress against delivery of the Disability and Equality Action Plans can be found on page 21.



Our Plan

In striving to achieve our vision, we are delivering our Corporate Plan under the 4 key pillars of People, Place, Planet and Performance.



Performance Summary

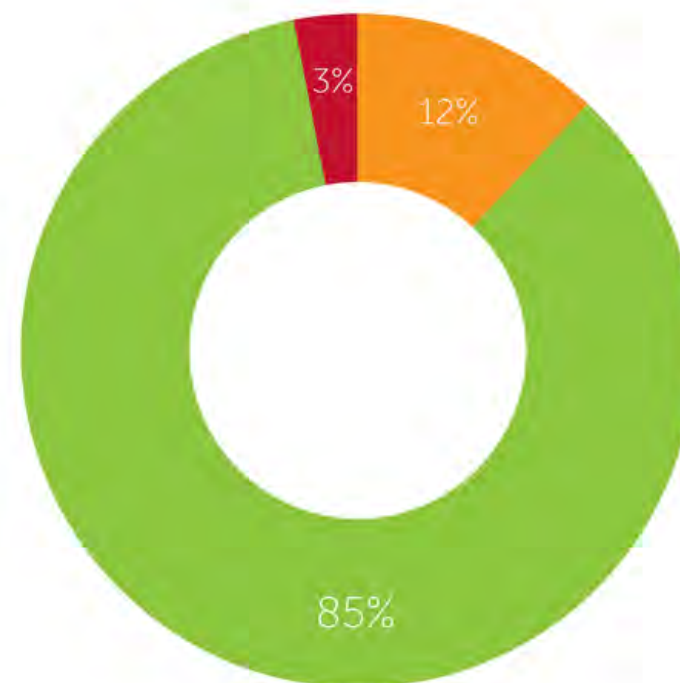
We use a series of key performance indicators to help us track our success in the delivery of our strategic objectives. We refer to these as measures.

Progress Key

- Achieved or on track
- Delayed but progressing
- Not achieved

Our performance against our 61 measures between April and September is summarised below.

Detailed performance updates, by pillar, are provided throughout the remainder of this report.





People

Our ambition:

By 2028, Mid and East Antrim will be a safe, inclusive, and welcoming borough, where diversity and cultural differences are celebrated, and communities live in peace.

Our people will have equity of opportunity and support to achieve their full potential, in both a professional and personal capacity. Individuals and communities will be empowered to be independent and self-sustaining, enabling us to concentrate our efforts on those who need it most.



To achieve this we will:

- Work in partnership with employers and stakeholders to support those seeking employment, provide upskilling support, improve access to the labour market for those with disabilities, and promote skills pathways.
- Promote the benefits of offering apprenticeships and work experience opportunities to enhance skills development and bridge the gap between education and employment.
- Support and deliver opportunities for our citizens to improve their physical, mental, and emotional health.
- Explore ways to help vulnerable and marginalised individuals feel welcomed and supported in their local communities, removing feelings of isolation or exclusion.
- Lead by example to improve equality, accessibility, and inclusion across the borough by embedding it into everything we do.
- Work alongside partners to encourage good relations, enhance community pride, and reinforce a strong sense of belonging in our communities.
- Strengthen community safety, and boost public confidence, by forging collaborative partnerships that focus on proactive and comprehensive crime prevention.



What you'll see

Measure	Deliver activities and programmes through the Mid and East Antrim Labour Market Partnership.
Status	A Letter of Offer was received in July, confirming delivery of the Labour Market Action Plan from 1 July 2024 through to 30 June 2025. So far, a total of 137 participants have engaged in a variety of targeted programmes, including the Graduate Disability Programme, Engineering (Coachbuilding), Tourism Academy, Plant Operations, Administration Academy, multiple Community Skills initiatives, Classroom Assistant training, Classroom Upskilling, Transport, and Enterprise Pathways. To date, 35 participants have secured employment, and 102 qualifications have been achieved.
Measure	Deliver the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Intervention Programme by 31 March 2025.
Status	The STEM Intervention Programme ran between April and September. The initiative included a range of activities aimed at raising awareness of STEM subjects and career opportunities. The programme was offered free of charge to schools and included 17 in-school workshops, 2 full-day events, a Teacher Insight Day and a final celebration event. Eight schools participated, with 454 students attending the in-school workshops and 326 participating in the 2 full-day events.
Measure	Deliver activities to promote and secure apprenticeship and work placement opportunities across the borough by 31 March 2025.
Status	Over 1,200 participants and companies have engaged in the Apprenticeship E-Hub, far exceeding the target of 150. In addition, 14 placements have been completed and 6 apprenticeships secured through our employment academies and the E-Hub. While some delays occurred due to the late award of funding, we are confident that our target of 60 will be met.
Measure	Deliver 15 internal work placement opportunities by 31 March 2025.
Status	Between April and September, we were pleased to host 6 placement students across various departments, including Climate Change & Sustainability, Tourism, Arts & Culture, and Parks & Open Spaces. As we move into the latter part of the year, we will continue to actively promote and engage with educational institutions to secure additional placements, further enhancing collaboration and providing more opportunities for students to gain practical experience in local government.
Measure	Deliver the MEA Active programme.
Status	Between April and September, over 5,000 people participated across 660 sessions in the MEA Active programme. Over half of participants were female and 1,642 participants had a disability or lifelong illness. The programme offered a variety of activities including AquaFit, Pilates, Danderball, Dodgeball, Gymnastics, Men's Over 50's Circuits, Pickleball, and Racket Club, ensuring a wide range of options for all ages and abilities. A standout initiative was the PAN Disability Club, which ran across all 3 leisure centres, offering adapted activities like boccia, cycling, chair-based exercises, and inclusive fitness. The programme also hosted Disability Camps in the summer, providing tailored activities to keep individuals active and engaged. The Adapted Bike Scheme, available from May to September, enabled individuals with disabilities to enjoy cycling in a safe and inclusive way.

Measure	Deliver the GP Referrals scheme.
Status	The Physical Activity Referral Scheme (PARS) is a 12-week programme we deliver in partnership with the Public Health Agency. It is aimed at helping individuals manage chronic conditions through prescribed physical activity. The programme begins with a consultation with a specialised exercise instructor, followed by a gym induction and regular progress reviews every four weeks. Between April and September, PARS received 140 referrals, with 49 individuals enrolling in the programme. Of those enrolled, 19 participants have successfully completed the full 12-week programme. Additionally, 55 individuals have taken up the first-year GP referral offer and are now paying a reduced gym membership fee of £15 per month.
Measure	Deliver the Veterans Programme by 31 March 2025.
Status	Between April and September, 130 people took part in a range of diverse events and activities including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural and Historical Tours - Veterans enjoyed a Jewish heritage walking tour in Belfast, a visit to the Ulster Scots Community Network, and a tour of the White House at Whiteabbey. • Guided Walks - Two popular guided walks took place, including a walk along the historical sites from Ballylumford to Skernaghan Point and a scenic walk from Whitehead to Blackhead. • Educational and Historical Excursions - Participants engaged in a full-day bus tour to South East Fermanagh and Enniskillen Castle, including a guided exploration led by the South East Fermanagh Foundation, as well as a visit to the Lisburn Linen Centre and historic castle gardens, followed by a tour of the Ulster Aviation Society. • Workshops and Storytelling - The programme included a storytelling workshop in Larne, where participants explored creative ways to share personal or family heritage stories, and a visit to the UNESCO-listed Moravian village of Gracehill.
Measure	Deliver actions through the Poverty Action Group.
Status	The Poverty Action Group supports a range of beneficiaries, including low-income families, vulnerable individuals facing financial hardship, and broader local communities. These initiatives are designed to help those in need by offering financial support, budgeting advice, and access to essential resources. Additionally, the group provides educational workshops to improve skills and employability, as well as distributing food and other necessities, and offering health and wellbeing programmes. We were supported by the group to deliver the highly successful School Uniform Scheme across the borough.



What you'll see

Measure	Deliver programmes through the Loneliness Network.
Status	<p>During Loneliness Awareness Week in June, the Loneliness Network hosted a series of 3 pop-up Chatty Cafés. These one-off events were designed to raise awareness, tackle stigma and to highlight the 12 permanent Chatty Cafés which meet on a weekly basis throughout the year.</p> <p>The following initiatives are being delivered across the borough through the Loneliness Network:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 18 Chatty Benches • 12 Chatty Cafés • 6 Kindness Post-boxes encouraging links between schools/youth organisations and care homes • 3 Kindness Post-box exhibitions held in local libraries as part of Positive Ageing Month in October • 6 new Loneliness Champions
Measure	Deliver Age-Friendly actions across the borough.
Status	<p>We launched our Age-Friendly Strategy and Action Plan 2024-27 in September. This strategy was developed in collaboration with our Age-Friendly Alliance partners, addressing key themes aligned with the priorities of the World Health Organisation.</p> <p>Additionally, the Age-Friendly Alliance plans to establish an Older Person's Forum to create a robust mechanism for engagement and consultation, ensuring that the voices of our older citizens are heard, considered and acted upon in decision-making processes.</p>
Measure	Progress internal Autism-Friendly actions.
Status	<p>We are dedicated to creating an inclusive environment that supports and welcomes individuals with autism and their families. Key developments over the past six months have included additional staff training and awareness, working towards becoming a JAM Card Friendly organisation, the introduction of 'Quiet Hours' and sensory friendly places, and updating our information and resources including pre-visitor guides.</p> <p>We are also working in partnership with the Northern Health & Social Care Trust and the Northern Area Autism Reference Group to develop a Train the Trainer package to extend autism awareness to local services and organisations.</p>

Measure	Deliver actions under the Equality and Disability Action Plans.
Status	<p>Our Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Network was established internally to enhance the progression of our equality and diversity efforts, enabling departments to align their work, share progress and collaborate more effectively. The network meets quarterly to review the progress of actions contained within our Equality and Disability Action Plans.</p> <p>A key achievement under the Equality Action Plan was the establishment of an Age-Friendly internal working group. Members of this working group undertook Age-Friendly awareness training, enabling them to conduct assessments of our buildings and services, with a view to making them more Age-Friendly and accessible. We also launched our Age-Friendly Strategy and Action Plan 2024-27 in September.</p> <p>Notable achievements under the Disability Action Plan include the hosting of 19 inclusive activities during Love Parks Week, such as biodiversity workshops, arts sessions and science experiments, all designed to be fully accessible. We also secured Access & Inclusion funding for accessibility improvements in our leisure centres, including a changing place in Larne, automated doors and enhanced signage.</p>
Measure	Deliver programmes within the Good Relations Action Plan.
Status	<p>As a result of reduced funding the Good Relations Action Plan was streamlined to the following 3 programmes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Celebrating Culture Safely – This programme has been fully delivered with 9 beacons distributed in the borough. 2. Integrate – A procurement exercise has been completed and the Inter-Ethnic Forum (Mid and East Antrim) has been appointed to deliver the Integrate project until 31 March 2025. 3. Good Relations Audit and Strategy – A procurement exercise has been completed and contract awarded to deliver the consultation on the Good Relations Audit and Strategy. This contract will be completed by 31 March 2025. <p>Between 16-22 September, we were pleased to join local groups and organisations to celebrate Good Relations Week 2024. Coordinated by the Community Relations Council, the celebration focused on the theme of 'OpportUNITY'. The week included a programme of events including an exciting mix of workshops, lectures, theatre productions, panel discussions, feature talks, podcasts, exhibitions, musical performances, and much more.</p>
Measure	Deliver actions under the Policing & Community Safety Partnership (PCSP) Action Plan.
Status	<p>Progress against the PCSP Action Plan has been steady, despite a delayed start due to funding being received later than anticipated. This delay has impacted the delivery timeline for several planned actions.</p> <p>Initial actions focused on the reconstitution process with the NI Policing Board, including the appointment of new members, alongside induction and training exercises, which are now complete.</p> <p>The PCSP has established 3 working groups to address key community safety issues, including anti-social behaviour, drugs & alcohol, and domestic & sexual violence.</p> <p>We also continue to support the Inter-Ethnic Forum, funding bilingual speakers who act as advocates and assist individuals in the community who have limited English proficiency.</p> <p>Other key initiatives delivered through the PCSP include the Four Tier Home Security programme, which offers victims of crime practical advice and equipment to improve home security, and the Small Grant Funding programme, which supports community groups with funding for their own community safety projects.</p>





Place

Our ambition:

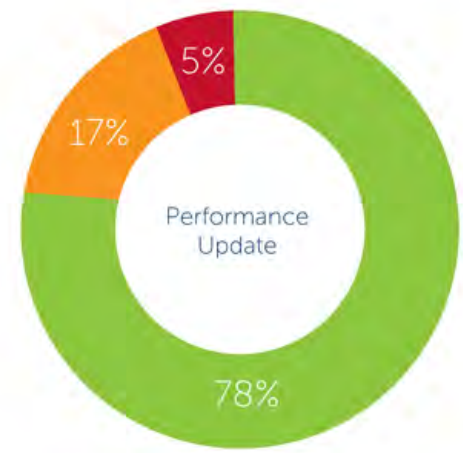
By 2028, Mid and East Antrim will be widely recognised as an ideal place to live, visit, work and do business. We will have vibrant, clean, and harmonious shared spaces, designed to showcase our natural, and built, heritage and assets.

Our tourism offering will be filled with diversity and richness of culture, history, and heritage, attracting visitors on a global scale. Businesses, new and existing, will have the required support to grow and prosper, leading to an economically innovative and sustainable borough, offering stable employment, inclusive growth and an ideal place to invest.



To achieve this we will:

- Support the development of a sustainable, dynamic, and prosperous local economy that helps businesses to grow, and promote the borough as an ideal place to do business for both new and existing companies.
- Help drive sustainable economic growth by promoting the borough as a leading visitor and cultural destination, utilising our natural, and built, heritage and assets.
- Support our towns and villages to help regenerate and stimulate economic activity, while protecting and conserving our natural and historic landscape.
- Enhance and expand our amenities, parks, open spaces, and built heritage, making sure they meet the needs of all, while encouraging their respectful and mindful use.
- Conduct Council business in a way that encourages economic prosperity within the borough.



What you'll see

Measure	Progress the i4C Innovation & Cleantech Centre and the HyTech Centre by 31 March 2025.
Status	<p>A major project milestone was reached in June with the appointment of the design team for the i4C building. The formal contract for funding, under the Belfast Region City Deal, has not yet been issued due to the requirement for additional input and response in relation to UK subsidy control. It is expected this process may take a further 3 to 6 months to complete.</p> <p>Progress with the outline business case for the HyTech NI project continues, with casework approval planned for early 2025. Queens University Belfast are the lead partner for the governance of the project, whilst we are leading on the development of 3 hydrogen testbed trials in Ballymena, delivered in conjunction with local industry partners Firmus, B9 Energy and Wrightbus.</p>
Measure	Deliver the Go Succeed programme.
Status	<p>Go Succeed helps potential entrepreneurs, new starts and existing businesses to maximise their potential and contribute to the local economy.</p> <p>Between April and September, 196 participants were supported through the programme. In the same time period, the programme also led to the promotion of 65 jobs through business start interventions.</p>
Measure	Deliver 16 civic events by 31 March 2025.
Status	We have held 16 events so far, including annual events such as the Knockagh Somme Commemoration, Merchant Navy Day, Emergency Services Day and the North Irish Horse Battle for the Hitler Line Commemoration. New events delivered included a Gibraltar Day Commemoration and the unveiling of three UDR Greenfinch memorials.
Measure	Welcome at least 35,000 people to Council and partner events in person by 31 March 2025.
Status	<p>Following a comprehensive review of our planned events catalogue, the schedule was streamlined to focus on the most impactful and high-quality experiences.</p> <p>As a result, the original target of 35,000 attendees may no longer be fully attainable. However, we remain committed to delivering a range of engaging and accessible events that will maximise attendance and continue to meet the needs of our community.</p>
Measure	Launch the Neighbourhood Tourism Scheme by 31 October 2024.
Status	Community engagement has been positive with plans for the Neighbourhood Tourism Points being well received at a local level. Development will continue throughout the winter with a view to having the six new locations branded and ready to promote by March 2025, ahead of the busy tourism season.
Measure	Welcome at least 90,000 visitors to our strategic tourist attractions (Carrickfergus Castle, The Gobbins, US Rangers Museum, Andrew Jackson Cottage and Arthur Cottage) by 31 March 2025.
Status	Between April and September, we welcomed 72,719 visitors across our strategic visitor attractions.

Measure	Develop a regeneration strategy, in conjunction with the Larne Business Forum and the Larne Community Wealth Building Hub by 31 March 2025.
Status	<p>We are working closely with the Larne Business Forum and the Larne Community Wealth Building Hub to develop a comprehensive regeneration strategy aimed at addressing dereliction and declining footfall in Larne town centre.</p> <p>A recent workshop held at Larne Town Hall brought together local residents, urban revitalisation experts, and design academics to explore a range of ideas for the town centre. Concepts discussed included potential retail, residential, and community spaces, all of which will be considered as part of future funding bids.</p> <p>We are also co-funding the development of a Community Wealth Building Partnership, which aims to advance strategic economic projects in Larne. This partnership will seek funding from both the Northern Ireland Executive and the UK government to support initiatives that drive job creation, revitalise town centre retail, and foster broader economic growth in the area.</p>
Measure	Deliver the Town Centre Revitalisation Scheme by 31 March 2025.
Status	<p>The Town Centre Revitalisation Scheme is being delivered through funding from the Department for Communities.</p> <p>In Larne, the Street Art Festival at the Narrowgauge Road underpass was successfully delivered in July, featuring live art, workshops, and temporary displays. This was complemented by the commissioning of 3 feature murals for Ballymena town centre.</p> <p>Between April and September, 16 events were held across the borough, contributing to the vibrancy of the town centres.</p> <p>The Pop-Up Shop initiative is proving popular once again, with 22 businesses and groups already benefiting. From December, more retailers will test-trade their offerings on the high street.</p> <p>The Shop Front Improvement Scheme opened again in September. Successful applicants will receive grants to improve the appearance of their shopfronts, enhancing the visual appeal of the town centres.</p> <p>A further £350,000 was awarded in September for Phase 2 of the revitalisation scheme, with two additional funding applications in progress.</p>
Measure	Maintain or exceed a score of 66% on the Street Cleansing Index as part of Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful (KNIB) by 31 March 2025.
Status	<p>The Street Cleansing Index assesses the effectiveness of street cleaning efforts by measuring various aspects of urban and rural environments, such as the presence of litter, graffiti, and general maintenance conditions. By using the Street Cleansing Index, KNIB aims to ensure that public spaces are kept clean and welcoming.</p> <p>We have achieved a cleaning index score of 70%.</p>

What you'll see

Measure	Completion of phase 1 of the Cullybackey to Galgorm Greenway by 30 September 2025.
Status	<p>The Cullybackey to Galgorm Greenway project is aimed at creating a dedicated pathway connecting the villages of Cullybackey and Galgorm. It is part of a broader effort to enhance local infrastructure, promoting sustainable modes of transportation for pedestrians and cyclists.</p> <p>Design consultants were appointed in June to advance Phase 1 of the project. However, due to unforeseen circumstances, the greenway route required updating. This amendment has taken place and outline designs were agreed upon by the project board in November.</p> <p>Phased options are currently being considered in line with cost implications. The impact on the overall project timescale is currently under review, and the revised completion date will be confirmed once the planning application is submitted and all factors are reassessed.</p>
Measure	Development of Carnfunnock Country Park for completion by 31 March 2026.
Status	<p>The development of Carnfunnock Country Park is progressing well, with the project on track for completion by 31 March 2026.</p> <p>With planning approval granted in October, the tender process for the construction phase is currently underway. We anticipate that a contractor will be appointed and onsite in January 2025.</p>
Measure	Begin the process of developing a Green Spaces Strategy for formal launch in 2026/27.
Status	The process of developing a Green Spaces Strategy is progressing, with initial planning and discussions taking place. A departmental strategy meeting was held in September to establish a clear roadmap for moving forward with the development of the strategy.
Measure	Ensure at least 50% of suppliers or performers, for each Council ran event, are from the borough.
Status	Between April and September, a total of 71% of performers at Council events were from the local area.
Measure	Ensure that a minimum of 60% of payments to suppliers are made within 10 working days.
Status	Between April and September, 78.1% of payments to suppliers were made within 10 working days.
Measure	Ensure that a minimum of 80% of payments to suppliers are made within 30 calendar days.
Status	Between April and September, 95.5% of payments to suppliers were made within 30 calendar days.
Measure	Major planning applications processed within an average of 30 weeks by 31 March 2025.
Status	<p>Between April and September, our average (median) processing time for major planning applications was 47.2 weeks, with zero cases processed within the target 30 weeks.</p> <p>The average processing time across all NI councils for this period was 42 weeks, with approximately 41% of cases processed within the target 30 weeks.</p> <p>Officers within our Planning department are proactively looking at measures to try to positively impact processing times moving forward.</p>

Measure	Local planning applications processed within an average of 15 weeks by 31 March 2025.
Status	<p>Between April and September, we processed in excess of 300 local planning applications. Our average (median) processing time for these applications was 6.1 weeks, with approximately 80% of cases processed within the target 15 weeks, placing us as the top performing council for this measure.</p> <p>The average processing time across all NI councils for this period was 18.8 weeks, with approximately 42% of cases processed within the target 15 weeks.</p>
Measure	Ensure at least 70% of enforcement cases are concluded within 39 weeks by 31 March 2025.
Status	<p>Between April and September, we concluded 93 enforcement cases, approximately 78% of which were concluded within the target 39 weeks.</p> <p>The average across all NI councils for this period was approximately 68%.</p>





Planet

Our ambition:

By 2028, Mid and East Antrim will be at the forefront of balancing progression with sustainability. We will be an emerging NI hub for innovation, environmental and cleantech skills training, and green economic growth.

Our commitment to achieving net-zero emissions by 2050 will have set a standard for excellence across the region. Our dedication to safeguarding our natural and built heritage and preserving the environment through climate change mitigation and adaptation, will ensure a thriving and resilient future for generations to come.



To achieve this we will:

- Empower, educate, and work in partnership with our citizens, communities, and businesses, to progress the borough towards net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.
- Support local communities to create an environmentally resilient and sustainable borough that is equipped to deal with emergency situations, including climate adaptation.
- Protect our natural environment, enhance biodiversity, and retain or increase Council's current levels of carbon capture.
- Lead by example and reduce the impact of our own operations to progress our organisation towards net-zero emissions by 2040, by embedding sustainability and climate adaptation into all decision-making.
- Deliver an effective and efficient waste service that supports citizens, communities, and businesses to reduce waste and promote a more circular economy.



What you'll see

Measure	Deliver the Mid and East Antrim Net Zero (MEANZ) Business Programme.
Status	<p>The Net Zero insights webinar series is now underway, with two webinars having taken place in October on the theme of Energy Efficiency, with a further 6 planned in the coming months.</p> <p>A joint Council and industry best practice visit took place in the Birmingham/Midlands area of England in October, providing an opportunity for Council staff and key industry partners across a range of Council led projects to understand more about net zero, sustainability and cleantech projects.</p> <p>A suite of Technical Assistance Partners have been appointed by Innovate UK to support projects funded under the Net Zero Living programme. Relevant Council officers now have access to 6 technical experts over the next 9 months to assist with delivery of the MEANZ Business project.</p> <p>In September, we also delivered the 'Starting the Loop' initiative to educate local businesses and social enterprises on the benefits of developing a circular economy.</p>
Measure	Engage with local schools and communities to provide environmental education programmes.
Status	<p>As part of our ongoing commitment to environmental education, we have delivered a variety of tailored programmes to a diverse range of local schools and community groups, including University of the Third Age (U3A), the Inner Wheel, Cairncastle Women's Institute, Ballymena Probus Club and the Carson Project.</p> <p>These programmes have centred around sustainability and environmental awareness, including topics such as recycling, energy conservation, sustainable gardening, the circular economy, waste reduction, eco-friendly living and sustainable transportation.</p>
Measure	Continue to actively engage with the Regional Community Resilience Group (RCRG).
Status	<p>The RCRG continues to collaborate with community groups, at both a local and a regional level, to develop a resilience toolkit. Efforts have focussed on building resilience across the key areas identified in the local Mid and East Antrim research, with projects delivered in the Glenravel area, alongside workshops and initiatives in the Toome Road area of Ballymena.</p> <p>The RCRG successfully engaged the Strategic Investment Board to build on the original pilot schemes. A regional strategic workshop was held in June and brought together a broad range of stakeholders.</p> <p>Efforts are ongoing in the borough with Council and community resilience groups continuing to implement resilience building projects, with continued efforts to secure funding to sustain this work.</p>
Measure	Plant 100k trees across the borough through the Climate Canopy Project by 31 March 2025.
Status	Over 350k trees have been planted since April, the majority at Woodburn Forest, and the remainder via local schools and community groups. We continue to engage local communities and schools through tree planting, educational workshops and publications.
Measure	Continue to be an active member of the Energy Managers Forum.
Status	Our Energy Manager is an active participant in the Energy Managers Forum. Furthermore, they have been appointed as Chair of the Energy Sub-Committee, which was established to review and progress energy procurement initiatives on behalf of 10 local authorities.

Measure	Deliver energy saving and clean energy projects within Council buildings by 31 March 2025.
Status	<p>To date, 5 energy saving LED lighting projects have been completed at key locations, including Sullatober Household Recycling Centre, Seven Towers Leisure Centre, The Showgrounds, The People's Park, and Carrickfergus Amphitheatre Car Park. Additional LED lighting upgrades are planned for Oakfield Community Centre and Carrickfergus Civic Centre by the end of the financial year.</p> <p>We are also advancing clean energy projects, with two new Solar PV installations set for Waveney Road Household Recycling Centre and Portglenone Marina by 31 March 2025. Additionally, two existing solar systems will be fitted with battery storage at Sullatober Waste Transfer Station and Springwell Street Multistorey Car Park by year-end.</p>
Measure	Finalise internal Council strategies and procedures to further progress sustainability by 31 March 2025.
Status	Sustainability strategies have been drafted and are currently under review to allow for alignment with the updated and revised Asset Management Strategy and Fleet Decarbonisation Strategy.
Measure	Ensure at least 50% of household waste collected is sent for recycling by 31 March 2025.
Status	From April to June, 55.17% of household waste collected was sent for recycling. Verified data up to September is not yet available and will be provided in our next update.
Measure	Ensure a maximum of 16,387 tonnes of biodegradable municipal waste is sent to landfill by 31 March 2025.
Status	From April to June, 3,861 tonnes of biodegradable waste collected was sent to landfill. Verified data up to September is not yet available and will be provided in our next update.
Measure	Ensure less than 75,797 tonnes collected municipal waste arisings by 31 March 2025.
Status	From April to June, there were 20,775 tonnes of collected municipal waste arisings. Verified data up to September is not yet available and will be provided in our next update.
Measure	Delivery of 5 circular economy initiatives by 31 March 2025.
Status	<p>We are delivering 5 key circular economy initiatives this year, designed to promote sustainability, reduce waste, and support local communities, including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. School Uniform Scheme - Ran across July and August, this scheme facilitated the reuse and recycling of school uniforms, with almost 2,000 items being gifted to families across the borough. 2. Christmas Toy Container Scheme - This annual initiative encourages the donation and reuse of toys during the holiday season, helping to reduce waste and support families in need. 3. Community Fridges - We have 5 fridges which are operational all year, offering individuals and businesses a space to donate surplus food for redistribution to those in need. 4. Community Repaint Scheme - This scheme is also operational throughout the year, with almost 2,000 litres of unwanted paint donated between April and September, some of which was redistributed to local schools and community groups. 5. Spectacle Reuse Scheme - This initiative will collect and redistribute unwanted spectacles, helping to provide vision care for those in need. We have partnered with Carnlough Lions Club to deliver the scheme.



Performance

Our ambition:

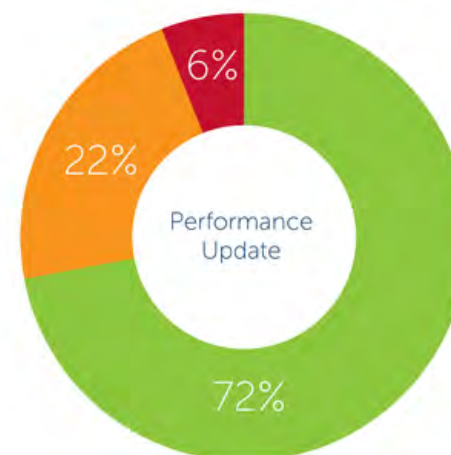
By 2028, we will operate as a single entity, fully embracing the vision of the Reorganisation of Public Administration (RPA 2015).

We will be a sustainable, customer focused organisation and employer of choice, attracting and retaining the right people, with the right skills, to deliver our vision for the borough. We will provide value for money services by building solid foundations, learning from our mistakes, and instilling sound governance arrangements.



To achieve this we will:

- Redesign the organisation to work more effectively and efficiently, ensuring financial competence and resilience, delivering social value, and offering good value for money services in a sustainable manner.
- Develop our key support services to help us achieve our goals, underpinning and enabling us to operate effectively and meet our core, statutory and regulatory obligations.
- Continue to work alongside our partners to progress the delivery of the Community Plan and other Council strategies, sharing knowledge, skills, and best practice, to create synergy and influence decision-making to achieve the best outcomes for the borough at an affordable cost.
- Empower and equip our staff, through comprehensive skill development initiatives, fostering a culture of continuous learning, innovation, and growth, ultimately enhancing individual and organisational capabilities.
- Prioritise employee health and wellbeing, encompassing physical, mental, and emotional health, creating an environment where everyone feels valued, motivated and confident, enabling them to thrive personally and professionally.
- Invest in our Elected Members, providing them with the required skills and knowledge to effectively govern.
- Include stakeholders in our decision-making processes through consultation, communication, and engagement, in order to increase satisfaction levels.



What you'll see

Measure	Utilisation of technologies to improve service delivery.
Status	<p>We are continually reviewing our internal systems to ensure they remain efficient and cost-effective.</p> <p>One of the most utilised systems in the organisation is our financial operating system and over the last number of months, we have made significant strides in leveraging it to enhance service delivery. These have included automated prepayments and journal approvals, recurring journal automation, report building training and enhanced management reporting. These improvements have helped streamline processes and ensure compliance.</p> <p>Additionally, within the planned restructure of our Corporate and Support Services Directorate, there will be officers responsible for driving transformation to improve processes and service delivery, including our use of technologies.</p>
Measure	Implementation of the Good Governance Review by 31 March 2025.
Status	The Good Governance review was agreed by Elected Members in May. The review provided a comprehensive set of actions and recommendations designed to enhance governance practices and improve decision-making, accountability, and transparency across the organisation. This reaffirmed our commitment to high standards of political decision-making and conduct. Work to deliver the agreed actions is ongoing.
Measure	Robust budget arrangements and sound financial management.
Status	<p>We continue to maintain reserves within the target range of net operating expenditure, ensuring financial resilience.</p> <p>Since March, we have seen a 5% reduction in the amount of debt older than 90 days, thanks to the implementation of a revised debt management policy, including more proactive collection measures.</p> <p>The production of monthly management accounts is progressing effectively, with monthly reports successfully completed and presented to the Senior Management Team. Earlier challenges with delays are being addressed, and the implementation of a streamlined month-end close process is enhancing overall efficiency. These improvements provide a strong foundation for timely and accurate financial reporting, supporting better decision-making across the organisation.</p> <p>We continue to actively manage our cashflow to take advantage of the best available investment opportunities. A review of our Treasury Management Policy is underway to ensure it supports this approach in the upcoming financial year.</p> <p>Overall, we are making strong progress in managing debt, investments, and financial reporting. Ongoing process improvements and policy adjustments are ensuring that we remain on track to meet our financial objectives for the year.</p>

Measure	Review and update our Asset Management Strategy by 31 March 2025.
Status	The review and update of our Asset Management Strategy is ongoing, but progress has been slower than anticipated due to requirements for the team to redirect their attention to emerging priorities. Meetings with key stakeholders are being scheduled to ensure alignment and gather necessary input. Work is progressing but may extend beyond the original target completion date.
Measure	Ensure all information requests under Freedom of Information (FOI) and/or Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) are processed within the statutory timeframe of 20 working days.
Status	Between April and September, 94% of requests for information under FOI and/or EIR were processed within the statutory timeframe of 20 working days.
Measure	Ensure all subject access requests are processed within the statutory timeframe of one calendar month.
Status	Between April and September, all subject access requests were processed within the statutory timeframe of one calendar month.
Measure	Ensure the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) does not issue any decision notices overturning our FOI/EIR decisions.
Status	Between April and September, the ICO did not overturn any of our decisions.
Measure	Implement changes to ensure effective utilisation of resources within the Corporate and Support Services Directorate.
Status	<p>Our Senior Management Team, in consultation with staff and Trade Unions, are undertaking a restructure of the Corporate and Support Services Directorate.</p> <p>The primary objective of the restructure is to ensure that the Corporate and Support Services Directorate is appropriately resourced to deliver high quality services in the most efficient and cost-effective manner. By realigning functions and roles, the restructure will enhance the capacity of the directorate to support other service areas, drive greater value for money, and deliver improved outcomes for our citizens.</p>
Measure	Deliver 10 programmes against the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs) by 31 March 2025.
Status	<p>We continue to deliver actions aligned with the 17 UNSDGs. These actions are integrated into our ongoing work, ensuring that we make a meaningful contribution to sustainable development across the borough.</p> <p>In January 2025, a student from Queen's University Belfast will be engaged to report on our progress in delivering against the goals in 2024/25.</p>
Measure	Continue to work in partnership with various community, business and tourism stakeholders to progress various initiatives and support programmes.
Status	<p>Between April and September, we have worked closely with a wide range of community, business, and tourism stakeholders to deliver key initiatives and support programmes. Our partners have included Government departments such as the Department for Communities and the Department for Infrastructure, as well as the Public Health Agency, PSNI, the Northern Health & Social Care Trust, and various community cluster groups and local business owners.</p> <p>While it is impossible to list all partners, these collaborations have been essential in progressing initiatives that support public health, community cohesion, and local business development.</p>



What you'll see

Measure	Ensure at least 1.5 days are spent, per full time equivalent (FTE), on employee learning and development by 31 March 2025.
Status	Between April and September, 0.68 days were spent, per FTE, on employee learning and development. This included training courses such as, Manual Handling, Recruitment & Selection, First Aid at Work Refresher, Interview Upskilling, and Level 3 Fire Safety.
Measure	Deliver a minimum of 100 training courses to staff by 31 March 2025.
Status	Between April and September, over 200 individual courses were completed and recorded, surpassing our target for the year.
Measure	Develop action plans based on the results of the 'Listening to Staff' survey by 31 March 2025.
Status	A comprehensive strategy will be developed following the completion of the Corporate and Support Services Directorate restructure. This strategy will outline the necessary actions to effectively respond to the survey results.
Measure	Develop a Learning & Development Strategy for staff by 31 March 2025.
Status	The development of a Learning & Development Strategy for staff will progress following the completion of the Corporate and Support Services Directorate restructure. A key component of this new structure includes the creation of an Organisational Development and Talent Manager role. This post will lead on the development and implementation of the strategy.
Measure	Deliver a minimum of 2 health and wellbeing initiatives for staff by 31 March 2025.
Status	Between April and September, we launched several initiatives to support staff health and wellbeing. These included menopause awareness sessions, Self-Care Month and an outdoor education event to promote mental wellbeing through connection with nature. The restructure of the Corporate and Support Services Directorate includes the creation of an Employee Inclusion and Wellbeing Officer role. This officer will be responsible for delivering actions to advance our health and wellbeing initiatives for staff.
Measure	Ensure annual staff absence levels do not exceed 15 days per FTE by 31 March 2025.
Status	Between April and September, a staff absence level of 8.62 days per FTE was recorded.
Measure	Develop and implement a learning and development programme for Elected Members by 31 March 2025.
Status	We are progressing well with the development and implementation of a learning and development programme for Elected Members. A Councillor Development Charter Sub-Committee has been established, with its first meeting held in September. Training opportunities continue to be offered, with further sessions planned, to support the development of Elected Members in their roles.
Measure	Develop a Consultation & Engagement Strategy to ensure stakeholder involvement in decision-making processes by 31 March 2025.
Status	The restructure of the Corporate and Support Services Directorate includes the creation of a Consultation and Engagement Officer role. This officer will be responsible for development of a Consultation & Engagement Strategy. The strategy will be designed to ensure that our approach to consultation and engagement is robust, inclusive, and effective, enabling us to better engage with our communities and stakeholders.



Get Involved

It is really important that Mid and East Antrim citizens' voices are heard, and that they have the opportunity to play their part in shaping local democracy.

We want your input, views and feedback as we continue our transformation, and as we work to deliver the very best public services, including waste collections, recycling, leisure services, business support, parks, funding, economic development, health and wellbeing, and much more.

We are committed to championing openness and transparency, and invite members of the public who live, work or study in the borough to put their questions directly to Elected Members and officers.

To submit a question to the Council, please complete the short form at:

midandeantrim.gov.uk/publicquestions

Suggestions and comments on areas where we can enhance our services can also be submitted directly to the Performance and Improvement Team at any time throughout the year, via any of the following methods:

- @: performance@midandeantrim.gov.uk
- ☎: 0300 1245 000
- ✉: **Corporate Performance and Improvement Team**
Mid and East Antrim Borough Council
1-29 Bridge Street
Ballymena
BT43 5EJ

Closing Remarks

As we reflect on the past six months, I am incredibly proud of the collective achievements of everyone involved in delivering our Corporate Plan.

Each milestone brings us closer to realising our vision of improving the quality of life for all who live, work, and visit Mid and East Antrim. The dedication and commitment shown by our teams have been exemplary, and the positive impact on our borough is clear to see.

Looking ahead, we remain focused on furthering this journey. We hope you will continue to work with us as we pursue the ambitious objectives set out in our Corporate Plan.

Together, we can ensure that Mid and East Antrim remains a vibrant and thriving place for everyone.

Thank you for your ongoing support.

Valerie Watts
Interim Chief Executive





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enquiries@midandeastantrim.gov.uk

www.midandeastantrim.gov.uk

Other formats

If you would like this publication in an alternative format, such as large print, or another language, please email communications@midandeastantrim.gov.uk

Council/Committee:	Full Council
Date:	6 January 2025
Report Title:	Performance Improvement Plan 2025-26 Consultation
Publication Status:	Open
Author:	Laura-Jane McCloy, Policy, Performance & Partnership Manager
Approver:	Laureen Donnan, Interim Director of Corporate & Support Services

1. Purpose

- 1.1. Elected Members are asked to review and approve the Performance Improvement Plan 2025-26 Consultation document, and to agree to commence public consultation.

2. Background

- 2.1. Councils have a duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of their functions under the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.
- 2.2. In the context of the Act, improvement means an activity that enhances the sustainable quality of life and environment for ratepayers and communities. It means more than gains in service outputs, efficiencies, or in internal effectiveness.
- 2.3. For each financial year, councils must set Improvement Objectives and have in place the arrangements to achieve them. These objectives are published in a Performance Improvement Plan by 30 June each year.
- 2.4. Each objective must link to at least one of seven aspects of improvement, as follows:
 - Strategic Effectiveness
 - Service Quality
 - Service Availability
 - Fairness
 - Sustainability
 - Efficiency
 - Innovation

- 2.5. Guidance from the Department for Communities requires objectives to be:
- Legitimate - they relate to one of the seven aspects of improvement.
 - Clear - they set out the visible improvements citizens can expect.
 - Robust - they have defined terms of success.
 - Deliverable - they have established links to individual service programmes and budgets.
 - Demonstrable - they are capable of being supported by evidence.
- 2.6. The objectives must align with wider strategies and policies, for example, the draft Programme for Government, the Community Plan, and the Council's own Corporate Plan.

3. Key Issues for Consideration

- 3.1. Three Improvement Objectives are being considered for the 2025-26 financial year, as detailed in Appendix 1.
- 3.2. Research undertaken to date suggests that the 2024-25 Improvement Objectives remain relevant, and so, we are considering a continued focus on them.
- 3.3. The 12-week public consultation will provide some insights into the needs and lives of citizens and will help to establish if the three objectives are appropriate and supported.
- 3.4. Potential actions for each objective have been developed with managers and officers across all functional areas, and with reference to available statistics and data, including the Council's own surveys. The actions outlined within the consultation document are provisional and are subject to available finance or funding.
- 3.5. Development meetings will take place with SMT, senior managers and officers in the new year.
- 3.6. Ongoing actions from prior Improvement Plans will continue within the 2025-26 plan, where appropriate to do so.

4. General Considerations / Implications

- 4.1. The Council, as a public authority, is required by law to consult with stakeholders on policy development.

- 4.2. It is a statutory requirement to publish the Performance Improvement Plan 2025-26 by 30 June 2025.
- 4.3. Our arrangements to secure continuous improvement are audited by the Northern Ireland Audit Office each year.
- 4.4. Non-compliance with legislation and guidance may lead to poor service delivery, poor audit results and reputational damage.

5. Proposed Way Forward

- 5.1. Indicative actions and timelines are presented below:

Action	Date
Consultation document presented to Full Council for review, approval, and agreement to commence public consultation.	6 January 2025
Public consultation.	7 January - 1 April 2025
Development meetings with SMT, senior managers and officers.	January – April 2025
Draft Plan presented to SMT for review and approval.	30 April 2025
Draft Plan presented to Full Council for review, approval, and agreement to publish.	12 May 2025
Final Plan published on Council's website.	Before 30 June 2025

- 5.2. All required screening will be completed before the final plan is presented for approval.

6. Recommendation or Decision

- 6.1. Elected Members are asked to review and approve the Performance Improvement Plan 2025-26 Consultation document, and to agree to commence public consultation.

7. Appendices / Link

Appendix 1: Performance Improvement Plan 2025-26 Consultation document



Performance Improvement Plan 2025-2026

Consultation

www.midandeantrim.gov.uk



**Mid & East
Antrim**
Borough Council

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Foreword

As Interim Chief Executive, I would like to welcome you to our consultation on our Performance Improvement Plan for 2025-2026.



Continuous improvement is a key priority for Mid and East Antrim Borough Council. We want to deliver high standards of service that meet the needs of our citizens, both now and into the future, and we are progressing with a programme of transformation and reform to enable this.

We are committed to working more closely with our partners to maximise value and opportunity, and we are developing our workforce to support this.

Our Performance Improvement Plan outlines our Improvement Objectives for the upcoming year, and while it does not detail every improvement we intend to make, it shows how we hope to address some of the key issues affecting our borough.

Three objectives have been drafted for your consideration. These objectives will focus on improving the lives of our citizens, maintaining and improving our local areas, and reducing our environmental impact.

They are designed to align with the longer-term vision of the Community Plan for Mid and East Antrim 'Putting People First', and our own Corporate Plan for 2024-2028.

The views of our citizens and communities should be at the heart of our decision-making, and each response will be carefully considered as we shape our final plan. We really appreciate you taking the time to participate.

Valerie Watts
Interim Chief Executive

Our Vision
Mid and East Antrim will be a strong, vibrant, safe and inclusive community, where people work together to improve the quality of life for all.

Duty to Improve

Under the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014, councils have a duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of their functions.

In the context of the Act, improvement means an activity that enhances the sustainable quality of life and environment for ratepayers and communities. It means more than gains in service outputs, efficiencies, or in internal effectiveness.

For each financial year, councils must set Improvement Objectives and have in place the arrangements to achieve them. These objectives are published in a Performance Improvement Plan by 30 June each year.

Arrangements to secure continuous improvement

Our arrangements to secure continuous improvement are outlined within our Performance Management Framework.

This framework drives performance at all levels within the organisation by linking our corporate strategies, aims and objectives to each employee's individual work plan.

These arrangements are audited by the Northern Ireland Audit Office each year.



Proposed Improvement Objectives

Three Improvement Objectives are being considered for the 2025-2026 financial year.

Research undertaken to date suggests that the 2024-2025 Improvement Objectives remain relevant, and so, we are considering a continued focus on them.

This public consultation will provide some insights into the needs and lives of citizens and will help to establish if the three objectives are appropriate and supported.

We have outlined a range of potential actions which will support the delivery of our objectives in the table below. All actions are provisional, they are subject to available finance or funding, and will be published in greater detail within our final plan.

Improvement Objectives

Potential actions

<p>1 We will work with partners to improve the lives of citizens.</p>	<p>1 Deliver a range of programmes to support citizens' physical, emotional and financial needs.</p> <p>2 Deliver skills and employability programmes to help citizens reach their potential.</p> <p>3 Work in partnership to support the most vulnerable.</p>
<p>2 We will maintain and improve our local areas.</p>	<p>1 Invest in and improve access to our amenities, parks and open spaces.</p> <p>2 Establish and develop a Local Economic Partnership to deliver on our economic priorities.</p> <p>3 Work with partners to maintain, revitalise and regenerate our streets and towns.</p> <p>4 Develop and promote our unique tourism offering.</p>
<p>3 We will reduce our environmental impact and improve sustainability.</p>	<p>1 Educate and engage to promote positive environmental behaviours.</p>



Your views

It is very important that our citizens have an opportunity to directly participate in the development of our Improvement Objectives for 2025-2026.

Please do so by completing our survey online at www.midandeantrim.gov.uk/consultations or fill out the table below and return it to us. The survey will close on **1 April 2025**.

Improvement Objective	Do you agree with us pursuing this objective?			Please tell us more.... (Include additional pages, if required).
	Yes	No	I'm not sure	
1. We will work with partners to improve the lives of citizens.				
2. We will maintain and improve our local areas.				
3. We will reduce our environmental impact and improve sustainability.				

If Mid and East Antrim Borough Council could make any improvement to positively impact on your life or environment, what would it be?
(Include additional pages, if required).

Please tell us about you.	Please tick
Which category best describes you? (Please only select one).	<input type="checkbox"/> Resident <input type="checkbox"/> Business <input type="checkbox"/> Community group / Voluntary sector <input type="checkbox"/> Elected Member <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)
Which general area do you live or work in? (Please only select one).	<input type="checkbox"/> Ballymena <input type="checkbox"/> Carrickfergus <input type="checkbox"/> Larne <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)
What is your age category? (Please only select one).	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 - 14 <input type="checkbox"/> 15 - 39 <input type="checkbox"/> 40 - 64 <input type="checkbox"/> 65+

The survey is now complete. Thank you for your time and participation.

What to do next

Please return your completed survey to:
[Performance Improvement Plan Consultation](#),
 Mid and East Antrim Borough Council,
 1-29 Bridge Street,
 Ballymena,
 BT43 5EJ

Or, any of the locations listed below:

- Ballymena Showgrounds
- The Braid, Ballymena
- Seven Towers Leisure Centre, Ballymena
- Carrickfergus Amphitheatre
- Carrickfergus Civic Centre
- Larne Leisure Centre

For online submissions, please visit:
www.midandeantrim.gov.uk/consultations

Returns deadline:
1 April 2025

Other formats

If you would like this publication in an alternative format, such as large print, or another language, please email: communications@midandeantrim.gov.uk

Ongoing feedback

If you would like to suggest an area for improvement at any time throughout the year, please email: performance@midandeantrim.gov.uk

Data Protection

Mid and East Antrim Borough Council is collecting your personal information as part of our consultation on our Performance Improvement Plan for 2025-2026. We will keep your information secure, accurate, and for no longer than is necessary in accordance with data protection laws. If you wish to find out more about how we control and process your personal data and protect your privacy, please visit: www.midandeantrim.gov.uk/privacy-notice





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