

Agenda

Agenda

Copy attached.

[C 31.01.2024 Agenda.pdf](#)

Page 1

1. **Prayer**
2. **Apologies**
3. **Declarations of Interest**
4. **Mayor's Business**
5. **Mayor and Deputy Mayor Engagements for the Month (Copy to follow)**
6. **Minutes of Council meeting dated 20 December**

Copy attached.

[C 20.12.2023 Minutes FINAL.pdf](#)

Not included

[C20.12.2023 Minutes FINAL PM.pdf](#)

Page 6

7 Minutes of Committees

7.1 Audit Committee dated 16 December 2023

Copy attached.

[AC 14.12.2023 Minutes.pdf](#)

Not included

[AC 14.12.2023 Minutes PM.pdf](#)

Page 29

7.2 Environment Committee dated 3 January 2024

Copy attached.

[EC 24.01.03 Minutes.pdf](#)

Not included

[EC 24.01.03 MinutesPM.pdf](#)

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7.3 Place and Prosperity Committee dated 4 January 2024

Copy attached.

📎 *PP 04.01.2024 Minutes.pdf* *Not included*

📎 *PP 04.01.2024 Minutes PM.pdf* *Page 63*

7.4 Corporate Services Committee dated 9 January 2024

Copy attached.

📎 *CS.09.01.2024 Minutes.pdf* *Not included*

📎 *CS.09.01.2024 MinutesPM.pdf* *Page 71*

7.5 Community and Wellbeing Committee dated 10 January 2024

Copy attached.

📎 *CWB 10-01-24 Minutes.pdf* *Not included*

📎 *CWB 10-01-24 MinutesPM.pdf* *Page 89*

8 Consultations

8.1 Onshore Petroleum Licensing Policy – Notification Of Consultation

Correspondence attached.

📎 *8.1 ONSHORE PETROLEUM LICENSING POLICY.pdf* *Page 125*

8.2 NIE response to Utility Regulator Utility Regulator’s consultation on its Draft Determination on the NIE Networks’ Business Plan for the six-year period (1 April 2025 – 31 March 2031)

Correspondence attached.

📎 *8.2 Correspondence from NIE with link to consultation.pdf* *Page 127*

9 Resolution

9.1 Cystic Fibrosis Medication (correspondence received from Newry, Mourne and Down District Council)

Correspondence attached.

📎 *9.1 Resolution - Cystic Fibrosis Medication.pdf* *Page 128*

10 Deputation Requests

10.1 Deputation Request from Business Improvement District

Report attached.

[📄 10.1 Deputation request - BID.pdf](#)

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11 Healthy Futures – A Strategic Framework to Prevent the Harm caused by Obesity, and Improve Diets and Levels for Physical Activity in Northern Ireland

Report attached.

[📄 11. Healthy Futures Report.pdf](#)

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[📄 11. Appendix 1 - doh-cons-obesity-strategy-healthy-futures.pdf](#)

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[📄 11. Appendix 2 - Healthy Futures Consultation questions \(002\).pdf](#)

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12 Changes to conducting Committee and Council meetings and changes to the Standing Orders

Report attached.

[📄 12. Changes to the Standing Orders - Committee and Council meetings.pdf](#)

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13 Sealing Documents

14 Transfer of Rights of Burial

15 Notice of Motion Status Report

Report attached.

[📄 15. NoM Status Report.pdf](#)

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[📄 15.1 NOM TRACKER LIVE.pdf](#)

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16 Notices of Motion

16.1 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor W Irvine and Councillor McKimm

That this Council writes to the Secretary of State to voice its objection to the NIO consultation on

Water Charges and any attempt to introduce Water Charges to Northern Ireland.

16.2 Notice of Motion submitted by Alderman Adair and Councillor Edmund

That Council Note the closure of the training area at Portavogie Football Pitch due to health and safety concerns recognises the negative impact this has on local provision and sports development and tasks officers to bring forward a report on options to provide temporary training facilities in the village in the short term and repairs to the pitch in the long term as a matter of urgency further Council task officers to bring forward a bi-monthly progress report on the development of the Portavogie 3G Pitch Project to Council.

16.3 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Wray and Alderman P Smith

That this Council writes to the Department of Infrastructure to once again express our deep concern at the poor state of roads across Ards and North Down.

Council further requests that DfI changes their policy in relation to the depth of potholes that are required to be repaired back to 20ml from the current 50ml in order to improve the quality and safety of our roads network.

16.4 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Boyle and Alderman McAlpine

That this Council agrees to write to the Department for Infrastructure (DfI), seeking a meeting with elected members representing the Ards Peninsula DEA, to discuss the recent and ongoing interruptions to the Strangford Ferry Service.

16.5 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor McCollum and Councillor Morgan

That this Council acknowledges with concern the devastating impact of the planned closure of the Action Mental Health Promote Day Opportunities Service on its users, their families and the wider community throughout this borough and agrees to write urgently to the Chair and Chief Executive of South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust to call on the Trust to address funding pressures to secure the future of the service and centre at Enterprise Road, Conlig.

16.6 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor McKee and Councillor Kendall

That this Council notes the announcement on Monday 15th January of the closure of Promote Day Opportunities Service in Bangor; this Council notes the importance of this day opportunities service, relied upon by so many residents of this borough; acknowledges the public outcry and widespread support for retention of this vital service, demonstrated by the change.org petition; writes to SEHSCT for clarity on what support will be made available for those affected by this closure and writes to the Department of Health calling for sustainable public financing of much needed learning disability services in our Borough.

***** ITEMS 17 to 20 IN CONFIDENCE *****

17 (a) Supplementary Report – Item 9 of P&P of 4.1.24 – Charging at Eisenhower Pier Car Park

*****IN CONFIDENCE*****

Report attached.


 *17a. Supplementary report- Item 9 Charging at Eisenhower Pier Car Park.pdf*

Not included

17 (b) Supplementary Report - Item 10 - Minutes of Place & Prosperity Committee on 4 January 2024 – Update on Ballyholme Yacht Club Watersports Centre

*****IN CONFIDENCE*****

Report attached

 *17b. Supplementary Report- Item 10 - Update on Ballyholme Yacht Club Watersports Centre (1).pdf*

Not included

18 Award of Tender for Consultancy Services for the Design and Project Management of Cathodic Protection works at Bangor Marina and Harbour

****IN CONFIDENCE****

Report attached.


 *18. Award of Consultancy Services for Cathodic Protection.pdf*

Not included

19 Minutes of Special Planning Committee meeting dated 11th January 2024

****IN CONFIDENCE****

Copy attached.

 *SpP.11.01.24 Minutes.pdf*

Not included

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

25 January 2024

Dear Sir/Madam

You are hereby invited to attend a hybrid Meeting (in person and via Zoom) of Ards and North Down Borough Council which will be held at the City Hall, The Castle, Bangor on **Wednesday, 31 January 2024 at 7.00pm.**

Yours faithfully

Stephen Reid
Chief Executive
Ards and North Down Borough Council

A G E N D A

1. Prayer
2. Apologies
3. Declarations of Interest
4. Mayor's Business
5. Mayor and Deputy Mayor Engagements for the month of January 2024 (Copy attached)
6. Minutes of Council meeting dated 20 December 2023 (Copy attached)
7. Minutes of Committees
 - 7.1 Minutes of Audit Committee dated 14 December 2023 (Copy attached)
 - 7.2 Minutes of Environment Committee dated 3 January 2024 (Copy attached)
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 - 7.4 Minutes of Corporate Services Committee dated 9 January 2024 (Copy to follow)
 - 7.5 Minutes of Community and Wellbeing Committee dated 10 January 2024 (Copy attached)

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 - 8.1 Onshore Petroleum Licensing Policy – Notification Of Consultation (correspondence attached)
 - 8.2 NIE response to Utility Regulator Utility Regulator’s consultation on its Draft Determination on the NIE Networks’ Business Plan for the six-year period (1 April 2025 – 31 March 2031) (Correspondence attached)
9. Resolution
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10. Deputation Requests
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13. Sealing Documents
14. Transfer of Rights of Burial
15. Notice of Motion Status Report (Report attached)
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*****IN CONFIDENCE*****

17. Supplementary Reports arising from Place & Prosperity Committee 4 January 2024

17a. Supplementary Report - Item 9 - Minutes of Place & Prosperity Committee on 4 January 2024 – Charging at Eisenhower Pier Car Park (Report attached)

17b. Supplementary Report - Item 10 - Minutes of Place & Prosperity Committee on 4 January 2024 – Update on Ballyholme Yacht Club Watersports Centre (Report attached)

18. Award of Tender for Consultancy Services for the Design and Project Management of Cathodic Protection works at Bangor Marina and Harbour (report attached)

19. Minutes of Special Planning Committee meeting dated 11th January 2024 (copy attached)

MEMBERSHIP OF ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

Alderman Adair	Councillor Hollywood
Alderman Armstrong-Cotter	Councillor S Irvine
Alderman Brooks	Councillor W Irvine
Alderman Cummings	Councillor Irwin (Deputy Mayor)
Alderman Graham	Councillor Kennedy
Alderman McAlpine	Councillor Kendall
Alderman McDowell	Councillor Kerr
Alderman McIlveen	Councillor MacArthur
Alderman Smith	Councillor Martin
Councillor Ashe	Councillor McCollum
Councillor Blaney	Councillor McCracken
Councillor Boyle	Councillor McKee
Councillor Cathcart	Councillor McKimm
Councillor Chambers	Councillor McLaren
Councillor Creighton	Councillor McRandal
Councillor Cochrane	Councillor Moore
Councillor Douglas	Councillor Morgan
Councillor Edmund	Councillor Rossiter
Councillor Gilmour (Mayor)	Councillor Smart
Councillor Harbinson	Councillor Wray

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

A hybrid meeting of the Ards and North Down Borough Council was held at the City Hall, The Castle, Bangor and via Zoom, on Wednesday 20 December 2023 commencing at 7.00pm.

In the Chair:	The Mayor (Councillor Gilmour)	
Aldermen:	Adair (7.05pm)	McAlpine (Zoom)
	Armstrong -Cotter (Zoom)	McDowell (Zoom)
	Brooks	McIlveen
	Cummings	Smith
	Graham	
Councillors:	Ashe	Kennedy
	Blaney	Kendall
	Boyle	MacArthur
	Cathcart	Martin
	Chambers	McCollum
	Creighton	McCracken
	Cochrane	McKee (Zoom)
	Douglas	McLaren
	Edmund	McRandal
	Harbinson	Moore
	Hollywood	Morgan
	S Irvine	Rossiter
	W Irvine	Smart
	Irwin	Wray

Officers: Chief Executive (S Reid), Director of Corporate Services (M Steele), Director of Place (S McCullough), Director of Prosperity (A McCullough - Zoom), Director of Environment (D Lindsay), Head of Communications and Marketing (C Jackson), and Democratic Services Officer (P Foster & J Glasgow)

1. PRAYER

The Mayor (Councillor Gilmour) welcomed everyone to the meeting and the Chief Executive read the Council prayer.

NOTED.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies had been received from Councillors Kerr and McKimm.

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At this stage Councillor Boyle advised that Councillor McKimm was currently unwell and had been advised not to return to Local Government until mid to late January.

NOTED.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Mayor asked for any Declarations of Interest and none were made. She reminded everyone that Declarations of Interest could be made at any point in the meeting, should the need arise.

NOTED.

4. MAYOR'S BUSINESS

The Mayor took the opportunity to wish all members and staff a very happy and peaceful Christmas.

She reported that she had attended many Christmas Tree lights switch on events and other Christmas activities all of which she had thoroughly enjoyed. Continuing she reported that Open House in Bangor had successfully been awarded the UK National Lottery Project of the year by public vote and offered her congratulations to both Alison Gordon and Kieran Gilmore. Also worth of note was Rhys McClenaghan's recent achievement of obtaining RTE's Sportsperson of the Year Award.

NOTED.

(Alderman Adair entered the meeting at this stage – 7.05pm)

5. MAYOR AND DEPUTY MAYOR ENGAGEMENTS FOR THE MONTH OF DECEMBER 2023

(Appendix I)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Copy of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor Engagements for the month of December 2023.

The Mayor expressed her thanks to the Deputy Mayor for assisting her throughout the month which had been particularly busy.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Alderman Cummings, that the information be noted.

6. MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 29 NOVEMBER 2023

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Copy of the above minutes.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Graham, seconded by Councillor W Irvine, that the minutes be agreed.

7. MINUTES OF COMMITTEES

7.1. Minutes of Planning Committee dated 5 December 2023

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Alderman Graham, that the minutes be adopted.

7.2 Minutes of Environment Committee dated 6 December 2023

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes

Councillor Morgan proposed, seconded by Councillor Douglas, that the minutes be adopted.

Item 7 - Northern Ireland Local Authority Municipal Waste Management Statistics, April to June 2023 and Quarterly Update on Recycling Progress

Councillor W Irvine referred to the Council's HRC Online Booking System and asked if there would be any degree of flexibility for those residents using HRCs on a regular basis.

In response the Director of Environment indicated that only a very small number in proportion to the total number of bookings had triggered an alert requiring them to phone in to book, around a couple of hundred relative to the tens of thousands of successful online bookings. He indicated that the software company was making adjustments to permit officers to allow further access where use was assessed as being for legitimate household waste disposal.

Alderman McIlveen noted that 216 residents had been affected by this over the past two months, and also noted the system would automatically reset on 1 January 2024. He surmised that the figure could greatly increase during the next 12 months and therefore he would have some concerns in respect of that. As such he suggested that Members were made aware through a report to the Environment Committee detailing proposals going forward to address such issues.

In response the Director of Environment commented that it was important to have such checks in place within the system to flag up any potential abuse. He expressed his view that there would be no point having the system otherwise. He added that the online booking system was designed to flag up any potential abuse and on a number of occasions suspected abuse had been flagged up and a letter sent to those concerned advising that their use would be monitored.

He also said that genuine householders were dealt with sympathetically when exceptional visits had been flagged up.

The Director reiterated that only a very small number of householders had been affected by this issue to date. As such he added that he was satisfied and not unduly concerned, particularly given his involvement with the delivery of such services for many years.

In response to further comments from Alderman McIlveen, the Director of Environment confirmed that temporary suspensions had been put into place to enable officers to consider the reasons for repeat visits to the HRCs. He added that it prior to going live, it had been understood that the system would give officers the ability to allow a householder to make additional online bookings themselves, rather than always having to call in after their number of visits had been flagged up. This would now be rectified in coming days, and officers would be able to modify online access where they were satisfied that a householder's use of the site was for legitimate household waste disposal purposes.

Alderman McIlveen advised of problems householders were experiencing when trying to speak to an officer and as such he felt it was imperative that this was addressed as soon as possible.

Councillor Kendall sought clarity around making bookings for green waste only and if consideration had been given to the installation of a dedicated telephone line for booking queries. She added that some householders had had to wait a number of days before officers returned their calls.

The Director confirmed that had been discussed adding that with the introduction of any new system there would always be teething problems anticipated. He advised that it would be made clearer that where more frequent visits were made for the primary purpose of regularly disposing of excess garden waste, householders should ensure they ticked the box for compostable waste only on the booking system – which would automatically facilitate the larger number of online bookings without issue. In respect of telephone calls the Director indicated that the team would be looking at this to ensure calls were managed in a more effective manner going forwards.

At this stage Alderman Brooks expressed concern that this was not the busiest time of the year, which generally occurred from Easter onwards.

By way of summing up Councillor Morgan acknowledged the issues currently were with the online booking system and reassured members that the Committee would scrutinise in detail any forthcoming performance statistics. She highlighted that the recycling performance of HRCs had improved over the last reported period and expressed her thanks to the Director and his team for all of their work to date.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Morgan, seconded by Councillor Douglas, that the minutes be adopted.

7.3 Minutes of Place and Prosperity Committee dated 6 December 2023

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

Councillor McCracken proposed, seconded by Councillor Hollywood, that the minutes be adopted.

Item 11 - Response to Notice of Motion – Safety Concerns at Kircubbin Harbour

Councillor Boyle noted the decision made by the Committee which would essentially see any decision being taken on it deferred for almost six months. By way of an update he advised that he had been invited to attend a recent meeting of the Group where it was apparent that they had accepted the Department's response and were now moving forwards to consider how best they could proceed to purchase the Harbour in order to carry out the necessary works.

The Director of Place confirmed that as outlined in the minutes that was the officer's understanding of the current situation and as such a response from the Group was not anticipated.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor McCracken, seconded by Councillor Hollywood, that the minutes be adopted.

7.4 Minutes of Corporate Services Committee dated 12 December 2023

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

Councillor Moore proposed, seconded by Councillor MacArthur, that the minutes be adopted.

Item 8a - Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor S Irvine, Councillor W Irvine and Councillor Brooks

As a matter of accuracy, Councillor McRandal asked that the vote record be amended to read 10 voting For and 4 voting Against.

NOTED.

Item 8a - Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor S Irvine, Councillor W Irvine and Councillor Brooks

At this stage Councillor McRandal referred to part (2) of Standing Order 18.1 adding that he wished to propose an amendment in respect of Item 8(a), the flags Notice of Motion.

Councillor McRandal proposed, seconded by Councillor McCracken, that this Council does not amend the flags policy to fly the flag at war memorials 365 days a year.

The proposer, Councillor McRandal stated that the Alliance Party supported the flying of the Union Flag from Council Civic Headquarters on designated days. This long-standing party policy was a balanced arrangement acknowledging the

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constitutional status of Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom whilst also upholding legal obligations.

In respect of War Memorials Councillor McRandal stated that Alliance continued to support the flying of the Union Flag at War Memorials at relevant Remembrance events. The Party did not however support the politicisation of war memorials or the act of remembrance and as such believed that the bringing of this Motion was a political move. He added that they believed that the decision taken at Committee was a bad decision, adding that Alliance treated the Union Flag with respect, not to score political points with it.

Continuing Councillor McRandal stated that his Party believed the proposal to fly the Union Flag 365 days a year at all War Memorials was contrary to the Section 75 Good Relations duty. Flying the Union Flag at Remembrance events only served to highlight the significance of the period, and flying the flag permanently could risk undermining this.

He said that the Royal British Legion had previously opposed proposals in 2013 to fly the Union Flag permanently at the cenotaph in Belfast City Hall, arguing that the Garden of Remembrance was "sacrosanct" and should not be politicised. He further noted that the Royal British Legion Headquarter Area Office (Ireland) responded to Belfast City Council consultation in 2013 saying:

“As the nation’s custodian of Remembrance, the Legion is committed to helping everyone understand the importance of Remembrance, so those sacrifices are never forgotten. Remembrance of all those who have fallen should unite, not divide. It is sacrosanct and should not be politicised in any way. We would therefore oppose the Garden of Remembrance becoming involved in the flag debate for that reason and, in the interests of keeping Remembrance free of controversy, cannot agree to any change to the current policy of flag-flying at the Cenotaph”.

In conclusion Councillor McRandal stated that Alliance did not vote in support of the Council’s current flag policy and as such could not support the Notice of Motion. If the decision taken at Committee was ratified it would mean that there would be three Union Flags being flown 365 days a year in Holywood, including two in close proximity at the War Memorial and at Queen’s Leisure Complex. He asked his Holywood and Clondeboyne colleagues, if they thought that was appropriate for Holywood and its’ people. He also asked if they would be prepared to support that. Councillor McRandal stated that it was undeniable that the proposal to amend the current flag policy to fly the Union Flag at every war memorial all year round would serve to make the Council’s flag policy much more expansive and extensive. He added that it may also result in the Council acting against its legal duties and potentially risking legal challenge.

Councillor McRandal asked for a recorded vote to be taken on the matter.

Commenting as seconder, Councillor McCracken noted the Imperial War Museum estimated that there were 100,000 War Memorials throughout the UK and it was noted the vast majority of those did not display the Union Flag at all, never mind 365

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days a year. As such he stated that he did not fully understand the logic behind the original motion. Remembrance Day had been celebrated in Northern Ireland for over a century at War Memorials where flags had not been flown 365 days a year. As such he expressed the view that past Remembrance events and indeed future Remembrance events would not be diminished in any way because the Union Flag was not flown 365 days.

Continuing Councillor McCracken commented that Remembrance Day was of special significance to him having served in the Royal Irish Regiment during the Troubles and subsequently in the Territorial Army in London. One of his highlights during that time had been parading at Whitehall in London and marching past the Cenotaph. At this stage Councillor McCracken referred to his various family members who had also served in the military adding that Remembrance Day was very much part of his history and heritage. However he indicated that he could not support the original motion because in his view it would politicise what should not be politicised. While he respected both the original proposer and seconder indicating that was not likely to be their intention it would undoubtedly end up being the case.

The Alliance Party, he stated, fully supported the custom and practice of the flying of flags at commemorative events and it did not support change which risked mixing War Memorials with identity politics. The Alliance Party's traditional approach was in keeping with custom and practice across the UK, adding that the Armed Forces themselves did not support the motion and several senior veterans had confirmed that. He added that the majority of veterans were content with the flag being flown from dawn to dusk on Remembrance Day, something which was in line with UK Flag Policy. He referred to the design of War Memorials which were fully supported by the Royal British Legion who were the custodians of Remembrance Day. Continuing Councillor McCracken stated that Remembrance should be about listening to everyone and reflecting. He added that freedom was defined by mutual respect, creating an inclusive society adding that the most important aspect of remembrance was the two-minute silence. During Remembrance everyone united across faith, culture and nationalities. Councillor McCracken stated the Royal Irish Regiment was a great example of uniting all. A regiment that recruited from across the island of Ireland, north and south. Whose regimental tie depicted Ireland's national symbol shamrocks, whose cap badge was a harp, whose mascot was an Irish Wolfhound named after Ireland's most famous High King (Brian Boru). Whose motto was in Gaelic - Faugh a Ballagh – clear the way.

In summing up Councillor McCracken stated that it was his wish to ensure Remembrance remained an inclusive commemoration, about the future and educating young people. As such all should be welcome at Remembrance events regardless of your religion, culture, nationality or age. Councillor McCracken urged all those in the Council chamber to support the amendment.

Alderman McAlpine stated that she would not support the flying of the Union Flag 365 days at War Memorials as she would not want to upset others. She commented that members of her family had served at the Battle of the Somme and as such she annually stood for the two minutes silence to remember. She reiterated the need to ensure that other people were not upset particularly given that 14% of residents in the Borough were Catholic. Continuing she expressed the view that the Union Flag

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was not something which needed to be flown 365 days a year. Instead she was of the opinion it was more meaningful to have it flown on those designated days.

Alderman Smith stated that he could not support the amendment although he would take on board all of the comments made by members to date. For him it was custom and practice in his District Electoral Area for the Union Flag to be flown 365 days a year at both Comber Square and Ballygowan War Memorials. Continuing Alderman Smith acknowledged that the Alliance Party had a different policy in respect of matters such as this however he asked them to respect democracy at this time. He noted how the matter had previously been Called-In and commented that all were entitled to their own viewpoint. He asked them again to respect democracy and the wishes of the majority of those in the Council Chamber. He referred to recent talks which had been ongoing in an attempt to restore the Northern Ireland Executive commenting that the Alliance Party had been noted commenting that while Party's could bring down the Executive they should not and that was something which he agreed with. However similarly in the Council Chamber Party's could block any decisions being made in the Council Chamber but he stated that just because they could did not necessarily mean that they should. In summing up he forecast that a vote would be taken on this amendment, it would fall and the Council would proceed with its original proposal. He appealed to everyone to respect democracy.

Councillor S Irvine stated that while he could not support the amendment he did respect Councillor McRandal's comments. He did however express regret with his comments around the Royal British Legion stating that was an issue which was being dealt with by Belfast City Council and the issue being discussed here was within the Ards and North Down Borough. Councillor Irvine also acknowledged Councillor McCracken's comments in respect of his military service and thanked him for that, however he added that he had constituents within his own DEA regularly asking him why the Union Flag could not be flown 365 days a year at War Memorials. Councillor Irvine stated that the Union Flag symbolised unity and solidarity of the diverse regions that made up the United Kingdom as a composite of the flags of England, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Flying the Union Flag at War Memorials reinforced the idea that, regardless of our differences everyone stood united in honouring those who had fought for the greater good.

Continuing Councillor S Irvine stated that the Union Flag was a powerful symbol of sacrifice. War Memorials were sacred and commemorated the lives lost in the defence of freedom, justice and democracy. By flying the Union Flag at those memorials, homage was paid to the countless individuals who had made the ultimate sacrifice. The flag served as a visual reminder of the courage and selflessness displayed by the servicemen and servicewomen who fought on behalf of our nation, ensuring that their legacy endured for generations. Councillor Irvine stated that he took homage to Councillor McRandal's suggestion that he was using this as a political statement, he stated that he was not. A War Memorial was, he stated a sacred place, a place for remembrance and respect. As such he asked for democracy and respect that the Union Flag was flown in what was a sacred place at War Memorials, throughout the Borough.

Councillor W Irvine stated that he could not support the amendment adding that he disagreed with bringing the Royal British Legion into the debate and being effectively

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used as a political football. Continuing he stated that the Union Flag was a flag for all and the only way for the country to move forwards was through the adoption of a shared future. That shared future included the value of the nation and remembering the sacrifices of those who fought and died for our future. Councillor W Irvine added that the act of remembrance occurred 365 days a year and he was aware that many veteran's families remembered the fallen every day of the year. As such he urged members not to Call-In the matter and felt that the decision made by the Corporate Services Committee had the broad support of those living in the Borough. As such he believed that the Union Flag should be flown 365 days a year in a respectful manner to honour all of those who had fought and died for their country and our freedom.

Alderman McIlveen commented that the vast majority of those in the Council Chamber had family members who had served and as such had even more reason to remember, which he added was important to do. He welcomed Councillor W Irvine's comments that remembrance was not just a one-day event. Continuing he reminded members that what was being done here was seeking to address an anomaly which had occurred following the merger of the two legacy Councils. He reminded members that only six months ago an EQIA had been undertaken and legal advice obtained on the issue of flags. As part of that process feedback had been obtained from the public who did not understand why the Union Flag was not flown 365 days in some areas whereas in other parts of the Borough it was. At that time the Council fully considered the EQIA and its Section 75 obligations. Therefore Alderman McIlveen asked the Alliance Party to let the Council get to that stage adding that everyone knew what the response would be, given that it was undertaken so recently and had received overwhelming support in respect of the flying of the Union Flag at War Memorials. He acknowledged, however, the concern in respect of the flying of the Union Flag at the Church Street Offices, Newtownards. As such he asked members in the Chamber to respect democracy, respect the views of those who had responded to the EQIA earlier this year and added that he would not be supporting the amendment.

Councillor Martin acknowledged that the debate in the Council Chamber had been very respectful and rightly so given its serious nature around remembrance. He noted Councillor McCracken's comments about his military service and thanked him for that. In respect of remembrance he believed that it was for everyone and as such it did not matter about your race, your background, how wealthy you were or your religion. As such he expressed disappointment with Alderman McAlpine's comments in bringing it down to that level as it should not matter. At this stage Councillor Martin recalled some of his own family history and about those family members who had also served. He reiterated that for him race and religion did not matter in respect of remembrance and as such should not matter in relation to what was being debated now. Continuing he stated that in respect of flags and War Memorials, all that really mattered was that all of those people had served their country and as such the flag, were representative of the country which they served. He stated that he was extremely proud of the flag and of the service given by all before him and while others may have a differing view on that it was ultimately about remembrance and as such he did not believe that it was disrespectful for the that flag to fly at War Memorials all year round. As such he indicated that he would not be supporting the amendment.

Councillor Boyle stated that he rose to oppose the motion which had been submitted by Councillor S Irvine and Alderman Brooks and instead would support the amendment. He felt it was a case of 'here we go again' with it coming on the back of a similar failed motion previously submitted to decorate a Council building with a flag. In fact he added that it reminded him of almost a last-ditch attempt to get it pushed through.

Continuing he questioned where some Unionists came from particularly when the larger Unionist parties appeared to have fallen into line with motions they would never have brought to the Council Chamber. The reason for that being that they had been content and at most times confident with a settled policy whereby respect continued to be demonstrated in a rightful and dignified manner on an annual basis on appropriate days and dates throughout the Borough. He added that there were aspects within the content of Council buildings that could do with inspections and further reports, something he noted was to have taken place some years ago.

Councillor Boyle stated that he did not accept the proposal as being something which demonstrated some form of greater respect for the war dead, for those who gave their lives and paid the ultimate sacrifice so that we could all enjoy our freedom. Instead he believed that it was more of a stunt to establish a greater number of permanently flying Union Flags across the Borough. As such he found the motion disrespectful and to a degree insulting to those brave souls that paid the ultimate sacrifice. Referring to the current policy he noted that through that the war dead were remembered with dignity and respect and felt that events to do that should not be weakened by simply having flags erected and flying every day of the year. He added that he would refrain from asking how many members frequented those locations for moments of appreciation and reflection throughout the year, outside of the dates already within the Council Policy.

Continuing Councillor Boyle commented that to simply have Union Flags erected permanently, as had been stated before by those visiting those venues, did not carry or had the same impact or respect as whenever flown on specific dates and occasions. He expressed the view that whenever it was felt that it had to be stated that it was hoped the motion would not cause offence, that in itself created a level of uncertainty of being exactly what it could do or had the potential to do over that of the current respectful policy. To also talk about 'not calling in a decision' indicated that the motion if passed was at best questionable and at worse wrong. Call-Ins he reminded members were only enacted whenever something was agreed to be done on a majority basis within a Council that was viewed not to be right.

As a representative of Holywood and Clandeboye DEA, Councillor McLaren stated that she fully respected Councillor McRandal's concerns in relation to the flying of three Union Flags in close proximity in Holywood. She added that she agreed that would be an excessive use of the Union Flag, especially given their location at the entrance of the town. Continuing she indicated that she would be open to discussion on such matters and she did believe that the drafting of a new EQIA would allow for that matter to be explored. Having said that she did not believe that it was a reason to oppose the original motion and as such she was still happy to support that with the appropriate acknowledgement of the concerns raised.

Alderman Brooks commented that as a Councillor for ten years he had been quite shocked this evening because for the first time in the Council Chamber, references to Protestants and Catholics had been brought into the debate. Continuing he referred to a recent issue in his own DEA about a school closing and the entire community had got behind it and no one had ever referred to it as the Catholic school. He added that he had never heard Councillor Boyle refer to the Catholics in Portaferry, or Alderman Adair refer to the Protestants in Cloughey. Instead it was always the community, Unionists or Nationalists and Alderman Brooks reminded members that during the First World War those that served were from all traditions and communities. He stated that he was just very disappointed with Alderman McAlpine's comments and production of statistics on the matter, none of which he felt was necessary.

At this stage Councillor Chambers commented that he had not shared his colleague's optimism on the proposal being ratified and instead had felt it was quite obvious the amendment would come forward. Continuing he stated that he would not describe himself as insecure Unionist or one who felt the need to have the Union Flag flying from every lamppost in the Borough. However when it came to War Memorials he was of the opinion that it was fitting and unoffensive given where they were to be placed and what they signified. Continuing he indicated that he also wished to refer to Alderman McAlpine's comments stating that he too had been disappointed that she had felt it necessary to bring religion into the debate. He added that he had also found it extremely disappointing that she mentioned there were 14%-15% Catholics residing in the Borough and the insinuation that purely because of their religion they would automatically be offended by this decision. Councillor Chambers stated that he had found that completely outrageous and that she had also suggested that we needed to be mindful of their opinion. Again the insinuation that they would find this offensive and he expressed the view that that would not actually be the case and as such he reiterated his disappointment. In summing up he stated that if the original proposal was to go through this evening he would hope that the Alliance Party would not try to activate the Call-In mechanism given that their Party over the past few years has been against the veto at Stormont and as such he would find that rather hypocritical of them. He added that he hoped the debate would end with a decision this evening.

On the amendment being put to the meeting, with 13 voting FOR, 23 AGAINST, 2 ABSTAINING and 2 ABSENT, the Amendment was declared LOST.

The recorded vote was as follows:

FOR (13)	AGAINST (23)	ABSTAINED (2)	ABSENT (2)
Aldermen:	Aldermen:	Councillors:	Councillors:
McAlpine	Adair	Kendall	Kerr
McDowell	Armstrong-Cotter	McKee	McKimm
Councillors:	Brooks		
Ashe	Cummings		
Boyle	Graham		
Creighton	Mcllveen		
Harbinson	Smith		

Irwin	Councillors:
McCollum	Blaney
McCracken	Cathcart
McRandal	Chambers
Moore	Cochrane
Morgan	Douglas
Rossiter	Edmund
	Gilmour
	Hollywood
	Irvine S
	Irvine W
	Kennedy
	MacArthur
	Martin
	McLaren
	Smart
	Wray

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Moore, seconded by Councillor MacArthur, that the minutes be adopted.

7.5 Minutes of Community and Wellbeing Committee dated 13 December 2023

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Martin, seconded by Councillor Boyle, that the minutes be adopted.

8. COURSES AND CONFERENCES

8.1. NAC – Environment/Positive Action Conference 12-14 January2024 (Appendix II)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report detailing that the Council had received an invitation from the National Association of Councillors inviting members and Council officers to its Conference at The Little Haven Hotel, South Shields, England. The conference would be held on 12 to 14 January 2024.

The NAC wrote that:

“As we face a Climate Emergency and we will be looking at positive projects carried out by local authorities in the north east of England and in particular Tyneside. Delegates will learn about schemes that have just been carried out such as The Viking Energy Network Jarrow and The Holborn Renewable Energy Network. Delegates will also look at the Implementation of waste reforms.

A range of speakers who were heavily involved in driving environmental schemes forward will be in attendance and we will be discussing how these schemes are

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working and what the practicalities are including the political ramifications. This will be followed by a question and answer sessions.

The conference would be of use to members from all local authorities”.

The booking form could be found at appendix 1. The workshops were free of charge to attend. The costs incurred would be the delegate fee of £350 plus, travel and subsistence.

RECOMMENDED that Council considers whether it wishes to nominate a Member(s) to attend the Conference and incur travel and subsistence costs.

Councillor McRandal proposed, seconded by Councillor Morgan, that Alderman McDowell be nominated to attend.

As there was a division in the Council Chamber a vote was taken by a show of hands.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor McRandal, seconded by Councillor Morgan, with 12 voting For and 6 voting Against, that Alderman McDowell be nominated to attend.

9. PEACE PLUS PARTNERSHIP

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report stating that at the Community and Wellbeing meeting held on 22 March 2022 a report was tabled outlining the model for the delivery of PEACEPLUS and requesting that the new Partnership be granted delegated authority from Council to develop and deliver an Action Plan. This was agreed by Council on 30 March 2022.

The PEACEPLUS Partnership had undergone a co design process to develop a Plan for submission to SEUPB for funding of approximately £5.6m. Two out of the three themes involved in the plan had been agreed in detail to date by the partnership.

Following a review of documentation received from SEUPB and from discussions with other Councils it had been determined that AND was the only Council which had granted delegated authority to its PEACEPLUS Partnership for the entire design and decisions on delivery of the programme.

For example – Belfast PEACEPLUS Partnership completed the co design process and the passed the list of capital concepts to a Council officer subgroup to make decisions in relation to that strand of their action plan. This approach mitigated the risk to Council of the Partnership taking a decision which could result in significant overspend on capital projects. It also dealt with potential conflicts of interest of PEACEPLUS Partnership members.

Therefore, In order to avoid partnership decisions that may result in overspending, (which was a risk for Council and not the partnership), and conflicts of interest coming into play that may result in queries over decisions made being raised, officers believed that Council should make final decisions in this regard. While it was

possible for Council to delegate a decision making function to the Partnership, Council would retain ultimate liability for any decisions the Partnership made on its behalf. Furthermore, given the potential for decisions to be challenged and thus the importance of a robust decision making process, it was considered that from a risk perspective it would be best if decision making reverted back to the Council and the delegated authority previously granted to the Partnership was withdrawn.

It was therefore considered appropriate that Council rescinds such delegated authority to the PEACEPLUS Partnership from 1 January 2024, and that Partnership recommendations will be brought to Council for approval in relation to the proposals to SEUPB and the development and implementation of the PEACEPLUS Plan.

RECOMMENDED that Council rescinds delegated authority from the PEACEPLUS Partnership from 1 January 2024 in order to mitigate risks to Council.

Alderman McIlveen proposed, seconded by Alderman Graham, that the recommendation be adopted.

The proposer, Alderman McIlveen agreed that the approach outlined in the report was a sensible one and one which would see the risk lying with the Council rather than the Partnership.

The seconder Councillor Boyle agreed with those sentiments.

Referring to the Partnership minutes, Councillor McKee noted there appeared to have been some difficulties which he felt was disappointing. Continuing he proceeded to ask a number of questions including noting that this Council was the only one to delegate all design and associated decisions to the Partnership. As such Councillor McKee asked if the risks had been understood prior to the formation of the Partnership how was the Council the only one which had taken that approach.

In response the Director of Community & Wellbeing commented that it was a case of that the risks had manifested themselves over a period of time, however it was worth noting the Partnership had been successful in other areas. He added that two of the three themes had been agreed to date, however since the beginning of August it had been grappling with a shortlist of a dozen capital projects and had been unable to take a decision on those.

Councillor McKee asked in respect of Peace IV were decisions delegated to the Partnership, in respect of design or was it operated in the way which was being proposed now. The Director indicated that he believed the appointment of contractors to oversee the delivery of capital projects came through the Council but added that there had been a degree of devolved power at that time. He added that he would however need to check that detail further.

Referring to the recommendation Councillor McKee noted that it was being proposed to return the delegated authority back to Council and as such he asked for some further details on how that would take place. The Director indicated that the first item to be brought back to Council would be the applications themselves which would include details of the three themes of each of the projects. He added that all three

projects would come back to Council in February 2024 for a final decision to be taken.

At this stage Councillor McKee indicated that he was content to support the recommendation as it appeared to be the only way forward. He did however express some concern that the Council's reputation could have been damaged by the poor handling of this process and as such residents and applicants could feel let down as a result.

At this stage Councillor McRandal commented that on initially reading the report it had raised a number of questions for him which he had discussed with the Director. As such he asked the Director to make it clear to the Chamber what this meant for the process going forward. He added that it was his understanding that in respect of the work of the Partnership nothing would change and the only difference would be the removal of the delegated authority and those decisions being brought to the Council for consideration.

In response the Director confirmed that to be the case confirming that the process would be based as how the Council's Standing Committees operated bringing forward recommendations for ratification by Council. He added however that there remained a lot of work for the Partnership still to undertake.

Rising as an independent member of previous Peace IV Partnership, Councillor Wray recalled how smoothly it had been run with clear rationale behind the marking of tender bids. That was then brought to the Council for approval. Some of those projects were fantastic and he did not wish for any negativity to take over as Peace was an amazing project and one which everyone should be supportive of. While understating the concerns he asked why the Council had diverged from a successful way of operating to what had been adopted to date, adding that he would have concern that some members could become disenfranchised from the Partnership.

The Director advised that the issues had evolved within the Partnership during the past five to six months and divisions had been created and in order to provide a layer of protection for all, what was before Members was considered to be the best way forward.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Alderman Graham, that the recommendation be adopted.

(Councillor Hollywood left the Chamber at this stage – 8.24pm)

10. CHANGES TO CONDUCTING COMMITTEE AND COUNCIL MEETINGS AND CHANGES TO THE STANDING ORDERS

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report detailing that at recent meetings of the Party Group Leaders and the Independent and Small Member Party Group, a number of potential changes to address the length and frequency of Council, Committee and other meetings were discussed.

A number of 'good practice' actions were considered for discussion, including that:

- Officers review the number, frequency and efficacy of Working Groups, Sub-Committees and Workshops outside of the Standing Committees.
- Officers review the Council (where appropriate) and Committee meeting agenda format, taking reports requiring decision/action first, with reports 'to note' grouped together later in the agenda. For Council meetings, the aim would be to overall reduce number of reports taken to directly to Council and;
- Officers to re-issue guidance to all Members on the appropriate use of Any Other Notified Business.

In line with Article 5 of the Council's Constitution on the role of the Chairperson, it was considered useful to remind the Chair to be more robust in enforcing the Standing Orders and controlling inputs that were not relevant to the item being debated. In order to ensure appropriate support was given to the Chair to do, Officers should maintain a good understanding of the Standing Orders.

It was also considered helpful to review the Scheme of Delegation to give more responsibility to the Corporate Leadership Team. Council currently agreed the annual Service Plans and budgets. Directors were focussed on their delivery, returning to Council on exception for example, for scrutiny of performance or abnormality or if key decisions and approvals are required. A report on a recommended update of the Scheme of Delegation would be brought back to Council at a later stage. A request for a list of delegated decisions taken would not be practical at this time.

Changes to Standing Orders

In addition to the above, two changes were recommended to be made to the Standing Orders. The Standing Order as it was currently written (Standing Orders, version 9, December 2021) were outlined below, with changes to the text marked in red:

Standing Order 20.15, Duration of Speeches

- "Except with the permission of the Council, a Member, in introducing a Motion, shall not speak for more than ~~ten~~ **five** minutes and in replying, for more than ~~five~~ **three** minutes. Other speakers shall be allowed one interaction which last no longer than ~~five~~ **three** minutes. **The duration of speeches is not inclusive of the Officer's response**".

Standing Order 11, Attendance of Members at Committees

To address the number of questions raised at Council on reports previously taken to Committee, it was recommended that Members be given dispensation to request at Council that a report be taken back to the Committee where Members who were not members of the Committee would be, at the discretion of the Chair, permitted to speak but not vote. Members should note the risk of referring reports back to Committee which, if many, could impact the length of Committee meetings.

The changes were recommended as follows:

- "Any Elected Member may attend a Committee meeting of which he/she is not a Member, ~~but may not take a Council seat within the main meeting area and~~

~~instead should sit in the public gallery if and~~ subject to permission of the Chairman of the Committee, shall be given dispensation to speak on a matter that has been referred back to the Committee for consideration, but shall not, unless he/she is a Member of the Committee, vote in any division or propose any resolution or amendment. A matter may only be referred back to the Committee once. Items considered by the Planning Committee may not be referred back by an Elected Member who is not a Member of the Planning Committee. If the public and press are excluded from the meeting the Member is not required to leave the room but rather be bound by the restrictions imposed at that part of the meeting.

Standing Order 17.1, Motions

The changes were proposed as follows:

- Notice of every motion, other than a motion which under Standing Order 17.2 may be moved without notice, shall be given in writing, signed by at least two Members of the Council giving the notice, to the Chief Executive not later than at least five working days before the next meeting of the Council. Each motion must have a proposer and seconder. The motion must be clear in meaning otherwise it shall be rejected until such time as it is resubmitted in clear language. ~~Submitted and not later than five working days before the meeting.~~ **Prior to lodging a notice of motion, members should take the opportunity to engage with the relevant Director on current action being taken and options available to have the subject matter addressed. This may assist members in formulating the terms of notice of motion. The motion must be submitted and not later than five working days before the meeting.**

Standing Order 17.1.7 –

- If the subject matter of any motion of which notice has been properly given comes within the remit of any Committee it shall, upon being moved and seconded, stand referred without discussion to that Committee, or to such other Committee as the Council may determine, for consideration and report. The Presiding Chairperson may, if they consider it urgent and necessary to the dispatch of business, allow the motion to be dealt with at the meeting at which it is brought forward. **Where such a motion is deemed urgent, the Presiding Chairperson shall give notice of this decision to the Members at least one day in advance of the meeting at which that motion is to be heard.**

Stand Down Standing Orders

Members should be aware when making these decisions, that under Standing Order 29 – Suspension and Amendment of Standing Orders - that any motion to, add to, vary or revoke the Standing Orders would, when proposed and seconded, stand adjourned and be referred without discussion to the next ordinary meeting of the Council and any resultant amendment would be ratified at the meeting.

Any motion under this Standing Order to suspend the Standing Orders shall require the support of a qualified majority vote and suspension can only be for the duration of the meeting.

RECOMMENDED that Council agrees to adopt the ‘good practice’ changes in this report and further considers the recommended changes to the Standing Orders as

set out and agrees that they are stood down without debate for one month, being brought back to the Council meeting in January 2024.

At this stage the Mayor reminded members that the Standing Orders element of the report would not be up for discussion and instead would be referred without discussion to the next meeting of the Council. She added that she was also aware of ongoing discussions between Group Party Leaders on the matter.

Alderman McIlveen proposed, seconded by Councillor McRandal, that the recommendation be adopted.

The proposer Alderman McIlveen commented that everyone would only be too well aware of the Council meetings lasting five hours becoming the new 'normal'. As such he was pleased that other members felt exactly the same way about it particularly given that every other Council in Northern Ireland could have its Council meeting completed within an hour and a half. As such he stated that he was pleased to see that a roadmap was now in place to try to deal with this and he looked forward to the debate around Standing Orders at the next Council meeting.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Councillor McRandal, that the recommendation be adopted.

11. SEALING DOCUMENTS

RESOLVED: -

(On the proposal of Alderman Adair, seconded by Councillor Edmund)

THAT the Seal of the Council be affixed to the following documents:-

- (a) Grant of Rights of Burials: D40269-D40286
- (b) ANDBC and Dorrian Quality Developments Ltd
- (c) ANDBC to Copelands Marina Limited – Lease of the Boat park, Donaghadee

(Councillor Hollywood re-entered the meeting at this stage – 8.27pm)

12. TRANSFERS OF RIGHTS OF BURIAL

The Mayor advised that there were no Transfers of Rights of Burial.

NOTED.

13. NOTICE OF MOTION STATUS REPORT

(Appendix III)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- A Status Report in respect of Notices of Motion.

This was a standing item on the Council agenda each month and its aim was to keep Members updated on the outcome of Motions. Please note that as each Motion had been dealt with, it would be removed from the report.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the report.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Edmund, seconded by Alderman Smith, that the recommendation be adopted.

14. NOTICES OF MOTION

14.1. Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor McLaren and Councillor Hollywood

Councillor McLaren proposed, seconded by Councillor Hollywood, that this Council recognises the growing concerns and impact of single use vapes on young people, schools, and our local environment. Calls on Council Officers to undertake a full review of options available to address these concerns and strengthen enforcement. This Council also calls on a ban on the importation of illicit vapes and calls on Stormont, at the earliest opportunity, to bring forward legislation to enforce regulations that will combat illicit importations.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor McLaren, seconded by Councillor Hollywood, that the Notice of Motion be referred to the Community & Wellbeing Committee.

14.2. Notice of Motion submitted by Alderman Adair & Councillor MacArthur

Alderman Adair proposed, seconded by Councillor MacArthur, that this Council notes the continuing issue of dead seals washed up on our beaches and coastline and the negative impact that this has on the use of beaches when the carcasses are not picked up in a timely manner. It therefore tasks officers to bring forward a report to ensure seal carcasses are prioritised for removal as soon as possible after reporting to ensure that our beaches continue to be a clean, safe, and well-managed coastal environment to be enjoyed by everyone.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Adair, seconded by Councillor MacArthur, that the Notice of Motion be referred to the Environment Committee.

14.3. Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Boyle & Councillor Wray

At this stage the Mayor informed members that she had agreed, due to the timing impending increase, that merits the request and it would be heard this evening.

Councillor Boyle proposed, seconded by Councillor Wray, that this Council writes to the Department for Infrastructure (DFI) objecting to the significant proposed percentage increases to charges involving the structures along with pedestrian and various vehicle usage, availing of the Strangford Ferry Services.

The proposer, Councillor Boyle, thanked the Mayor for allowing his motion to be heard this evening. The reason for this was that there was currently a 30 day consultation period underway which commenced on 29 November 2023 with reference to the proposed price increase for those wishing to avail of the Strangford Ferry Service. He recalled the many issues and improvements throughout the years associated with the Ferry Service adding that he wished to express his thanks to the current management of Brendan Matchett and his team who had always gone the extra mile to accommodate their user and customer base despite facing their own difficulties.

While everyone would only be too familiar with price increases to many services throughout society Councillor Boyle believed that increases to the charges for the Strangford Ferry Service should, if necessary, be reflective of the inflation rate. While the cost of living increased sharply during 2021 and 2022, the annual rate of inflation reached 11.1.% in October 2022, a 41 year high, before subsequently easing. Recent data showed that it was 6.7% in September, 4.6% in October and currently was sitting at 3.9%. Therefore he believed that the Council should be requesting an inflation based increase in prices rather than that of the current proposed increased levels from Dfl which would see increases by 30%.

At this stage Councillor Boyle provided members with examples of the proposed price increases:

- Passenger £1 rising to £1.30
- Car and Passenger £5.80 rising to £7.70
- 20 journey Smart Card rising from £50 to £66.70

For a regular user a 20-journey ticket would cost £50 equating to a £400 annual increase for Ferry charges.

For many Councillor Boyle noted there was no alternative for those living geographically isolated, particularly at the most southern tip of the Ards Peninsula, but to access the Strangford Ferry Service. While it was accepted that there had not been a price increase for some years, to propose a 30% increase he suggested that Dfl needed to reconsider this given the impact it would have on everyone from local users, tourists and those operating businesses bordering both sides of Strangford Lough. He asked Members for their support.

Commenting as seconder Councillor Wray acknowledged that prices for the Strangford Ferry had not been increased since 2009. While the price increase had been set in line with inflation, a 30% price increase was unprecedented and as such he believed that it needed to be challenged. It was after all an essential service for many using it to access schools, businesses and those with caring responsibilities. Continuing he noted the recent operational problems with the Ferry and the potential impact the suggested price increases could have on tourism, particularly as the Council currently was keen to attract new businesses and tourism to the Borough. While he sympathised with the Civil Servants responsible for making such decisions in the absence of an Executive he was adamant of the Council's need to push back on the proposed increases and encouraged members to support the motion.

Rising in support of the motion, Alderman Adair added that he too was aware of how much those living in the communities of the lower Ards Peninsula relied upon the Strangford Ferry Service. He too acknowledged that there had been no price increase since 2009 but agreed that the proposed price increase of up to 35% was exceptionally high. Alderman Adair commented that he had previously raised the matter at the October committee meeting and recalled that a meeting was to be set up to discuss any proposed price increases. Continuing he too paid tribute to Brendan Matchett and his team for the service they provided to the local community. Alderman Adair commented that the issue was not the result of the absence of an Executive but rather Northern Ireland not having enough money to run its various Departments. He added that his Party had been the only one to ask for additional funding for Northern Ireland's public services.

Thanking the members for bringing forward the Motion, Alderman McAlpine agreed that the proposed price increases were disappointing and would put many people off using the Ferry service. Coupled with that would be the detrimental impact upon daily users of the service and tourists alike.

Councillor Edmund commented that the Strangford Ferry Service was essential for many but especially those in Portaferry and Strangford who used it on daily basis. As such he hoped the Department would revisit their proposed price increases, particularly in light of the fact that one Ferry had been out of service for a year.

By way of summing up, Councillor Boyle thanked members for their comments and support.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Boyle, seconded by Councillor Wray, that this Council writes to the Department for Infrastructure (DFI) objecting to the significant proposed percentage increases to charges involving the structures along with pedestrian and various vehicle usage, availing of the Strangford Ferry Services.

CIRCULATED FOR INFORMATION (Appendix IV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Undernoted items of information:

- a) Institute of Public Health (IPH) and Tobacco Free Research Institute (TFRI) hosted a webinar to launch the findings of a new report, "[Children and gambling - evidence to inform regulation and responses in Ireland](#)".
(Correspondence attached)
- b) Independent Reporting Commission - Sixth Report
www.ircommission.org/publications (Correspondence attached)

Councillor Wray proposed, seconded by Alderman Smith, that CFI (a) be noted, and CFI (b) be referred to the relevant Committee.

The proposer, Councillor Wray commented that the Independent Reporting Commission report was of great significance and referred to topics included in two Motions recently raised by Alderman McIlveen and Councillor Smart. Given its

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significance he therefore felt it was important for the Council to consider the report further at the appropriate Committee.

The seconder, Alderman Smith welcomed the report and expressed his support for the proposal.

AGREED, on the proposal of Councillor Wray, seconded by Alderman Smith, that CFI (a) be noted, and CFI (b) be referred to the Community and Wellbeing Committee.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Councillor Smart, that the public/press be excluded from the undernoted items of confidential business.

15. REQUEST FOR A WAYLEAVE AT KILTONGA, BELFAST ROAD, NEWTOWNARDS (Appendix V)

*****IN CONFIDENCE*****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 6 – INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON (INCLUDING THE COUNCIL HOLDING THAT INFORMATION)

Council was asked to consider granting NIE a Wayleave over land at Kiltonga Industrial Estate. A 3rd party had applied to NIE for an increased load and part of the cable needed to go over Council land. It was recommended that the Council acceded to the request from NIE.

The recommendation was adopted.

READMITTANCE OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Graham, seconded by Councillor Edmund, that the public/press be readmitted to the meeting.

MAYOR'S FINAL REMARKS

The Mayor took the opportunity at this stage to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and extended an opportunity to Members to visit her Parlour after the meeting had concluded for some festive cheer.

NOTED.

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 8.48pm.

C.20.12.2023PM

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

A hybrid meeting (in person and via Zoom) of the Audit Committee was held at the Council Chamber, Church Street, Newtownards and via Zoom, Thursday 14th December 2023 at 7.00pm.

PRESENT: -

In the Chair: Councillor McLaren

Aldermen: Armstrong-Cotter (Zoom)
McAlpine (Zoom)

Councillors: Ashe (Zoom) McKee (Zoom)
Cochrane MacArthur
Hollywood Wray
McCollum

Independent Member: Mr P Cummings (Zoom)

In Attendance: ASM – C Hagan
Deloitte – C McDermott
Deloitte – N Sammon
Deloitte – D Kinsella (Online)
NIAO – D Cambell

Officers: Chief Executive Officer (S Reid), Director of Corporate Services (M Steele), Head of Finance (S Grieve), Head of Strategic and Democratic Services Officer (S McCrea)

1. APOLOGIES

The Chairman (Councillor McLaren) sought apologies. Though there were no apologies for attendance, Mr Cummings advised he had another commitment and may not be present for the entire meeting.

NOTED.

2. CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting including the internal and external auditors from the Northern Ireland Audit Office and Deloitte.

NOTED.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairman asked for any Declarations of Interest and none were declared.

NOTED.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

(a) Audit Committee Minutes from September 2023

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Wray, seconded by Councillor MacArthur, that the report be noted

(b) Follow up Actions

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above report.

The Head of Finance advised to Members that the report kept track of actions that had been previously agreed and summarised the content of the report. He explained that Internal Audit had been given explanations as to why implementation dates had been missed and, in relation to the vesting of William Street, advised that Council legal representatives continued to respond to queries from DSO. Consideration on the matter was still ongoing as to whether it should be escalated.

Mr Campbell (NIAO) recalled that Mr O'Sullivan had been asked to raise the issue with Collette who in turn had taken the issue to BFI. The situation was still being monitored and the Head of Finance assured Members that the matter would be considered by management and reported upon at the next Audit Committee.

Councillor MacArthur proposed, seconded by Councillor Cochrane that the report be noted.

Councillor MacArthur noted the usefulness of the follow-up actions report as well as the verbal update provided.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor MacArthur, seconded by Councillor Cochrane, that the report be noted

5. CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

(a) Risk Appetite Framework

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services outlining a draft risk appetite framework developed by the Corporate Leadership Team through a workshop facilitated by Deloitte in August 2023.

RECOMMENDED that the Draft Risk Framework be adopted.

Councillor MacArthur proposed, seconded by Alderman Armstrong-Cotter that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor MacArthur asked if the four headings of the risk register were standard and within which reputational damage may belong. The Director of Corporate Services provided some examples such as breaches in cyber security and difficulties with partnerships and that reputational damage would be considered as part of any corporate risk register used. The draft risk framework before Members was in advance of redrafting the overall corporate risk registers. It was hoped that the revised corporate risk register encompassing relative appetites across risk areas could be presented at the Audit Committee in March 2024. The document would be fluid, evolving over time in response to various internal and external factors, working like a tool to ensure robust decisions were made.

Camille McDermott (Deloitte) explained to Members that a workshop had taken place to support development of a risk appetite statement and that the risk register and risk appetite were different in that one registered identified risks on the horizon whilst the other was a tool to measure the amount of risk the Council may be willing to take on a decision. Given the sector however, being completely risk averse was impossible and reputational risk was an outcome/ impact of risk as opposed to a category in its own right.

Councillor Wray asked, if, in the event that the Corporate Leadership Team took a particular course of action against the framework, would it need to be taken to the Council meeting and if so, how the Leadership team would arrive at a decision. The Director of Corporate Services reminded Members that the draft was a tool to be referred to regularly but not in all circumstances. It would not be about where a decision lines up with risks but instead where each risk was associated with a course of actions sits with risk appetite.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor MacArthur, seconded by Alderman Armstrong-Cotter, that the Draft Risk Framework be adopted.

(b) Interim Statements of Assurance November 2023

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailing assurance statements completed by Heads of Service for the period 1st April to 30th September 2023.

RECOMMENDED that the report be noted.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Wray, seconded by Councillor Hollywood, that the report be noted.

6. **CORPORATE GOVERNANCE**

(a) Report to those charged with Governance

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from Deloitte detailing key matters from the 2022-23 audit of Ards & North Down Borough Council Financial Statements.

RECOMMENDED that the report be noted.

Mr Campbell explained that the document was in its final format and included manager comments.

Councillor MacArthur proposed, seconded by Councillor Cochrane that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor MacArthur advised that Members had received an update on the Priority #1 issue discussed at the previous Audit meeting.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor MacArthur, seconded by Councillor Cochrane, that the report be noted.

(b) Audit & Assessment Report

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from Deloitte summarising the work of the Local Government Auditor on the 2023-24 performance improvement audit and assessment undertaken on Ards and North Down Borough Council.

RECOMMENDED that the report be noted.

Mr Campbell advised Members that this was a standard report in respect of the Performance Improvement Plan for 2023-24 and the Performance Assessment of 2022-23. The Local Government Auditor had given an unqualified audit certificate with no statutory recommendations. Only one new proposal existed as outlined on page 6 regarding good practice regarding Performance Improvement.

Councillor Wray proposed, seconded by Councillor Hollywood that the report be noted.

Mr Cummings referred to annex b within which manager's comments could be found regarding an audit oversight and asked Officers for comment. The Director of Corporate Services explained that it was a comment in relation to the Performance Improvement Plan which, at the time of writing was presented to the Corporate Services Committee as opposed to the Audit Committee. Management would be reviewing the Terms of Reference for both committees to ensure the correct reports and documents were presented to the most appropriate committees. The other minor recommendation was with regard to Council not having a formal consultation strategy. The Director of Corporate Services had spoken to the Communications & Marketing team and agreed consultation engagement was a top priority with plans to engage the community with initiatives and projects through the Corporate Plan with the likes of Citizen Space potentially being used to further that agenda. It was hoped

that the formal consultation strategy would be in place within the next six to twelve months.

Councillor MacArthur noted mention of limited evidence of audit tracking (page 12 of the report) and asked if it was relevant to the Performance improvement Plan that the Audit Committee had not seen. The Director of Corporate Services confirmed, stating that as discussed earlier, Management would review the Terms of Reference for committees to ensure they aligned correctly, ensuring reports could be presented to the most appropriate.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Wray, seconded by Councillor Hollywood, that the report be noted.

(c) Annual Audit Letter

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from

RECOMMENDED that the report be noted.

Mr Campbell apologised for the report arriving late and explained that the key message was that the 2022-23 financial statements were certified by qualification and no issues were noted.

Councillor Cochrane proposed, seconded by Councillor Wray that the report be noted.

Councillor Hollywood asked if there was any information relating to the causes of high sickness within the Council. The Director of Corporate Services advised that absenteeism was regularly scrutinised at the Corporate Services Committee with quarterly reports which categorised absence reasons.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Cochrane, seconded by Councillor Wray, that the report noted.

7. INTERNAL AUDIT

(a) Progress & Quarterly Follow-up

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from Deloitte outlining the Audit Committee's progress report.

RECOMMENDED that the report be noted.

Camille McDermott summarised the content of the report to Members, explaining that six reports had been completed with three presented at this evening's Committee. Fieldwork had been completed for two further reviews whilst there were plans for two further reviews in the new year. There had been no changes to the internal audit plan other than a review around vehicle acquisition and disposal for which Deloitte would work with Management regarding the Terms of Reference to be brought before the Audit Committee.

In relation to outstanding internal audit recommendations, 65 were open as of the previous meeting with reports presented at this evening's meeting having added a further five. However, significant progress had been made as 26 recommendations had been closed by management with 44 remaining. That said, based upon updates, many of those were partially implemented whilst 27 recommendations had not been started in part due to implementation needs or whilst engaging with higher priority recommendations. Of three Priority #1 recommendations at the last meeting, two had been closed whilst the other was partially implemented. The bar chart in the report provided target dates with an expectation of many recommendations being closed off in approximately six months.

Councillor MacArthur proposed, seconded by Councillor Wray that the report be noted.

Councillors MacArthur & McLaren thanked the Director and team for their progress as did Mr Cummings given the reassuring inroad that had been made, whilst Councillor Wray thanked Deloitte for adding additional detail on dates to the report.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor MacArthur, seconded by Councillor Wray, that the report be noted.

(b) Emergency Planning

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from Deloitte detailing an assurance review undertaken as part of the 2023-24 Internal Audit Operational Plan that reviews the controls in place which enable the Council to fulfil its responsibilities for Emergency Planning and support of communities in the event of a major emergency in the borough.

RECOMMENDED that the report be noted.

Camille McDermott explained that two Priority #3 findings of a relatively minor nature existed which granted a satisfactory level of assurance. The Priority #3s related to updates between the emergency plans and appendices, ensuring processes were in place for lessons learned and that they be documented within the plan with clear action plans in place where lessons had been identified and to follow them up.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Hollywood, seconded by Councillor Ashe, that the report noted.

(c) Finance Service Review

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from Deloitte outlining a review undertaken as part of the 2023-24 Internal Audit Operational Plan, focusing on key controls in place to manage risks associated with Service planning, performance monitoring/ reporting, risk management and system readiness.

RECOMMENDED that the report be noted.

Camille McDermott summarised the report, explaining that it spanned Service Planning, performance monitoring, reporting and risk management with the addition of adding system readiness with regard to approval for the Finance Department to invest in new systems and its implementation. Satisfactory assurance had been granted.

Overall, there was one Priority #2 and two Priority #3s. The former related to readiness for a new system. In identifying a new system, it was important to know what did not work with the system in place at the time of writing versus what the newer system could achieve. These elements could then be fed into procurement to ensure acquisition of the most suitable system and any training that may be required. At the time of the review being carried out, a post project evaluation of the Core HR Payroll system had yet to be completed. The Priority #3s were minor, consisting of ensuring explanation of under qualifying variants for KPIs and a review of the risk register which was reviewed in the service. However, the risk strategy recommended quarterly though at the time of writing, it was carried out bi-annually.

Councillor MacArthur proposed, seconded by Councillor Wray that the recommendation be adopted.

In answer to questions by Councillor MacArthur, Camille McDermott advised that the Priority #2 existed only as a new system was amidst a procurement process and the recommendation would provide some ability to plan.

The Head of Finance explained that there had been pre-market engagement with a number of suppliers and liaised with other Councils who had recently or were themselves amidst the process of implementing new systems. A business case had been approved as part of last year's estimates process which had since been revised in line with the estimates process being carried out. Transformation Services were carrying out a post-project evaluation of the Core System with consultation taking place amongst team members with a hope of completion before procurement. The system that was in place was reaching the end of its life cycle with approximately two years left. The Head of Finance hoped to carry out additional consultations with other service managers and administration staff who used the system.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor MacArthur, seconded by Councillor Wray, that the report noted.

(d) Procurement

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from Deloitte detailing an assurance review undertaken as part of the 2023-24 Internal Audit Operational Plan to review the controls in place over procurement above the tender threshold and controls to manage supply chain risk. The review also included contract management arrangements in-place post-procurement, including performance monitoring controls.

RECOMMENDED that the report be noted.

Camille McDermott summarised the report to Members, advising that there had been one Priority #2 finding and two Priority #3 findings which granted an overall satisfactory assurance. The former related to clarity of tender documentation with regard to roles and responsibilities and performance monitoring. This kind of clarity was important from the outset with contractors to ensure both parties were under no illusion as to their own roles, responsibilities, requirements and performance measures. It had been noted that for three of the five contracts, performance was managed on-site through a site supervisors or visitation for example. However, it was identified that more formal updates would be helpful from contractors.

The Priority #3 was relatively minor, relating to maintenance of a checklist developed by procurement service which each of the service units should use when undertaking procurement which would ensure full documentation and evidence of advertisements. Most Council procurement would find itself on the E-Tender platform and newspapers. It was noted that the E-Tender platform was much easier to evidence than perhaps that of newspapers.

Finally, it was noted that the procurement handbook required of managers in Council to consider both supply chain and contractor risk when engaging in procurement but there was no formal mapping or consideration as to Council critical suppliers, critical risks around supply chains etcetera.

Councillor McKee proposed, seconded by Councillor MacArthur that the report be noted.

Camille McDermott advised that the renewed contract of leisure did not form part of the review in answer to Councillor McKee's query.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor MacArthur, seconded by Councillor McKee, that the report noted.

8. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

The Chairman advised that there were no items of Any Other Notified Business.

NOTED.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Wray, seconded by Councillor Cochrane, that the public/press be excluded during the discussion of the undernoted items of confidential business.

9. SINGLE TENDER ACTIONS UPDATE (FILE 231329)

*****IN COMMITTEE*****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 6 – INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON (INCLUDING THE COUNCIL HOLDNG THAT INFORMATION)

A report had been supplied informing those present of updates on Single Tender Actions. A recommendation had been made to note the report.

10. FRAUD, WHISTLEBLOWING AND DATA-PROTECTION MATTERS

*****IN COMMITTEE*****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 6 – INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON (INCLUDING THE COUNCIL HOLDNG THAT INFORMATION)

11. MEETING WITH NI AUDIT OFFICE & INTERNAL AUDIT SERVICE IN THE ABSENCE OF MANAGEMENT

*****IN COMMITTEE*****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 6 – INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON (INCLUDING THE COUNCIL HOLDNG THAT INFORMATION)

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Cochrane, seconded by Councillor Wray, that the public/press be readmitted to the meeting.

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 19:51.

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

A hybrid meeting (in person and via Zoom) of the Environment Committee was held at the Council Chamber, Church Street, Newtownards and via Zoom, on Wednesday, 3 January 2024 at 7.00 pm.

PRESENT:

In the Chair: Morgan

Aldermen: Armstrong-Cotter
Cummings
McAlpine

Councillors: Blaney Kerr
Boyle McKee (Zoom)
Cathcart Rossiter
Douglas Smart
Edmund Wray
Harbinson

Officers: Director of Environment (D Lindsay), Head of Waste and Cleansing Services (N Martin), Head of Assets and Property Services (P Caldwell), Head of Regulatory Services (Temporary) (R McCracken), and Democratic Services Officer (H Loebnau)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor McKimm.

NOTED.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

NOTED.

3. UPDATE BY KEVIN BAIRD – RESULT OF AUDIT ON DRAFT MSMS (Appendix I)

Kevin Baird, Harbour Master and Marine Manager, was introduced to the Committee and the Chair invited him to make his presentation which was attached.

Mr Baird praised the engagement made by Ards and North Down Borough Council in complying with the Port Marine Safety Code. He referred to the noteworthy milestones achieved and made recommendations for further improvement.

Examples of those were that the Environment Committee be regularly briefed (every 6 months) by the Harbour Master or the appointed Council officer on the higher ranked hazards and incident reports as a standing item at Committee meetings. He also thought it was worth considering the establishment of a forum to ensure all stakeholders, including contractors, would be given an opportunity to comment on the safety of operations and that those meetings be minuted or recorded.

He encouraged the Environment Committee, as the Committee responsible for safety and compliance with the Port Marine Safety Code, to collectively or individually visit each harbour with the appointed harbour master or with himself.

The Chair thanked Mr Baird on behalf of the Committee for his presentation and the hard work that had been carried out in terms of the report and asked how that would be progressed. The Head of Assets and Property Services advised that he would be bringing back a report to the Committee on the audit findings and proposals for addressing any matters raised.

Alderman Cummings referred to the increase in social use within harbours such as kayaking, open sea swimming and the use of jet skis. Mr Baird informed the Committee that in April 2023 the British government had brought in watercraft legislation which now classed jet skis similarly to ships and boats and required them to comply with all the collision regulations and the Merchant Shipping Act. That had previously not been the case and prosecutions by the MCA (the enforcing authority) could be brought as a result.

Councillor Edmund appreciated the update and discussed the lights at the harbour at Ballywalter and asked if those had been checked. That had been done by Strangford Marines but Mr Baird had looked at the lights himself and had noticed what he believed to be a crack on the lens, which he would follow up.

Councillor McAlpine thanked Mr Baird for his presentation and queried whether the Council, as Duty Holder, should be updated more than once every six months particularly over the summer months.

The Director stated that detailed operational procedures were in place and the Committee should be able to rely upon the proper routine implementation of those by experienced and competent Council staff. He emphasised that in between the proposed six-monthly harbours management reports to Committee, officers would not avoid or delay taking critically important or urgent measures required to ensure safety at harbours or to deal with imminent risks. Furthermore, where something urgent did require consideration/approval by the Committee, interim reports could be brought at any time outside the standard six-monthly reporting.

Referring to jet ski use, Councillor Rossiter referred to the new legislation and wondered if it was up to the individuals to send in evidence or were there regular patrols by MCA to detect offences. Mr Baird informed him that evidence should be presented to the Maritime Coastguard Agency but he was not aware that they carried out dedicated patrols for this specific issue as such.

Councillor Boyle praised the work of the Harbour staff and that of the Council who in his experience were always willing to help with issues as they arose. He asked if there was cooperation between neighbouring Councils in managing the use of jet skis noting Strangford Lough’s proximity to Newry, Mourne and Down Borough Council.

The Head of Assets and Property Services informed the Committee that the Strangford Lough Working Group had been set up in recent years and was represented by various stakeholders and agencies. Much work had been carried out during the Covid period and the group had been instrumental in helping to address the issues which had arisen from the increased use of jet skis.

Councillor Kerr praised the work that had been undertaken over recent years and asked about the installation of speed markers in harbours. Mr Baird advised that this could be considered and a report would be made to the Committee at a later point if deemed necessary.

NOTED.

4. Q1 AND Q2 SERVICE PLAN PERFORMANCE REPORTS

4.1 Assets and Property Services
(Appendix II)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment detailing that Members would be aware that the Council was required, under the Local Government Act 2014, to have in place arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions. To fulfil that requirement the Council approved the Performance Management Policy and Handbook in October 2015. The Performance Management Handbook outlined the approach to Performance Planning and Management process as:

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years
- Corporate Plan – published every 4 years (Corporate Plan Towards 2024 in operation)
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually in September
- Service Plan – developed annually (approved April/May 2023)

The Council’s 18 Service Plans outlined how each respective Service would contribute to the achievement of the Corporate objectives including, but not limited to, any relevant actions identified in the PIP.

Reporting approach

The Service Plans would be reported to relevant Committees on a half-yearly basis as undernoted:

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
H1	April – September	December

H2	October – March	March
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The report for April to September 2023 was attached.

Key achievements:

- Over 2500 maintenance jobs completed
- Project works completed at Balloo ERC, Aurora (handrails and showers), Clandeboye Cemetery Staff Accommodation
- Playground replacements at Helen’s Bay and designs completed for Dickson Park Ballygowan and Kilcooley Community Centre

Emerging issues:

- Slightly below target for completion of maintenance jobs in accordance with agreed timescales due to staff vacancies.
- Budget surplus due to utilities coming in under budget.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the report.

Proposed by Councillor Edmund, seconded by Councillor Blaney, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor Blaney queried the E rated building target of 91% and noted that it appeared that the Council had achieved a zero result. The Head of Assets and Property Services stated that that figure was an end of year target and that this was a half year report. The Member asked if that could be addended within future reports for ease of understanding. He also referred to the biofuel trial that the Council had previously agreed to and noticed that that had not been progressed. It was explained that at the time of agreement biofuel was cost neutral to the Council and since then it had rocketed in price by approximately 40%. The Member suggested that that target be taken off the report if it was no longer of relevance to the Committee.

Councillor Blaney also asked about the number of refurbishments to buildings being undertaken and the Key Performance Indicator had no defined target. The Officer advised that the target was to complete the refurbishment programmes set out in the maintenance strategy for the year and that that was being achieved. He agreed to look at the 10% target for quality assurance checks on completed works but emphasised that this was a sample check and not meant to give an indication of overall quality of all completed jobs. If appropriate, the target on that indicator would be enhanced going forward.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Edmund, seconded by Councillor Blaney, that the recommendation be adopted.

4.2 Regulatory Services
(Appendix III)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment detailing that Members would be aware that the Council was required, under the Local

Government Act 2014, to have in place arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions. To fulfil that requirement Council approved the Performance Management Policy and Handbook in October 2015. The Performance Management Handbook outlined the approach to Performance Planning and Management process as:

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years
- Corporate Plan – published every 4 years (Corporate Plan Towards 2024 in operation)
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually in September
- Service Plan – developed annually (approved April/May 2023)

The Council’s 18 Service Plans outlined how each respective Service would contribute to the achievement of the Corporate objectives including, but not limited to, any relevant actions identified in the PIP.

Reporting approach

The Service Plans would be reported to relevant Committees on a half-yearly basis as undernoted:

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
Quarter 2 (Q2)	April – September	December
Q4	October – March	March

The report for Q1/Q2 was attached.

Key points to note:

- The Council had not maintained a top 3 position for Fixed Penalty Enforcement in NI, with the top three Councils having signed up to a one-year pilot scheme with a private enforcement company, Waste Investigations Support and Enforcement (WISE). It was understood that those arrangements had now ended, and that was liable to have an impact upon the FPNs issued by Councils involved going forward.

Key achievements:

- An inspection programme in relation to the licensing of Pavement Cafes had been developed and implemented. Officers had also been visiting premises to educate them on the need to obtain a licence.
- A Building Control awareness campaign had been launched and was being published on a bi-monthly basis on the Council's Facebook page.
- The new higher fine Fixed penalty Notice of £200 for fouling and litter, with an early payment reduced rate of £150, was introduced on 1 June 2023.
- RCIF grant funding (£30k) was transferred to LHLH, however the cost to the Council was £25k as the Council was able to reclaim the VAT (£5k). LHLH would issue the grants and take responsibility for monitoring applicants’ fulfilment of the award criteria by successful groups.

- The delivery model for the Council's Environmental education programme (Project ELLA) for Year 8s was redesigned and launched in June 2023. All primary schools in the Borough were contacted and sent a link to the on-line flyer which provided details of project ELLA and invited teachers to contact the department to arrange for school visits, presentations and workshops. Several school visits, presentations and workshops were completed in the quarter July 2023 – September 2023.
- A pilot signage scheme for dogs on leads at Ballyholme Promenade was delivered in July 2023 and the signage was painted on the footpaths of the promenade. That was approached as an educational tool, assisting officers to interact and educate members of the public on the existing Dogs on Lead legislation. The Council also had 12 Pop Up clinics at Ballyholme with the Gazebo throughout the summer, providing residents with information, poop scoops, toys for their dogs and allowing officers to take enquiries and complaints about specific issues of concern.

Action to be taken:

- Implementation of arrangements for transition to the recently awarded new contract for Car Park enforcement services.
- A number of the working groups in relation to the various strands within the agreed car parking strategy had now been established and a Car Park Management Officer had also been employed to co-ordinate that work.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the report.

Proposed by Councillor Cathcart, seconded by Alderman Cummings, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor Harbinson referred to the key points to note within the report noticing that the Council had not maintained a top 3 position for Fixed Penalty Enforcement in Northern Ireland, with the top three Councils having signed up to a pilot scheme with a private enforcement company, and asked why Ards and North Down was not aiming for that. It was explained that that had been a pilot project carried out by a number of Councils and it was understood that this approach had now been discontinued by those Councils. It was anticipated that the elevated FPN figures in the Councils concerned would fall back in the next published report.

The Director pointed to a robust enforcement approach acting as a deterrent, which in time should lead to a reduction in the occurrence of the offence and reduce the number of Fixed Penalty Notices needing to be issued. It was accepted that dog fouling and littering remained an issue in the Borough and that this KPI would remain a measure of the Council's focus and attention to something which remained a concern to many residents.

Following a further question from Councillor Blaney the Director went on to say he had been advised that the private sector involvement with the other Councils as indicated, had now ended and that route was no longer being pursued. Historically

Ards and North Down has been a leader in this area of enforcement, and he hoped that the FPN figures would reflect that again going forward.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Cathcart, seconded by Alderman Cummings, that the recommendation be adopted.

4.3 Waste and Cleansing Services (Appendix IV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment detailing that Members would be aware that the Council was required, under the Local Government Act 2014, to have in place arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions. To fulfil that requirement the Council approved the Performance Management Policy and Handbook in October 2015. The Performance Management Handbook outlined the approach to Performance Planning and Management process as:

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years
- Corporate Plan – published every 4 years (Corporate Plan Towards 2024 in operation)
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually in September
- Service Plan – developed annually (approved April/May 2023)

The Council's 18 Service Plans outlined how each respective Service would contribute to the achievement of the Corporate objectives including, but not limited to, any relevant actions identified in the PIP.

Reporting approach

The Service Plans would be reported to relevant Committees on a half-yearly basis as undernoted:

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
Quarter 2 (Q2)	April – September	December
Q4	October – March	March

The report for Q1/Q2 was attached.

Key points to note:

- Up to date reports for the Borough Cleanliness Index were still not available from Keep NI Beautiful.

Key achievements:

- The new HRC Access Management System had been successfully implemented.
- Waste to landfill had reduced in comparison to the same period last year.
- The percentage of waste recycled had increased in comparison to last year.
- Five of the Council's Public Conveniences received a platinum award for cleanliness from the British Toilet Association.

Emerging issues:

- Work had commenced on the review of kerbside collection services.

Action to be taken:

- None

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the report.

Proposed by Councillor Cathcart, seconded by Councillor Blaney, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor Cathcart had some questions in relation to the HRCs and firstly welcomed the additional times which had been made available over the Christmas period and asked for a report on how the centres had coped over what was traditionally a very busy time. The Director stated that that would be covered in the quarterly waste statistics reporting to the Committee.

The Member asked about access for modified vehicles which could be deemed to be vans but were required for people with mobility issues and may be the household's only vehicle. The Director advised that a van that had obviously been adapted for the transport of a person with a disability would be treated flexibility under the access rules for vans, as indeed it had been before the introduction of the booking system.

The Member also referred to cases where a logoed company car was used on a regular basis as the main form of transport for a householder and when visiting an HRC it looked like it could be a business use. The Director reported that such situations had not been reported as a significant issue, but if the Member could share any specific information officers could look at it further.

In closing his points Councillor Cathcart had heard of complaints from users of the Balloo site in Bangor in respect of cleanliness and helpfulness of staff compared with other sites within the Borough and asked that that be passed on to the relevant officers.

Councillor Blaney asked for further information on the measurement of cleanliness of the local environment since that was a big issue for the residents of the Borough. It was explained that the measurement had been outsourced by Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful (KNIB) and issues had arisen around the accuracy of data. Presently the Council was therefore unable to avail of that external audit source, as was the situation in other Councils. The Member urged the Council to consider carefully what would replace that because the measurement of it was important to achieve the targets that residents expected.

Councillor Douglas was delighted to read about the five public conveniences which had attained Platinum Standard and it was noted that those were located at McKee Clock Arena, Bangor; Mill Street, Newtownards; Comber; The Parade, Donaghadee and Groomsport. She was pleased that Comber had been included since she often received praise for the standard of the toilets there and passed on her congratulations to the Director and his team. The Director agreed adding that he had received emails from the public in praise of the cleanliness of public toilets and

the high standards delivered by relevant staff. The Chair of the Committee praised the work of the section on behalf of the Environment Committee.

Councillor Boyle asked if the survey had extended to the Ards Peninsula and the Head of Service reported that the award involved attended toilets only. Councillor Boyle noted that the facilities on the Peninsula were also well kept by staff and he offered his praise and thanks to them for their dedicated work as well.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Cathcart, seconded by Councillor Blaney, that the recommendation be adopted.

5. ROADMAP TO A GREEN FLEET PRELIMINARY REPORT

(Appendix V)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment detailing that Armagh Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council, Ards and North Down Borough Council, Louth County Council, Monaghan County Council and Newry Mourne and Down District Council, under the umbrella of East Border Region, commissioned Fehily Timoney and Company to carry out a feasibility study on the adoption of alternative fuel vehicles for Local Authorities (LA's) in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

The overall purpose of the study was to identify viable low and no carbon vehicle fleet options for each local authority's vehicle fleet - to support each authority's broad aim to reduce its organizational Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions.

Scope

The study involved the following steps:

1. A baseline evaluation of each LA's vehicle fleet.
2. Contextual analysis of the main macro-environmental factors that affect and influence the adoption of alternative fuel vehicles in the East Border region.
3. A programme of stakeholder and industry engagement - to develop a greater understanding of the viability of alternative fuel options for each LA's vehicle fleet.
4. An examination of several case studies involving organisations transitioning their vehicle fleet to alternative fuels.
5. The carrying out of quantitative and qualitative Alternative Fuel Option Analysis.
6. Development of a Sample Strategic Roadmap for Achieving Net Zero Emission Vehicle Fleets, for each LA.
7. Completion of a Feasibility Study Report documenting the above steps.

The full document was attached for Members' review.

Summary of Short- and Long-Term Recommendations

After extensive analysis of the factors that affected the adoption of alternative fuel vehicles, and review of the pertinent case studies, the appointed consultant recommended:

1. The most viable short-term option for reducing GHG emissions associated with Light Good Vehicles (LGV's) and Heavy Good Vehicles (HGVs) was to advance the use of Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) within the fleet. That was considered to be a short-term, transitional option that would serve to reduce ANDBC's vehicle fleet emissions in a manner broadly commensurate with the national GHG reduction target to reduce GHG emission by 48% by 2030.
2. The most viable long-term option for reducing GHG emissions associated with HGVs was to support the development of Hydrogen infrastructure and advance the use of Hydrogen based vehicles within the fleet. That was considered to be a long-term option that would serve to support the development of a 'Net Zero' GHG emission vehicle fleet for ANDBC - in accordance with the national GHG reduction target of achieving 'Net Zero' GHG emissions by 2050.
3. The most viable solution for reducing GHG emissions associated with LGVs was the adoption of Battery Electric Vehicles as a longer-term solution.

Considerations to Note Prior to Commitment.

- Members may recall previously agreeing to trial of HVO within the fleet, however soon after that decision, the price of that fuel increased significantly. That meant that it went from being cost neutral compared to diesel, to being approximately 40% more expensive than diesel. If Members opted to transition to HVO next year, an additional £800,000 would need to be added to the fuel budget.
- There was currently a limited supply of green hydrogen and substantial resourcing and capital expenditure was required to drive its roll out in the region. Therefore, an immediate move to a renewable hydrogen powered HGV fleet would not be possible. There was therefore a degree of risk with committing to that option. However, as the study clearly showed, it was likely to be the most viable alternate fuel for the Council's HGVs in the medium to long term.
- The NIE network was not currently capable of supplying the necessary power to meet the charging requirements, if our entire LGV fleet changed to electric. That problem was not unique to the Council; significant investment in infrastructure was needed, both on a regional and local level. Therefore, there was also a degree of risk attached to that alternate fuel. Officers were currently assessing the long-term viability of the two depots (Balloo, Bangor and North Road, Newtownards), and future-proofing the electrical infrastructure was one key consideration in that assessment.

RECOMMENDED that the Council, after consideration of the attached feasibility study and the summary contained within the report, instructs Officers to use the

information contained therein as a basis for development of our own “Roadmap to a Green Fleet” document, to be brought before Council for consideration at a later date.

Proposed by Councillor Edmund, seconded by Councillor Kerr, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor Edmund referred to the lack of supplies for hydrogen and biofuels and noted that the costs of those had risen, and electric vehicles in his opinion were often not as environmentally friendly as many people believed. He asked if there was any light at the end of the report. The Head of Assets and Property Services replied that there would be risks and uncertainties with any of the measures being suggested but that the Council was confident that the consultant had done a great job in providing a framework within which to now develop a Council specific plan to move forward towards meeting the 2050 net zero target.

Councillor Edmund thanked the officers for the report and Councillor Kerr agreed that it had been very thorough.

Councillor Rossiter stated that he was happy to go with the proposal in terms of the Council’s report but was quite disappointed that the infrastructure from NIE was not in place and felt that Northern Ireland was lagging behind others in reducing its carbon footprint. He believed that greater input should be made by the Department at Stormont to develop the infrastructure needed and hoped for clearer thinking moving forward.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Edmund, seconded by Councillor Kerr, that the recommendation be adopted.

6. GRANT OF ENTERTAINMENT LICENCE

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment detailing that applications had been received for the Grant of Entertainment Licences as followed:

Bangor Elim Church, 13 Balloo Crescent, Bangor BT19 7WP

Applicant: Gary Faulkner, 7 Fernbank Close, Bangor

Days and Hours: For 14 Unspecified Days within 12 months, 7pm – 11pm

Type of entertainment: Dancing, Singing or Music or any other entertainment of a like kind.

Comber Community Centre, 1 Parkway, Comber BT23 5AR

Applicant: Ards and North Down Borough Council, 2 Church Street, Newtownards

Days and Hours: Monday to Sunday during the permitted hours when alcohol may be served on these premises under the Licensing (NI) Order 1996

Type of entertainment: A Theatrical Performance

Dancing, Singing or Music or any other entertainment of a like kind.

Any entertainment which consists of or includes a public contest match, exhibition or display of boxing, wrestling, judo, karate or any similar sport, billiards, pool, snooker or any similar game, darts. Equipment for Playing Snooker or Similar Games.

There were no objections to those applications.

RECOMMENDED that the Council grants the applications.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Boyle, seconded by Councillor Kerr, that the recommendation be adopted.

7. TRANSFER OF ENTERTAINMENT LICENCES

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment detailing that an application had been received for the Transfer of an Entertainment Licence as followed:

The Parlour Bar, 4 Castle Place, Newtownards

Applicant: Alana Clarke, 20 Old Mill Dale, Dundonald

Days and Hours: Monday to Sunday during the permitted hours when alcohol may be served on these premises under the Licensing (NI) Order 1996

Type of entertainment: Indoor dancing, singing and music or any other entertainment of a like kind; Machines for Entertainment and Amusement

There were no objections to the application.

RECOMMENDED that the Council grants the application.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Boyle, seconded by Councillor Smart, that the recommendation be adopted.

8. ACTIVITY REPORT FOR NEIGHBOURHOOD ENVIRONMENT TEAM FROM 1 JULY 2023 TO 30 SEPTEMBER 2023

(Appendix VI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment detailing that the information provided in the report covered, unless otherwise stated, the period 1 July to 30 September 2023. The aim of the report was to provide Members with details of some of the key activities of the Team, the range of services it provided along with details of level of performance.

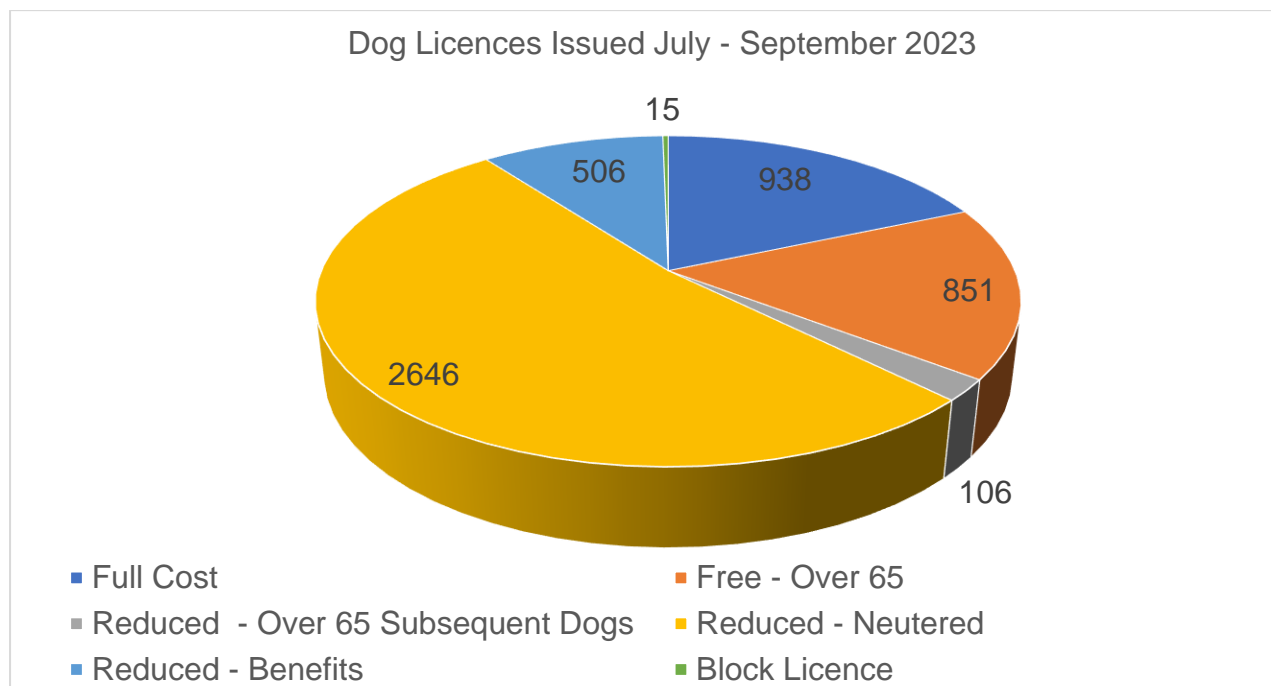
Applications to the Neighbourhood Environment Team

The Dogs (NI) Order 1983

It should be noted that the figures included block licences where one licence could be issued for multiple dogs in specific circumstances.

	Period of Report July – Sept 2023	Same 3 months July – Sept 2022	Comparison
Dog licences issued during the three months	5062	5013	↑


Concessionary licences remained at 81% of dog licences issued over the period. That included the categories of neutering (£5) / over 65 (Free – 1st dog) / over 65 subsequent dog (£5) and income related benefits (£5). Standard dog licence £12.50 and block licence £32.

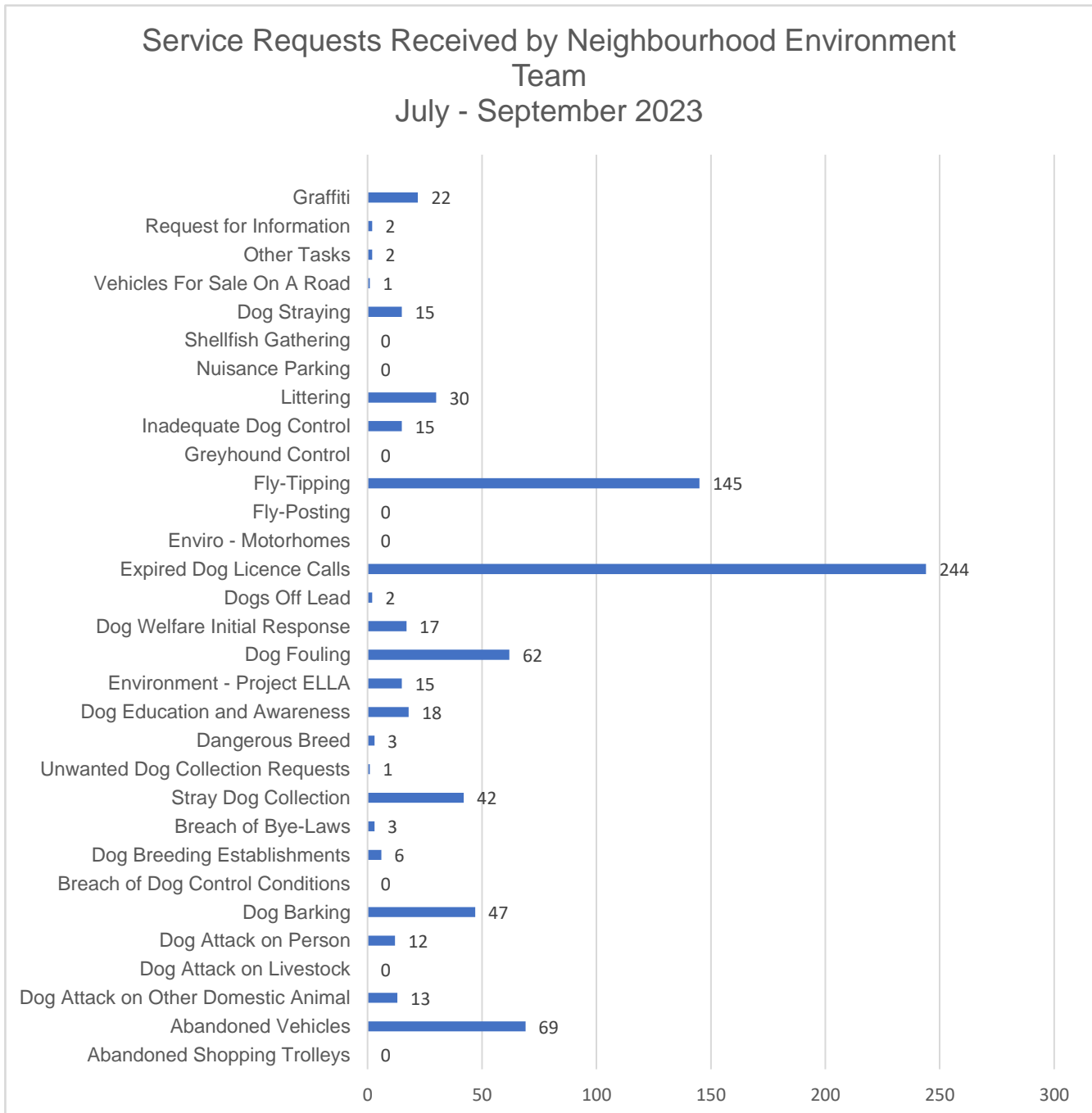


Investigations


The Neighbourhood Environment Team responded to a range of service requests. In terms of time spent, some types of service requests would be completed immediately whilst others required a longer-term strategy to find a resolution. The total number of service requests had been outlined together with a sample of the types of requests received.

	Period of Report	Same 3 months	Comparison
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	July – Sept 2023	July – Sept 2022	
Service Requests received the three months	786	623	



**Non-Compliance
Prosecutions**







	Period of Report July – Sept 2023	Same 3 months July – Sept 2022	Comparison
Total Prosecutions	1	11	

Fixed Penalty Notices

In addition to cases being prosecuted through the court, 71 fixed penalty notices had been issued in respect of various matters. That continued to demonstrate a sustained Council focus upon detecting and punishing those who persisted in committing environmental offences in the Borough and highlighted one patrolling outcome of the Neighbourhood Environment Team achieved despite the reduction in staffing levels due to sickness and vacant posts.

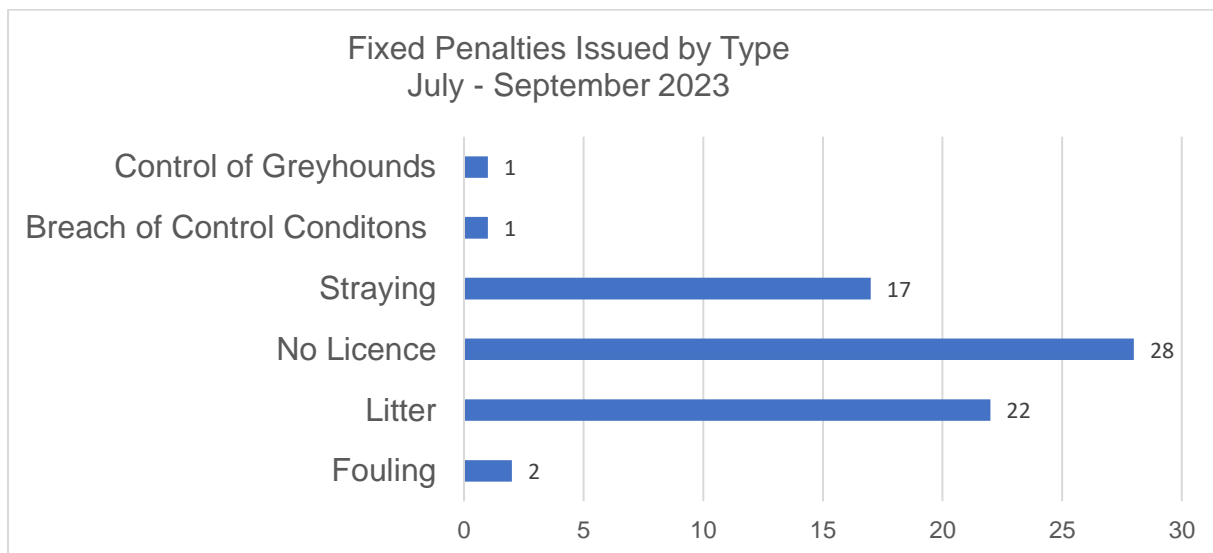
The main categories of fixed penalties were shown below. Other categories existed i.e., breach of dog control conditions, exclusion order and off lead offences. The offer of an £80 Fixed Penalty Fine was an opportunity to discharge liability to prosecution.

A payment period of 28 days was permitted. If paid within 14 days, the fine was discounted to £60. As staff recruitment and retention remained a challenge that had impacted on the number of notices issued during the quarter. Over the past year additional efforts had been made to reduce the dog licence renewal backlog and the Council now saw fewer unlicensed dogs as a result. The higher fixed penalty fines for litter and fouling offences applied from 1 June 2023 i.e. £200 reduced to £150 if paid within 14 days.

	Period of Report July - Sept 2023	Same 3 months July – Sept 2022	Comparison
Fouling	2	8	
Litter	22	58	
No Dog Licence	28	1	
Straying	17	11	
Breach of Control Conditions	1	0	
Control of Greyhounds	1	0	

The following graphs demonstrated:

1. the total number of fixed penalties issued by the Neighbourhood Environment Team during each month of the period of report.
2. the fixed penalties issued during the period of report by type.



Appendix A to the report provided a street level location for each of the penalty fines issued during the period of report 1 July to 30 September 2023.

Environmental Education Programme

Project ELLA

An email was sent to all primary schools within the borough attaching a link to the on-line flyer which provided details of project **ELLA** and invited teachers to contact the department to arrange for school visits, presentations and workshops.

For the period of report the following activities took place:-

JULY	Action Mental Health rock pooling and beach clean at Groomsport Beach - 10 pupils in attendance (2 activities) Beach clean with pupils from Positive Futures, Banks Lane Beach - 12 pupils and staff in attendance (1 activity)
AUGUST	Action Mental Health group, rock pooling and beach clean, Donaghadee - 10 pupils in attendance (2 activities)
SEPTEMBER	Rock pooling and beach archaeology event delivered as part of the Council's Staff Health and Wellbeing initiative - 10 staff and children in attendance. (2 activities)

Keep NI Beautiful Partnership Programme

Attached (Appendix B) was an impact card from Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful containing impact information for the Live Here Love Here and Eco-Schools programmes within the Ards and North Down Council area during 2022-23.

Some key highlights:

- The Council invested £75k into the Live Here Love Here Programme, a positive, people-powered campaign focused on improving the local environment and building a sense of civic pride in local communities.
- The Council invested over £10k in the Eco-Schools Programme
- There was an estimated £3.66 return on every £1 invested by the Council in those initiatives.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the report.

Proposed by Alderman Armstrong-Cotter, seconded by Councillor Cathcart, that the recommendation be adopted.

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter referred to the information which showed the amount of dog fouling and litter penalties. She asked for the fly tipping figures to be presented so that they could be compared to the previous year as well, and it was agreed to include that in subsequent reports.

The Member asked if there was a threshold where littering became fly tipping and the Director replied that there was no strict definition but generally the Council viewed fly tipping where it was more than a single item and the sanctions for fly tipping were more significant under the legislation. Alderman Armstrong-Cotter thought that the Council should communicate that fines were in place not for the Council to make money but rather they reflected the costs of cleaning up and also should act as a deterrent and send out a message that all forms of littering were unacceptable.

The Director agreed with the Member's point of view and explained that it was a difficult message to get out to all sections of the community, but was an ongoing part of the Council's communications programme.

Councillor Cathcart raised the matter of high incidences of dog fouling which was unacceptable to most people and the Director clarified that at the peak of enforcement action the Council was issuing far more Fixed Penalty Notices than other councils. Reported enforcement figures were lower currently and it was hoped to see those much improved over the coming months. The Director reassured Members that the Council maintained a laser focus on the detection and enforcement of such environmental offences.

Councillor McKee echoed the concern of Councillor Cathcart agreeing the Council had been a leader of the Northern Ireland councils previously. He urged the Council to look at its strategy on enforcement, reviewing and taking further action as

necessary. The Director advised that that was taking place, but that recruiting staff and retaining staff for this particular role was often challenging.

Councillor Boyle referred to a fly tipping incident in his area which was on land owned by NI Water, and it was explained that landowners themselves had responsibility to remove waste found on their own property under the Fly Tipping Protocol between Northern Ireland Councils and DAERA. Hazardous waste could be reported to NIEA and a contractor appointed by it would deal with that. Councillor Boyle reported that he had always found Council staff to be extremely efficient when dealing with fly tipping on land owned by the Council. The Director explained that the Council had authority to investigate fly tipping on anyone's land and would support the landowner in that way to try and bring the perpetrator to task, but would not remove the waste.

Councillor Rossiter raised the matter of the fixed penalties in relation to expired dog licences. The Director said that the Council had revised its approach to that, with action being taken more swiftly than before to prevent abuse of the system. He also pointed out that stray dogs were also almost always responsible for fouling in public places, and therefore every FPN issued for straying was also an enforcement action which addressed the fouling offence.

Councillor Wray asked if a person reporting fly tipping or littering would remain anonymous. It was advised that the nature and strength of the evidence would be considered, and it may not always be necessary for a witness's identity to become known. A witness's identity would never be revealed without their express approval. The key message was that the public should come forward with evidence so that enforcement options could be considered.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman Armstrong-Cotter, seconded by Councillor Cathcart, that the recommendation be adopted.

9. RESPONSE TO NOTICE OF MOTION – PLASTIC PACKAGING (Appendices VII - XII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment detailing that this report had been prepared in response to the following agreed Notice of Motion:

That this Council recognises the environmental damage caused by modern day packaging, much of which is disposed of in landfill or as litter. This Council agrees that producers, not ratepayers, should be responsible for the net costs of managing packaging waste and that litter payments must be included in any Extended Producer Responsibility scheme.

This Council tasks Officers with bringing back a report detailing what initiatives Council have undertaken to encourage businesses within the Borough to review, change and/or reduce the packaging they use. The report should include analysis of achievements and challenges encountered to date and outline further initiatives that

could be undertaken to encourage businesses to change or reduce the packaging they use.

Over a sustained period, since the beginning of the new ANDBC in 2015, the Council had been proactive across a number of initiatives, in lobbying and advocating for change in relation to packaging waste.

1. The Council's StAND for Sustainability Campaign had involved a programme of initiatives aimed at reducing packaging waste, in particular focussing upon 'single use plastics' (SUPs). The campaign had involved the Council first and foremost seeking to lead by example, through the introduction of internal protocols for procurement and the use of packaging/SUPs at its own facilities and events.

The StAND campaign had also involved advising and supporting local businesses with a move towards more sustainable packaging practices, for example providing local food outlets with free supplies of compostable takeaway food containers to replace polystyrene versions as a means of encouraging them to make such transitions.

Promoting change in attitudes by the general public had also been a central feature of StAND for Sustainability, with one of the Council's most high-profile initiatives being the 'Refill' campaign whereby it partnered with NI Water to promote a shift away from buying of plastic bottles of water towards routine carrying and use by the public of refillable water bottles. The campaign had been supported by grant funding to local communities for installation of readily accessible drinking water refill points.

Copies of relevant PRs on those initiatives were included in appendices.

2. The Council had lobbied major supermarket companies over the years in relation to the issue of excessive and unsustainable packaging waste. Positive responses had been received in relation to those representations, setting out efforts and proposals by the large supermarket companies to move towards more sustainable packaging solutions for their produce.
3. The Council had actively responded to government consultations on the subject (for example the consultation options for the banning of certain commonly littered single use plastic items).
4. The Council lobbied major supermarket companies to campaign for the provision of in-store soft plastics recycling drop off points, funded by supermarkets themselves rather than the Council. The Council representations were very positively received, and the campaign was highly successful in that all major supermarkets now provided such a facility at large store outlets precisely as lobbied for by this Council. A WRAP sponsored web link could now be easily used to take a resident to their nearest participating supermarket store where a wide range of named soft plastic types could be dropped off for recycling ([Plastic bags and wrapping | Recycle Now](#))

5. The Council's Recycling Community Investment Fund (RCIF) was established with the express purpose of utilising some of the savings accrued through the Borough communities' recycling efforts, to support further initiatives that would support a more environmentally sustainable future. The RCIF was currently utilised in three ways, all of which supported the sustainable packaging agenda:

- To support the province wide campaign led by Keep NI Beautiful on responsible waste disposal and related objectives around protecting and enhancing the natural environment.
- To support the development and delivery of Project ELLA, the Council's schools and community environmental education programme.
- To deliver the Live Here Love Here small grants programme, allowing local community groups and schools to avail of funding to undertake projects that would help to protect and enhance sustainable local communities. That could include community led initiatives related in some way to the sustainable packaging agenda and impacted on the local environment.

Going forward it was envisaged that the Council's new Corporate Plan for 2024-28 would explicitly place sustainability at the core of everything the Council did and in that context it would be actively exploring on an ongoing basis all opportunities to further advance the sustainable waste resource management agenda, including issues around sustainable packaging.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this report.

Councillor Harbinson asked to make an amendment and it was proposed by Councillor Harbinson, seconded by Councillor Rossiter, that;

Officers bring back a further report outlining future initiatives that could be undertaken to encourage businesses to change or reduce the packaging they use, instead of waiting for the 2024-2028 Corporate Plan. The initiatives should look in particular at single use plastics (SUPs) and reinvigoration of the StAND campaign.

Councillor Harbinson thanked officers for the report which he believed to be progressive, and he urged officers not to let the progress made to date slip. He asked for that to be included in the Corporate Plan.

Councillor Cathcart referred to soft plastic recycling at his local supermarket and wondered about the possibility that this would be included in kerbside collections. The Head of Waste and Cleansing said that to date Northern Ireland did not appear to be following other parts of the United Kingdom in collecting that at the kerbside. The officer believed that the solution should lie more with producers and their responsibility to reduce the prevalence of such packaging.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Harbinson, seconded by Councillor Rossiter, that officers bring back a further report outlining future initiatives that could be undertaken to encourage businesses to change or reduce the packaging they use, instead of waiting for the 2024-2028 Corporate Plan. The initiatives should look in particular at single use plastics (SUPs) and reinvigoration of the StAND campaign.

10. REVIEW OF PROPERTY MAINTENANCE STRATEGY

(Appendix XIII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment detailing that the Council's Property Maintenance Strategy was originally implemented in 2016 but it had been revised several times to meet the changing needs of the Estate and to evolve in line with best practice and changes to other related strategies.

In this fifth revision a number of changes were proposed.

- Cross departmental working section added, to more effectively ensure awareness of the plans/needs of other departments prior to proceeding with significant maintenance investment in the Council's Estate.
- Introduction of mechanical and electrical plant replacement process to enable more accurate budgeting and less downtime due to failures.
- Revised staff structure following Service Transformation. A more efficient and effective departmental staff structure had been implemented to deliver the Council's evolving service objectives.
- Increased budget for energy saving initiatives: a dedicated fund to help the Council meet its responsibilities under the Climate Change Act.

RECOMMENDED that version 5 of the Council's maintenance strategy attached was approved.

Proposed by Councillor Wray, seconded by Councillor Smart, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor Wray was happy to support the recommendation and was pleased to read about the planned approach rather than one which was reactive or firefighting. Seconding the recommendation Councillor Smart echoed his colleague's words of thanks for the proactive approach to be taken. He pointed to the reality that if funds were spent those would come from the ratepayer. The Council was in the process of striking the Rate for next year and there were pressures on all budgets which required strategic thinking.

Councillor Cathcart agreed that the strategy had been working and wondered if a similar plan was in place for the maintenance of public areas and he referred to areas at the seafront in Bangor. The Head of Assets and Property Services confirmed that this featured in the strategy, and that reporting on that aspect would be included in future reports to the Committee.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Wray, seconded by Councillor Smart, that the recommendation be adopted.

11. RENEWAL OF AN EXISTING MOU WITH COUNCIL(S) AND DEARA ABOUT EPIZOOTIC DISEASE

(Appendix XIV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: Report from the Director of Environment detailing that the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) had had a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with this Council, and other Councils from July 2017 for the provision of Council staff and equipment in the event of an outbreak of Epizootic Disease.

This support of the Department, and their support of the Councils, was seen as essential in such emergency circumstances in order to control infection.

The report related to the out workings of a review and subsequent minor alterations to some of the terms used in the MoU, which remained substantially the same as before.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approve this MoU.

Proposed by Alderman Cummings, seconded by Alderman Armstrong-Cotter, that the recommendation be adopted.

Alderman Cummings queried the pay and conditions which covered staff and it was not clear where those funds would come from. The Committee was advised that the Department would be covering the staff costs of Council support provided under the MOU.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman Cummings, seconded by Alderman Armstrong-Cotter, that the recommendation be adopted.

12. NOTICE OF MOTION SUBMITTED BY ALDERMAN ADAIR AND COUNCILLOR MACARTHUR

That this Council notes the continuing issue of dead seals washed up on our beaches and coastline and the negative impact that this has on the use of beaches when the carcasses are not picked up in a timely manner. It therefore tasks officers to bring forward a report to ensure seal carcasses are prioritised for removal as soon as possible after reporting to ensure that our beaches continue to be a clean safe, and well-managed coastal environment to be enjoyed by everyone.

Proposed by Alderman Adair, seconded by Councillor MacArthur that the Notice of Motion be adopted.

Alderman Adair referred to the Notice of Motion he had brought the previous month to the Environment Committee in respect of the cleanliness of local beaches. He repeated that Ards and North Down Borough had the largest coastline of all councils in Northern Ireland and was a great asset to residents and visitors alike. Recently there had been a sharp increase in the number of dead seal carcasses found on local beaches and in many incidences, those were being left for many days decomposing. That was upsetting to children particularly and was a health risk to people and dogs who were using the beaches for recreation. He called for a quick response to that by Council staff moving forward to maintain the coastline as a well-managed environment.

Seconding the Notice of Motion Councillor MacArthur stated that in December a couple of incidences of seals located at Ballymacormick Point had been brought to her attention, one of those was alive and the other was not. She had looked for information to try to resolve the situation from the Council's website and had found that to be difficult. A member of the public had called a team at DAERA who had advised on the website to report the matter to the local Council. Since the seals were found on land that belonged to the National Trust, she now understood that the landowner was responsible for them. She suggested that there should be a method of reporting dead animals on the Council's website and to give advice to the public on what they should do.

Councillor Rossiter asked where the overall responsibility for the removal of dead animals lay and the Director explained that it was similar to what had been discussed earlier in the meeting in respect of waste, where the landowner had responsibility. The Member thanked his Council colleagues for bringing the Motion and asked if they would be happy to include all mammals rather than seals only.

Councillor Wray appreciated the Notice of Motion and had discussed the matter with Councillor Adair and the danger that was presented to the public by carcasses being left for long periods on beaches. He was pleased that the Notice of Motion would lead to the matter being a priority for the Council. He stated that often officers found it difficult to locate the animal easily on the beach and encouraged them to telephone local Councillors for help and for the public to give clear information.

Councillors Edmund, Boyle and Kerr rose in turn expressing their support for the Motion and hoped that the situation could be improved if it was passed.

In conclusion Councillor Adair thanked the Committee for expressing its support and was happy to include all mammals within the Motion. He called for the matter to be a priority and asked for a joint up approach to be taken on the Council's website.

AGREED, on the proposal of Alderman Adair, seconded by Councillor MacArthur, that the Notice of Motion be adopted and that this Council notes the continuing issue of dead seals and all mammals washed up on our beaches and coastline and the negative impact that this has on the use of beaches when the carcasses are not picked up in a timely manner. It therefore tasks officers to bring forward a report to the carcasses of mammals are prioritised for removal as soon as possible after reporting to ensure that

our beaches continue to be clean, safe, and well-managed coastal environments to be enjoyed by everyone.

13. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

There were no items of Any Other Notified Business.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

AGREED, on the proposal of Alderman Cummings, seconded by Alderman Armstrong-Cotter, that the public/press be excluded during the discussion of the undernoted items of confidential business.

14. RECYCLING OF RIGID PLASTICS

****IN CONFIDENCE****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 3 – INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON

A report relating to a review of the contract for the processing of rigid plastics was considered.

It was agreed that the proposed contract variation should not be approved.

15. TENDER EXTENSION – MINOR WORKS AND HIRED PLANT

****IN CONFIDENCE****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 3 – INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON

A report relating to the extension of a contract for minor works and hired plant was considered.

It was agreed that the contract should be extended.

16. TENDER FOR SUPPLY OF ELECTRICAL FITTINGS

****IN CONFIDENCE****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 3 – INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON

A report relating to a tender for the supply of electrical fittings was considered.

It was agreed that the contract for the Supply of Electrical Fittings is awarded to Eastower NI t/a Gordons Electrical.

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

AGREED, on the proposal of Alderman Armstrong-Cotter, seconded by Councillor Smart, that the public/press be re-admitted to the meeting.

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 9.19 pm.

ITEM 7.3

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ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

A hybrid meeting (in person and via Zoom) of the Place & Prosperity Committee was held at the Council Chamber, Church Street, Newtownards on Thursday 4 January 2024 at 7.00pm.

PRESENT:

In the Chair: Councillor Blaney

Aldermen: Adair (Zoom)
Armstrong-Cotter (Zoom)
McDowell

Councillors: Ashe (Zoom, 7.15pm) Kennedy
Edmund McCracken
Gilmour McLaren
Hollywood Smart

In Attendance: Director of Place (S McCullough - Zoom), Director of Prosperity (A McCullough), Head of Regeneration (B Dorrian), Head of Tourism (S Mahaffy) and Democratic Services Officer (R King)

1. APOLOGIES

The Chair advised that apologies had been received from Councillor Rossiter, Councillor McCollum and Councillor MacArthur.

NOTED.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairman sought any Declarations of Interest and none was declared.

NOTED.

3. PLACE 10X CALL FOR EVIDENCE RESPONSE AND WAY FORWARD (Appendix I - II)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Prosperity stating that Members would recall that Council submitted its response to the DfE Place 10X Call for Evidence in July 2023 whereby views were sought on what a place-based sub-regional economic approach should look like.

At the beginning of December DfE published its response and an outline of its thoughts on approach to take things forward (See Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 for details).

In summary, DfE planned to be more visible on a sub-regional level and deliver against measurable targets, avoiding duplication. It planned to develop programmes with local partners including Councils and their partners through mechanisms such as Community Planning Partnerships and taking advice from SOLACE NI Economic Recovery Group. DfE was planning to use the Invest NI Regional Office Structure to determine sub-regional boundaries. For our area the sub-region encompasses: Ards and North Down, Lisburn and Castlereagh and Newry Mourne and Down. Final geographic boundaries would be agreed by August 2024.

A Place 10X dataset was being developed and was planned for January 2024. The sub-regional economic plan would be reviewed with Councils to identify the disparities that need addressed and priorities for each area.

While the response was to be welcomed, Council would have needed to work closely with DfE representatives, who had yet to be identified, to ensure the best outcomes for AND as sub regions do not always have the same priorities, in addition to ensuring that DfE's metrics and plans prove meaningful and align with ANDBC's, to have a genuine and positive impact for the borough.

The Response Report could be also be read and downloaded here – <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/economy/Place10X-Call-Evidence-Responses-summary.pdf>

A summary of the proposed this approach can be also be viewed here – <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/economy/Place10X-Sub-Regional-Economic-Approach.pdf>

RECOMMENDED that Council approves further working with DfE to ensure the Place 10X sub-regional economic approach is optimised for Ards and North Down.

Proposed by Councillor Smart, seconded by Councillor Hollywood, that the recommendation be adopted.

Alderman McDowell asked if it would it be possible for DfE to be invited to make a presentation to the Committee to allow Members to get further understanding on how the programme would work, particularly in terms of bringing Councils together and the involvement of Councillors. He recalled previous claims that engagement had taken place with local Councils; however, he had noted this had only been with officers; therefore he felt it was important for the key players to extend this engagement to Councillors to enable maximum benefit of opportunities.

Noting the comments, the Director of Prosperity would take this forward with the relevant programme leaders once they were in place. Referring to the officer engagement around the programme, the Director highlighted that officers had been critical of the programme's sub regional approach due to the different needs and characteristics of each region.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Smart, seconded by Councillor Hollywood, that the recommendation be adopted.

4. LABOUR MARKET PARTNERSHIP UPDATE (FILE ED135)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Prosperity detailing that the aim of Ards and North Down Labour Market Partnership (LMP) was to help improve employability outcomes and labour market conditions locally. The LMP worked through co-ordinated, collaborative, multi-agency partnerships to meet their regional objectives whilst being flexible to meet the needs presented by localised conditions and helping to connect employers with employees.

Action Plan for 2023-24

AND LMP Action Plan 2023-2024 Launch:

The Launch of the 2023-2024 Action Plan took place in the Chamber in the City Hall, Bangor on 23 November 2023. The Mayor, senior Economic Development staff and representatives from DfC were in attendance, along with past participants, employers and Delivery Agents. In total 31 people attended.

The AND LMP 2023-24 Action Plan aims to achieve the following:

Activities	Nos. of participants/attendees
Events	260
Participants in activities and programmes	207 (155 completers)
Employers engaged with across all programmes	55
Employment	74 to gain employment or to progress in better positions

Redistribution of Funds:

A LMP Emergency Meeting was held on 8 November to discuss and vote to redistribute funds from the Enterprise Readiness Programme and the underspend from the Academies budget. A change request was then made to DfC and was approved on 17 November 2023.

Transport Academy:

The tender for the Transport Academy had now been awarded to DFPP (People 1st and Hendersons). The uplift to this Academy was agreed, and all the documentation had now been signed and returned. The Delivery Agent had started to implement the project which should be completed by 31 March 2024.

Academy for People with Disabilities:

The tender for the Academy for People with Disabilities had now been awarded to the NOW Group. The uplift to this Academy was agreed, and all the documentation had now been signed and returned. The first update meeting took place on 28 November. Currently there were 23 participants recruited onto the programme and the Employer Engagement was well underway.

Academies:

An Academy for Classroom/Early Year Assistants for approximately 24 participants at a value of £29,400, went out to quotation on 9 November with a closing date of the 24 November. Two submissions were received. These had been evaluated, scored and checked by procurement. The Award and unsuccessful letters had just gone out. Further information would be communicated upon acceptance of the contract.

Rapid Response Academies:

A Health and Social Care Rapid Response Academy had been finalised and put out to quotation on 28 November with a return date of 12 December.

There was budget for one more Rapid Response Academy - this would need to be decided in early January to ensure the Delivery Agent appointed had time to run it before the 31 March 2024.

Careers Convention:

Apprenticeship week was from 5- 9 February 2024. To coincide with this, a Careers Convention was being organised for 7 February 2024 in Bangor Aurora Aquatic and Leisure Centre. Further details on the Careers Convention would be reported to Council once agreed.

Job Fair:

With assistance from DfC a Job Fair was planned for March 2024, the date of which was yet to be confirmed. It was anticipated that it would be held in Ards Blair Mayne Wellbeing and Leisure Complex. This would showcase employers within the Borough that had jobs available. Support agencies would also be in attendance to assist applicants where possible. Further details on the Job Fair would be reported to Council once agreed.

The LMP was on target to deliver fully the 23/24 action plan and preparations were being made to compile a three year strategic assessment and a one year action plan for 24/25, subject to funding being made available by DfC. Discussion was currently ongoing within DfC to make the case for continued funding for the Labour Market Partnership. The Council would be updated of progress in due course.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this report.

Proposed by Councillor Hollywood, seconded by Councillor Gilmour, that the recommendation be adopted.

The proposer, Councillor Hollywood had been pleased with the initiatives to increase employability outcomes, particularly for those people with disabilities. Praising the work of the NOW group, he was keen to see that work progress.

The Mayor, Councillor Gilmour, had attended the launch of the initiative at Bangor City Hall and had found it enlightening to hear firsthand from beneficiaries of the programme such as the Transport Academy and HGV training groups. The users

had flourished from opportunities that they would not have otherwise had and another positive element was the opportunity for employers to upskill their staff and help develop their workforce. Continuing, the Mayor highlighted the Jobs Fair plan and recalled it running very successfully in the past. She hoped that the Council would make it as easy as possible for people to access the Job Fair and recalled the organisers had previously provided busses to enable people to attend from across the Borough. The Director of Prosperity advised that it was the intention to continue the bus services this year, if possible.

Praising the programme, Councillor Smart believed that its impact had been fantastic for both the individuals and companies involved, and he paid tribute to the team behind its delivery. He was aware that feedback and data was used to shape the programme going forwards and recalled interest had been expressed from the hospitality sector. He asked if those businesses could be involved going forwards and the Director of Prosperity explained that officers were aware of the interest, advising that representatives from SERC sat on the LMP. There was also dialogue ongoing with the Council's Tourism team in relation to that area of employability so the opportunity was there for that to be included in the next action plan.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Hollywood, seconded by Councillor Gilmour, that the recommendation be adopted.

5. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

There were no items of Any Other Notified Business.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

AGREED, on the proposal of Councillor Edmund, seconded by Councillor Smart, that the public/press be excluded during the discussion of the undernoted items of confidential business.

6. TENDER FOR THE PROVISION OF EVENTS SECURITY AND MARSHALLING (FILE TO/PRO73)

****IN CONFIDENCE****

Option 3: NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 6 – INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON (INCLUDING THE COUNCIL HOLDING THAT INFORMATION)

SUMMARY

This report contains information on the recommended Tender for the appointment of Events Security and Marshalling for the contract starting 1 April 2024 with an option to extend for a further 2 x 12-month periods, reviewed annually.

The report recommended that Council approved the recommended Tender submission.

(Councillor Ashe had joined the meeting, via Zoom, at this stage – 7.15pm)

7. GROWTH EVENTS FUND 2024-2027 AND BID FOR EVENTS FUND 2023/24 (FILE TO/EG68)

****IN CONFIDENCE****

Option 3: NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 6 – INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON (INCLUDING THE COUNCIL HOLDING THAT INFORMATION)

SUMMARY

This report contains information on the assessment and award process for the Growth Events Fund 2024-27 (multi annual) and the Bid For Events Fund 2024-25.

The report recommended that Council approved the recommended awards for both Funds and that Letters of Offer are issued once the rates process is complete.

8. AND EVENTS & FESTIVALS FUND (FILE TO/EV105)
(Appendix III)

****IN CONFIDENCE****

Option 3: NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 6 – INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON (INCLUDING THE COUNCIL HOLDING THAT INFORMATION)

SUMMARY

This report contains information on the assessment, award process and anticipated budget for the AND Events and Festivals Fund 2024-25.

The report recommended that Council approved the awards as presented in the report, with recommendations on the budget and that Letters of Offer are issued once the rates process is complete.

9. QUEEN’S PARADE UPDATE (FILE RDP63)
(Appendix IV)

****IN CONFIDENCE****

OPTION 3: NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 6 – INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON (INCLUDING THE COUNCIL HOLDING THAT INFORMATION)

SUMMARY

The report provides an update on the private sector queen’s parade regeneration project being delivered by Bangor Marine.

10. BRCD AND BANGOR WATERFRONT UPDATE (FILE RDP22/RDP56)
(Appendix V)

****IN CONFIDENCE****

Option 3: NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 6 – INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON (INCLUDING THE COUNCIL HOLDING THAT INFORMATION)

SUMMARY

The report provides an update summary of the current position of the BRCD projects including Bangor Waterfront, including an update on a number of procurement exercises currently being undertaken.

11. BANGOR ART PIECE

****IN CONFIDENCE****

Option 3: NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 6 – INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON (INCLUDING THE COUNCIL HOLDING THAT INFORMATION)

SUMMARY

The report presents an Outline Business Case for a potential Art Lead Regeneration project in Bangor, being submitted to Department for Communities for potential funding.

12. COUNCIL REGENERATION SITE – HAMILTON ROAD (FILE RDP51)

****IN CONFIDENCE****

Option 3: NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 6 – INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON (INCLUDING THE COUNCIL HOLDING THAT INFORMATION)

SUMMARY

The report gives an update on the Council’s Hamilton Road site with a recommendation on how to take the site forward for potential regeneration.

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

AGREED, on the proposal of Councillor Gilmour, seconded by Councillor Edmund, that the public/press be re-admitted to the meeting.

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 8.51 pm.

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

A hybrid meeting (in person and via Zoom) of the Corporate Services Committee was held at the Council Chamber, Church Street, Newtownards and via Zoom, on Tuesday 9 January 2024 at 7.00 pm.

PRESENT:

In the Chair: Councillor Moore

Aldermen: Brooks McIlveen
 Graham Smith
 McAlpine

Councillors: Chambers (Zoom) Irwin
 Cochrane Kennedy
 Gilmour MacArthur
 Irvine, S McCracken
 Irvine, W McRandal

Officers: Chief Executive (S Reid), Director of Corporate Services (M Steele), Head of Finance (S Grieve), Director of Place (A McCullough), Director of Environment (D Lindsay), Director of Place (S McCullough, via Zoom), Director of Community and Wellbeing (G Bannister via Zoom), and Democratic Services Officer (H Loebnau).

1. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest notified.

3. DRAFT CORPORATE PLAN

(Appendix I)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailing that the Council would be aware that the current Corporate Plan would end in March 2024 and that preparations had been underway for the development of a new Corporate Plan 2024 – 2028 to outline the strategic direction of the Council. That work had been progressed by an internal project team, with representation from across all Directorates, a workshop with Elected members, multiple staff workshops, staff feedback and a review of the 2023 Residents Survey.

The Plan was currently in draft format and was attached for consideration, prior to issuing to the public for consultation. It was expected that the content would be further refined based on consultation responses. The style and format of the Plan, including illustrations and infographics, would also be updated in the final version.

If approved, the Plan would set the course for the next four years. It would only be achieved consistently working towards any agreed direction, in plans, actions and decisions.

It was proposed that the draft Plan would now be subject to wider consultation. The detail of that would be progressed via the project team, though it was likely to include public advertisement, residents focus groups, engagement with community planning partners, the Consultative Panel on Equality and Good Relations, the business community, elected members, and officers. That would progress alongside screening with resulting amendments incorporated in a final draft for Council approval.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the progress to date and agrees the draft Corporate Plan 2024 – 2028, enabling progression to consultation and screening, prior to consideration of the final draft.

The Director of Corporate Services outlined the information within the report and the draft Corporate Plan. He explained that this was not the final document but a collation of all the work that had gone on to date. The output of that was organised around a vision which had emerged of a sustainable Borough working in harmony; economically, environmentally and socially. The document detailed the outcomes and commitments of the plan and the measures of success. The next step in the process was a public consultation and that was due to begin in February. Consultation with Members would continue until the Corporate Plan's completion.

Proposed by Councillor McRandal, seconded by Alderman Smith, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor McRandal welcomed the Plan coming forward particularly since it was driven by sustainability in its strategic priorities. The move to the 'green' economy would undoubtedly mean changes for everyone and it was right that the Council showed leadership. He believed it was right that the Council encouraged a thriving high street and continued to work to support local businesses. While he appreciated that the Council wished to encourage people to reduce waste that should be balanced with support for the wider economy.

Alderman Smith welcomed the information and believed that the Corporate Plan set the strategy for the coming years, and he agreed with Councillor McRandal that the environment should be the cornerstone of the Council's plans and commitments. He commended officers for the work that had been done to date.

Alderman McIlveen echoed those comments and congratulated officers. He viewed that seeing sustainability in the wider sense was more appropriate and that a balance of the environment alongside economic growth could be achieved. He suggested that the balance of business and residential within the rate base should also be addressed and welcomed the intention of the Corporate Plan to tie in to all the activities of the Council more closely than previously and that the Plan remained a living document.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor McRandal, seconded by Alderman Smith, that the recommendation be adopted.

4. INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS UPDATE

(Appendices II & III)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailing that further to a decision taken at the August meeting of the Council to:

(a) Consider the invitation extended to the Mayor, another Member plus one Senior Officer to travel to Virginia Beach at a cost of return airfares, with the view to bring a further report back to Council with next step options on Sister City and Town Twinning relationships.

(b) Agree that a further report is brought back to the Council on International Relations including Town Twinning and Sister Cities and agree that Officers respond to the Questionnaire on Town Twinning by the deadline of 8 September with initial thoughts and include a caveat that further consideration on this area by Council is pending.”

The report aimed to update Members on both the outcome of the visit to Virginia Beach and the work that had followed, as well as the work that had been done on International Relations in a broader context.

Virginia Beach – 20 September-23 September

At the meeting in August, the Council agreed to accept the invitation from the Sister Cities Association of Virginia Beach and send the Mayor and the Chief Executive to visit Virginia Beach in September. A breakdown of the itinerary of the visit including who they met and what work had taken place since was outlined in the table below. Some photographs of the trip and subsequent meetings could be found in an appendix.

<u>Itinerary</u>	<u>Who did we meet with</u>
Wednesday 20 September 2023 7:30pm - Welcome Dinner and meeting.	Met Sister Cities Association Representatives: Jessica Windish, Maria Weissenseel, Carolyn Garrett, Katy Robertson, Ruth Smith.
Thursday 21 September 2023 10:00am - Tour of the City of Virginia Beach, city Council offices and chambers	<u>City of Virginia Beach Elected Members:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mayor, Councillor Bobby Dyer • Councillor Michael Berlucchi <u>Tallwood High School students with Glenlola Collegiate students and staff:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jessica Windish Meeting and presentation by Chief Executive.
11:45am - Tour of IMS GEAR Manufacturing	Tour of factory and discussion about economic development opportunities with Gunter Weisenseel.
1:00pm – Working Lunch with Virginia Beach Sister Cities Association Committee.	
2:45pm - Tour of Town Center Economic Development Office and team meeting	<u>City of Virginia Beach Council officials:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chuck Rigny, Director of Economic Development • Paige Fox, Business Development Manager Presentation by Paige Fox on economic development opportunities between Ards and North Down and Virginia Beach.

	<p>The group discussed commonalities including plans to develop the Oceanfront area in Virginia Beach and the Bangor Waterfront Regeneration Project as well as Exploris and potential links there.</p>
<p>3:30pm – Roundtable with local stakeholders and City Council officials.</p>	<p>Information exchange: Presentation by the Mayor and Chief Executive followed by discussion on opportunities for Sister Cities relationships/co-operation.</p> <p><u>Roundtable attendees:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Angeleigh Mitchell, Mayor’s Youth Leader in Action • Dorian Muncy, SCAVB Youth Ambassador • Lynette Andrews Symphonicity, Virginia Beach Orchestra • Laurie Skytt, VB Fire Department • Kenneth Pravetz, VB Fire Chief • Bev Anderson, VB School Board • Sara Lockett, Career and Technical Education in VB CPS • Roy Flanagan, VB Agriculture Department • Michael Mauch, Restaurant Association and Green Initiative Committee • Charles MacDowell, VB Economic Development UK (online)

<p>7:00pm - Dinner with Mayor Dyer, Councillor Berlucchi and Sister Cities Association representatives to discuss opportunities.</p>	
<p><u>FRIDAY 22 SEPTEMBER 2023</u> 10:30am - Tour of the Virginia Aquarium and Marine Science Center</p>	<p>Met with Cynthia Whitbred-Spanoulis of Virginia Beach Aquarium to tour the aquarium and discuss commonalities with Exploris and opportunities to collaborate.</p>
<p>12:00pm - Meeting at City Hall with Mayor Bobby Dyer</p>	<p>Presentation to Mayor Gilmour of the Virginia Beach City Seal and Proclamation – Exchange of Borough Plaque and gifts from Council. Meeting between the Mayors to discuss the Sister Cities relationship. Presentation from the Mayor of Virginia Beach to the Mayor of the Seal of Virginia Beach.</p>
<p>2:00pm - Round table discussion to review and brainstorm current and future mutually beneficial activities between Virginia Beach and Ards and North Down Borough.</p>	<p>To discuss student exchange opportunities between Tallwood High School and Glenlola ahead of Virginia Beach exchange in March 2024.</p> <p><u>Sister Cities Association of Virginia Beach:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maria Weissenseel, President • Carolyn Garrett • Katy Robertson • Ex-Governor of Virginia Beach, Bob O’Donnell
<p>5:00pm – Visit to Tallwood High School and informal dinner.</p>	<p><u>Tallwood High School:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jessica Windish • Dr Ryan O’Meara, Principal

SATURDAY 23 SEPTEMBER 2023

10:30am - Tour of local landmarks that honor our Sister City relationships narrated by the Sister Cities Youth Ambassador:

- Japanese Garden (Miyazaki City, Japan)
- Statue (Moss, Norway)
- Anchor (Olongapo, Philippines)
- Peace Pole (includes reference to AND)

Tour by Jessica Windish, Tallwood High School Sister Cities representative and Maria Weissenseel, President of Sister Cities Association of Virginia Beach.

Summary of key actions since the visit

Sister Cities Association of Virginia Beach

A number of Zoom meetings had since taken place with the Sister Cities Association and Tallwood High School representatives to talk about broad opportunities and the potential of a gift being made by Virginia Beach to ANDBC.

Virginia Beach City Council

Mayoral visit

Next steps were to explore the idea of a possible reciprocal visit of the Mayor of Virginia Beach in 2024 or 2025. Virginia Beach would hold a Mayoral election in 2024.

Economic Development

A number of Zoom meetings had since taken place to build on the relationship and discuss potential links with the Borough including Denroy which had links to the USA.

Paige Fox, Business Development Manager, Virginia Beach City Council and Charles McDowell, VB Economic Development UK travelled to Northern Ireland on 10 November for a previously planned visit with Invest NI. Following the introductory meetings in Virginia Beach, it was agreed to re-arrange time in the schedule to include a meeting with the Mayor and Council Officers including the Chief Executive, Director of Prosperity and Head of Economic Development.

A meeting was held to discuss opportunities for the new year and the VB economic development priorities. The group also toured Artemis Technologies for a demonstration of the e-foiler - a project which the Council was partnered in.

Looking ahead and reflecting on the trip in November, plans were now underway for a more substantial trip of the Virginia Beach Economic Development Leadership team to Ards and North Down in March 2024.

That trip would focus around a proposed event in the Borough on Ards and North Down and Virginia Beach new market opportunities looking to progress cross-sector links such as Creative Technologies, Professional Services (Insurance, Finance, Digital), Advanced Manufacturing, and the Agri-Food and Import sector, Defence, Cyber, Marine. The event would be organised in conjunction with Invest NI.

Tallwood High School

Following the trip, a meeting took place with the Mayor, Chief Executive and teachers from Glenlola Collegiate to discuss a reciprocal inward visit scheduled for March 2024 of 10 students and 2 staff from Tallwood High School to Bangor.

A request had been made from Glenlola for the Council's involvement in the visit in terms of practical support e.g. discount on activities in the Borough e.g. Mount Stewart, Exploris, Aurora, Bangor Castle and the Walled Garden.

Following Zoom meetings with Tallwood High School representatives, some early-stage progress had been made on building connections with the High School on career and technical education who were keen to learn about SERC.

Symphonicity, Virginia Beach Orchestra

A number of Zoom meetings had taken place since the visit between Symphonicity, the Sister Cities Association and the Council to discuss and agree practical support for a planned tour in June 2025 which would include a concert in Bangor. Work had also been done to link in with the Bangor Ladies Choir, as Ambassadors for the City, to perform at the concert.

Aquarium

Initial connections with the Virginia Beach Aquarium and next steps would be to connect with them with Exploris over a Zoom call to discuss potential collaboration opportunities and benefits of membership with the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums.

Public Services

Following a meeting during the trip, early progress had been made on plans to re-connect with the Virginia Beach Fire Department to explore any potential opportunities or exchanges which had previously taken place.

International Relations

The Council's current Sister Cities and Town Twinning relationships were outlined in the report considered in August, and a full summary of each could be found in the appendix.

In the light of the developing relationship with Virginia Beach, the Council was now asked to consider, broadly, their international relationships. Currently, there was no International Relations policy, strategy or framework.

As outlined, several relationships had been dormant for many years, and all were legacy relationships prior to the merger in 2015. Some were potentially no longer fit for purpose. The Council should consider what a location had to offer in terms of economic development, tourism, regeneration, and other benefits that the Council valued.

Each of the current relationships were below:

- **Ards Borough Council and Peoria, Arizona, USA (Sister City) –** commencing in 2001, ties had primarily been in cultural, education, tourism and business, with exchanges also taking place with public services in 2004. The last outward delegation to Peoria was in 2010 and it was unknown when the last inward visit took place. Since 2011 the link has been dormant. The School Exchange trips also ended in 2013 due to budget constraints from Peoria. The Peoria Administration had confirmed that the Sister City relationship no longer existed.
- **Bangor and Bregenz, Austria (Town Twin) –** Bangor had a significant historical connection to Bregenz. In the first 20 years of the relationship, there

were numerous civic visits by Mayors from North Down to Bregenz, but there had been no exchanges for a number of years. Plans were in place to visit Bregenz in 2020 to investigate tourism and regeneration in the area, in particular, in relation to the Bangor Waterfront Redevelopment Project. It was also planned to explore opportunities to re-invigorate the twinning relationship including the development of a Trans-European Trail from Bangor to Bobbio. The trip was cancelled due to the pandemic and plans had not been revisited.

Bangor had Christian Heritage links with Bobbio, but the relationship was informal only. In 2013 the legacy North Down Borough Council signed an agreement to formalise the relationship with the three becoming founding members of a European Cultural Route, "The Columban Way".

Given the strong connection with Bregenz, there was much potential to explore in terms of re-invigorating and it was recommended that relationship should be maintained.

- **Newtownards and Kemi, Finland (Town Twin)** – commencing in 1969 following a visit to Kemi by a Westminster delegation, based on similarities between the two towns in regard to their geographic position within their country, both had small airports and were mainly industrial towns with similar population sizes. There had been limited benefits due to the prohibitive travel route. Benefits to date had primarily been cultural, with limited gains in terms of trading links. The last outward delegation from Ards Borough Council to Kemi was in 2014, and the last inward visit to the Borough was in 2007, with an unofficial visit of the Deputy Mayor. The relationship had been dormant for many years and no longer served real purpose to the Borough. It was recommended that the relationship now be closed down.
- **North Down and Virginia Beach (Sister City)** – Formal relationship was recognised in 2002, with links primarily being cultural and business/manufacturing focused as well as exchanges with public services. A focal point of the relationship had been its strong education links between schools in North Down and Virginia Beach. The Borough had hosted a number of exchanges over the years with the Mayor of Virginia Beach visiting North Down in 1998, 2003, 2006 and 2012.

In recent years, the Sister Cities relationship had been relatively quiet, until 2023 when the Sister Cities Association of Virginia Beach had expressed much interest in re-igniting the relationship, including a school exchange between Glenlola Collegiate and Tallwood High School, and a visit from the Mayor and Chief Executive to Virginia Beach in September 2023.

Since that visit, plans had been put in motion to re-invigorate the connection with an event in Bangor in June 2025 arranged with Symphonicity (Virginia Beach orchestra) and Bangor Ladies Choir, another School Exchange in March 2024 with Glenlola Collegiate and Tallwood High School, as well as promising economic development links with Virginia Beach Council, with an initial visit already taken place in November 2023, and a further, more substantial visit

planned in early 2024. It was recommended that the Council continue to build that momentum and dedicate resource to the relationship.

The Executive Office/Local Government International Relations Working Group

Since its revival in November 2022, officers had represented the Council at the Executive Office/Local Government International Relation Working Group. The Group was chaired by the TEO International Relations and Europe Strategy branch and met quarterly. The purpose of the Group was to support the implementation of the Executive's International Relations Strategy, first agreed in 2014 and now under review, through co-operation with key stakeholders in Local Government, with a view to inform a revised draft International Relations Strategy for the consideration of the incoming Executive.

Those meetings had encouraged the Council to review its practice, as well as interact with other Councils – both inside the group forum and 1-to-1 - to share ideas and good practice.

Officers had engaged in discussions with counterparts in Fermanagh and Omagh District Council, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council, Belfast City Council and Antrim and Newtonabbey Borough Council on their current and historic relationships, as well as seeking information and guidance on internal policies and frameworks/assessment matrices on Sister Cities and International Relations.

Framework

It was recommended that at this stage, a robust assessment process was engaged to ensure Council was working with the most suitable and constructive relationship.

Following some baseline research, it was recommended that the Council consider adopting an 'assessment matrix' which could be used to evaluate both twinning requests as well as proactive assessments. The matrix would be broken down into three stages:

Stage 1 – a quantified approach

- Drawing on high level statistics centered on population (scale, density, age structure, and projected changes) and economic conditions (economic activity rate). This was an initial assessment of potential twinning areas, using high level population data to identify 10 areas of similar scale and characteristics, against a baseline.
- Once data was collated, a score would be developed for each indicator (e.g. a score of 5 for any district within +/- 10% of the baseline, a score of 3 for any district within +/- 20% and so forth).
- The output from this stage would be a list of suitable districts and regions.

Stage 2 – combination of quantitative metrics and qualitative measures

- Following collection of data at stage 1, the second stage would allow for judgement to be exercised on a range of factors such as: Economy, Infrastructure, Environment and Governance.
- That information could then be judged qualitatively. It should also be noted that in addition to areas of similarity, there was merit in considering places that had distinctly different characteristics, which would offer new learning opportunities.
- The second stage was to be treated flexibly, and the characteristics used could be tailored depending on the twinning priorities at that point in time.

Stage 3 – findings and recommendations

Officers would collate all baseline data as proposed in Stage 1 and Stage 2, relating to potential twinning partners and present findings and recommendations to the relevant Committee, expected to be the Place and Prosperity Committee.

The Council may also wish to consider developing a wider International Relations Strategy in which Sister Cities and Town Twinning would fit within.

In recent years there had been no budget set aside for International Relations or Sister Cities. Without a limited amount of funding, work would not be able to continue. It was recommended that the Council consider a small budget initially of £5,000 to support the costs associated with upcoming inward visits in 2024 and 2025.

Next steps

The Council was now asked to agree to close down the formal relationships with Peoria, Arizona and Kemi, Finland, in the light of inactivity and maintain the 'Twin' and friendship relationship with Bregenz and the Sister City relationship with Virginia Beach with the view to developing those relationships in a meaningful way, increasing engagement and opportunity with both respectively. In addition, re-form an International Relations Sub-Committee under the Place and Prosperity Committee, using the recommended Assessment Framework outlined above, review the Council's current links to ensure the Council was getting the most from each relationship and identify any future Sister City or Twinning relationships. The Sub-Committee would also be tasked with developing an International Relations policy for Council consideration.

The Council would also consider the inclusion of a small international relations budget of £5,000 in the 2024/25 budget.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approves the next steps actions outlined in this report.

Proposed by Councillor W Irvine, seconded by Alderman Smith, that the recommendation be adopted.

Proposing the recommendation Councillor W Irvine agreed with the thrust of the report and thought that where links existed they should be built upon. He thought that having an international relations committee would be of merit and he was happy to support it.

Alderman Smith agreed that it was good to have a structure in place to properly manage the important issues and historical relationships and continue to look at new opportunities for the future. He suggested that the relationships built needed to work for the residents of the entire Borough.

The Chair reminded Members that the report was asking the Council to approve the next steps in the recommendation and asked them to consider that.

Alderman McIlveen stressed that the relationships should not be Bangor centric while acknowledging that the twinning once enjoyed by Ards had withered on the vine. He hoped that the relationships would be inclusive, and he was a great supporter of looking outward to build international relationships which in turn were of benefit to all the Borough's residents.

Speaking as Mayor Councillor Gilmour referred to her recent visit to Virginia Beach in the United States, which had been very successful and whilst their historic connections remained, the Sister Cities Board had changed recently, and had reported a recent drive within their network to make the connections work for them. She believed that the Council could learn from the experience of Virginia Beach. The links between the two places had been strengthened by the visit and many positive outcomes had been reported, most significantly being the visit by the economic development team from Virginia Beach to Northern Ireland.

The Mayor also referred to the links between Tallwood High School and Glenlola Collegiate School and the consistent benefit that they had brought over the years. The local orchestra based in Virginia Beach was also expected to perform to a Bangor audience in the coming year. The Mayor emphasised that it was necessary for both 'twins' to benefit and she was happy to support the recommendation.

Councillor McCracken welcomed the previous comments and had memories of reading about the Bangor / Bregenz connection in The Spectator newspaper as a boy and those links were familiar to the people of the Borough. He was pleased that the initiative would be revived in 2024 and links developed within that part of Europe and hoped that a suitable twinning could be found over time for Newtownards.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor W Irvine, seconded by Alderman Smith, that the recommendation be adopted.

5. RESPONSE TO NOTICES OF MOTION

5(A) NOM 181 – NAMING OF A PLACE OR BUILDING IN HONOUR OF QUEEN ELIZABETH II (Appendix IV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailing that Bangor was awarded City Status as part of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth's Platinum Jubilee celebrations in May 2022.

At the Council meeting September 2022, Members agreed the following Notice of Motion in respect of that honour:

That this Council, in recognition of Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee and her conferment of City Status upon Bangor, agrees to name an appropriate place or building within Bangor in her honour and that future Council Bangor entrance signs make reference to Bangor being a Platinum Jubilee City.

Naming of a place or building

Council Officers had been liaising with the Northern Ireland Office in relation to guidance around the naming of buildings after Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth. Formal guidance was expected from the Palace but had not been released.

Officers in the Lands Team in conjunction with Heads of Service had reviewed the Council's land portfolio in Bangor and surrounding area and advised that no suitable locations were immediately obvious. There were many locations named throughout the City which referenced the late Monarch and outside the Bangor area there had been recognition of the Jubilee at the time with a park in Ballygowan being renamed to Platinum Jubilee Park.

The next significant investment project in Bangor was the Queen's Parade Development by Bangor Marine. The Marine Garden's section of the project, from the McKee Clock to Pickie Fun Park, would be completed first and would offer an opportunity to name a unique, new feature in the City's waterfront naming it 'The Queen Elizabeth Marine Gardens' subject to equality screening, consultation and approval. If agreed, then the Council would submit a formal request to the Cabinet Office for use of the Royal name for that site and await the response before implementation.

Signage update

Bangor had five current entrance signs, which were in keeping with all other town gateways signs in the Borough and were funded by DfC.

Planning permission had to be secured for the erection of those signs and if the design were to change significantly (primarily in terms of dimensions) the process might have to be completed again.

To avoid the requirement for a further planning application and to keep the signs complimentary to those in the other towns it was recommended that an update to the current design, rather than a complete redesign, be undertaken. That would allow the existing steel brackets and supporting structures to be reused with just a replacement of the polycarbonate panels – reducing the overall replacement costs.

The new signage design included the updated City of Bangor logo and reference to the platinum jubilee.

The attached appendix showed two draft designs (Options A and B), which incorporated the updated logo and A) the official Platinum Jubilee logo without the 'by the Sea' strapline and B) the official Platinum Jubilee logo, plus the wording 'A Platinum Jubilee City'. Members should be advised that the 'by the Sea' strapline was agreed with the Bangor stakeholder group as part of the town and City branding exercise.

Members would also note that the overall height of the sign had been increased to better accommodate the additional elements from the Notice of Motion, but the change did not impact the support structure or require any further planning review.

The costs of the manufacturing and installing the new signs would be £7,600 – there was no existing budget for the work but it had been included in the Rate setting process for 2024/25.

RECOMMENDED that:

The Marine Gardens, Bangor, once redeveloped be named 'The Queen Elizabeth II Marine Gardens,' subject to equality screening and consultation; and Officers continue to engage with the Cabinet Office to seek their approval.

Signage option A or B is agreed and allocation of budget is made in the current estimates process for 2024/25.

Proposed by Councillor Gilmour, seconded by Councillor McCracken, that the recommendation be adopted and that Option B be agreed.

Proposing the recommendation Councillor Gilmour stated that her preference would be Option B. She recalled that the late Queen had died on that day following the passing of this Notice of Motion. She remembered that when the signage was being agreed before City Status there had been a lot of discussion with local steering groups and 'Bangor by the Sea' was chosen. She believed that that should remain on the City's new signage but asked if the Department of Communities logo also needed to remain on the signs. She believed the city's name should be placed higher up to give it greater prominence. The Chief Executive agreed to discuss that with the Department and agreed that too many logos could make the city's signage look cluttered.

Councillor McCracken was pleased to second the proposal and was delighted to be able to celebrate the connection with the Royal Family and a sense of history and placemaking. He was aware that 'by the sea' had been important to many when Bangor had been a seaside town but it felt a little bit folksy to him for a city and as a Platinum Jubilee City that was no longer necessary.

Councillor W Irvine considered that Option B should be the way forward and he liked that strapline. He hoped that a statue of Queen Elizabeth II could be agreed and hoped for details of design and potential costings. On the Chief Executive's advice that this was a deviation from the notice of motion under discussion, the Member withdrew the request.

The Chair asked for Members to agree part one of the recommendation and:

Proposed by Councillor Gilmour, seconded by Councillor W Irvine, that the recommendation be adopted.

AGREED UNANIMOUSLY.

On consideration of part two of the proposal;

Proposed by Councillor Gilmour, seconded by W Irvine to adopt Option B.

Alderman Smith was in agreement with Councillor McCracken preferring Option A, considering that Bangor by the Sea was more of a sentence rather than a name and was better suited to a town than a city. He also thought Option B was too long and would clutter the signage.

Alderman McIlveen suggested that the committee delay making any decision until further consultation had taken place outside the committee with Bangor's traders and stakeholders since those were the people most affected by the decision.

Alderman Graham seconded that Alderman McIlveen's amendment thinking that he had made a valid point, and the committee should avoid taking such an important decision 'on the hoof'. He thought that if 'by the sea' was a marketing tool for Bangor and enhanced the place's individuality then it would be wise to incorporate it but for now he felt that the consultation would be beneficial.

Councillor Chambers was also in agreement with Alderman McIlveen's amendment and suggested that the matter might have some sensitivities but that he was happy to go with the consensus of the consultation. Councillor McCracken also welcomed and supported the amendment and believed that consultation on the signage could be the start of wider communication in respect of the Bangor Waterfront.

When Alderman McIlveen's amendment was put to the meeting it was agreed unanimously.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Alderman Graham, that The Marine Gardens, Bangor, once redeveloped be named 'The Queen Elizabeth II Marine Gardens,' subject to equality screening and consultation; and Officers continue to engage with the Cabinet Office to seek their approval and that the Council consult with Bangor's stakeholders on the signage for the new city.

6. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

There were no items of any other notified business.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Councillor MacArthur, that the public/press be excluded during the discussion of the undernoted items of confidential business.

7. ESTIMATES UPDATE

(Appendices V & VI)

*****IN CONFIDENCE*****

8. EXTENSION OF LEASE TO THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION, BANGOR

(Appendix VII)

*****IN CONFIDENCE*****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 6 – INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON (INCLUDING THE COUNCIL HOLDING THAT INFORMATION)

The Council currently leases the building at 41 Hamilton Road, Bangor to the Royal British Legion (RBL). The Lease commenced on 9th November 1933 for the term of 99 years and is due to expire on 8th November 2032. Council was asked to agree to extend the Lease until 2065 subject to the terms and conditions as outlined in the report.

The recommendation was adopted.

9. REQUEST FROM NI WATER TO PURCHASE LAND AT NEWTOWN BRIDGE, COMBER

(Appendices VIII, IX & X)

*****IN CONFIDENCE*****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 6 – INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON (INCLUDING THE COUNCIL HOLDING THAT INFORMATION)

At its meeting on 5th July 2023, the Council approved a request from NI Water to purchase land at Newtown Bridge. Further to this, NI Water provided an updated map showing the area they wished to acquire which also included a right of way not previously considered by Council. Council was asked to approve the up-to-date map subject to the terms and conditions as previously agreed by Council in July 2023, and also subject to NI Water providing reasonable notice of any works which may impact upon Council's planned Greenway in the area and to provide signage if the Greenway needs to be closed.

The recommendation was adopted.

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

AGREED, on the proposal of Councillor Gilmour, seconded by Councillor S Irvine, that the public/press be re-admitted to the meeting.

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 8.38 pm.

(The Vice Chairman took the Chair at this stage – 7.03pm)

NOTED.

3. BOOKSTART EARLY YEARS RESPONSE TO NOTICE OF MOTION (FILE CW167)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that A Notice of Motion was previously heard at Council.

“That this Council explores the possibility of supporting the Bookstart Early Years Pilot across Ards and North Down. A report is brought back detailing information about the programme, how it could be supported across the Borough, including cost potential delivery partners.”

Background

Bookstart was BookTrust’s early years programme. Every child in England and Wales got a free Bookstart pack before they were 12 months old and again aged 3-4 years (27 months in Wales).

The pilot for the programme was initiated in Birmingham in 1992 and involved 300 babies. The project was built upon previous research which identified the significance of reading with very young children. The research found that Bookstart children began school with significant advantages and with higher attainment in all aspects of the nine pre-school baseline assessments. The success of Bookstart programmes was helped by library staff willing to become “Bookstart Coordinators”.

Bookstart also offered book packs for children with additional needs, those included:

- Bookshine for children who were deaf;
- Booktouch for children who were blind or partially sighted; and
- Bookstart Star for children with conditions affecting their fine motor skills.

The Notice of Motion originally referred to the early years pilot. BookTrust had confirmed there was currently funding in place to run this scheme via the Surestart centres in the Borough.

Book Trust previously worked in partnership with the South-Eastern Health and Social Care Trust to provide Bookstart packs, distributed via Health workers, to every newborn in the Borough. Funding had been withdrawn due to the ongoing pressures on the Health and Social Care budget in Northern Ireland.

The total number of births per year in the Ards and North Down Borough was approximately 1,400. Each Bookstart pack costs £5 per pack. A total of £7,000 would be required should Council decide to take over the provision of the Bookstart packs to every newborn in the Borough.

There was currently no funding allocated for this provision in the 2024/25 Community and Culture budget.

RECOMMENDED that Council chooses one of the following options, subject to the budget setting process:

1. To agree to fund Bookstart for every newborn in the Borough in 2024/2025 and agree to include an additional £7,000 funding to the Community Development budget 2024/2025.
2. To agree to fund Bookstart in the next financial year and include provision in the 2025/2026 Community Development budget.
3. To agree not to fund Bookstart in the Borough at this time.

Councillor Martin proposed, seconded by Alderman Adair, that subject to the budget setting process the Council agrees to fund Bookstart for every newborn in the Borough in 2024/2025 and agree to include an additional £7,000 funding to the Community Development budget 2024/2025.

The proposer, Councillor Martin, indicated that he wished to speak on behalf of the Mayor, Councillor Gilmour, to welcome the report and propose that the Council proceeds with Option 1. Option 1 would see 1,400 books delivered throughout the Borough and would be the first Council in Northern Ireland to undertake this. Continuing Councillor Martin quoted some statistics including:

- 20% of parents did not read to their children
- 28% did not find reading easy
- 95% believed reading was important

Councillor Martin believed reading was both important and beneficial for children and the earlier reading activities could commence the better. He supported parents being encouraged to read to their children which could then in turn see them develop reading into their daily routine. Continuing he advised that he had spoken to officers about this and been advised there were some in year savings to be made and as such this proposal would not impact the rate. As such he commended his proposal to the Committee to support Option 1.

Commenting as seconder, Alderman Adair concurred with Councillor Martin's comments and took the opportunity to pay tribute to the Mayor for bringing the Motion forward. Alderman Adair stated that it was a wonderful proposal and would be money well spent. He too agreed that early years were some of the most important in a child's life adding that the power of reading was very much a positive. He stated that reading encouraged children to dream, learn many life skills and spend time with family reading together. He encouraged members to support the proposal.

Councillor Irwin asked for her complete support for this to be put on record. She added that it recognised that the first 1,000 days or a child's life were some of the

most important developmentally. Councillor Irwin stated that books provided real escapism for young people and she thanked the proposer, seconder and officers for all their work associated with this.

At this stage Councillor Boyle also congratulated the Mayor, proposer and seconder for their comments particularly as this time next year 1,400 children in the Borough would have received their books. Continuing he noted the statistics quoted by Councillor Martin and congratulated all of those who had been involved in making this happen.

Councillor W Irvine also commended the proposer and seconder for bringing the proposal forward. He welcomed the recommendation and sought clarification on how the books would be distributed to families.

The Head of Community & Culture advised that would be undertaken in conjunction with Sure Start and Health Visitors.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Martin, seconded by Alderman Adair, that subject to the budget setting process the Council agrees to fund Bookstart for every newborn in the Borough in 2024/2025 and agree to include an additional £7,000 funding to the Community Development budget 2024/2025.

RE APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN

At this stage the Chairman resumed his position in the Chair and thanked the Vice Chairman for stepping in during the discussion of the previous item.

(The Chairman took the Chair at this stage – 7.13pm)

NOTED.

4. WOMEN'S NIGHT SAFETY CHARTER (FILE CG11874)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that Hospitality Ulster had contacted every Council in Northern Ireland to sign up to the Women's Night Safety Charter.

In its letter requesting support it stated "Northern Ireland is a safe place, but research suggests that too many women feel unsafe when travelling, working, or going out at night. The Northern Ireland Executive Office is working with stakeholders to prioritise the safety of women and girls. First established in London and now operating in several regions across the UK, the WNSC is a commitment by organisations and businesses involved / operating at night to support the campaign to End Violence Against Women and Girls".

After signing up to the charter, organisations and business would be supported with White Ribbon NI's 'Listen, Learn, Lead' toolkit which offered simple ideas, inspiration, information, and resources to help organisations and businesses meet the charter's seven simple pledges. It advised on possible courses of action, some changes that may need to be made and how organisations could upskill their staff. The rollout of the WNSC in Northern Ireland was supported by the Executive Office's Ending Violence Against Women & Girls (EVAWG) team and PSNI. Council was being asked to sign the Charter and its seven pledges:

1. Nominate a champion in your organisation / business who actively promotes women's night safety,
2. Demonstrate to staff and customers that your organisation takes women's safety at night seriously, for example through a communications campaign,
3. Remind customers and staff that Northern Ireland is safe, but tell them what to do if they experience harassment when working, going out or travelling,
4. Encourage reporting by victims and bystanders as part of your communications campaign,
5. Train staff to ensure that all women who report are believed,
6. Train staff to ensure that all reports are recorded and responded to,
7. Design your public spaces and workplaces to make them safer for women at night.

RECOMMENDED that Council signs the Charter and that an implementation Plan be developed and actioned by the PCSP.

Councillor Kendall proposed, seconded by Councillor Douglas, that the recommendation be adopted.

The proposer, Councillor Kendall, welcomed the recommendation and thanked officers for their work in relation to this. At this stage she asked the Committee to further consider that through the implementation plan, this Council via the PCSP, engage with the respective Chambers of Commerce, and other appropriate businesses and organisations, across the Borough to encourage widespread take-up of the Charter.

Councillor Kendall referred to the rising incidents of violence against women in Northern Ireland and stated that this proposal would serve to help stop those incidents occurring. Continuing she stated that being reactive was no longer enough and as such moving forwards what was being suggested should have a positive impact. Councillor Kendall referred to various pieces of legislation which had been brought forward in recent times but added that funding was urgently needed from Stormont which was best placed to provide that to help support those women who were struggling.

Commenting as seconder, Councillor Douglas welcomed the report and as such was content to support that course of action through the PCSP. She stated that generally in most places throughout Northern Ireland it was a safe place for women and girls,

however she acknowledged that at night on occasions that was not the case and as such help of this nature was required and would be welcomed.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Kendall, seconded by Councillor Douglas, that the recommendation be adopted and furthermore that through the implementation plan, this Council via the PCSP, engage with the respective Chambers of Commerce, and other appropriate businesses and organisations, across the Borough to encourage widespread take-up of the Charter.

5. ARDS AND NORTH DOWN SPORTS FORUM GRANTS (WG DECEMBER 2023) (FILE SD149) (Appendix I)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that on the 26 August 2015 Council delegated authority to the Ards and North Down Sports Forum, in order to allow it to administer sports grants funding on behalf of the Council. £45,000 had been allocated within the 2023/2024 revenue budget for this purpose. The Council further authorised the Forum under delegated powers to award grants of up to £250. Grants above £250 still required Council approval. In addition, the Council requested that regular updates were reported to members.

During November 2023, the Forum received a total of 14 applications (2 Event Grants were for Events in April 2024, hence, were assessed as 2024/25 Grants): 5 Event, 5 Goldcard and 4 Travel/Accommodation. A summary of the 11 successful applications were detailed in the attached Successful Event 23/24, Successful Goldcard 23/24, Successful Travel & Accommodation 23/24 and Successful Event 24/25 Appendices.

For information, the annual budget and spend to date on grant categories was as follows:

2023/24 Budget £45,000	Annual Budget	Funding Awarded November 2023	Remaining Budget
Anniversary	£1,000	£0	£250.00
Coaching	£3,000	£0	£1,453.75
Equipment	£14,000	£0	*-£6,924.77
Events	£6,000	*£1,991.33	-£523.33
Seeding	£500	£0	£55.01
Travel and Accommodation	£14,500	*£470.00	-£3,058.99
Discretionary	£1,000	£0	£1,000.00
Schools/Sports Club Pathway	£5,000	£0	£3,002.00
*Goldcards proposed during the period November 2023 is 4 (19 Goldcards in total during 2023/24).			

*The proposed remaining budget for Equipment of **-£6,924.77** was based on Reclaimed costs of £60.

*The proposed remaining budget for Events of **-£523.33** was based on a proposed award of **£1,991.33** – for Approval.

*The proposed remaining budget for Travel and Accommodation of **-£3,058.99** was based on a proposed award of **£470.00** – for Noting and Withdrawn/Reclaimed costs of **£285.52**.

The proposed funding for November was **£2,461.33** and the proposed remaining budget for 2023/24 was **-£4,746.33** (111% of the 2023/24 budget spent).

2024/25 Budget £50,000* *subject to approval	Annual Budget	Funding Awarded November 2023	Remaining Budget
Anniversary	£1,000	£0	£1,000.00
Coaching	£3,000	£0	£3,000
Equipment	£16,000	£0	£16,000
Events	£7,000	*£982.50	£6,017.50
Seeding	£500	£0	£500
Travel and Accommodation	£16,500	£0	£16,500
Discretionary	£1,000	£0	£1,000.00
Schools/Sports Club Pathway	£5,000	£0	£5,000

*The proposed remaining budget for Events of £6,017.50 was based on a proposed award of **£982.50** – for Approval.

*2023/24 applications subject to Council approval to reallocate funds, as per report presented to Council December 2023: Ards and North Down Sports Forum Grants (WG November 2023).

*2024/25 applications subject to Council 2024/25 budget allocations.

RECOMMENDED that Council approves the attached applications for financial assistance for sporting purposes valued at above £250, and that the applications approved by the Forum (valued at below £250) are noted.*

Councillor Boyle proposed, seconded by Councillor S Irvine, that the recommendation be adopted.

The proposer, Councillor Boyle, welcomed the report and thanked all of those involved adding that Clubs could always of course do with more funding. He added that he was very much looking forward to the forthcoming Sports Award Ceremony taking place in March 2024.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Boyle, seconded by Councillor S Irvine, that the recommendation be adopted.

6. LEISURE PRICING GROUP DISCOUNT 2024-2025 (FILE LS/LA18) (Appendix II)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that at the December Council meeting they agreed the annual leisure price increases for 2024/25 in line with inflation. This would result in approximately 6% of a price increase for customers utilising the Councils leisure facilities.

At the December Community & Wellbeing Committee meeting members referred to the application of a discount that clubs/groups who utilised directly operated Council facilities had historically benefitted from.

Clubs/groups and other long-standing customers who made “block bookings” for example 10 or more concurrent bookings had historically received a discount on their booking. This was loosely in line with the VAT discount that Council received in line with HMRC guidelines. This discount was applied throughout 2023/24 despite the proposed changes to VAT on leisure charges. However now that this VAT discount was likely to be no longer applicable the situation relating to those historical bookings needed to be resolved.

Appendix one detailed the current situation for those customers, who for commercially sensitive rationale were coded, who had and currently received discount as outlined. Members would note that for some customers this could be a significant saving. For example, Club A would normally, under the old VAT /discount rules, receive a saving of almost £12,000 on its facility hire charges for the coming year. If however the benefit was removed from this group, similar to the situation for individual customers the Club would be required to pay the full charge of over £49,000 for a year’s access. Whilst this was clearly one of the biggest clubs utilising a significant level of facility access it did highlight the potential additional burden for groups who may no longer receive a discount as they did previously.

Following a review of the Leisure VAT benefits for Council by the finance department it was predicted that significantly more than the original estimated £250,000 would be retained by Council and the figure for Leisure Ards facilities was now estimated by the finance department more likely to be £390,000. Therefore, it was possible for the discount to be retained for current Clubs without any further detrimental impact on the rates for 2024/25. An internal process of reducing the target for leisure by the £50,000 would ensure that the Clubs could still receive their discount without any pressure being placed on the leisure team to recover this income elsewhere.

It was not proposed to offer this discount to any new groups or clubs going forward but only to those customers with current bookings who availed of the previous

discount. Future discounts for extended let bookings would be at the Operations Managers discretion in line with commercial considerations.

RECOMMENDED that Council agrees to retain a discount for historical block bookings in line with their historical discount; being applied to their bookings for the 2024/25 financial year and ensures this saving is considered as part of the budget setting process.

Councillor Boyle proposed, seconded by Councillor Kendall, that the recommendation be adopted.

Welcoming the report, the proposer Councillor Boyle agreed that this was a good and wise decision for those who had been looking after the Council for so many years. He stated that he had one question that being would there be further discounts for existing bookings.

In response the Head of Leisure Services advised that managers would be delegated permission to make operational decisions such as this and organisations would be advised of this on making their initial enquires.

Commenting as seconder, Councillor Kendall, expressed her support for the recommendation and sought further clarification around the £390,000 of VAT Output.

The Head of Leisure Services advised that this was an estimate for the full year and it amounted to £390,000 of benefit to the Council.

Continuing Councillor Kendall sought an update on where the Council was in respect of its Leisure Transformation Plan and budgets for that. The Head of Leisure Services reported that officers were working on finalising the plan and would feature in a Members Workshop to take place at the end of January 2024 to consider the Plans further. The Director added that money had been set aside within budgets to enable the Head of Leisure Services to achieve his goals in respect of this.

In response to a query from Councillor Irwin about discounts offered to Clubs, the Head of Leisure Services advised that had varied but currently was in the region of 20% on average.

At this stage Councillor S Irvine expressed his thanks to officers for bringing along the Clubs and associated discounts.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Boyle, seconded by Councillor Kendall, that the recommendation be adopted.

7. REVIEW OF SUMMER SCHEMES 2023 (FILE CDV34B)

(Appendix III)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that in 2023 the Council led summer schemes were delivered by the Community Development Team in the following Community Centres/locations:

- Alderman George Green Community Centre
- Ballygowan Village Hall
- Bowtown Community Hall
- Donaghadee Community Centre
- Portavogie Primary School
- Redburn Community Centre
- Westwinds Community Centre

Three Community Led Summer Schemes were delivered in the following areas:

- Bangor, Kilcooley Community Centre – Kilcooley Women’s Centre
- Millisle, Millisle Community Hub - Millisle Youth Forum
- Portaferry, Steel Dickson Avenue - Ballyphilip Youth Club

Across both schemes, (Council and Community), there was a total of 385 places, (264 Council places, 121 Community partner places) available per week for the period 17/07/2023 – 28/07/2023). A decrease of 91 places compared with 2022 figures. Table 1 refers.

Table 1

Council Led locations per week	Number of children 2022	Number of children 2023		Community Partner location	Number of children 2022	Number of children 2023
Ards-Bowtown	48	24		Kilcooley x 2 weeks	60	52
Ards-Westwinds	48	24		Millisle x 2 weeks	30	29
Ballygowan	48	24		Portaferry x 2 weeks	50 (1 week)	40*
Bangor ACC	48	48				
Carrowdore	48	N/A				
Hollywood	48	48				
Portavogie	48	48				
Donaghadee	N/A	48				
Total Per Week	336	264		Total Per Week	140	121

Ballygowan, Bowtown and West Winds, ran with a reduced capacity of 24 children per week (juniors ran for one week and seniors for one week), instead of 48 children per week as in previous years. This would previously have run by alternating the use of the hall with trips, allowing both schemes to run alongside each other. A decision was made to run a centre-based scheme to utilise the experience of staff to deliver quality programmes and activities onsite over the two-week period, which helped foster more meaningful relationships with attendees and deliver a more beneficial programme for the children. As children could only attend for one week for their age group, the schemes reached more children even though the numbers were reduced.

Within the Community led schemes, Kilcooley had a reduction in numbers due to the size of the hall they were using. Portaferry ran for 1 week in 2022 and had 50 attendees compared to 2023 when the scheme ran for 2 weeks and had an average of 40 children per week. A total of 80 over the 2 weeks and increase in provision in of 30 places.

The heat map at Annex 1 showed the locations the children travelled from to attend the summer schemes.

The Process

This year the CD Team continued to use an online registration process, which significantly reduced the costs usually associated with registration. Building on this the process it was further streamlined with verification parents emailed proof of address and free school meals entitlement, which enabled verification with no need to travel just to show documents, making it easier for parents/carers and more sustainable.

Staffing

The Council Led Schemes employed 45 agency staff, supplied by The Recruitment Co. which was a reduction of 11 agency staff recruited since last year. This reflected the number of children on three of the schemes being reduced and therefore not as many staff were required.

Summer Scheme Promotion

Registration for both Council and Community Partner schemes was advertised through Council's website, Council Facebook and local press.

Programme delivery

This year programme delivery relied heavily upon the agency staff that had been recruited. Those staff used initiative and understanding to help them deliver education and physical sessions to the young people.

Several Activity based trips took place this year and those included:

Trips in the borough non ANDBC	No. of trips week 1	No. of trips week 2
Airtastic	2	2
Ark Farm	1	1
Mount Stewart	3	3
Castle Espie	2	4
Happytown	1	1

Outside borough trips	No. of trips week 1	No of trips week 2
W5	2	1
Indiana land	1	0

Cross Council Working

There were also several sessions delivered by Council Officer's bringing a cross departmental Council approach to delivery, offering targeted work to the young people.

Those included:

	No. Session week 1	No. Session week 2
Community Safety Team - 30 min	11	4
Good relations - 1 hour	4	4
ANDBC - recycle team - 1 hour	0	5
ANDBC Biodiversity - 1 hour	1	0
ARC21 - 45 mins	10	1
Walled garden and Museum	2	2
Blair Mayne Swimming	3	3

Volunteering

This year six young volunteers took part in the summer schemes, three at Alderman George Green and three at the Bowtown. This was an excellent opportunity for young people to get involved with their community, learn new skills, and build confidence.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes this report.

Councillor W Irvine proposed, seconded by Councillor Kendall, that the recommendation be adopted.

Thanking officers for the report, the proposer, Councillor W Irvine commented that summer schemes were very important, well received and one of the most important

service offered by the Council. He did note however that in some areas numbers attending the schemes had reduced and he sought further information on that.

The Head of Community & Culture advised that as some of the Schemes had only run for two weeks rather than three, thereby meaning less spaces were available and the number of trips had also been curtailed. They hoped to reinstate where possible this year.

Continuing Councillor W Irvine noted that the Community Led summer scheme in Breezemount had not taken place this year and he sought some clarification around that. In respect of this the Head of Community & Culture confirmed that had not went ahead this year but it was the intention to work with them next year with a view to restoring it. She added that a new Community Development Manager was now in place who was very enthusiastic and would work with the community to enhance the scheme.

At this stage Councillor Kendall noted the use of Agency Staff and asked why no fixed term summer contracts had been secured. She suggested there may be a resource available with Classroom Assistants during the summer months which could be utilised. In response the Head of Community & Culture advised that the Agency staff used were mostly classroom assistants and teachers.

Acknowledging the popularity of summer schemes Councillor Ashe referred to a very popular scheme in Comber which had not taken place. As such she sought clarification on how areas were identified and if there were any plans to restore the scheme in Comber. The Head of Community & Culture advised that the decision not to run the scheme had been taken by a previous staff member and going forwards officers would be considering this scheme along with others with decision made based upon need.

Thanking officers for the report, Councillor Boyle recalled previous plans to rotate Council led schemes across the Borough and asked if consideration could be given to Portaferry being given consideration for a Council led scheme. In response the Head of Community & Culture advised that rotational schemes would be considered as part of the overall review but added that it could be quite confusing for local people with a scheme there one year and then not the next. She added that community led schemes were very beneficial being led by those within the local community. Councillor Boyle accepted the officers comments but stated that local community volunteers could get tired doing everything in Portaferry and as such he stated that it would be nice for them to have a rest from time to time. He added that tired volunteers often equated to less volunteers.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor W Irvine, seconded by Councillor Kendall, that the recommendation be adopted.

8. MAINTAINING BEACHES AND OUR COASTAL ENVIRONMENT RESPONSE TO NOTICE OF MOTION (FILE PCA102)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that in November 2023 the following Notice of Motion was agreed by Council:

“That Council recognise the value of our beaches and coastal environment to our residents and tourists alike note the new DAERA regulations for the cleaning and maintenance of our beaches and task officers to bring forward a report on cleaning and maintaining our beaches on a proactive basis in line with the new DAERA regulations to ensure our beaches continue to be a clean, safe, attractive and well-managed coastal environments.”

Summary

It could be reported that Parks currently cleaned beaches in line with all previous and new DAERA regulations for the cleaning and maintenance of beaches on both a proactive and reactive basis.

Current activity

Many of the Borough's beaches were incredibly popular places for leisure time. Whether it be for building sandcastles, walking the dog, water sports, or just to relax, each year thousands flock to beaches bringing economic benefits to coastal communities. As well as having huge benefits for the economy and wellbeing, sandy shores were also ecologically very important habitats, supporting a surprising amount of life. Sandy shores also sapped energy from waves as they broke on the shore, providing a natural sea defence for coastal towns and villages.

Rough seas, higher tides and strong winds could cause large amounts of marine material such as seaweed to get temporarily washed up on beaches regularly around the Borough. Warmer seas could also be a contributory factor, the Marine Conservation Society stated UK sea temperatures had risen 2°C in the past 40 years. Research suggested that cold water seaweeds were moving further north where it was cooler, while the range of warm water species was expanding.

Council managed several coastal locations including many beaches throughout the Borough. All maintenance activities on those foreshore's were restricted under legislation and governed by Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA). The NIEA was an Executive Agency within the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA). In addition, The Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (NI) placed a statutory duty on all public bodies (including Council) to “further the conservation of biodiversity in exercising any function.”

Seaweed did form an integral part of a beach ecosystem, providing food and stability to the sand structure. As mentioned in criteria for the Blue Flag Award Scheme (section 10): ‘Seaweed is a natural component of the littoral (intertidal high-water

mark to foreshore) ecosystem. The coastal zone must also be considered as a living and natural environment and not only as a recreational asset to be kept tidy. Thus the management of seaweed on the beach should be sensitive to both visitor needs and littoral biodiversity' (2). In some instances, the strandline was therefore handpicked to remove litter while the seaweed remained.

Almost all coastal beaches within the Borough were within an Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI) and Special Protection Area (SPA). Over the past number of years significant conditions had been placed on Council when carrying out mechanical cleaning and clearing of marine material such as seaweed. As a result, except in extreme situations, the Council had a proactive cleaning programme of manual litter collection by the Beach Ranger Service and permitting the tidal flows to disperse deposited seaweed etc. This was in line with current regulations and Blue Flag Award Scheme recommendations. This approach had had significant environmental benefits in reducing the loss of sediment from the foreshore and allowing coastal grasses to colonise to reduce the impact of coastal erosion. Furthermore, by not extensively removing seaweed material, the Council was encouraging a greater variety of wildlife species to those feeding areas.

The Outer Ards ASSI/SPA was important for a range of bird species, and those would feed on invertebrates amongst the seaweed so removal of significant volumes of seaweed may have an adverse impact on the birds and other wildlife.

However, Council could where particular needs were identified to enable it to respond to any extreme situations whereby deposited seaweed and debris had the potential for significant health issue. As a competent authority it could apply for an 'Assent' approval and then 'Marine Licence Exemption' from NIEA to carry out works - this process took at least 30 days to progress. Although Council did not receive many complaints regarding its beaches, some concerns were raised regarding beach flies and the volume of seaweed that was temporarily washed up on to beaches. Council's Environmental Health Department had advised that there were no medical risks to the residents from seaweed flies and flies were not public health pests.

Due to complaints noted above, officers contacted the Senior Scientific Officer (Marine and Fisheries Division) at DAERA in June 2020. DAERA advised that "mechanical harvesting is unlikely to be permitted due to the detrimental impact on the marine environment, harvesting by hand is the preferred method." The Marine and Fisheries Division carried out licensing and enforcement functions in Northern Ireland territorial waters, under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 (MCAA) Part 4. Council officers continued to work within the present regulations and regularly liaise with DAERA to ensure compliance.

Before an 'Assent' application to NIEA was made a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) was required to be undertaken prior to carrying out or issuing any form or permission or authorisation by NIEA. Currently, there were also conditioned point of approval which related to biosecurity measures required in

relation to the use of machinery on the beach. The Marine biosecurity measures / condition stated: The Invasive Species Ireland advice of check, clean and dry are appropriate measures to prevent the spread of invasive species for these works. Operators of machinery should ensure this is applied to all parts of machinery that are in contact with the marine environment before leaving the beach.

Management of the coastal environment was directly linked to the Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) agreed in April 2023 and a previous Notice of Motion on Sand Dunes Management agreed in June 2022. As part of the development of the LBAP, preliminary ecological appraisals were completed for large areas along the coastline. This developed specific actions within the LBAP which would now guide how Council managed those areas to improve the local environment. Those were (among others), Theme 3: Land Management that agreed to commission conservation management plans for key Council owned sites detailing prescriptions to ensure relevant features remain in good condition, any features not in favourable condition are to be improved and maintained in good condition. Officers had started the process of implementing those actions, along with many others detailed in the LBAP.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the ongoing work to deliver appropriate sustainable management of our beaches and coastal environment including proactive and reactive cleaning.

Alderman Adair proposed, seconded by Councillor Boyle, that this Council tasks officers to bring forward a report on the possible installation of Beach Bio Security Sanitation Units including any potential funding opportunities for them and possible locations. The report should also explore how the equipment in these stations could be used to clean our beaches mechanically to comply with DAERA regulations, ensuring that beaches continue to be clean, safe, attractive and well-managed coastal environments.

The proposer, Alderman Adair, advised that he had previously brought forward the Notice of Motion about the cleaning and maintenance of beaches. He acknowledged that up until a few years ago prior to the introduction of the DAERA regulations the Council had carried out a lot of good work in respect of this. Recently he had been advised by a colleague in the Causeway Coast and Glens Council which also had many beautiful beaches on its coastline about the installation of a Beach Bio Security Sanitation Unit at Portrush and Portstewart. This had reportedly been a success and as such he encouraged officers to consider such an installation within the Borough. Continuing Alderman Adair advised that he received numerous complaints from constituents about flies and seaweed at many of the local beaches and as such he felt it was important for the Council to manage this appropriately and he encouraged members to support his proposal.

Commenting as seconder, Councillor Boyle acknowledged the good contents within the report and he agreed that if this was something which the Council could do better then it should be explored. Particularly he added if other Councils were already successfully doing this. Continuing he referred to the Council's plans to build tourism

within the Borough and what was being proposed for the beaches along the coastline of the Ards Peninsula would ensure that was all in place. He added that he would look forward to the report coming back in due course.

Councillor Chambers indicated that he was content to support the alternative proposal given the booming popularity of many of the Borough's beaches since the Covid19 pandemic. Continuing he asked if the policy stretched to include the cleaning and maintenance of beach paths as he was regularly contacted about seaweed and sand banking up at the paths to Groomsport beach which in turn caused a variety of access issues.

In response the Head of Parks & Cemeteries advised that the report reflected solely on beaches and as such was not about litter picking. He stated that the paths referred to by the member were cleaned by the Council's Cleansing team with their sweepers with some assistance offered by the Parks & Cemeteries team. It was noted beaches were currently cleaned by hand by rangers and litter picking teams and what had been proposed would involve mechanical cleaning.

Councillor Irwin commented that the Council had one of the largest coastlines in Northern Ireland and was aware that a number of her colleagues regularly participated in beach litter picks. She indicated that she had a consideration to put to the proposer, that being if it would be possible to include in the report consideration of the Bio Diversity Action Plan.

The proposer, Alderman Adair and the seconder indicated that they would be content to accept that.

At this stage Alderman Brooks sought further clarification around the issue of sea weed recalling how previously farmers had come to the seafront at Donaghadee to remove the sea weed, a practice which he noted now longer took place. Continuing he referred to peak times in the summer when there would be a significant amount of seaweed and a storm would then come along and create a mess long the shorefront on the Parade in the town. As such under the new DAERA regulations he asked what the Council could actually remove.

In response the Head of Parks & Cemeteries that in respect of the proposal and as well as that the Council would need to obtain a licence from NIEA. He also reminded members of the many protected areas of the coastline within the Borough and added that seaweed itself contained a large number of wildlife and also protected the coastline by preventing the growing of grasses. The officer agreed that mechanical beach cleaning obviously kept beaches very clean but it did have significant environmental impacts and as such he believed it was very much out of the Council's control.

Thanking members for their comments, Alderman Adair stated that he would expect that the report would take on board Councillor Irwin's comments in respect of Bio Diversity Action Plan. Continuing he reiterated that other Councils had already taken

this course of action and he felt if the Council could do the same it would very much be welcomed. At this stage he advised that a Beach Bio Security Sanitation Unit would enable mechanical equipment to be washed down before moving to another beach, a requirement under DAERA legislation.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman Adair, seconded by Councillor Boyle, that this Council tasks officers to bring forward a report on the possible installation of Beach Bio Security Sanitation Units including any potential funding opportunities for them and possible locations. The report should also explore how the equipment in these stations could be used to clean our beaches mechanically to comply with DAERA regulations, ensuring that beaches continue to be clean, safe, attractive and well-managed coastal environments.

9. INDEPENDENT REPORTING COMMISSION 6TH REPORT (FILE CW168) (Appendix IV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that at the Council meeting in December 2023, the following press release dated 4 December was tabled. It was agreed that the report referred to would be placed on the agenda of a Council Committee for further consideration.

“SIXTH REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REPORTING COMMISSION

The Independent Reporting Commission (the IRC) had today published its Sixth Report on progress towards ending paramilitary activity. The Commission was established in 2017 to report annually on progress towards ending paramilitary activity connected with Northern Ireland. The Commission is governed by an international treaty between the UK and Irish Governments which reflected the terms of the Fresh Start Agreement concluded by the two Governments and the Northern Ireland parties in 2015.

Commenting on the findings and recommendations in the Sixth Report, the Commissioners said: “Paramilitarism represents a continuing threat to individuals and society and must continue to be given sufficient attention and focus to ensure that it becomes a thing entirely of the past. “We characterise 2023 as “mixed” in terms of paramilitarism. The security situation data showed levels broadly in line with the last few years, although the recent increase in shootings is a concern. “There were some shocking incidents during the year involving both Loyalist and Republican paramilitaries.

These included the attempted murder of Detective Chief Inspector John Caldwell (which was instrumental in the raising of the Threat Level in Northern Ireland related Terrorism from “substantial” to “severe”) and a number of incidents occurring under the banner of Loyalist paramilitarism, including a high-profile drug gang feud, which served to underline how quickly situations can escalate. Coercive control continues to be an unacceptable feature of life in many communities where the paramilitaries

operate. Commenting on evidence of progress being made, the Commissioners added: “There is increasing evidence that the work undertaken by the Tackling Paramilitarism, Criminality and Organised Crime Programme (“the Programme”) is bearing real fruit. “We welcome an increasing focus on collaborative working by all of the entities involved, with a relatively new structure at the top chaired by the Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service, ensuring strategic leadership on a joined-up basis at a senior level, and there are strong examples of inter-agency collaboration at working level.

Evaluation and data are showing that various projects are making a tangible difference in individual lives, communities, and services provided, and we see good evidence of joined-up and collaborative partnerships. “We believe that there are growing indications that the cumulative impact of collective law enforcement efforts, including on the part of the Paramilitary Crime Task Force, is having an impact on the groups and their leaderships. Prevention, collaboration and partnership work, including neighbourhood policing, must continue to be adequately resourced and funded. We acknowledge and welcome the commitment of the senior leadership team at the PSNI to this approach.

The Commissioners highlighted the political and economic challenges impacting on progress, and the continuing need for commitment to this work: “A lot of good work has been delivered and there is much more to be done. We encourage a wide conversation about how we can strengthen and deepen efforts to tackle paramilitarism. “Instability at political level has not helped.

There are no grounds for complacency. Rather, the need for a sustained focus on tackling and ending paramilitarism remains essential. “Policing and criminal justice measures are essential in bringing paramilitarism to an end, but they are not enough in themselves and need to be situated within a wider, more holistic approach that includes tackling the deep and systemic socio-economic conditions which are linked to the continuing existence of paramilitarism and which particularly affect certain communities. We welcome the fact that that is the direction of travel of the Tackling Paramilitarism Programme and encourage the continuation of that approach. “It is vital that appropriate funding is provided not only for dedicated work to tackle paramilitarism, but also for transformational work to address the socio-economic context and for related core service delivery. “We recommend an ambitious new Programme for Government, which both restates a collective commitment to tackling paramilitarism, and sets ambitious economic and social policy goals, including for education and poverty, which will help address the socioeconomic conditions which are linked to the continuing existence of paramilitarism. “The effect of the cost-of-living crisis is disproportionately felt in those communities already struggling in socio-economic terms, which are often communities where paramilitary influence tends to be at its strongest. We call on the Government to give continued special consideration to the needs of communities where paramilitaries mainly operate in measures addressing the cost-of-living crisis in Northern Ireland.

The Commissioners repeated their recommendation for an agreed formal process of Group Transition, involving direct engagement with the paramilitary groups themselves, to bring about disbandment. “In our Fifth Report we proposed an intermediate step in the form of the appointment by the two Governments of an Independent Person, who would scope and prepare the ground for a possible process of engagement, with a view to bringing about Group Transition to disbandment. We appreciate the engagement to date with the two governments on our Recommendation, and the fact that they are giving it positive consideration; we urge them to progress the implementation of this Recommendation as soon as possible. In conclusion, the Commissioners said: “A core goal of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement was ensuring that the future was based on exclusively peaceful, democratic politics and that paramilitarism would become a thing entirely of the past.

We believe that just as risks had to be taken to achieve peace in the 1990s, and dialogue underpinned those endeavours, so today it is worth taking further risks in order to achieve the goal of ending paramilitarism once and for all.. “As 2023 draws to a close, and while nothing is guaranteed, we believe that the opportunity to deliver the promise of a definitive end to paramilitarism exists in a very real way. Achieving the goal of tackling paramilitarism will require political leadership from every quarter. The task now is to ensure that every opportunity to meaningfully tackle paramilitarism is taken to the full.”

RECOMMENDED that Council notes the above press release and attached report.

Councillor Boyle proposed, seconded by Councillor Hollywood, that the recommendation be adopted.

Commenting as seconder Councillor Hollywood welcomed the recent news that 2023 was the first year there had not been a single security death in Northern Ireland since Police records began. The report before them highlighted that there remained a significant way to go adding that 2023 remained a mixed year in respect of paramilitarism but he was of the opinion that the majority of that activity had taken place within the Borough. Continuing he referred to comments made by a colleague who had expressed the view that now was the time for such activities to cease. Councillor Hollywood further stated that it was imperative that the recommendations included within the report were heard and that everyone worked together to finally get rid of this blight within society once and for all.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Boyle, seconded by Councillor Hollywood, that the recommendation be adopted.

10. NOTICE OF MOTIONS

10.1 NOTICE OF MOTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR WRAY AND COUNCILLOR SMART

Councillor Wray proposed, seconded by Councillor Hollywood that this Council is alarmed at proposed 5% cut in funding to arts organisations funded by the Department for Communities through the Arts Council NI. Notes that Arts Council NI funding has decreased, in real terms, by 30% over the last decade, despite evidence that investment in the arts has a real terms economic benefit for Northern Ireland. With continued cuts our borough will see more initiatives end, more artists forced into seeking new careers, and more companies forced to close.

Recognises that Stormont Permanent Secretaries are being forced to take, without mandate, difficult decisions that should be taken by locally elected Ministers and a devolved Executive and Assembly. Calls for a reversal in cuts to the arts and agrees to join as a signatory to Equity NI's latest open letter to the Permanent Secretary of the Department for Communities. Further calls for the restoration of a reformed Executive and Assembly to take decisions which can future proof the arts sector and protect funding in the future.

The proposer, Councillor Wray stated that as some members would know the Arts played a massive role into shaping the person he was today. He advised that he had been involved in performance art and theatre since the age of seven and had benefited from organisations such as the Youth Lyric, Youth Actions Rainbow Factory. He added that he had also attended Belfast Institutes National Diploma in Performing Arts. More recently he reported that he had been involved in the governance side of small theatre companies. Therefore, Councillor Wray stated that he was only too well aware of how important the Arts was to communities, and how devastating the cuts would impact artists, crew, audiences, and the wider general public.

While those were his personal experiences he suggested that the Arts should be a concern for every member in this Chamber. The Borough was the home of many professional and amateur artists and as such had seen the impact of those cuts through Bangor Open House Festival, and Portico in Portaferry. He added that he Chaired the Ards and North Down Arts Panel, and many members had encouraged him in bringing forward this Notice of Motion.

Councillor Wray stated that the Arts was important to all sections of the community and impacted all Government departments. The future of the Arts did not just sit within the Department for Communities alone. He expressed the view that if the Arts Sector could be stimulated that would have an impact on the economy, education and health. The Arts comprised of theatres, art galleries and the music scene. The Arts nurtured performers everyone watched on Netflix, it was Ceilidh bands and marching bands. The Arts was in schools, churches, pubs, and in public spaces. What the Arts was not, was a luxury. The Arts was used to articulate important public

health messages, and to explore issues around the complicated and at times divisive past. Councillor Wray suggested that there was no substitute for the Arts, and if it was not appreciated, recognised, and properly resourced now, the whole community would suffer.

Continuing Councillor Wray stated that the 5% cut in funding to arts organisations funded by the Department for Communities through the Arts Council NI would be absolutely devastating. He added that it was not something which he would accept and suggested that other should not simply just shrug their shoulders and concede. Further cuts would see more initiatives end, more artists forced into seeking new careers, and more companies forced to close, including those Artists from the Borough and wider afield. He noted that London invested £12 per capita into the arts, Scotland invested £15, Wales £16, and Dublin £21.90. In Northern Ireland we invest a mere £5.07. That he felt was shameful and needed to change, not only for the benefit of those working within the sector but also the wider community. The Arts should be cherished, valued, and resourced. Despite the incredible pool of talent which had been produced, there was a long way to catch up with neighbours in terms of support for the sector.

At this stage Councillor Wray indicated that he wished to commend Equity NI, the arts sector, and supporters of the arts for their campaign, around this, adding that this motion had started in Belfast City Council. He added that he had been happy to attend a rally there and support his friend Councillor Boyle's SDLP colleague Seamus de Faoite, who had brought the original motion, which received unanimous support across all parties. It was noted this was amended slightly and brought to Mid Ulster Council, and he had done something similar here in Ards and North Down. Councillor Wray added that he was aware other Councillors and Aldermen across the Borough were planning to bring this to more Council areas and the purpose of this was to ensure that when the Executive was reformed, there was a clear message in the in-tray for the next Minister for Communities.

Since this motion had been drafted the 5% cut had been confirmed, and the Arts Sector had been told to prepare for further cuts. Councillor Wray stated that this could not be allowed to happen. Continuing he noted that sometimes he referred to Hollywood Notices of Motion and while he was not referring to his colleague Stephen or indeed the beautiful part of the Borough, he was referring to motions that were actually above the station of Council, and as such could not have any impact on the final decision. This he stated was not a Hollywood Notice of Motion, but instead was intended to send a clear message to the Department that the Council and other Councils across the province, valued the Arts, and would not accept the Arts being used as 'an easy touch' to cut the budget of. He asked members for their support.

Rising as seconder, Councillor Hollywood endorsed the comments made by the proposer adding that the proposed cuts to the Arts would be detrimental. Arts organisations were beacons of activity and cornerstones of everyone's cultural identity and were an economic lifeline for budding artists and a bridge which connected diverse voices. Continuing he stated that the Arts were woven into the

fabric of daily lives, and he referred to the Open House Festival which had proved to be a haven for local talent. He agreed with his colleague's sentiment that Arts were not just an added luxury but instead were a fundamental part of everyone's identity, heritage and future. In summing up he hoped that all in the Chamber could support the proposal to advocate for a reversal of this decision.

Alderman Adair thanked both the proposer and seconder for bringing forward their motion. He did however indicate that there was an element within it which his party, the DUP, could not support and that was:

"Further calls for the restoration of a reformed Executive and Assembly to take decisions which can future proof the arts sector and protect funding in the future".

He asked the proposer if he would consider the removal of that particular sentence to enable him and his party to offer support to the motion.

At this stage a short debate ensued on the inclusion and exclusion of the words before agreement was reached between the proposer, Councillor Wray and Alderman Adair to amend the last sentence to read:

"Further calls for the Assembly to take decisions which can future proof the arts sector and protect funding in the future".

Continuing, Alderman Adair commented that everyone loved the Arts and as such it was important for the Council to be seen to be sending out a united voice on the matter. Continuing he stated that the DUP had been making a case of the Arts in Westminster for a long time, particularly as Northern Ireland's public sector was underfunded. He thanked the other Parties throughout Northern Ireland for supporting the DUP's call for any new Assembly to be sustainable and have adequate equal funding in place to deliver services for Northern Ireland. Continuing Alderman Adair acknowledged the value of the Arts to so many people adding that it was all part of the rich tapestry of Northern Ireland. As such public services in Northern Ireland needed to be adequately funded and as such, he was supportive of the Motion.

At this stage the Director referred to the Council's Standing Orders in respect of Notices of Motion and in particular Standing Order 17.1.12 which detailed that

- Substantial Amendments to Notices of Motion made by the proposer and seconder must be received at least five working calendar days in advance of the meeting.
- Substantial Amendments to Notices of Motion made by any member other than the proposer or seconder must be received at least one working day in advance of the meeting.

As such the Director advised that it was at the Chairman's discretion to make a judgement on whether the changes made were considered non substantive and if so could be accepted on the night.

The Chairman indicated that he was content that the change made was non substantive.

Rising in support of the proposal, Councillor Moore acknowledged the proposer and seconders reference to the importance of the Arts to the local economy. However, she urged members to remain mindful that the Arts were for all regardless of your level of skill and talent. As such she believed that it was important to ensure that the Arts remained accessible to all given the benefits to be reaped from it.

Also supporting the proposal, Councillor W Irvine agreed that the Arts meant a lot to so many throughout the Borough. He took the opportunity to remind members that just recently Open House had been awarded National Lottery Project of the Year for The Court House in Bangor. As such he agreed that it was imperative that the Department did not proceed with the proposed cuts.

Councillor Boyle expressed his support for the proposal to reverse the proposed cut to the Arts. He commented that for many children access to the Arts every weekend provided them with a safe and warm space. Indeed, he recalled during Northern Ireland's Troubles that the Arts at that time had brought everyone together and now due to funding cuts the Arts sector was effectively dying. He expressed the view that the Government did not consider the Arts worth investing in and that would include all those children and youth clubs currently involved with the Arts. By way of summing up he stated that he had been a former Chairman of a Youth Drama Group and just recently had a role in the television series 'The Woman in the Wall'.

Councillor Kendall stated that she was privileged to be able to support the proposal and subsequently the Arts. Arts she stated was creativity, provided assistance to businesses, assisted with policy making and was an outlet for mental health.

At this stage Councillor Douglas expressed her support for the proposal particularly as a family member had been fortunate enough to obtain funding from through the Arts and was now playing with the Ulster Orchestra.

By way of summing up Councillor Wray thanked members for their comments and support. He stated that through adversity came strength, and he fully believed the Arts sector in Northern Ireland would become stronger than ever playing a pivotal role within the community. He added that he was prepared to make that happen and appreciated members support to assist with that.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Wray, seconded by Councillor Hollywood, that this Council is alarmed at proposed 5% cut in funding to arts organisations funded by the Department for Communities through the Arts Council NI. Notes that Arts Council NI funding has decreased,

in real terms, by 30% over the last decade, despite evidence that investment in the arts has a real terms economic benefit for Northern Ireland. With continued cuts our borough will see more initiatives end, more artists forced into seeking new careers, and more companies forced to close.

Recognises that Stormont Permanent Secretaries are being forced to take, without mandate, difficult decisions that should be taken by locally elected Ministers and a devolved Executive and Assembly. Calls for a reversal in cuts to the arts and agrees to join as a signatory to Equity NI's latest open letter to the Permanent Secretary of the Department for Communities. Further calls for the Assembly to take decisions which can future proof the arts sector and protect funding in the future.

10.2 NOTICE OF MOTION SUBMITTED BY ALDERMAN ADAIR AND COUNCILLOR EDMUND

Alderman Adair proposed, seconded by Councillor Edmund, that this Council continues discussions with the Education Authority concerning the redevelopment of the play area fronting Victoria Primary School, Ballyhalbert (which is a shared facility between the school and public) and tasks officers to source external funding streams to enhance recreation & sports facilities for the village and surrounding area. Further, Council notes the poor condition of Ballyhalbert children's play park and tasks officers to bring forward a report on enhancing and improving the play park to meet the needs of local children.

The proposer Alderman Adair stated that he had brought his motion to the Committee on behalf of the children and young people of Ballyhalbert village. A village which had almost quadrupled in size with a population of almost 1,800 as recorded at the last census. Regrettably despite the number of new homes in the village, infrastructure had not been suitably upgraded so much so that now much needed investment was now required. Continuing he referred to a previous Notice of Motion he had brought in respect of a green area under the ownership of the Education Authority which at the time had been unable to progress. While noting the Council's Play Park Strategy there currently was broken equipment at the play park in Ballyhalbert and as such he was seeking in the suggested report temporary measures which could be put in place in the interim. Alderman Adair advised that this was a big issue within the village and as such he would ask members for their support.

Commenting as seconder, Councillor Edmund agreed that this was a major issue in the village particularly as the Council did not currently own any ground in it. He noted how the original football field had been sold to the Education Authority in order to build a new Primary School. Since then no provision had been made to provide alternative facilities which was disappointing particularly as the village had a senior football team which could not play at home. Continuing he stated that grass pitches were not suitable for training on hence the importance of the motion which sought to provide suitable training facilities. As such he believed that with the support of

members this could provide the village with an opportunity to secure the facilities which it so desperately needed and deserved.

Rising in support of the motion, Councillor Boyle stated that everyone was aware of the issues throughout the Ards Peninsula and its increasing population. He agreed that the village of Ballyhalbert was being deprived and as such the Council needed to step up. Referring to play parks Councillor Boyle sought an officers clarification on how often Council officers carried out checks on those facilities.

The Head of Parks & Cemeteries confirmed that weekly checks were carried out by the Council's Assets and Property team, with daily checks undertaken by members of the Council's Parks team.

Councillor Boyle asked if defective equipment could be updated in the meantime.

In response the Head of Parks & Cemeteries that a report on the Council's Play Strategy would be brought to the Committee to its March 2024 meeting and would include details of usually up to five parks being recommended for upgrade. He added that if any equipment was damaged or required repair that would be carried out regardless.

By way of summing up, Alderman Adair thanked members for their support which would ensure a collective and positive voice from the Council was sent out to the people of Ballyhalbert. He advised that currently the play park in the village was in a bad state of repair requiring some upgrades to be made to a number of pieces of equipment. Alderman Adair commented that he would await the report to come to the March 2024 meeting to see if Ballyhalbert was included within it, adding that if it was not then he would encourage consideration to some interim upgrade to the equipment already in place there. He again reiterated his thanks to members for their support.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman Adair, seconded by Councillor Edmund, that this Council continues discussions with the Education Authority concerning the redevelopment of the play area fronting Victoria Primary School, Ballyhalbert (which is a shared facility between the school and public) and tasks officers to source external funding streams to enhance recreation & sports facilities for the village and surrounding area. Further, Council notes the poor condition of Ballyhalbert children's play park and tasks officers to bring forward a report on enhancing and improving the play park to meet the needs of local children.

10.3 NOTICE OF MOTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR CATHCART AND COUNCILLOR GILMOUR

Councillor Cathcart proposed, seconded by Councillor Gilmour, that this Council recognises the invaluable work undertaken by community/voluntary groups and organisations in this Borough in identifying and tackling the needs of communities

and residents. The Council therefore, commits to undertaking a root and branch review of community development funding, arts and heritage, sports development and all other funding streams to ensure that it provides the most efficient, effective and responsive service to our community, thus maximising impact, accessibility and equitable allocation of resources.

The review should examine the following four categories:

- Accessibility
 - Simplify application forms, review all funding applications to ensure that they are simple, clear and don't unnecessarily overburden applicants with information required.
 - Digitisation of community grants, tenders and reporting to allow those that wish the option for simple and more efficient submissions.
- Building capacity in the community, creating a scheme to help the community to write and deliver more successful applications and bring in more external funding to this Borough.
- Communication Enhancement
 - Single grants list or 'open grants' page on council website with uniform advertisement of grants so that everyone receives the same information on available funding with a clear grants timetable, with scoring criteria clearly outlined including ranking and amount available across borough etc.
- A single point of contact to direct community and voluntary groups to support and assistance across different Council departments.
- Showcase & celebrate the great and valuable activities that the dedicated volunteers are delivering on this section of website.
- Equity
 - Make funding available proportional to size of communities/activities being delivered and the type of needs being addressed, community groups represent different sizes of population and area (areas of deprivation etc) and are doing different work ('essential needs' and 'non-essential') yet often funding is allocated 'per group' rather than area/numbers targeted or type of work being delivered.
- Funding available to reflect the continued rise in costs., e.g., ensure funding available for community events is adequate to actually host events & activities.
- Up front funding is uniform, that groups get the same up front funding percentage (e.g.,80%) across all Council funding to help with delivery.
- Equality of opportunity, ensuring that groups are not pigeonholed into a certain category of funding pots and can apply for all they are eligible for.
- Removal of 'first come first serve' funding to ensure level playing field.
- Efficiency

- Creation of reserve lists of funding to ensure Council can allocate underspend and slippage quickly, easily and equitably to ensure no funds are returned to Departments.
- 'Trusted Supplier Scheme' to allow emergency and time limited funding to be provided quicker.
 - Logistical planning, ensuring that all grants are delivered in a timely manner to ensure impact on the ground.

The review will be brought to the Community Grants Working Group to be examined in detail and reviewed on an annual basis.”

The proposer Councillor Cathcart expressed the view that his motion was worthwhile particularly as during his ten years of being an elected member of the Council he had been contacted by members of the Community/Voluntary Groups in respect of concerns about funding and accessibility. Through engagement with them a lot of feedback had been forthcoming and the key elements for consideration were as outlined below:

Accessibility

- Simplify application forms, review all funding applications to ensure that they were simple, clear and did not unnecessarily over burden applicants with information required.
- Digitisation of community grants, tenders and reporting to allow those that wished the option for simple and more efficient submissions.

Building capacity in the community

- Creating a scheme to help the community to write and deliver more successful applications and bring in more external funding to this Borough.
- A single point of contact to direct community and voluntary groups to support and assistance across different Council departments.
- Showcase and celebrate the great and valuable activities that the dedicated volunteers were delivering on this section of website.

Equity

- Make funding available proportional to size of communities/activities being delivered and the type of needs being addressed, community groups represent different sizes of population and area (areas of deprivation etc) and were doing different work ('essential needs' and 'non-essential') yet often funding was allocated 'per group' rather than area/numbers targeted or type of work being delivered.
- Funding available to reflect the continued rise in costs, for example ensure funding available for community events was adequate to actually host events and activities.
- Up front funding was uniform, that groups got the same up front funding percentage (80%) across all Council funding to help with delivery.

- Equality of opportunity, ensuring that groups were not pigeonholed into a certain category of funding pots and could apply for all they were eligible for.
- Removal of 'first come first serve' funding to ensure level playing field.

Efficiency

- Creation of reserve lists of funding to ensure Council could allocate underspend and slippage quickly, easily and equitably to ensure no funds were returned to Departments.
- 'Trusted Supplier Scheme' to allow emergency and time limited funding to be provided quicker.
- Logistical planning, ensuring that all grants were delivered in a timely manner to ensure impact on the ground.

Councillor Cathcart highlighted the significance of each of the four main priorities raised with him and urged members to support his motion as outlined.

Commenting as seconder, Councillor Gilmour thanked the Chairman for allowing her to come to the meeting this evening. She stated that during her role as a Councillor over the last few years particularly, she had had feedback on experiences of the community in accessing funding, and particularly so this year as Mayor of Ards and North Down. In that role she had the opportunity to meet many community groups across the Borough, engaged in the community and voluntary activities and had seen firsthand the benefit to the Borough and the passion and enthusiasm, which they had, adding that it was something to be commended. Indeed it was something that she had tried to shine a spotlight on where possible. However, she was mindful of the fact that they often had a small team of individuals who were involved with applying for the funding to try and make their programs or activities or plans come together. She added that it was through their work that kept associations going or activities happening and therefore she felt that it was important to ensure that the access was as easy as possible. Continuing Councillor Gilmour stated that the Council needed to make sure that the applications were easy to access, understand and complete. Mindful of the fact also that the Council was responsible for the distribution of public funds and any system had to be robust from an audit point of view of view.

Councillor Gilmour advised that she had been contacted by a local group which had missed out on submitting an application because funding was not advertised on the general grant funding section of the Council website, but instead advertised in a different section. Whilst specific grants may be useful to be mentioned on specific parts of the Council, she felt it was important that there was a central grant listing which outlined all the available grants, otherwise groups may not know what was available to them. Also she added there was a feeling amongst some in the community that current grant funding applications did not take into account the amount of impact that a program had in terms of the area covered and the folks that would be able to benefit from it. As the Council had been doing grants for a number of years through this new Council and it had had to adapt to add on schemes when

funding became available, like the recent hardship funding etc. Councillor Gilmour expressed the view that a review be undertaken of the whole scheme as outlined in the motion and adding that it was the opportunity that the Council could look to ensure it was carrying out best practice. Suggestions for that included do not digitise things, reduce the need for duplication of details being submitted in multiple times on occasion and also make it more accessible to see what was available funding wise.

In summing up, Councillor Gilmour acknowledged that her colleague had spoken at length on his motion and she would hope that members could support this. She added that the list itself may well not even be exhausted and once the review processes was underway there would be other elements she was sure that may well be able to be included and looked at. However it was felt important to give a good framework for foundation of a review, and this would be reported back to the sub group. She thanked members for their support and time and the opportunity to come along to the committee this evening and would hope for support across the chamber.

Thanking the proposer and seconder, Councillor Irwin agreed that it was quite an extensive list and the overall aim was for it to be supported, particularly in respect of accessibility and enhancement. Continuing she stated that she would have some hesitancy in respect of the efficiency of the scheme and as such she was unsure how that would work. Overall she indicated that she welcomed the list and looked forward to the report coming back on that basis.

Councillor Boyle commented that he undecided in respect of this given its length and differing aspects. As such he referred to funding offered for Sports Development and its allocation which was done as fairly as possible albeit it would welcome an increase in funding available. In respect of community groups he was only too well aware of the work they carried out adding that when it came to securing funding he knew that Council staff were readily available to assist with that. He also noted that the application process had been simplified. As such he was of the view that if something was not broken do not try to fix it.

Supporting the motion, Councillor W Irvine commented that he was aware of some concerns in respect of Community Development Funding which added to existing problems for some groups in respect of upkeep. He added that he hoped the Grants Review Working Group would continue with its work in respect of community grants.

Also happy to support the motion, Councillor Kendall, agreed that it was important to consider how this process was carried out to ensure that it was done as fairly and as flexibly as possible. She stated that upfront funding was vital and as such she would be keen for that to remain. Continuing Councillor Kendall added that she would also be keen to ensure that any processes put into place would not make the grant application process more difficult and that those existing best practices remained in place.

By way of summing up Councillor Cathcart thanked members for their supportive comments adding that the list had been compiled from issues raised with him and as

such he believed they should be addressed. He added that he too was keen to ensure that the 80% upfront remained in place for the Borough.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Cathcart, seconded by Councillor Gilmour, that the Notice of Motion be adopted.

RECESS

At this stage the meeting went into recess 8.56pm and reconvened at 9.09pm.

NOTED.

(Alderman Brooks and Councillor S Irvine left the meeting at this stage – 9.09pm)

10.4. NOTICE OF MOTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR MCLAREN AND COUNCILLOR HOLLYWOOD

Councillor McLaren proposed, seconded by Councillor Hollywood, that this Council recognises the growing concerns and impact of single use vapes on our young people, schools, and our local environment. Calls on Council Officers to take a full review of options available to address these concerns, and work in conjunction with outside agencies in order to do so. The Council also calls on a ban on the importation of illicit vapes and calls on Stormont, at the earliest opportunity, to bring forward legislation to enforce regulations that will combat illicit importations.

Councillor McLaren stated that she was delighted to bring forward this Motion before Committee in regard to the growing concern about single-use disposable vapes. In discussing the issue she would highlight the critical problems that had been identified and open the debate on how growing issue could be addressed. She stated that she was aware that many people and governing bodies within the Borough, also shared those concerns, and in particular, the issues which pertained to the use of vapes by children and teenagers. Consequently, she was glad to have brought a motion which both brought attention to the matter and placed focus on the Council to facilitate discussions, collaborate with other concerned agencies, and find solutions for the benefit of the health and wellbeing of residents in the Borough.

Initially, the primary use of vapes would have been via a refillable e-cigarette and sold under the premise of an aid to stop smoking tobacco, but the growing trend was now leaning toward single-use disposables, which entered the market in 2021. Those vapes were easier to use, widely available, had attractive colours and flavours and were affordable. With the cheapest being sold for around £4, disposable vapes were now widely used by children who found all of the above appealing. It was now commonplace to see teenagers holding them, smoking them and buying them in local shops. Far from being used as a device to stop smoking cigarettes, they were now nearly as vital as an accessory as a mobile phone. She added that currently

there was very little legislation on vapes in Northern Ireland and whilst there were age restrictions on purchasing them, they still inevitably fell into children's hands.

At this stage Councillor McLaren referred to a spate of recent alarming incidents involving children collapsing, after using vapes, which had made parents and indeed schools, worried for their children's safety. Where there was a vulnerable and easily influenced group, it was inevitable that sinister elements in society would aim to take advantage. She noted that drug dealers had introduced an illegal synthetic drug called 'spice' into the mix and this had been enticing the children of Bangor and surrounding towns in the Borough, to experiment by adding 'spice' into their vapes. With catastrophic consequences she added. Children in local schools had also recently had to receive emergency medical attention after collapsing when vaping 'spice', and the problem, unless tackled urgently, was only going to get worse.

Councillor McLaren indicated that she had heard the concerns of parents in resident's groups within her own constituency of Holywood and Clondeboye, and the concerns of heads of schools and the police on the issue. What children were not realising, was that when they purchased vapes illegally, and more importantly, when they purchased spice to smoke in the vapes, they were leaving themselves open to a drug offence on their records, which could have devastating consequences for their future job prospects and education. Plus, it also gave schools the extra heavy burden of monitoring and tackling the issue within their premises. Members were advised that it had been reported that vapes could be purchased via online food delivery apps, online from countries outside the UK, and from older people who were willing to purchase them on young people's behalf. Councillor McLaren stated that it was therefore understandable when the parents of children, and the pastoral care teams in schools, worried that the situation was out of control.

Continuing Councillor McLaren advised that single use vapes also posed a significant risk to the environment, where roughly five million vapes were discarded every week in the UK. They contained a lithium battery which also posed a recycling challenge. Far from being critical of officers within the Council, she stated that instead she wished to bear testament to the work they had done up until now, insofar as they had completed approximately 46 test purchases with 6 penalty fines. Whilst that was great, and in accordance with guidelines around test purchasing targets, she felt that it was a less than ideal situation whereby, the Council and other concerned agencies such as schools, resident's groups, traders and the PSNI, were working alone, without support, or indeed understanding, of how to combat the problem. As such that was why she was asking the Council to consider her motion, to take a collaborative approach in order to learn how each agency was affected, how they dealt with it and how attempts could be made to consolidate education and enforcement together.

In summing up Councillor McLaren stated that by wishing to tackle the importation of illicit vapes from areas without regulation and restriction on ingredients, she would request that this would be an area given attention, during the test purchasing phase of Council work as discussed earlier. She advised that she had called that Stormont,

at the first available opportunity, brought forth legislation to enforce regulations. This was in itself self-explanatory and would allow Councils to expand the remit within which they could work and enhance the enforcements that they could hand out. She stated that it was important to ensure that the safety and welfare of young children in the Borough. As a mother of four, she fully understood the pressures placed upon children by their peers, but by attempting to draw attention to the dangers of single use vapes, could go some way to taking away the pressures that they faced, and ultimately, ensure their health was not compromised before they even reached adulthood.

Commenting as seconder, Councillor Hollywood commented on the availability of vaping products and significant risks they posed to public health and particularly young people. He stated that it had become deeply concerning and as such he agreed that some form of regulation was vital to ensure safe standards were adhered to. Councillor Hollywood hoped that through the introduction of regulations that would help to reduce the access of vapes to young people and thereby prevent a potential public health crisis.

Also supportive of the motion, Councillor W Irvine agreed that this was a major issue particularly as vapes were currently marketed with colourful packaging to attract young people. He also noted that 11.6% of 11 to 16 years olds had tried vaping and therefore felt that a task force needed to be formed to tackle all of the issue associated with vaping.

Expressing thanks to the proposer for bringing forward her motion, Councillor Chambers commented that it reminded him of an issue back in the 1990's concerning the sale of alcopops. Continuing he stated that currently no one was aware of the long term effects of vaping something he found particularly alarming given this his primary 7 son had friends in school who were vaping. As such he was fully supportive of the motion.

By way of summing up Councillor McLaren thanked members for their comments adding that it was important for the Council to be seen to be leading the way in this matter. As such she was hopeful that the Council could work its partner agencies to combat the problem and find an appropriate solution.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor McLaren, seconded by Councillor Hollywood, that this Council recognises the growing concerns and impact of single use vapes on our young people, schools, and our local environment. Calls on Council Officers to take a full review of options available to address these concerns, and work in conjunction with outside agencies in order to do so. The Council also calls on a ban on the importation of illicit vapes and calls on Stormont, at the earliest opportunity, to bring forward legislation to enforce regulations that will combat illicit importations.

11. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

The Chairman advised that there were no items of Any Other Notified Business.

NOTED.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS

AGREED, on the proposal of Councillor Boyle, seconded by Councillor Hollywood, that the public/press be excluded from the meeting.

12. PARKLANDS CATERING CONTRACT EXTENSION ABMWLC (FILE CW106)

****IN CONFIDENCE****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 3 – Exemption relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person

A report was presented to Community & Wellbeing detailing a contract extension for Parklands Catering in accordance with their contract.

The report recommended that Council extend the contract to March 2025.

The recommendation was agreed.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Boyle, seconded by Alderman Cummings, that the recommendation be adopted.

13. ROUNABOUT SPONSORSHIP - UPDATE (FILE PCA108) (Appendix V)

****IN CONFIDENCE****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 3 – Exemption relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person

A report was presented to Community & Wellbeing to update on sponsorship options for roundabouts

The report recommended that Council approve the sponsorships.

The recommendation was agreed.

(Alderman Adair left the meeting at this stage – 9.25pm)

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman Cummings, seconded by Councillor Cochrane, that the recommendation be adopted.

14. WAR YEARS REMEMBERED DEPUTATION (FILE CW152)

(Appendix VI)

****IN CONFIDENCE****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 5 – Exemption a claim to legal professional privilege

A report was presented to Community & Wellbeing to update on progress and funding.

The report recommended that Council consider the information and that a further report is brought back.

The recommendation was agreed.

(Alderman Adair re-entered the meeting at this stage – 9.34pm)

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor W Irvine, seconded by Councillor Kendall, that the recommendation be adopted.

15. PEACEPLUS PARTNERSHIP MINUTES DATED 23 NOVEMBER 2023 (Appendix VII)

****IN CONFIDENCE****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 3 – Exemption relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person

A report was presented to Community & Wellbeing detailing the confidential minutes of the PEACEPLUS Partnership meeting on 23 November 2023

The report recommended that Council note the minutes.

The recommendation was agreed.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Boyle, seconded by Alderman Adair, that the recommendation be adopted.

16. POLICE AND COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP MINUTES DATED 11 SEPTEMBER 2023 (Appendix VIII)

****IN CONFIDENCE****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 3 – Exemption relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person

A report was presented to Community & Wellbeing detailing the confidential minutes of the PCSP meeting on 11 September 2023

The report recommended that Council note the minutes.

The recommendation was agreed.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman Cummings, seconded by Councillor Moore, that the recommendation be adopted.

RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS

AGREED, on the proposal of Alderman Adair, seconded by Councillor Kendall, that the public/press be re-admitted to the meeting.

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 10.02pm.



Minerals and Petroleum Branch
Floor 7
Adelaide House
39-49 Adelaide Street
Belfast
BT2 8FD
email: petroleumpolicyreview@economy-ni.gov.uk

ONSHORE PETROLEUM LICENSING POLICY – NOTIFICATION OF CONSULTATION

Dear Stakeholder,

The Department has launched a consultation on onshore petroleum licensing policy in Northern Ireland following a review by the Department.

The Department has developed a range of policy options for onshore petroleum licensing policy. This has been informed by independent research from Hatch Regeneris on the environmental, social and economic impacts of onshore petroleum exploration and production in Northern Ireland and other relevant international research. The preferred policy option is a moratorium and eventual legislative ban on exploration and production of all forms of onshore oil and gas in Northern Ireland.

The final decision on onshore petroleum licensing in Northern Ireland will be taken by a future Executive, informed by the responses and evidence submitted through this consultation process.

The details of the consultation can be found on the [DfE website](#). You can respond to the consultation by completing the [Citizen Space survey](#). This is the quickest and easiest way to have your views heard.

The deadline for responses is **12 April 2024**.

We look forward to hearing your views.

Minerals and Petroleum Branch

120 Malone Road, Belfast, BT9 5HT
Phone 03457 643 643 nienetworks.co.uk

13 December 2023

Dear Stakeholder

Today the Utility Regulator has launched a consultation on its Draft Determination on the NIE Networks' Business Plan for the six-year period (1 April 2025 – 31 March 2031), RP7. We welcome both the consultation and the opportunity to respond.

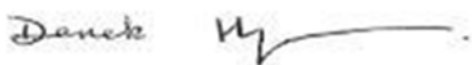
Our business plan is designed to ensure that the electricity networks in Northern Ireland are developed in a way that allows all of the families and businesses in Northern Ireland to participate in the transition away from fossil fuels and enjoy a safe, secure and reliable electricity supply. We are also committed to building, maintaining and operating new and existing assets in a way that reduces the financial burden of this investment on the homes and businesses in this region. The Utility Regulator has recognised the need for the investment and the positive outcomes that it will deliver for customers, and we welcome that. This reflects the open, transparent and collaborative approach taken by the Utility Regulator, NIE Networks and our stakeholders throughout the RP7 process.

The Draft Determination contains significant detail. Our teams will now undertake a rigorous assessment of the document to carefully analyse all aspects of it so that we can fully understand the basis of the Utility Regulator's position and the impact that it will have on the work that needs to be done, and how that will be paid for. Where there is a divergence of views – for example the level of organisational growth needed in NIE Networks to deliver RP7 – we are confident that through open, constructive dialogue we will develop a better understanding of our respective positions. At this point, our aim is to further inform the process, provide clarity where that is needed and to ensure that we provide the Utility Regulator sufficient evidence upon which to base its future final decision.

When developing the RP7 Business Plan we committed to our stakeholders that the necessary investment will be delivered at least cost. We will do that by operating safely and efficiently. The Utility Regulator acknowledges that our costs are below industry benchmarks, and we will work with them to agree targets that continue to improve efficiency and give value for money to all the people in Northern Ireland. As we commit to an efficient and value for money outcome for all, we will have to understand further how the UR's proposed reduction in total expenditure (totex) of £338m will impact on our ability to deliver on the scale of work required over the next 25 years, and our ability to meet a wide and growing variety of stakeholder requirements.

Our RP7 business plan is creating the foundation for Northern Ireland's journey towards net zero and as such will be just one in a series of investment steps that NIE Networks will need to take over the next 25 years. A key strength of our plan is that it reflects a broad spectrum of stakeholder views across a range of industries and areas of interest. We would encourage all stakeholders to continue to engage directly with this process to ensure that the Utility Regulator is provided with the information and evidence it requires to deliver an effective and balanced Final Determination.

Best regards



DEREK HYNES
Managing Director

Marie Ward
Chief Executive



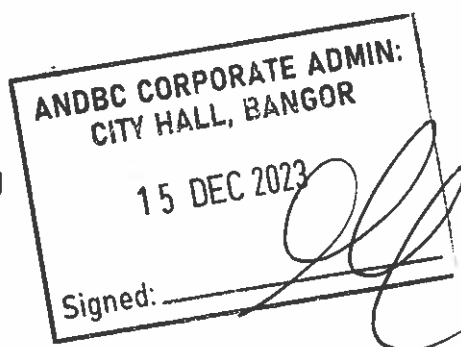
Comhairle Ceantair
**an Iúir, Mhúrr
agus an Dúin** 128

**Newry, Mourne
and Down**
District Council

Our ref: C/250/2023

13 December 2023

Ards & North Down Borough Council
Town Hall, The Castle
Bangor
BT20 4BT
United Kingdom



Dear Chief Executive

Re: Notice of Motion – Cystic Fibrosis Medication

At a Meeting of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council held on 4 December 2023 the following Notice of Motion was unanimously agreed:

"That Council notes with extreme concern proposals by NICE to remove its NHS recommendations for Kaftiro, Orkambi and Symkevi due to rising costs; calls upon NICE to reconsider this proposal without hesitation to make such medication available to all in need; and will write to the Department of Health to request an assessment of the efficacy of this drug to help save lives since its introduction in January 2022; and to consider amending the minimum age for recipients of this medication to 2 so as to ensure that all those who suffer from cystic fibrosis have the best start in life."

It was also agreed that Council would write to the other 10 Councils in Northern Ireland and the Prime Minister highlighting Council's opposition to the removal of these drugs and to reverse the decision".

The proposer of the motion asked that the motion be circulated to the other 10 Council Chief Executives asking them to table at a future meeting of their Council.

I would ask that you give this matter serious consideration and I look forward to your response.

Yours faithfully

Marie Ward
Chief Executive



Oifig an Iúir
Newry Office
O'Hagan House
Monaghan Row
Newry BT35 8DJ

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

0330 137 4000 (Council)
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www.newrymouredown.org

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

Unclassified

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ITEM 10.1**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Council Meeting
Date of Meeting	31 January 2024
Responsible Director	Chief Executive
Responsible Head of Service	
Date of Report	18 January 2024
File Reference	
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Deputation Request - Business Improvement District (BID)
Attachments	Appendix 1 - Deputation request form

The attached deputation request has been received from Business Improvement District (BID) to present to the Place and Prosperity Committee.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council accepts the request for a deputation from Business Improvement District (BID) and refers it to the Place and Prosperity Committee.

Unclassified

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ITEM 11**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Council Meeting
Date of Meeting	31 January 2024
Responsible Director	Chief Executive
Responsible Head of Service	Community Planning Manager
Date of Report	09 January 2024
File Reference	'-
Legislation	'-
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below: Consultation response
Subject	Healthy Futures - A Strategic Framework to Prevent the Harm caused by Obesity, and Improve Diets and Levels of Physical Activity in Northern Ireland
Attachments	* Healthy Futures - A Strategic Framework to Prevent the Harm caused by Obesity, and Improve Diets and Levels of Physical Activity in Northern Ireland - Consultation Document * Draft ANDBC Consultation Response

Background

Department of Health is seeking views on a range of proposals to enhance health and wellbeing in Northern Ireland by focusing on improving diets, increasing participation in physical activity, addressing the obesogenic environment, and preventing the harm caused by overweight and obesity. A proposed new strategic framework has been developed that seeks to take a whole system approach to addressing obesity and supporting people to achieve healthy weight, recognising the wider environment.

Not Applicable

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A consultation is being undertaken to seek view on the development of the new strategy. The draft strategy is attached to this report. Ards and North Down Borough Council is mentioned in the draft strategy as, via our Community Planning Partnership, we are the first early adopter site to start implementing a whole system approach to obesity.

The new strategic framework will take a whole system approach to addressing obesity and supporting people to achieve healthy weight, it will be health led but not solely health owned. The Framework will focus on reducing food, physical activity and overweight and obesity related inequalities.

The Framework is centred on four themes:

- Healthy policies
- Healthy places
- Healthy people
- Collaboration and whole systems approach

Proposed responses to the consultation questions are attached to this report.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council agree the consultation response.



Department of
Health

An Roinn Sláinte

Máinnystrie O Poustie

www.health-ni.gov.uk

Healthy Futures

A Strategic Framework to Prevent the Harm caused by
Obesity, and Improve Diets and Levels of Physical
Activity in Northern Ireland

A Consultation Document

November 2023



MAKING LIFE **BETTER**

Foreword By Permanent Secretary

Supporting and enabling people to improve their health and wellbeing is a key priority for the Department of Health as this will help to make the population of Northern Ireland healthier, reduce the demand on our health and social care services, make us economically more productive, improve wellbeing and help make our population more resilient to future crises, such as pandemics.

The harms related to living with overweight and obesity, poor diets and not being physically active are among the most significant global health challenges we face, estimated to be the fourth most common risk factor for non-communicable diseases. It is therefore vital that we take action, across government and across society, to address this issue.

Work began on the development of a new strategic framework on obesity, to replace the existing 'A Fitter Future for All' commenced in 2021. The then Minister, Robin Swan, agreed to the establishment of an expert project board to develop this consultation. Importantly, membership of the Board included people with lived experience, Academics, Government Departments, Health Professionals and the Voluntary and Community Sector. The project board also hosted a range of workshops and seminars to get input from a wide variety of stakeholders and those with an interest in the issue. These engagement sessions were central to the development of this consultation document, and I would like to thank everyone who took part for their involvement, commitment, and the expertise they contributed.

The draft vision statement for the new strategy is 'to create the conditions in Northern Ireland which enable and support people to improve their diet and participate in more physical activity, and reduce the risk of related harm for those living with overweight and obesity'. In addition, thematic areas have been developed which include Healthy Policies, Healthy Places and Settings, Healthy People and, Making it Happen: Collaboration and a Whole System Approach.

The proposed new strategic framework seeks to take a whole system approach to addressing obesity and supporting people to achieve healthy weight, recognising the wider environment. It will be health-led but not solely health owned because there are contributing factors and mitigations that lie outside the scope of the health and social care system. It also acknowledges the alignment with other policy areas which impact on obesity and seeks to add value to these existing frameworks. This will help to address factors in the food and physical environment and also will help to better join up services and interventions for those suffering multiple needs and provide better patient centred care.

This consultation seeks views on a range of proposals to enhance health and wellbeing in Northern Ireland by focusing on improving diets, increasing participation in physical activity, addressing the obesogenic environment, and preventing the harm cause by overweight and obesity. Any new strategy will need to be agreed by Ministers when they are in place, but through this consultation we are keen to hear a wide range of views and ideas to make our new strategy, and proposed interventions, even better targeted at the factors that will make the most positive difference.

Please send us your thoughts, comments and suggestions by Friday 16 February 2024 and help us make the final strategy as effective as it can be to address this important issue.

Peter May
Permanent Secretary, Department of Health

23 November 2023

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1. THIS CONSULTATION AND HOW TO RESPOND

Topic of this consultation:

- 1.1 This consultation seeks views on the development of a new strategy to enhance health and wellbeing in Northern Ireland by focusing on improving diets, increasing participation in physical activity, addressing the obesogenic environment, and preventing the harm caused by overweight and obesity.

Scope of this consultation:

- 1.2 We are keen to hear the views of all those with an interest in addressing the harm related to obesity, poor diets or lack of physical activity including:
- members of the public;
 - community and voluntary sector organisations;
 - service users and those with lived or living experience of overweight and obesity;
 - health bodies;
 - health professionals;
 - those who work in schools, early years and education settings;
 - local government;
 - business and industry bodies;
 - academics; and
 - other Government Departments and agencies.

Geographical Scope:

- 1.3 The strategy falls within the scope of the devolved administration of Northern Ireland. However, we will continue to work closely with UK Government, Scotland, Wales, and the Government in the Republic of Ireland on these proposals.

Body/Bodies Responsible for the consultation:

- 1.4 This consultation is being undertaken by the Health Development Policy Branch in the Department of Health.

Duration:

- 1.5 The consultation will run for 12 weeks from **23 November 2023 to 16 February 2024**.

Enquiries:

- 1.6 For any enquiries about the consultation, please email the Department at: HDPB@health-ni.gov.uk or write to:

Healthy Futures – A Strategic Framework to Prevent the
Harm caused by Obesity, and Improve Diets and Levels of
Physical Activity in Northern Ireland
Health Development Policy Branch
Department of Health
Room C4.22, Castle Buildings
BELFAST BT4 3SQ
Tel: (028) 9052 0540

How to Respond:

- 1.7 Online: You can respond online by accessing the consultation documents on the 'Citizen Space' web service and completing the online survey there. The online version can be accessed at <https://consultations2.nidirect.gov.uk/doh-1/healthy-futures-consultation-2023-2032/>.
- 1.8 Alternatively you can respond via the email or office address above, however we would much prefer responses by Citizen Space.
- 1.9 When you reply, it would be very useful if you could confirm whether you are replying as an individual or submitting an official response on behalf of an organisation. If you are replying on behalf of an organisation, please include:
- your name;
 - your position (if applicable);
 - the name of your organisation;
 - an address (including postcode); and
 - an e-mail address.

Consultation Response:

- 1.10 We will consider the responses received and publish a report summarising the consultation findings on the Department's website.

Accessibility:

- 1.11 Alternative formats of this consultation document and the questionnaire (such as other languages, large type, Braille, easy read and audio cassette) may be made available on request. Please contact the Department to discuss your requirements.

Consultation Principles:

- 1.12 This consultation is being conducted in line with the Fresh Start Agreement – (Appendix F6 – Eight Steps to Good Practice in Public Consultation-Engagement)¹. These eight steps give clear guidance to Northern Ireland departments on conducting consultations.

Feedback on the Consultation Process:

- 1.13 We value your feedback on how well we consult. If you have any comments about the consultation process (as opposed to comments about the issues which are the subject of the consultation), including if you feel that the consultation does not adhere to the values expressed in the Eight Steps to Good Practice in Public Consultation Engagement or that the process could be improved, please address them to:

Health Development Policy Branch
Department of Health
Room C4.22, Castle Buildings
Stormont Estate
BELFAST BT4 3SQ
E-mail: HDPB@health-ni.gov.uk

1

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/479116/A_Fresh_Start_-_The_Stormont_Agreement_and_Implementation_Plan_-_Final_Version_20_Nov_2015_for_PDF.pdf

Equality and Rural Screening:

- 1.14 As per the Department of Health's Equality Scheme² and in order to comply with the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016³, this policy has been screened for both Equality/Good Relations and Rural Needs impacts. These screening documents are both available at: <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/obesity-strategy-2023-2033-rnia-and-eqia-0>.
- 1.15 These screenings have indicated that there is no significant negative impact from this strategy in terms of Equality of Opportunity, Good Relations or Rural Needs and thus no need for further Equality or Rural Impact Assessments. As part of this consultation, we welcome comments on these screening documents or inputs on areas where those responding may feel we should take further information into consideration in any future screening.

CONSULTATION QUESTION 1 – SCREENING:

Have you any comments on either the Equality/Good Relations or Rural screening documents?

CONSULTATION QUESTION 2 – SCREENING:

Are there any areas or issues you feel we should be considering in future Equality/Good Relations or Rural screenings?

² <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/doh-equality#toc-0>

³ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ni/2016/19/contents>

Privacy, Confidentiality and Access to Consultation Responses:

- 1.16 For this consultation, we may publish all responses except for those where the respondent indicates that they are an individual acting in a private capacity (e.g. a member of the public). All responses from organisations and individuals responding in a professional capacity may be published. When doing so, we will remove email addresses and telephone numbers from these responses; but apart from this, we may publish them in full. For more information about what we do with personal data please see the link to our consultation privacy notice at paragraph 1.19.
- 1.17 Your response, and all other responses to this consultation, may also be disclosed on request in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR); however all disclosures will be in line with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA) and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (EU) 2016/679.
- 1.18 If you want the information that you provide to be treated as confidential it would be helpful if you could explain to us why, so that this may be considered if the Department should receive a request for the information under the FOIA or EIR.
- 1.19 DoH is the data controller in respect of any personal data that you provide, and DoH's Privacy Notice, which gives details of your rights in respect of the handling of your personal data, can be found at: <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/articles/health-development-policy-branch-and-health-improvement-policy-branch-steering-groups-privacy-notice>.

2. BACKGROUND AND THE CASE FOR CHANGE

Introduction:

2.1 This chapter outlines what we know about the impact of food, physical activity, and overweight and obesity on health outcomes, along with the position in Northern Ireland.

Context:

- 2.2. Improving the health of the population of Northern Ireland is a key focus of the Department for Health and for the wider Northern Ireland Executive. In support of this, “We all enjoy long, healthy, active lives” is a key outcome in the draft Programme for Government⁴. Supporting and enabling people to improve their health and wellbeing will help to make the population of Northern Ireland healthier, will reduce the demand on our health and social care services, will make us economically more productive, will improve wellbeing and will help make our population more resilient to future crises, like pandemics.
- 2.3. The harms related to living with obesity, having poor diets or not being physically active, are recognised by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as one of the most serious global health challenges we face. The WHO European Regional Obesity Report 2022 states the “Recent estimates suggest that overweight and obesity is the fourth most common risk factor for non-communicable diseases, after high blood pressure, wider dietary risks and tobacco”.⁵
- 2.4. It is also important to note that this issue is not specific to Northern Ireland, the worldwide prevalence of obesity nearly tripled between 1975 and 2016 and it is estimated that by 2030 over 1 billion people globally will be living with obesity⁶.

⁴ <https://www.northernireland.gov.uk/programme-government-pfg-2021>

⁵ <https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/353747/9789289057738-eng.pdf>

⁶ https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/wof-files/World_Obesity_Atlas_2022.pdf

Defining Obesity:

- 2.5. The WHO Health Service Delivery Framework for Prevention and Management of Obesity states that obesity is "... a chronic complex disease defined by excessive adiposity (having too much fatty tissue in the body) that can impair health. It is in most cases a multifactorial disease due to obesogenic environments, psycho-social factors and genetic variants"⁷. Obesity is usually measured by Body Mass Index (BMI), which is calculated and is defined as the weight in kilograms divided by the square of the height in metres (kg/m²). The BMI categories for defining obesity vary by age and gender in infants, children and adolescents. For adults, obesity is defined by a BMI greater than or equal to 30 kg/m². There are three levels of severity of obesity – Class I BMI 30.0-34.9 kg/m², Class II BMI 35.0-39.9 kg/m², and Class III BMI greater than or equal to 40.0 kg/m² – in recognition of different management options⁸.
- 2.6. However, BMI should only be considered as an approximate guide to categorising overweight and obesity for individuals. Differences in distribution of fat around the body, higher or lower than average amounts of muscle, and ethnic differences, may mean that people with the same BMI have different levels of fat, and this may affect the associated health risks.
- 2.7. There have been some concerns about the validity of using BMI to measure obesity at the individual level, and there are alternatives such as waist to height ratio⁹. However, at the population level, BMI is generally accepted as a good measure of those living with overweight and obesity and can be compared across jurisdictions.
- 2.8. The situation for children is much more complex because a child's BMI varies with age and gender. There are UK reference curves and an international classification of overweight and obesity¹⁰ in children that can be used to

⁷ <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240073234>

⁸ <https://icd.who.int/browse11/l-m/en#/http://id.who.int/icd/entity/149403041>

⁹ <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg189>

¹⁰ <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/obesity-and-overweight>

calculate rates of overweight and obesity in children – with both producing slightly different results.

Statistics:

- 2.9. According to the Health Survey Northern Ireland¹¹, 65% of adults are classified as living with overweight or obesity. More men (71%) than women (60%) are living with overweight or obesity and rates are also higher in the most disadvantaged communities (68%) compared to the least disadvantaged (62%). Detailed statistics and trends from 2010/2011 are given at Annex A.
- 2.10. Just over one in four¹² children and young people in Northern Ireland are living with overweight (20%) or obesity (6%). Detailed statistics and trends from 2010/2011 are given at Annex A.
- 2.11. Around 57% of the population of Northern Ireland met the physical activity guidelines – with 23% reporting they were inactive.
- 2.12. 16% of the population were not aware of the guidance on consuming at least 5 portions of fruit and vegetables a day. 56% of the population consume less than the recommended portions with men (61%) less likely than women (52%) to reach the recommended level. The most disadvantaged communities have a lower proportion meeting the guidelines (39%) than the least disadvantaged (46%).

¹¹ <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/topics/health-survey-northern-ireland>

¹² Using the International Obesity task Force (IOTF) cut off points.

Summary:

2.13. The following infographics, sourced from the Health Survey Northern Ireland¹³, seeks to summarise the position in relation to these issues in Northern Ireland:

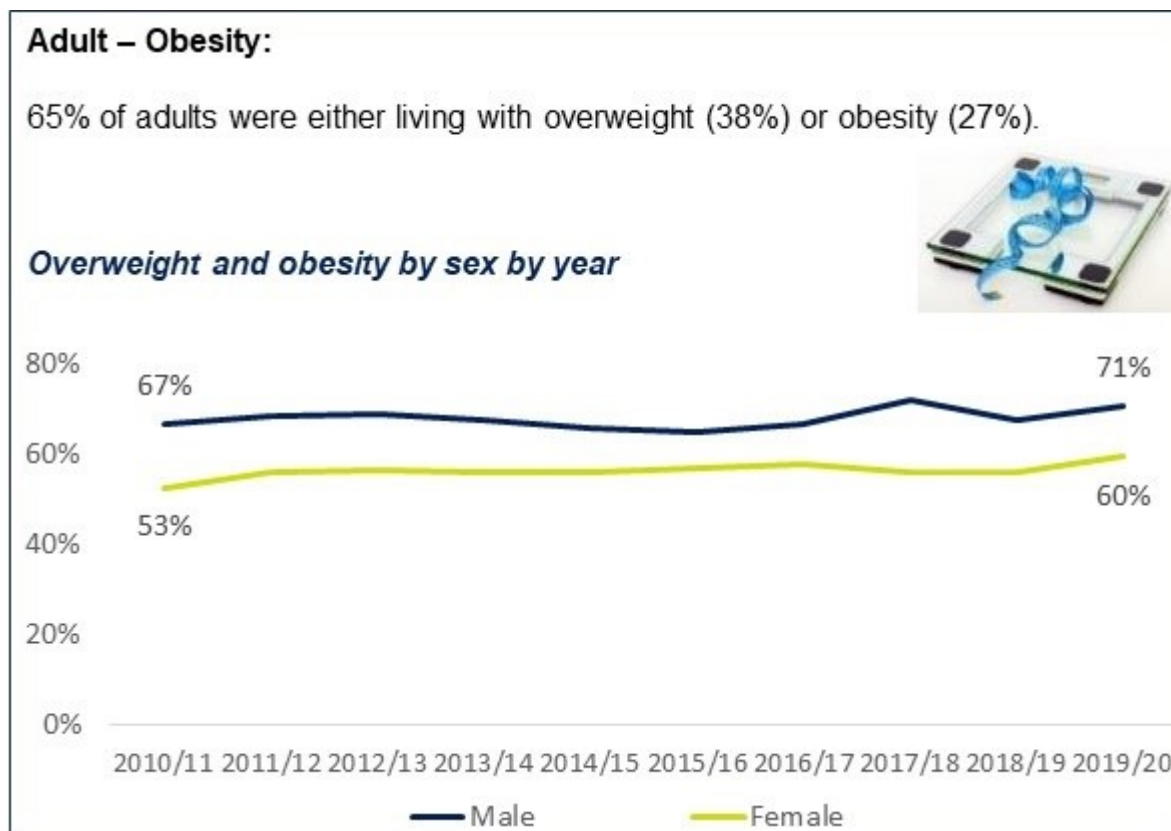


Figure 1: Adult overweight and obesity prevalence - 2010/11 to 2019/20

2.14. For all years, the proportion of males that were living with overweight or obesity was higher than for females and the overall trend is increasing over the past 10 years.

¹³ <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/topics/health-survey-northern-ireland>

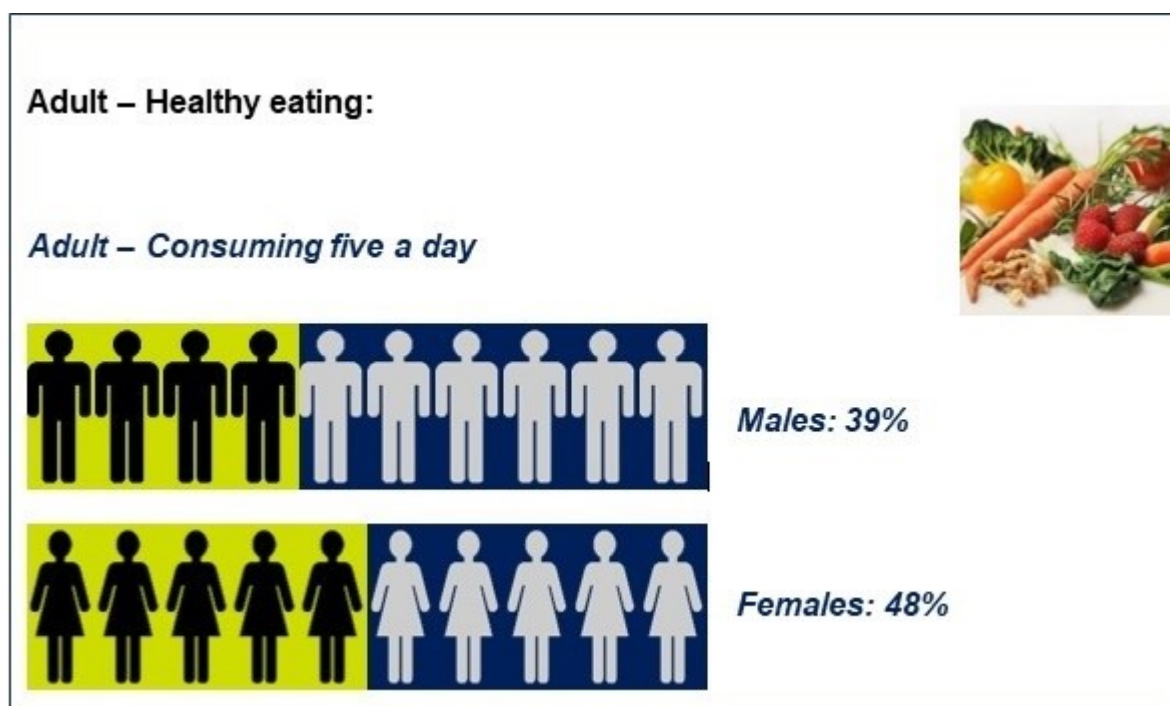


Figure 2: Adult rate of consuming '5-a-day' - 2010/11 to 2021/22

- 2.15. Consuming five a day increased from around a third (32%) in 2010/11 to 44% in 2021/22. Females (48%) were more likely than males (39%) to consume five a day
- 2.16. The latest Northern Ireland Food and You 2¹⁴ report indicated that most people (80%) were aware that the UK Government recommend that people should eat 5 portions of fruit and vegetables every day.
- 2.17. Despite apparent knowledge of these guidelines, the National Diet and Nutrition Survey¹⁵ reported that average adults aged 19 to 64 years consume 3.4 portions per day and adults aged 65 years and over consume 3.3 portions per day with around 80% not meeting the 5 A Day recommendation.
- 2.18. Children aged 11 to 18 years in Northern Ireland consume an average of 2.5 portions of fruit and vegetables per day with 94% not meeting the 5 A Day recommendation.

¹⁴ <https://www.food.gov.uk/research/food-and-you-2>

¹⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-diet-and-nutrition-survey>

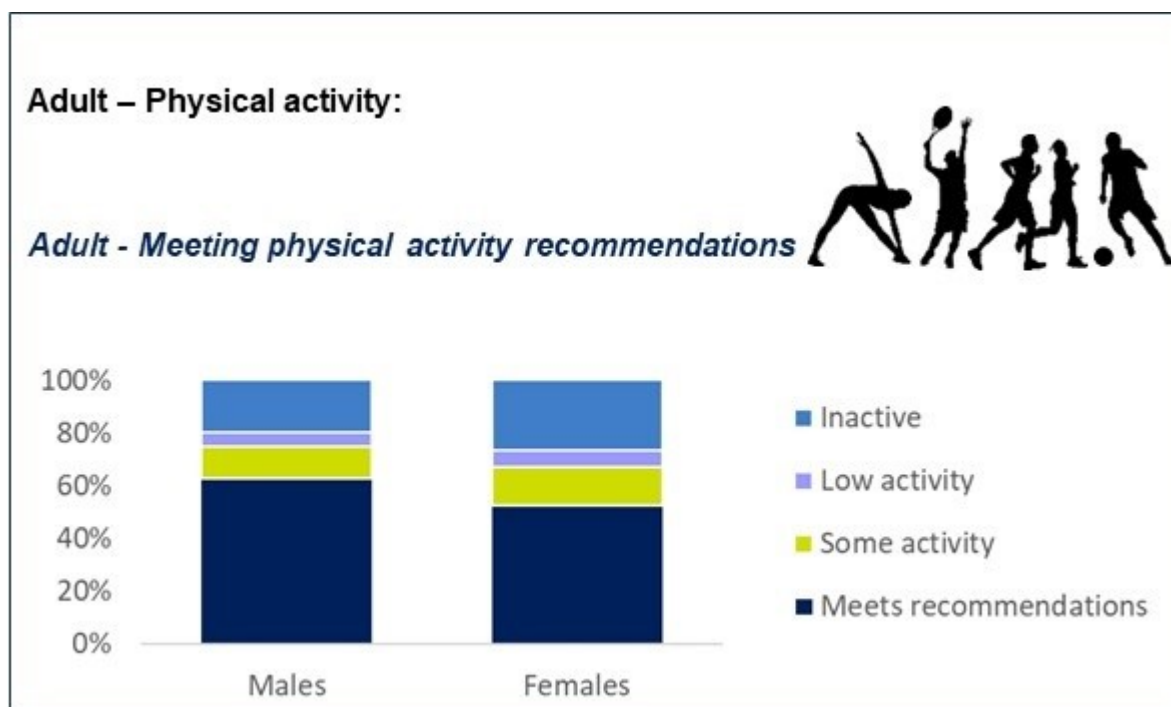


Figure 3: Adult rates of meeting Chief Medical Officers physical activity recommendations

- 2.19. 57% reported¹⁶ meeting the Chief Medical Officer’s physical activity recommendations.
- 2.20. Females (52%) were less likely than males (63%) to meet recommendations.

¹⁶ <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/topics/health-survey-northern-ireland>

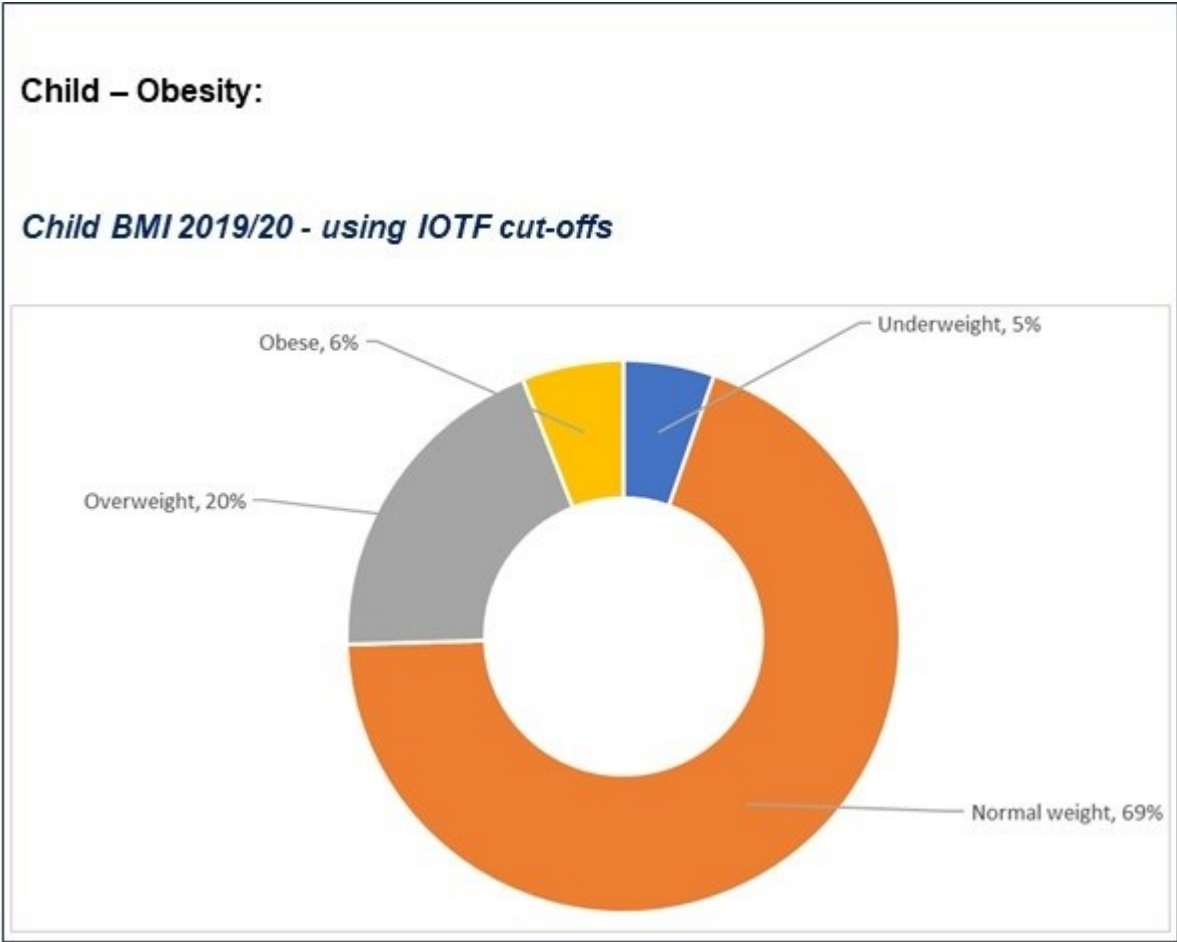


Figure 4: Child BMI levels 2019/20

- 2.21. Child obesity¹⁷ remained relatively stable between 2010/11 and 2019/20, with around a quarter of children in NI living with either overweight or obesity. In children aged 2 – 10, the rate changed from 27% in 2010/11 to 25% in 2019/20. For the same periods, for children aged 11 – 15 the rate changed from 27% to 26%.
- 2.22. In all years, there was no difference in the proportion of girls and boys that were living with overweight or obesity.

¹⁷ Children in this context are aged between 2 and 15 years old.



Figure 5: Child rates of consuming '5-a-day' in 2022

2.23. Around a sixth (16%)¹⁸ of children consumed five or more portions of fruit and vegetables each day. There was no difference between girls and boys.

2.24. 63% of children thought you SHOULD¹⁹ eat 5 or more portions of fruit and vegetables each day to be healthy.

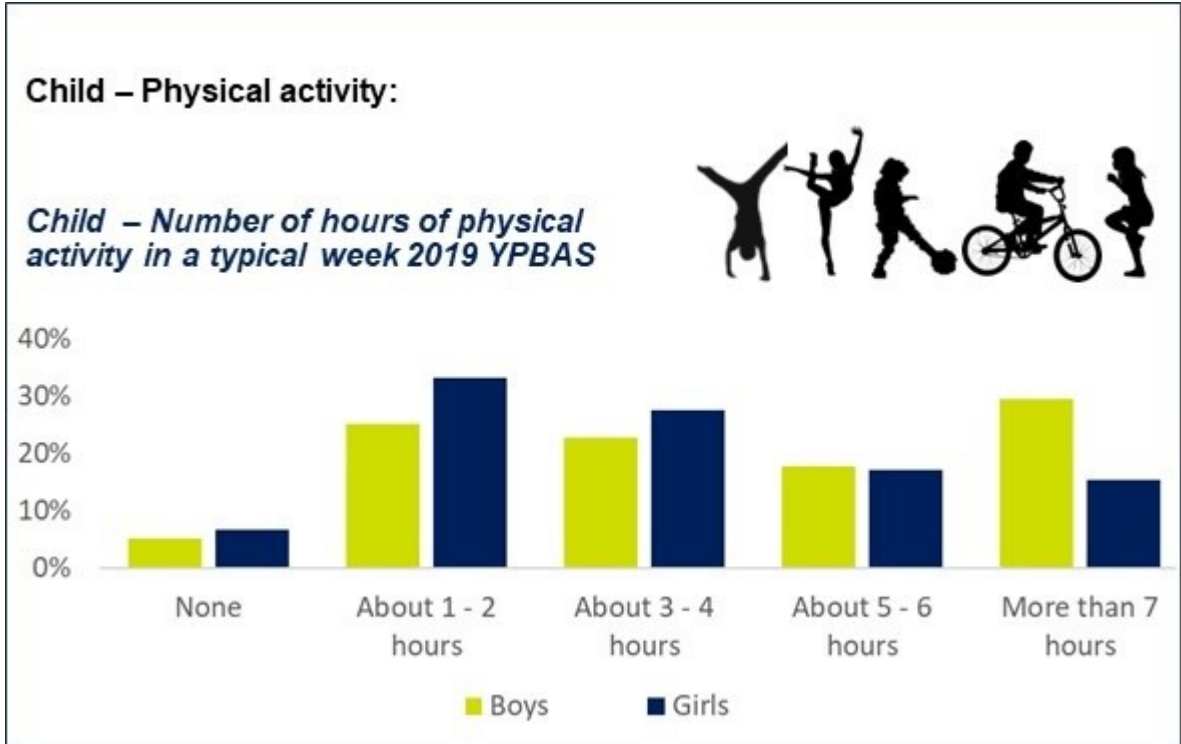


Figure 6: Child number of hours of physical activity per week 2019

¹⁸ <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/young-persons-behaviour-and-attitude-survey-2022>
¹⁹ <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/topics/health-survey-northern-ireland>

- 2.25. In 2019, boys (29%) were twice as likely as girls (15%) to do more than 7 hours of physical activity per week.
- 2.26. A third (32%)²⁰ of children described themselves as 'very active' and 'eat healthily' and 41% thought they were 'very active' but 'don't eat healthily'.
- 2.27. Almost two thirds (62.4%) of children stated that they enjoyed doing sports or physical activity a lot, with a third (32.3%) saying they enjoyed it a little, and the remaining 5.3% stating that they didn't enjoy it at all.
- 2.28. A further breakdown of some of these statistics is provided at Annex A

Impact:

- 2.29. The most important aspect of these figures is the impact this high prevalence of overweight and obesity has on individuals and our population. For example, those living with overweight or obesity are at a higher risk of a range of major health conditions including heart disease and stroke; type II diabetes; some cancers, including postmenopausal breast cancer, orthopaedic problems, and complications in pregnancy. In addition, obesity can also impact negatively on disability in the wider population - restricting people's ability to engage in physical activity, potentially negatively impacting quality of life, and mental health. Estimates by Cancer Research UK²¹ showed that obesity was the second main preventable cause of cancer, after smoking. and there are a number of other research reports on the links between body fat, weight gain and the risk of cancer²².
- 2.30. There are currently 108,000 people living with diabetes in Northern Ireland. Approximately 90% of people with diabetes will have type 2 diabetes. Diabetes diagnoses have almost doubled in the last 15 years²³, largely due to the number of cases of type 2 diabetes. While there are several risk factors for

²⁰ <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/find-your-survey/young-persons-behaviour-attitudes-survey>

²¹ https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/sites/default/files/obesity_tobacco_cross_over_report_final.pdf?_gl=1*_1clplp3*_ga*Nzg3OTk0OTIzLjE2MzU4NTg0ODk.*_ga_5873622GNN*MTY2MjM3NDU1Ny4yLjAuMTY2MjM3NDU1Ny42MC4wLjA.&_ga=2.108649159.493165658.1662374558-787994923.1635858489

²² https://www.wcrf.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Body-fatness-and-weight-gain_0.pdf

²³ <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/200405-202021-raw-disease-prevalence-data-northern-ireland>

type 2 diabetes, including age and ethnicity, the biggest preventable risk factor is obesity, which accounts for as much as 85% of the overall risk of developing type 2 diabetes. **It is also estimated that approximately 10% of Northern Ireland's HSC budget is spent on diabetes-related complications, which is over £1m per day.** Further estimates suggest that, without intervention, this could rise to 17% of HSC expenditure by 2035²⁴.

- 2.31. People living with obesity regularly face weight bias and stigma from a variety of sources, including education, workplace, healthcare settings. This is often the result of a lack of understanding about the complex drivers of obesity and lack of appreciation that addressing the issue of obesity is much more than simply 'eating less and moving more'. Experiencing weight stigma can directly and indirectly influence future weight gain, and negatively impact upon physical and mental health. It is therefore really important that we recognise that obesity, and weight stigma, can also contribute to mental health issues such as depression, and vice versa.
- 2.32. Overall, even low levels of excess weight can be associated with the loss of one in ten potentially disease-free years in middle and later adulthood (40-75 years old), and higher levels of obesity are associated with the loss of one in four disease-free years. There is an increasing loss of disease-free years as levels of obesity increase in both sexes, smokers and non-smokers, the physically active and inactive, and across socio-economic groups²⁵.
- 2.33. For our young people, children who live with overweight or obesity are at a greater risk of poor health in adolescence, as well as in adulthood. Indeed, a systemic review in 2016²⁶ showed that 80% of children who are living with obesity at 4/5 years old will continue to live with obesity into their adulthood.
- 2.34. Living with overweight and obesity can also impact on our body's resilience and ability to deal with other issues that can impact on our health. For

²⁴ <https://www.niauditoffice.gov.uk/files/niauditoffice/media-files/Type%20%20Diabetes%20Prevention%20and%20Care.pdf>

²⁵ <https://phw.nhs.wales/topics/overweight-and-obesity/the-case-for-action-on-obesity-in-wales/>

²⁶ [Predicting adult obesity from childhood obesity: a systematic review and meta-analysis - PubMed \(nih.gov\)](#)

example, evidence from the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated that excess weight was associated with an increased risk of the following for COVID-19: a positive test, hospitalisation, advanced levels of treatment (including mechanical ventilation or admission to intensive or critical care) and death²⁷.

- 2.35. Physical inactivity is one of the leading risk factors for noncommunicable diseases mortality. People who are insufficiently active have a 20% to 30% increased risk of death across the life course compared to people who are sufficiently active²⁸. Increasing levels of physical activity, and reducing sedentary behaviour, can also help achieve the UN Sustainability Goals²⁹, which are a collection of seventeen interlinked objectives designed to serve as a "shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future."
- 2.36. Regular physical activity can provide significant health benefits. Some physical activity is better than doing none. Being physically active on a regular basis can:
- improve muscular and cardiorespiratory fitness
 - improve bone and functional health
 - reduce the risk of hypertension, coronary heart disease, stroke, diabetes, various types of cancer (including breast cancer and colon cancer), and depression
 - reduce the risk of falls as well as hip or vertebral fractures; and
 - help maintain a healthy body weight.
- 2.37. Finally, consuming a healthy diet, across your life-course, helps to prevent malnutrition as well as a range of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and conditions. However, many people are now consuming more foods high in energy, fats, free sugars and salt/sodium and ultra-processed foods, and

²⁷

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/907966/PHE_insight_Excess_weight_and_COVID-19_FINAL.pdf

²⁸ <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/physical-activity>

²⁹ <https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/272722/9789241514187-eng.pdf>

many people do not eat enough fruit, vegetables, and other dietary fibre such as whole grains leading to nutrient deficiencies. This can be exacerbated by issues with the accessibility and affordability of healthy foods, and thus there can be an interrelationship between food security, social and economic disadvantage, and the risk of obesity that can further drive and widen inequalities.

Costs:

- 2.38. The financial costs related to the harms caused by overweight and obesity are substantial. A study³⁰ focusing on estimating both the healthcare and productivity costs of overweight and obesity in Northern Ireland put this at **£425 million** (at the October 2023 GBP: EUR exchange rate) every year.

Causes and wider determinants:

- 2.39. The causes of overweight and obesity are complex, and interrelated with wider genetic, socio-economic, cultural, and environmental factors. It is generally accepted that obesity occurs when an energy imbalance is created by an individual taking in more energy through the food and drink they consume than they expend. Over the years the increased availability of energy dense food processed foods at relatively cheap prices, along with a decrease in being physically active, has contributed to increasing levels of overweight and obesity in Northern Ireland.
- 2.40. The Foresight Report on Obesity published in 2007³¹ outlined the causes of obesity as multiple, complex, and interlinked and reaching far beyond public health. The research that underpinned the report revealed that the causes of obesity are embedded in an extremely complex biological system, set within an equally complex societal framework. And while the report successfully highlighted the contributions of a poor diet and physical inactivity as drivers of excess weight gain, it also brought an awareness that some individuals are

³⁰ <https://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/5/3/e006189>

³¹

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/287937/07-1184x-tackling-obesities-future-choices-report.pdf

biologically more susceptible to weight gain; recognised the impact of the environment on personal 'choices'; and provided a much greater acknowledgement of the interactions between the environment and the individual.

- 2.41. Other research shows that there are also genetic and epigenetic factors at play, which can make it challenging for individuals, and means we need to ensure that we create a supportive environment and that we intervene at early stages of life, and even pre-conception. The WHO Health Service Delivery Framework for Prevention and Management of Obesity³² also supports this and states that "... risk of obesity is influenced not only by genetic predispositions, biological factors and behaviours, but by upstream social, economic and commercial determinants such as poverty, employment, urbanization and food production and marketing that impact the environments in which eating and physical activity behaviours are learned and reinforced. These upstream determinants have the effect of limiting individual agency."
- 2.42. In light of this, it is vital that we understand that, while individual choices can play a role in overweight and obesity, through decisions made around diet and nutrition and participation in physical activity, the physical, social, economic, and commercial environment in which people are born, grow, develop, live, work, and age plays a key role in shaping behaviours (including the influence of cultural norms around food, activity and body weight) and opportunities and ability to make healthy choices. Therefore, these factors, along with ethnicity, genetics, poverty, and age, influence body weight outcomes, and we need to think in these broad systemic ways if we are to address this issue.
- 2.43. The outcome of this is demonstrated in the inequalities we see in health outcomes, for example rates of childhood obesity are consistently higher in the most deprived areas – with the rates at Year 1 being 1.5 times higher among children from the most deprived areas than those from least deprived and over twice as high in Year 8 in 2018/19. Therefore, with obesity as with

³² <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240073234>

other population health outcomes, it is important to address the wider social and economic determinants of health linked to deprivation and opportunity.

The Case for Change:

- 2.44. As set out above, obesity is one of the key risk factors for Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) such as type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, and certain types of cancer, as well as pulmonary, digestive, renal, endocrine, musculoskeletal, neurological, and mental health disorders. In 2019, there were an estimated 5 million obesity-related deaths from NCDs across the world, which corresponds to 12% of all NCD deaths³³. This combination of rising prevalence and significance as a risk factor for other NCDs means that obesity now represents one of the major public health challenges of our time.
- 2.45. Given what we know about diet, nutrition, physical activity, and weight-related outcomes, it is clear that efforts to address these issues require a cross-sectoral and whole-of-Government approach. NESTA's Report on the focus of Obesity Interventions³⁴ highlights that when it comes to reducing obesity, evidence shows that at the population level changing food environments is more effective than measures that try to educate or change the behaviour of individuals. However, the general public perceive that individual behaviour makes the most difference. This disconnect can mean there is more support for measures that seek to change individual behaviour, rather than measures that change the wider food or physical activity environment and culture and which are likely to be more effective. It is important that we make the case for these wider interventions and clearly communicate their potential effectiveness.
- 2.46. This also means that it is not solely the responsibility of the health and social care sector or health services to address this issue. And, in fact, if this is seen as a health-only issue then we will not create the system change needed to see real and lasting improvements. Solutions are multiple and complex, and

³³ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2589537023000275?via%3Dihub>

³⁴ <https://www.nesta.org.uk/report/changing-minds-about-changing-behaviours-obesity-focus/>

no single agency, sector or Government department can deliver on them on their own. In addition, as referred to above, inequalities in economic and social circumstances are correlated with rates of obesity and therefore addressing these wider health determinants is an important aspect of any strategic approach to addressing obesity.

- 2.47. While there has been good progress on implementing our current obesity prevention framework, A Fitter Future for All (see Chapter 3), it is clear that the strategy, for various reasons set out later, has not met its overarching targets at the population level, and therefore any new approach to supporting improved diets, encouraging participation in physical activity, and reducing the prevalence of overweight and obesity at the population level, needs to take account of the most up-to-date evidence base and must be delivered at a scale and intensity that makes a difference at a population level.

3. WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO DATE AND THE WAY FORWARD

Summary:

3.1. This chapter outlines the existing policy environment, as well as summarising the reports of progress of the previous strategy and the process to develop this consultation document.

A Fitter Future for All:

3.2. A Fitter Future For All 2012-2022³⁵ (AFFFA) is the current the strategic framework to reduce the harm related to overweight and obesity, it aimed to “empower the population of Northern Ireland to make health choices, reduce the risk of overweight and obesity-related diseases and improve health and wellbeing, by creating an environment that supports and promotes a physically active lifestyle and a healthy diet”.

3.3. AFFFA’s overarching targets were:

- For adults, to reduce the level of obesity by 4% and overweight and obesity by 3% by 2022.
- For children, a 3% reduction of obesity and 2% reduction of overweight and obesity by 2022.

3.4. AFFFA has had a focus on outcomes across the life of the framework, with short, medium and long-term outcomes set and reviewed every 3 years – to align with anticipated budget periods. The latest set of short-term outcomes, covering 2019-2022 were agreed in October 2019. The framework, associated papers and progress reports are available at: <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/articles/obesity-prevention>.

3.5. 82% of these latest short-term outcomes were either achieved or on track for achievement as of June 2022 while 18% were on track for achievement, but with some delay. Key progress to date includes:

³⁵ <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/obesity-prevention-framework-and-reports>

- The Weigh to a Healthy Pregnancy Programme is now offered to all pregnant women with a BMI of 38+.
- All pregnant women receive the pregnancy book, which is updated yearly and contains information on healthy eating and physical activity.
- The 'Breastfeeding Welcome Here'³⁶ scheme continues to be promoted and any business open to the public is eligible to join the scheme.
- The HENRY Early Years Obesity Prevention Programme³⁷ (EYOPP) was procured in September 2019. EYOPP coordinators and child health assistants are in post in each trust to deliver the programme to families.
- Raise, Engage, Refer training has been delivered as part of EYOPP training package and informs Allied Healthcare Professionals and others working in health on how to constructively raise the issue of obesity, engage with parents/carers and to refer into the HENRY programme.
- An Eating Well, Choosing Better programme is being delivered to encourage the food industry to achieve sugar and calorie reduction by reduction in portion size, reduction in sugar and/or calories content per 100g of product or a shift in product portfolio towards lower sugar options.
- The development of the voluntary calorie labelling scheme, 'Calorie Wise' continues, in partnership with the eleven local councils in NI.
- Active Travel is supported in three settings, Schools (Active Schools Travel), workplaces (Leading the Way with Active Travel), and communities (Community Active Travel Programme in 12 disadvantaged communities in Belfast).
- The Daily Mile scheme is being promoted in primary schools and work is ongoing to expand this throughout NI.
- A regionally consistent Physical Activity Referral Scheme has been rolled out across all council areas in NI.

³⁶

<https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/sites/default/files/Breastfeeding%20welcome%20here%20scheme%20booklet%202018.pdf>

³⁷ <https://www.henry.org.uk/crucialtime>

- 3.6. Indicators used to measure these outcomes over the lifetime of AFFFA up to the latest available data, show that, for example:
- % mothers breastfeeding increased from 42% to 51% between 2012/13 and 2019/20.
 - % of children in P1 living with overweight and obesity increased from 22.7%/5.7% to 23%/6.8% between 2010/11 and 2019/20.
 - % of adults adopting the 5–a–day guidelines rose from 32% to 44% between 2010/11 and 2019/20.
 - % of adults experiencing food poverty dropped from 7% to 4% from 2013/14 to 2018/19.
- 3.7. There has therefore been good progress in implementing AFFFA, but it has not met its overarching targets at the population level. While individual interventions have proved successful, they have either not been delivered within a wider systematic approach needed to create a supportive environment, have been impacted in terms of delivery and behavioural change by the COVID-19 pandemic, or they haven't been delivered at the scale required to have an impact.
- 3.8. In addition, the current strategy has been taken forward within the constraints of the wider 'obesogenic environment' that exists in our society. The term 'obesogenic environment' refers to the role environmental factors may play in determining both energy intake and expenditure. It has been defined as the 'sum of the influences that the surroundings, opportunities, or conditions of life have on promoting obesity in individuals and populations'³⁸. The term embraces the entire range of social, cultural and infrastructural conditions that influence an individual's ability to adopt a healthy lifestyle. For example, specific environmental factors may shape the availability and consumption of different foods, or the levels of physical activity undertaken by populations, thus limiting choices.

³⁸ Eggar, G. and Swinburn, B. 2002. Preventative Strategies against Weight Gain and Obesity. *Obesity Reviews*, 3:28–301.

Project board, Development of a new strategy, Pre-consultation process:

- 3.9. In this context, and because of the wider impacts of this issue along with the case for change, the former Health Minister agreed in June 2021 that co-production work should begin on a refreshed strategic direction.
- 3.10. To take this work forward, the Department of Health established in late 2021 an expert project board to advise on this work and to lead the co-production of a new strategy. The project board includes input from health professionals, academics, the community and voluntary sector, those living with obesity, and a range of other Government Departments.
- 3.11. The project board developed and agreed the overarching process to develop the new strategic framework and helped inform the development of a range of thematic co-production workshops to test the development of the strategy, advised on who should be involved, and developed a vision and principles for the work. The Department hosted seven virtual thematic workshops that had input from and engagement with all key sectors, and one overarching workshop on “whole system approaches”.

Strategic Insight Lab and Systems Dynamic Modelling:

- 3.12. The project board’s work was informed by a 2-day Strategic Insight Lab in late 2019 on childhood obesity which was held to examine the challenge question ‘how can we create a society in which children grow up a healthy weight?’
- 3.13. The objectives of the Strategic Insight Lab were agreed as follows:
- to identify the key challenges, opportunities and gaps relating to the challenge question;
 - to develop recommendations relating to the key themes and questions identified by participants for further consideration by DoH; and
 - to produce a report capturing the detail of the event that may help inform any further work on this area.
- 3.14. In identifying attendees for the Strategic Insight Lab event, engagement and discussion took place between the Department, key stakeholders and the

Innovation Lab to ensure there was an optimal mix, spread and balance of participants representing the health and business landscape from across a range of sectors.

3.15. By working through the exercises, individuals and stakeholder groups were able to look at and understand the challenge from other perspectives. This approach, coupled with the energy, enthusiasm and passion of individuals at the event, was instrumental in leading to 42 recommendations. The recommendations addressed the following questions:

- How do we identify, collect, share and link data that is representative of society to measure indicators and outcomes to achieve impact?
- How do we agree a common outcome for tackling childhood obesity / health weight?
- How can we create a culture that encourages and incentivises outdoor play, activity and physical activity and utilise social clauses in planning to ensure a healthy environment?
- How can we understand barriers, develop and promote physical activity (inside and outside of school) as important as other subjects and make it more accessible?
- How do we ensure health impacts are embedded in policy development and legislation and ensure government policy doesn't have inadvertent adverse impacts?
- How do we ensure the right balance between legislative solutions to voluntary agreements (with the food industry)?
- How can we break the cycle of deprivation for families, focus on reducing inequalities and raise awareness?
- How can we tackle stigma while at the same time push back against the normalisation of higher body weights across the populations and ensuring we don't drive people towards underweight?
- How can we ensure effective buy-in, engagement and accountability of all stakeholders from the outset and reward collaboration to ensure the achievement of outcomes?

- How can we prioritise research and allocate funding with the focus on prevention and sustainability?
- How do we engage with all business to encourage and normalise healthy and sustainable food policy and healthy choices?
- How can we better encourage consumers to demand a healthier food environment?

3.16. The Lab was supported by the development of a system dynamics model to get a better understanding of the wider determinants of obesity and how they interact with policy, society and communities. While this work had to be paused due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as part of the co-production of a new strategy, the Department brought back together those individuals and organisations involved in the Strategic Innovation Lab and the system's dynamic modelling to further revise and prioritise actions and include them in this new framework.

Research projects:

- 3.17. The project board also helped to design and commission two pieces of research that have helped to inform the development of this strategic framework. The first is “A whole systems approach to obesity prevention: a review of evidence to support Northern Ireland policy development”³⁹. This co-produced briefing paper summarises the findings of an evidence review of what is known about using whole system approaches in relation obesity, food and nutrition, and physical activity, and how this may operate in a Northern Ireland context. The report was presented to the project board to inform decision making and inform the development of this consultation document.
- 3.18. The second research project involved the development of a policy options matrix. The matrix summarised the findings from a rapid review evidence published in academic journals that related to international obesity prevention policies over the last 10 years. The project identified 51 review articles (48

³⁹ <https://publichealth.ie/report-evidence-is-building-to-support-a-whole-systems-approach-to-obesity-prevention-in-northern-ireland/>

systematic reviews, two scoping and one narrative review) which were summarised under the following categories: food labelling, food packaging, food reformulation, taxation/subsidies, advertising, marketing and sponsorship, food and physical activity environment, and target population policy measures including socially disadvantaged groups and indigenous groups.

- 3.19. Overall, the policy options matrix summarises possible policy options and considers how these may or may not be applied in Northern Ireland. This, in conjunction with findings from the evidence review and stakeholder engagement throughout the consultation process, will help to inform decision-making to ensure that any policy approach taken is acceptable, feasible and translatable to the Northern Ireland context. This is a live document that will continue to be used to inform policy decisions and the implementation of the new strategic framework into the future.

NICE Guidelines:

- 3.20. There are also a range of existing National Institute for Clinical Excellence⁴⁰ (NICE) guidelines related to diet and nutrition, physical activity, obesity prevention and management, and weight management. These have also been taken account of in the development of this work, and also should be key to ensuring the strategic framework, once agreed, is delivered through an evidence-based and effective approach.

⁴⁰ <https://www.nice.org.uk/>

4. VISION, OUTCOMES, PRINCIPLES AND THEMATIC APPROACH

Introduction:

4.1 Based on the learning from the previous strategy, plus the pre-consultation process and related evidence reviews, and a consideration of what has worked elsewhere, this chapter sets out the proposed overall vision for a new strategic framework, along with a number of related outcomes, and outlines a number of principles that should be at the heart of its development and implementation. It also sets out the thematic approach we propose to use to take this forward.

Vision

4.2. The project board proposed that the overall vision for this new strategic framework should be:

To create the conditions in Northern Ireland which enable and support people to improve their diet and participate in more physical activity, and reduce the risk of related harm for those living with overweight and obesity.

CONSULTATION QUESTION 3 – VISION:	
Do you agree with this vision?	
Strongly agree: <input type="checkbox"/>	Agree: <input type="checkbox"/>
Disagree: <input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly disagree: <input type="checkbox"/>
Comments:	

Principles:

4.3. The project board proposed a range of principles for the development and implementation of the new strategic framework, these are:

- The new strategic framework will take a **whole system approach** to addressing obesity and supporting people to achieve healthy weight, it will be **health led but not solely health owned**.
- Recognising that overweight and obesity can cause harm at any stage, and that there is an intergenerational dimension, the new framework will take a **life course approach**, but it may specifically **target or prioritise certain groups** (i.e. it may have a strong focus on childhood obesity).
- Given the disparities that exist in this area, the framework will have a focus on reducing food, physical activity and overweight and obesity related **inequalities**.
- Acknowledging the **alignment with other policy areas**, the new framework will seek to add value to existing strategic frameworks (such as the new cancer, diabetes, food and the sport and physical activity strategies) and will not seek to duplicate activities or reporting arrangements.
- The framework will be **outcome-based**, focused on how we improve life for people not just the activities and initiatives we undertake.
- The framework will provide an **umbrella for actions to prevent and address overweight and obesity**, from education and prevention through to weight management and treatment services. Previous obesity strategies focused solely on prevention.

CONSULTATION QUESTION 4 – PRINCIPLES:	
Do you agree with these principles?	
Strongly agree: <input type="checkbox"/>	Agree: <input type="checkbox"/>
Disagree: <input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly disagree: <input type="checkbox"/>
Comments:	

Outcomes

4.4. We also recognise that, eating a healthy diet and being physically active have many health benefits beyond just promotion of healthy weight. These are key components in living long, healthy lives, promoting good health and emotional wellbeing, and reducing the risk of injury and premature death and are therefore important in their own right. For example, over and above weight related outcomes, these can improve your brain health and mental wellbeing, reduce the risk of disease, strengthen bones and muscles, improve your oral health, and improve your ability to do everyday activities.

4.5. This strategic framework therefore focuses on four main long-term population level outcomes across the life course:

- Reducing the percentage of people in Northern Ireland who are a living with overweight and/or obesity;
- Improving the population’s diet and nutrition;
- Increasing the percentage of the population who participate in regular physical activity; and
- Reducing the prevalence of overweight and obesity related Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs).

CONSULTATION QUESTION 5 – OUTCOMES:	
Do you agree with these 4 population level outcomes?	
Strongly agree: <input type="checkbox"/>	Agree: <input type="checkbox"/>
Disagree: <input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly disagree: <input type="checkbox"/>
Comments:	

- 4.6. In line with the overall approach set out in the draft Programme for Government⁴¹, this new strategic framework will be taken forward using an Outcomes Based Accountability approach. At the strategic level, this framework will focus on “Population Accountability”. It is accepted that no one organisation alone will be able to achieve, or even progress, the outcomes at population accountability level and therefore this new strategic framework will promote a joined up, whole system approach to partnership working and decision-making.
- 4.7. However, at the implementation level the delivery of the actions within the strategic framework will focus on “Performance Accountability” highlighting whether and how the local population is better off as a result of the delivery of the actions.

Thematic approach:

- 4.8. The project board proposed an overall thematic approach for the new strategic framework. This is set out in the following diagram, with further information contained in the following chapters:

⁴¹ <https://www.northernireland.gov.uk/programme-government-pfg-2021>

Diagram – Thematic Approach

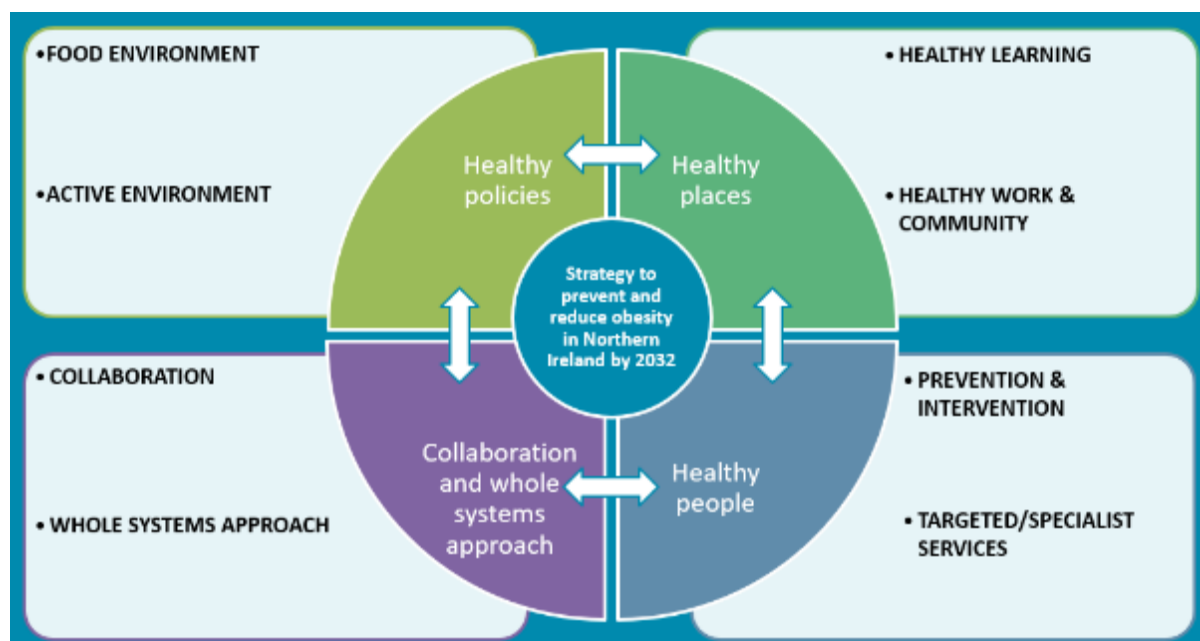


Figure 7: Thematic approach graphic, summarising project themes

CONSULTATION QUESTION 6 – THEMATIC APPROACH:	
Are all the key areas covered within this thematic approach?	
Yes: <input type="checkbox"/>	No: <input type="checkbox"/>
Comments:	

Links to other strategies:

4.9. Given the complexities involved in addressing the obesogenic environment, and the existing policy across the NI Executive in relation to food and physical activity, this strategic framework cannot address all the wider causes of obesity-related harm and will therefore focus on where there are specific diet, nutrition, physical activity and healthy weight actions that can have a positive impact. However, we will work with others, and play our part in addressing these issues through interaction with a range of strategies led by other NI Executive Departments. While further related strategies are mentioned under each theme in the chapters that follow, the following are particularly relevant:

- a. Active Living - Sport and Physical Activity Strategy for Northern Ireland (<https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/active-living-sport-and-physical-activity-strategy-northern-ireland>).
- b. The draft Northern Ireland Food Strategy Framework which issued for consultation in late 2021 (<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/summary-responses-consultation-northern-ireland-food-strategy-framework>).
- c. Active travel - Sustainable transport policies, primarily focused on cycling and walking in Northern Ireland (<https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/topics/active-travel>).
- d. A Cancer Strategy for Northern Ireland 2022-2032 (<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/cancer-strategy-northern-ireland-2022-2032>).
- e. A Diabetes strategic framework (<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/diabetes-strategic-framework>)
- f. Our Great Outdoors – The Outdoor Recreation Action Plan For Northern Ireland (<https://www.outdoorrecreationni.com/publication/strategies/our-great-outdoors-the-outdoor-recreation-action-plan-for-northern-ireland/>)

5. THEME A – HEALTHY POLICIES

What is this and why is it important:

- 5.1. **As set out so far in this consultation, our ability to eat a healthy diet, participate in physical activity, and to maintain a weight that is good for our health, is very much influenced by the wider environment in which we live our lives. The strategies, policies, regulations and stakeholders such as the food industry that control the wider food and physical environment therefore play a key role in addressing the obesogenic environment.**

Food environment:

- 5.2. The food we eat and the drinks we consume have a direct impact on our physical and mental health. Over the past 50 years, the food environment, the commercial environment, wider regulations and what and how we eat has continued to change.
- 5.3. Eating out of home has become much more prevalent, as has ordering take-aways to eat on the move and at home. These meals can often be larger portion sizes and/or contain low-cost ingredients and preservatives with greater amounts of fat, salt and sugar than food we make ourselves.
- 5.4. Shopping has also changed, with more use of large retailers and home delivery or “click and collect” services. Ready meals and pre-prepared food also are more available, and often the foods that are promoted and sold as lower cost deals are convenient, higher in fat, salt or sugar, and more energy dense than healthier alternatives. If more of these unhealthy foods are eaten, over time this can create behavioural, psychological or dietary preferences that can be challenging to change.
- 5.5. There is also growing consideration being given to Ultra Processed Foods. A rapid review of Ultra-Processed Food and Obesity⁴² was completed in 2018

⁴² <https://phw.nhs.wales/topics/overweight-and-obesity/rapid-review-of-ultra-processed-food-and-obesity/>

and it set out that these are products which are typically energy dense; have a high glycaemic load; are low in dietary fibre, micronutrients, and phytochemicals; and are high in unhealthy types of dietary fat, free sugars, and sodium. When consumed in small amounts and with other healthy sources of calories, ultra-processed products are likely to be harmless; however, intense palatability, the availability and the marketing of these foods makes their consumption more likely, and has the potential to displace fresh or minimally processed foods. These factors also make ultra-processed products liable to harm satiety mechanisms and so promote energy overconsumption and thus obesity.

- 5.6. The Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN) has carried out a scoping review of the evidence on processed foods and health and published its position statement and report⁴³ in July 2023. The Systemic Reviews identified have consistently reported that increased consumption of (ultra-) processed foods was associated with increased risks of adverse health outcomes. However, there are uncertainties around the quality of evidence available. Studies are almost exclusively observational and confounding factors may not be adequately accounted for. The SACN statement concludes that consumption of (ultra-) processed foods may be an indicator of other unhealthy dietary patterns and lifestyle behaviours. Diets high in (ultra-) processed foods are often energy dense, high in saturated fat, salt or free sugars, high in processed meat, and/or low in fruit and vegetables and fibre. It is unclear to what extent observed associations between (ultra-) processed foods and adverse health outcomes are explained by established nutritional relationships between nutritional factors and health outcomes on which SACN has undertaken robust risk assessments. The SACN statement goes on to state that the observed associations between higher consumption of (ultra-) processed foods and adverse health outcomes are concerning – however, the limitations the classification system, the potential for confounding, and the possibility that the observed adverse associations with (ultra-) processed foods are covered by existing UK dietary recommendations mean that the

⁴³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sacn-statement-on-processed-foods-and-health>

evidence to date needs to be treated with caution. The statement also set out recommendations for further research to address these issues with the evidence base.

- 5.7. However, given the inflationary pressures currently affecting the UK economy and the financial pressures on households – particularly those with the lowest amounts of income or communities living in the most deprived areas – it is important that any changes we propose do not have unintended consequences that exacerbate issues for those most likely to be at risk. Action we take should take account of our commitment to addressing inequalities, recognising that any changes we propose may have the potential to have the biggest health and wellbeing impacts, both positive and negative, on those in the most deprived areas. We must seek to reduce the gap in health outcomes between those in the most deprived areas and the Northern Ireland average. Any changes will therefore need to be carefully balanced and timed, and we are seeking your views on this as part of the consultation.
- 5.8. It is important to note that there has been some positive recent progress in reformulation of certain food and providing a greater choice of healthier options. However, it will be vital that this work is built on into the future.

Physical Environment:

- 5.9. The physical environment in which we live has also changed dramatically over the last 50 years. In general, our infrastructure is built around the car, rather than public transport, walking and cycling. And while there has been good progress in promoting and enabling active and sustainable transport, there can still be issues around perceived convenience and safety concerns that can influence us to take more sedentary options instead of active travel. This can be a particular issue in rural areas where access to active and public transport can be more of an issue leading to a greater reliance on cars⁴⁴

⁴⁴ <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/daera/Key%20Rural%20Issues%202022%20Infographic.pdf>

- 5.10. There is also the opportunity to make greater use of the environment in which we live, for physical activity, recreation, and sport.
- 5.11. There is a strong link between childhood obesity and lack of access to quality green spaces and active travel opportunities. We therefore need to ensure that we use all the resources accessible to our population to provide high-quality, well-connected places and spaces, and that there are more opportunities for active recreation and play for families and children, particularly in the early years.

What do we collectively want to achieve:

- 5.12. Over the 10-year span of this new strategic framework, under this theme, we will seek to ensure that:
- everyone can access and afford healthier food and drink more readily;
 - healthier food and drink will be marketed and promoted to a great extent, and there will be less promotion of food or drinks high in fat, salt or sugar, to ensure that healthy food is more visible and accessible than less healthy options;
 - consumers will be better informed and have clear information to enable them to make informed choices;
 - there is greater consumption of healthier food, particularly fruit and vegetables, in line with the Eatwell guide;
 - more people achieve the 4 UK Chief Medical Officer Physical Activity Guidelines;
 - use of active travel is increased; and
 - physical recreation and sport participation is increased.
- 5.13. Within all these areas we will focus on, and measure, reducing the inequalities that exist between the most deprived areas, the NI average and the least deprived areas.
- 5.14. It should be noted that there is also a clear overlap between progress on this agenda, and wider progress on climate change, net zero, green growth, air

quality, food security, and the sustainability agenda. Delivering on this strategic framework will also therefore very much support the delivery of ‘A Green Growth Strategy for Northern Ireland - Balancing our climate, environment and economy’⁴⁵. It will also align closely with the draft Northern Ireland Food Strategy Framework⁴⁶.

CONSULTATION QUESTION 7 – HEALTHY POLICIES:	
Do you agree with this theme and what it is seeking to achieve?	
Strongly agree: <input type="checkbox"/>	Agree: <input type="checkbox"/>
Disagree: <input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly disagree: <input type="checkbox"/>
Comments:	

What are the priorities within this theme:

- 5.15. The Department hosted three open co-production seminars on this theme, along with a wider review of the evidence base in respect of the impact policies and legislation can have on supporting social change on these issues. We also worked closely with counterparts who lead on other strategies in this area to ensure alignment, and that potential proposals would add-value to those already in place.

- 5.16. The key priorities that have been identified through co-production with stakeholders and the evidence reviews were:

⁴⁵ <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/green-growth-strategy-northern-ireland-balancing-our-climate-environment-and-economy>

⁴⁶ <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/summary-responses-consultation-northern-ireland-food-strategy-framework>

Food environment:

- Work with the UK Government to further restrict the broadcast advertising of foods high in saturated fat, sugar and salt, including online.
- Consider what powers are in place within NI to further reduce the marketing, promotion, packaging, and advertising of foods high in saturated fat, sugar and salt.
- Work with local and national stakeholders to increase the affordability and accessibility of healthier options.
- Consider NI and UK nation's policy on price and place promotions of food high in saturated fat, sugar and salt including the introduction of legislation and the powers available in NI.

Food labelling and information:

- Work with the UK nations to review and enhance front of pack nutritional labelling on pre-packed products. Continue to monitor EU position on the policy and implement any change to current legislation.
- Consider NI and UK nation's policy on calorie labelling at the point of purchase for food eaten out of the home including the introduction legislation and the powers available in NI.

Healthier food options:

- Increase the scale and breadth of reformulation among Northern Ireland manufacturers to produce healthier food lower in calories, saturated fat, sugar and salt and where appropriate work with the UK Government and other devolved nations on national reformulation programmes.
- Expand the use of nutritional standards to ensure that procurement and contracting in the public sector supports the purchasing and selling of healthier food and drink.
- Promote and increase the awareness of nutritional standards among private sector employers.

- Support local food businesses to develop healthy food choices and to increase more local food growing and food production opportunities.
- Work with planning leads to develop planning policies to restrict the availability of Hot Food Take-aways near schools or to manage density of Hot Food Takeaways where appropriate.

Physical activity and active travel:

- Work with DfI to ensure continued and sustained investment into active travel which will increase cycling and walking opportunities.
- Development of a holistic Active travel programme across communities, schools and workplaces.
- Work with DfC on the delivery of the themes and goals set out in the NI Strategy for Sport and Physical Activity – Active Living, which will have a direct impact on addressing obesity levels across communities.
- Development of a Walking for All programme.
- Support and enhance the use of Health Impact Assessments and tools for planners to support local action and improve opportunities for communities to develop local ideas and solutions to improve access to quality green spaces.
- Work with other government departments, councils, and local communities to better promote, and provide more opportunities to access, local green spaces and safe routes for walking, cycling and recreation – particularly in areas of deprivation.

CONSULTATION QUESTION 8 – HEALTHY POLICIES:

Do you agree with these priorities?

Strongly agree:

Agree:

Disagree:

Strongly disagree:

<p>Comments: Food environment priorities</p>
<p>Comments: Food labelling and information priorities</p>
<p>Comments: Heathier food options priorities</p>
<p>Comments: Physical activity and active travel priorities</p>

<p>CONSULTATION QUESTION 9 – HEALTHY POLICIES: Is there anything missing that is likely to have a positive impact on this theme and what it is trying to achieve?</p>
<p>Comments:</p>

6. THEME B – HEALTHY PLACES AND SETTINGS

What is this and why is it important:

- 6.1. At all ages, we can spend a significant portion of our lives in places and settings that influence our ability or inability to eat healthily, be physically active and to manage our weight. This can be through a lack of access to opportunities, barriers to participation and lack of availability. However, settings can also play a positive role in supporting the health and wellbeing of the people who access them. Not just through providing healthy options, but also by promoting knowledge and awareness, and by understanding the impact that food and nutrition, physical activity and healthy weight play in promoting productivity, life-long health and longevity, supporting learning, and helping to address sustainability and climate change issues.

Early years settings, schools, and further/higher education:

- 6.2. Our children and young people can spend a significant proportion of their time in early years settings, schools, and further and higher education settings. These settings can therefore play a vital role in supporting the development of healthy habits that can support our young people through childhood, but also help establish this behaviour into adulthood.
- 6.3. We know that providing children with the appropriate foods and their participation in physical activity helps support their growth and development. But there is a growing body of research showing that what children eat and their physical activity levels, can affect not only their physical health but also their mood, mental health and learning. It is therefore vital to recognise while these settings can support good health and wellbeing outcomes, good health and wellbeing is also a vital component and enabler of preparedness for school and the achievement of good learning outcomes both now and into the future.
- 6.4. Research suggests that eating a healthy and nutritious diet and participating in physical activity can improve mental health, enhance cognitive skills like

concentration and memory and improve academic performance. This means that healthy students are better learners. Research also shows that eating habits and healthy behaviours are connected to academic achievement⁴⁷. For example, in the USA, student participation in the School Breakfast Program is associated with better grades and standardised test scores, reduced absences, and improved memory⁴⁸.

- 6.5. Consuming too many nutritionally poor foods and drinks that are high in added fats, sugars and salt, has been connected to emotional and behavioural problems in children and adolescents. In fact, young people that have the unhealthiest diets are nearly 80% more likely to have depression than those with the healthiest diets. The Children's Future Food Inquiry⁴⁹ set out that food insecurity, hunger and poor diets could lead to behavioural issues in class, alongside wider mental health and emotional wellbeing concerns. This will obviously impact on learning outcomes, not just for the individual but there are potential implications for the rest of the class.
- 6.6. Early years and education settings can play a key role in influencing healthy eating and physical activity habits, as students can consume on average 37% of their energy intake for the day during school hours and significant time can also be made available in these settings to undertake physical activity.
- 6.7. These settings can therefore promote and educate children, young people and their parents or carers about a healthy lifestyle. They can facilitate and provide the delivery interventions which support regular physical activity and healthy eating and can be places that provide access to healthier food and drink. Establishing these patterns early in life can bring life-long benefit. Staff in these settings can also benefit from this approach.

⁴⁷ https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/health_and_academics/pdf/factsheetDietaryBehaviors.pdf

⁴⁸ <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30715390/>

⁴⁹ <https://foodfoundation.org.uk/publication/childrens-future-food-inquiry>

Workplace Settings:

- 6.8. Even with the increase in hybrid and home working, as a nation we spend a significant amount of our adult lives in workplaces. It is important to acknowledge therefore that the places where we work play an important role in promoting positive health and wellbeing.
- 6.9. Not only can this be good for the health and wellbeing of employees, but there are strong social and economic reasons for workplaces in the private, public and third sectors to encourage and enable staff to be healthier as this can increase productivity, job satisfaction and reduce sickness absence. Many workplaces already undertake to do just this, and we want to work to ensure this is the norm across Northern Ireland, and to support and empower employers to go further.
- 6.10. The types of initiatives that employers can take forward include increasing the availability and accessibility of healthier food and drink options in canteens and vending machines, where these are provided. They can also restrict promotions on unhealthy products and increasing promotion of healthier options. Many workplaces already provide schemes and support to promote good physical and mental health for staff such as offering health checks, programmes that provide advice and support on health issues, cycle to work schemes, gym access etc. In addition, workplaces can provide facilities and policies to support active travel and promoting peer support workplace initiatives, such as lunchtime walks or weight loss programmes.
- 6.11. There are also wider influences in respect of unemployment, under employment, job insecurity, shift patterns and health related behaviours⁵⁰.

Health, community and other settings:

- 6.12. There are a number of other settings within our daily lives that play an integral role in creating healthy environments and can influence the daily opportunities

⁵⁰ <https://diabetes-resources-production.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/resources-s3/public/2022-10/Preventing%20type%20%20and%20gestational%20diabetes%20position%20statement%20-%20October%202022.pdf>

available to us for eating well and physical activity. These settings include health or care sites such as hospitals, GP surgeries or pharmacies and places in the community such as leisure centres, cinemas or community centres.

- 6.13. These are also workplaces and have the ability to influence and support healthy behaviours for staff, as well as for the general public attending. But more than this they can all contribute to the obesogenic environment, or alternatively can support making healthy opportunities the norm across society as part of a whole system approach.

What do we collectively want to achieve:

- 6.14. Over the 10-year span of this new strategic framework, under this theme, we will seek to ensure that:
- more children start school a healthy weight and this is maintained;
 - pupils leave education settings with the improved knowledge and skills in relation to food, drink and physical activity;
 - there is increased offering and uptake of healthier food in educational settings, community settings, and workplaces in line with the Eatwell Guide;
 - there are an increased number of children and young people meeting the Chief Medical Officer physical activity guidelines and a reduction in sedentary behaviours – including through participation in sport or recreation and active travel amongst children and young people.
 - there is an increase in those who are a healthy weight across the working population; and
 - there is reduced sickness absence and increased job satisfaction across workforces implementing interventions.
- 6.15. Within all these areas we will focus on, and measure, reducing the inequalities that exist between the most deprived areas, the NI average and the least deprived areas.

6.16. It should be noted that there is also an overlap between progress on this agenda, and wider progress to improve the productivity and economic outlook for Northern Ireland through 10X Economy – An Economic Vision for a Decade of Innovation⁵¹. There are also clear overlaps between this agenda and work being taken forward through local community plans – and these can also support and reinforce each other.

CONSULTATION QUESTION 10 – HEALTHY PLACES:	
Do you agree with this theme and what it is seeking to achieve?	
Strongly agree: <input type="checkbox"/>	Agree: <input type="checkbox"/>
Disagree: <input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly disagree: <input type="checkbox"/>
Comments:	

What are the priorities within this theme:

6.17. The Department hosted three open co-production seminars on this theme, along with a wider review of the evidence base in respect of the impact policies and legislation can have on supporting social change on these issues. We also worked closely with counterparts who lead on other strategies in this area to ensure alignment, and to ensure that potential proposals would add value to those already in place.

6.18. The key priorities that have been identified through co-production with stakeholders and the evidence reviews were:

⁵¹ <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/publications/10x-economy-economic-vision-decade-innovation>

Early years settings:

- Early Years Settings support young children to eat a healthy balanced diet and be physically active.
- Support and scaling of interventions which promote early childhood movement and the importance of play.

School settings:

- Delivery and expansion of the Food in Schools Programme and Nutritional Standard for school meals.
- Ensuring that children and young people are able to access appropriate PE and afterschool physical activity programmes.
- Expansion of the Daily Mile programme.
- Increase opportunities to learn and improve skills in relation to food, cooking, physical activity, nutrition and hydration through the curriculum.
- Train staff to support pupil learning about food, physical activity, nutrition and hydration.
- Inspection programmes include food, physical activity, and whole school approaches to health and wellbeing.
- Environments and programmes inside and outside the school gates support active travel and physical activity including safer routes to schools.

College, university, and workplace settings:

- Further and Higher Education campuses and sites provide healthy food and drink provision, and encourage active travel routes and a range of support for students to remain physically active and participate in sport for life.
- Enhanced workplace policies and programmes in all sectors that deliver effective preventative and early intervention approaches for employees, such as healthy lifestyle programmes.
- Ongoing delivery of the Work Well and Live Well programme to support workplaces.

Healthcare settings:

- Implementation of the Nutritional standards for catering in health and social care for staff and visitors in health and social care setting, and appropriate expansion of these to local government and other public sector settings.
- Develop and deliver active travel plans for all HSC sites.
- HSC organisations deliver workplace health programmes to support health and activity within their workforces, including availability of weight management services.

Local Government and other community settings:

- Work through local government and community planning to promote increased uptake of healthy food and participation in physical activity.
- Development of Nutritional standards for catering and vending in local government setting for staff and visitors.
- Planners address obesogenic environment around schools through planning policy

CONSULTATION QUESTION 11 – HEALTHY PLACES:	
Do you agree with these priorities?	
Strongly agree: <input type="checkbox"/>	Agree: <input type="checkbox"/>
Disagree: <input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly disagree: <input type="checkbox"/>
Comments: Early years settings priorities	

<p>Comments: School settings priorities</p>
<p>Comments: College, university, and workplace settings priorities</p>
<p>Comments: Healthcare settings priorities</p>
<p>Comments: Local government and community settings priorities</p>

<p>CONSULTATION QUESTION – 12: HEALTHY PLACES: Is there anything missing that is likely to have a positive impact on this theme and what it is trying to achieve?</p>
<p>Comments:</p>

7. THEME C – HEALTHY PEOPLE

What is this and why is it important:

- 7.1. **People are at the heart of what we are trying to do. As well as amending the wider policy and legislative environment and ensuring that a range of settings support people to be healthy, we also need to help, support, and enable people to prevent poor health and wellbeing, to provide early interventions for those who may need additional help, and to provide appropriate treatment and interventions which seek to reduce the harm to those who may be living with overweight and obesity.**

Prevention and Early Intervention:

- 7.2. The best way to prevent the impact of poor diet and a lack of physical activity is to ensure that children get the best start in life and that from pre-conception and conception they are provided with the best opportunities to grow, develop and thrive. There is growing evidence in relation to the role of genetic and epigenetics in the development of obesity across the life course, and therefore intervening as early as possible is likely to provide a real opportunity to change and to break intergenerational cycles. In addition, establishing nutritional input and appropriate physical development in the lives of babies and young children greatly reduces their risk of poor physical and emotional health and wellbeing throughout childhood and the rest of their lives. Breastfeeding and weaning are also important to establishing healthy outcomes and behaviours from the early years throughout childhood⁵².
- 7.3. Pregnancy and starting a family can be a key catalyst to encouraging people to make positive changes in their lives. Women with a BMI above 30 kg/m² before conception are considered at higher risk of complications during pregnancy and delivery. In addition, early life exposures during pregnancy, such as maternal obesity, excessive gestational weight gain, high blood glucose levels, maternal smoking, stress and impaired foetal growth can

⁵² <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/breastfeeding-strategy>

impact the weight at birth and the risk of obesity and related NCDs onward across the life course.

- 7.4. However, we have to recognise that not all people and families are starting in the same place, and this is demonstrated in the inequalities that exist in food, physical and weight-related indicators from an early age. People who live in areas of deprivation, or are part of at-risk groups, may live in environments that limit their choice or ability to live a healthy life. We need to support those individuals and work to create the conditions that can help them achieve better outcomes.
- 7.5. In addition, many people will face challenges in maintaining good food and nutrition and physical activity habits across their life-course. There is a clear overlap between food, physical activity and mental health outcomes, and these can reinforce each other or act to exacerbate issues without support. People are often at different places in their lives, or face different genetic, biological, environmental, socio-economic, cultural or behavioural issues. This means that support and interventions may need to be tailored for the individual's needs, and may need to be flexible.
- 7.6. Ensuring that health, care and other professionals engage in regular conversations with patients about being a healthy weight, help raise public awareness of the detrimental health consequences of overweight and obesity and support behaviour change. This is particularly the case if messages and approaches are consistent across professions and settings and are conducted at an early stage rather than left to be addressed when weight issues become more challenging and complex.
- 7.7. Our approach to prevention is based on the following model:
 - **Primary** prevention: universal approaches focussing on **stopping problems before they emerge**, targets the **whole population** and interventions or solutions aim to promote good nutrition, physical activity and healthy weight outcomes are referred;

- **Secondary** prevention: targeted approaches focussing on **people who are at risk** (e.g., due to social inequalities); solutions or interventions are referred to as selective or targeted; and
- **Tertiary** prevention: focussing on **people who require more intensive interventions** or solutions aimed at reducing symptoms, reducing the risk of recurrence and to support self-management. This type of prevention is an adjunct to treatment.

Weight Stigma:

- 7.8. One issue that has come up strongly as part of our co-production development of this new strategic framework is the issue of weight stigma, and this is seen as a key issue, especially by those with lived or living experience of obesity.
- 7.9. Weight stigma can act as a barrier to people accessing services, can be reflected in people's experience of health and social care, and can also impact people's wider mental health and wellbeing.
- 7.10. We are keen that we don't add to those issues through this strategic framework. We recognise that weight in itself isn't a behaviour, it is the outcome of a range of complex interactions between people's genetic and biological factors, the environment they live in, and their wider mental and physical health. This new strategic framework will therefore take a person-centred approach to meet people where they are, recognising that this isn't just about behavioural change or making "healthy choices".

Treatment:

- 7.11. Our previous strategy, A Fitter Future for All, was purely focussed on prevention and early interventions. One of the things we heard during the co-production of this new framework, particularly from those with lived or living experience of overweight and obesity, was that we can't completely separate out prevention from treatment and other specialist services. People may require specialist support and help from highly skilled professionals to be able to manage their weight.

- 7.12. There are many people, children or families who may require access to specialist weight management services to provide intensive help and support. However, treatment services, particularly at hospital based or surgical, have been very limited in Northern Ireland, and it will be important that we develop and grow these services over time to meet the needs of those who require this level of support.
- 7.13. It is for that reason that in March 2019, the Department set up a multi-disciplinary Task and Finish group to explore options for the establishment of a Regional Obesity Management Service (ROMS) for Northern Ireland. The key remit of the group was to develop a specification for a prototype ROMS model, to include: a surgical service for those individuals for whom surgical intervention is required to treat severe and complex obesity (Tier 4 service); and also a specialist weight management service, to support adults with severe and complex obesity to lose weight through a range of interventions, including psychological and dietetic support (Tier 3 service). This would also help to ensure that patients accessing Tier 4 surgical services would be supported sufficiently to deliver sustained results with weight loss.
- 7.14. Development of specialist weight management services will require additional resources, which is challenging at present given the continued pressures being faced across the HSC. However, it is very clear that there continues to be a real need for a ROMS in Northern Ireland. For this reason the Department intends to launch a public consultation on its plans to introduce a specialist weight management service in Northern Ireland. It is intended that this consultation will be launched in the near future, to run alongside the consultation on this Strategy.
- 7.15. There have also been recent developments in respect of the pharmacological weight management treatment, and these should be available as appropriate to individuals in Northern Ireland once approved and in line with the evidence base as part of a new weight management service.

- 7.16. Overall, weight management services will need to be delivered based on an informed, respectful, non-judgemental and non-discriminatory approach to ensure the services effectively reach and support the people who require them.

What do we collectively want to achieve:

- 7.17. Over the 10-year span of this new strategic framework, under this theme, we will seek to ensure that:
- more people are a healthy weight in the pre-conception period and that healthy weight is maintained throughout pregnancy;
 - more children start school a healthy weight and this is maintained;
 - there is an increase in breastfeeding rates;
 - there is an increase in people achieving the Chief Medical Officer Physical Activity Guidelines and reduce sedentary behaviour;
 - there is a reduction in adults and children who are living with obesity; and
 - there is reduction in chronic diseases, including Type 2 diabetes, linked to obesity.
- 7.18. Within all these areas we will focus on, and measure, reducing the inequalities that exist between the most deprived areas, the NI average and the least deprived areas.
- 7.19. It should be noted that there is also an overlap between progress on this agenda, and wider progress on the Mental Health Strategy⁵³.

⁵³ <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/mental-health-strategy-2021-2031>

<p>CONSULTATION QUESTION 13 – HEALTHY PEOPLE:</p> <p>Do you agree with this theme and what it is seeking to achieve?</p>	
<p>Strongly agree: <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>Agree: <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>Disagree: <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>Strongly disagree: <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>Comments:</p>	

What are the priorities within this theme:

7.20. The Department hosted an open co-production seminar on this theme, along with a wider review of the evidence base in respect of the impact policies and legislation can have on supporting social change on these issues. We also worked closely with counterparts who lead on other strategies in this area to ensure alignment, and that potential proposals would add-value to those already in place.

7.21. The key priorities that have been identified through co-production with stakeholders and the evidence reviews were:

Pregnancy, postnatal period, and early years:

- Continued delivery of “A weigh to a healthy pregnancy”.
- Appropriate information is provided through the pregnancy book.
- Continued promotion and support for breastfeeding.
- Parenting programmes include evidence-based advice on breastfeeding, weaning, introduction of solid foods, early eating, etc.
- The need for specialist assessment for complicated pregnancy, obesity and complications/comorbidities.

Prevention and awareness programmes:

- Making Contacts Count approaches for brief interventions to support individuals, parents, carers and families, with a specific focus on diet and nutrition and physical activity.
- Promoting the awareness of the UK CMO Physical activity guidelines.
- Increased support for self-directed weight management approaches, including digital approaches, for those who could benefit from such an approach.
- A communications campaign that seeks to improve understanding and knowledge of the outcomes of excess weight, the impacts of nutrition and diet and physical activity, as part of a behavioural change approach to improve healthy outcomes.
- Provision of engaging and enjoyable programmes to encourage eating well, sitting less and moving more. This will include targeted programmes in areas where there are greater health inequalities.
- Increased social prescribing opportunities available across Northern Ireland.
- Programmes in place to support early years obesity intervention behavioural change.

Weight management services:

- The development of self-management programmes and apps.
- The development of a person-centred, flexible, clinical pathway, including pharmacological treatment and surgery.
- The potential need for differential diagnosis of obesity types, such as those related to endocrine and genetic disorders, especially for children and young people.
- Continued delivery of the Physical Activity Referral Scheme.
- Evaluation of the current early years obesity prevention programme, with a view to wider roll out if successful.

- Consideration of community evidence-based weight management programmes.
- Access to specialist obesity management services for those who need them.

<p>CONSULTATION QUESTION 14 – HEALTHY PEOPLE:</p> <p>Do you agree with these priorities?</p>	
Strongly agree: <input type="checkbox"/>	Agree: <input type="checkbox"/>
Disagree: <input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly disagree: <input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Comments: Pregnancy and early years priorities</p>	
<p>Comments: Prevention and awareness programmes priorities</p>	
<p>Comments: Weight management services priorities</p>	

<p>CONSULTATION QUESTION 15 – HEALTHY PEOPLE:</p> <p>Is there anything missing that is likely to have a positive impact on this theme and what it is trying to achieve?</p>
<p>Comments:</p>

8. THEME D – COLLABORATION AND A WHOLE SYSTEM APPROACH

What is this and why is it important:

- 8.1. **What we know, from the Foresight report and from recent system dynamic modelling on childhood obesity in Northern Ireland, is that overweight and obesity is complex and interrelated with other issues and outcomes. It is vital therefore that this strategic framework is a living document, that our approach is regularly updated in line with the latest international research and evidence, that we work collectively across the UK and Ireland, and that we enable people to come together to seek to find solutions and take a systematic approach to achieving our goals.**

Research and evaluation:

- 8.2. The new strategic framework will seek to support and build research on this issue to inform future practice, policy and implementation. This will include looking at the international evidence base, and working with researchers locally and across the UK and Ireland to ensure that research can meet our policy needs.
- 8.3. Actions delivered under the new strategic framework will also be monitored and where appropriate evaluated, via an Outcomes Based Accountability type approach, to ensure that we can demonstrate if they are working or that we learn from what isn't working and ensure that resources are used in the most effective way going forward.

Collaboration:

- 8.4. Issues that we need to address often cross borders, food production and retail for example is influenced by dynamics at the local, national, European and global levels. This means we need to ensure that we work with colleagues at different levels to ensure that, where appropriate, we take collective approaches to deliver at scale, or at least understand and work to mitigate wider changes in the policy context that can impact on the delivery of this

strategic framework within Northern Ireland. We will work to set up mechanisms to support this collaborative approach.

Whole System Approach:

- 8.5. Given the complexity of factors that influence obesity there is growing interest in taking forward and delivering Whole System Approaches (WSA) to obesity prevention to ensure that we are addressing the obesogenic environment and delivering at scale in a systematic way
- 8.6. As set out in the rapid review of whole systems approaches to obesity that was commissioned via the Institute of Public Health in Ireland (IPHI) and published in January 2023⁵⁴, a WSA to diet, physical activity and healthy weight shifts the focus away from individuals and puts an emphasis on improving the 'systems' within which people are born, grow, live, work and age. A WSA focuses on multi-sectoral partnerships to leverage the strengths and resources of a diverse range of actors who have wide influence over and within the systems that influence diet and healthy weight. Public health responses that adopt a WSA to diet and healthy weight are becoming more popular, though most are still early in their development, and while they seem to be having success from a process point of view, it is still too early to determine their impact on outcomes.
- 8.7. The IPHI's rapid review work describes case studies where WSAs have been applied and highlights barriers and facilitators to implementation, as well as setting out key considerations for taking a WSA to overweight and obesity in the Northern Ireland context.
- 8.8. A workshop was subsequently held in October 2022 on this rapid synthesis of evidence report and PHA is now establishing obesity Whole System Approach early adopter sites in Northern Ireland. Work on the first early adopter site in Ards & North Down Borough Council area has commenced and early adopter sites in 5 other Council areas will be phased in over the next two years.

⁵⁴ <https://publichealth.ie/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/WSA-approach-to-obesity-prevention-final.pdf>

A Whole System Approach to obesity prevention:



Figure 8: Illustration of a Whole System Approach to obesity prevention. © Institute of Public Health, 2023

What do we collectively want to achieve:

- 8.9. Over the 10-year span of this new strategic framework, under this theme, we will seek to ensure that:
- Research, modelling, and evidence continue to inform action;
 - Delivery of the framework is monitored and evaluated on an outcomes basis as appropriate through the development of an overarching indicator set;
 - Networks and collaboration exist to support local, national, and international work on key issues; and
 - A framework is in place to allow the delivery of local action in a systematic way.

CONSULTATION QUESTION 16 – WSA:	
Do you agree with this theme and what it is seeking to achieve?	
Strongly agree: <input type="checkbox"/>	Agree: <input type="checkbox"/>
Disagree: <input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly disagree: <input type="checkbox"/>
Comments:	

What are the priorities within this theme:

- 8.10. The Department hosted an open co-production seminar on this theme, along with a wider review of the evidence base in respect of the impact policies and legislation can have on supporting social change on these issues. We also worked closely with counterparts who lead on other strategies in this area to ensure alignment and that potential proposals would add-value to those already in place.

8.11. The key priorities that have been identified through co-production with stakeholders and the evidence reviews were:

- Establish research networks and projects that support the ongoing development of policies, legislation and action.
- Continue to build the research and evidence base on key drivers and effectiveness of interventions.
- Establish evaluation and outcomes frameworks to demonstrate the effectiveness of the new strategic framework.
- Work across jurisdictions to deliver change at scale, where appropriate.
- Set up Whole System Approach early adopter sites to test the use of this approach to improve diet, physical activity and health weight outcomes in Northern Ireland.

CONSULTATION QUESTION 17 – WSA:	
Do you agree with these priorities?	
Strongly agree: <input type="checkbox"/>	Agree: <input type="checkbox"/>
Disagree: <input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly disagree: <input type="checkbox"/>
Comments: Whole System Approach and collaboration priorities	

CONSULTATION QUESTION 18 – WSA:	
Is there anything missing that is likely to have a positive impact on this theme and what it is trying to achieve?	
Comments:	

9. NEXT STEPS

9.1 This consultation will play a key role in the development of this new strategic framework to promoting healthy diet and nutrition, participation in physical activity and healthy weight outcomes. We want to receive your comments, inputs and views on:

- the vision for the strategic framework;
- the principles it will be delivered through;
- the thematic approach set out; and
- the priorities that have been identified to date under each theme.

9.2 During and after the consultation we will further refine and develop proposals, based on the feedback received, changes in the wider context, or new or emerging research of evidence.

9.3 A key task after the consultation will be to further refine the priorities contained within each theme, and to turn these into an action plan which will accompany the final strategic framework and will be presented to Ministers and the Executive for final consideration and approval.

Governance Structures:

9.4 New programme structures would then be put in place to oversee the delivery of the agreed strategic framework. These will be required at different levels covering strategic cross-departmental oversight and delivery, intervention and service planning and delivery, and whole system approach at the local level.

9.5 While the exact format of these structures will be agreed following the consultation and the agreement of the strategic framework, we commit to having input from the community and voluntary sector and those with lived or living experience of overweight and obesity involved at all levels of programme delivery and oversight.

Resourcing:

- 9.6 The financial position going into the future is likely to be challenging. While delivering on this new strategic framework is likely to require additional resources, the level of resources required will be influenced by the consultation process and by future decisions on agreed actions. However, it is recognised that we can deliver additional value and capacity by better aligning existing programmes of work across related strategies and with other Government Departments. There may also be opportunities to reprofile existing public expenditure to achieve better outcomes. In addition, there are opportunities to jointly plan and commission interventions with partners, including local government, the community and voluntary sector and private sector to get better value for money and increase effectiveness. Finally, there may be opportunities to leverage funding from other sources and/or adopt innovative approaches that could help embed the finalised strategic framework.
- 9.7 Investment in the final strategic framework and its success in delivering better health outcomes has the potential to deliver substantial cost savings in future for the health and social care services and improve economic productivity, as well as improving the wellbeing of people right across Northern Ireland and addressing health inequalities.

CONSULTATION QUESTION 19 – Final Comments:

Have you any other comments you wish to make at this stage?

Comments:

Further statistical data

Annex A

Adult Data

All data sourced from Health Survey Northern Ireland trend tables⁵⁵. Adult respondents aged 16+.

BMI: Adults

All	2010 / 2011	2011 / 2012	2012 / 2013	2013 / 2014	2014 / 2015	2015 / 2016	2016 / 2017	2017 / 2018	2018 / 2019	2019 / 2020	Significant difference?	
											2010/11 & 2019/20	2018/19 & 2019/20
Underweight	3%	2%	2%	1%	2%	1%	2%	2%	2%	1%	↓	↔
Normal weight	38%	36%	36%	37%	37%	38%	36%	34%	37%	33%	↓	↓
Overweight	36%	38%	38%	38%	36%	35%	35%	38%	37%	38%	↔	↔
Obese	22%	22%	23%	22%	22%	24%	24%	24%	23%	24%	↑	↔
Morbidly obese	2%	2%	2%	2%	3%	2%	3%	3%	2%	3%	↑	↔
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%		
<i>Unweighted base</i>	2603	3342	3280	3454	3172	2912	2729	2315	2723	3120		

⁵⁵ <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/tables-health-survey-northern-ireland>

BMI: Adults, by sex

Males	2010 / 2011	2011 / 2012	2012 / 2013	2013 / 2014	2014 / 2015	2015 / 2016	2016 / 2017	2017 / 2018	2018 / 2019	2019 / 2020	Significant difference?	
											2010/11 & 2019/20	2018/19 & 2019/20
Underweight	2%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	↓	↔
Normal weight	31%	30%	30%	31%	33%	34%	32%	26%	31%	28%	↔	↔
Overweight	44%	43%	43%	43%	40%	37%	38%	46%	42%	43%	↔	↔
Obese	22%	24%	24%	23%	24%	26%	26%	24%	24%	26%	↔	↔
Morbidly obese	1%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	3%	2%	2%	2%	↑	↔

Females	2010 / 2011	2011 / 2012	2012 / 2013	2013 / 2014	2014 / 2015	2015 / 2016	2016 / 2017	2017 / 2018	2018 / 2019	2019 / 2020	Significant difference?	
											2010/11 & 2019/20	2018/19 & 2019/20
Underweight	3%	2%	2%	1%	3%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	↔	↔
Normal weight	44%	42%	41%	43%	41%	41%	41%	42%	42%	38%	↓	↓
Overweight	29%	34%	32%	33%	33%	32%	33%	30%	32%	33%	↑	↔
Obese	21%	20%	22%	20%	20%	22%	22%	23%	21%	23%	↔	↔
Morbidly obese	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%	2%	3%	3%	3%	4%	↑	↔

Obesity: Adults, by age group

Age group	2010 / 2011	2011 / 2012	2012 / 2013	2013 / 2014	2014 / 2015	2015 / 2016	2016 / 2017	2017 / 2018	2018 / 2019	2019 / 2020	Significant difference?	
											2010/11 & 2019/20	2018/19 & 2019/20
16-24	12%	8%	16%	10%	12%	14%	17%	9%	13%	14%	↔	↔
25-34	16%	20%	20%	19%	20%	22%	20%	22%	20%	25%	↑	↔
35-44	26%	26%	24%	22%	24%	29%	27%	29%	25%	27%	↔	↔
45-54	29%	30%	34%	30%	30%	32%	34%	32%	30%	34%	↔	↔
55-64	31%	34%	31%	33%	33%	33%	36%	37%	34%	30%	↔	↔
65-74	30%	30%	27%	31%	32%	29%	32%	32%	28%	35%	↔	↑
75+	24%	17%	21%	22%	26%	25%	25%	24%	22%	27%	↔	↔
Total %	23%	24%	25%	24%	25%	26%	27%	26%	25%	27%	↑	↑

Obesity: Adults, by deprivation quintile

Deprivation quintile	2010 / 2011	2011 / 2012	2012 / 2013	2013 / 2014	2014 / 2015	2015 / 2016	2016 / 2017	2017 / 2018	2018 / 2019	2019 / 2020	Significant difference?	
											2010/11 & 2019/20	2018/19 & 2019/20
Most deprived	25%	25%	31%	25%	28%	28%	27%	29%	28%	32%	↑	↔
Quintile 2	27%	25%	23%	27%	25%	28%	27%	28%	24%	28%	↔	↔
Quintile 3	23%	25%	25%	22%	26%	26%	29%	23%	26%	26%	↔	↔
Quintile 4	22%	23%	27%	22%	27%	26%	27%	28%	24%	27%	↑	↔
Least deprived	19%	20%	21%	22%	19%	24%	25%	24%	24%	25%	↑	↔
Total %	23%	24%	25%	24%	25%	26%	27%	26%	25%	27%	↑	↑

Obesity: Adults, by urban / rural

Urban / Rural	2010 / 2011	2011 / 2012	2012 / 2013	2013 / 2014	2014 / 2015	2015 / 2016	2016 / 2017	2017 / 2018	2018 / 2019	2019 / 2020	Significant difference?	
											2010/11 & 2019/20	2018/19 & 2019/20
Mixed Urban / Rural						19%	31%	27%	25%	24%		↔
Rural	24%	25%	24%	25%	26%	28%	27%	26%	24%	26%	↔	↔
Urban	23%	23%	26%	23%	24%	27%	26%	26%	25%	28%	↑	↑
Total %	23%	24%	25%	24%	25%	26%	27%	26%	25%	27%	↑	↑

Children data

All data sourced from Health Survey Northern Ireland trend tables⁵⁶. Child respondents aged 2 – 15 years old. Figures here use the International (IOTF) Body Mass Index cut-offs for thinness, overweight and obesity in children⁵⁷.

BMI: Children – IOTF cut offs

All	2010 / 2011	2011 / 2012	2012 / 2013	2013 / 2014	2014 / 2015	2015 / 2016	2016 / 2017	2017 / 2018	2018 / 2019	2019 / 2020	Significant difference?	
											2010/11 & 2019/20	2018/19 & 2019/20
Underweight	7%	5%	4%	5%	5%	7%	6%	6%	6%	5%	↔	↔
Normal weight	65%	65%	69%	70%	66%	68%	69%	68%	67%	69%	↔	↔
Overweight	19%	21%	19%	17%	21%	16%	17%	18%	19%	20%	↔	↔
Obese	8%	10%	8%	7%	7%	9%	7%	9%	8%	6%	↔	↔

BMI: Children, by sex

Boys	2010 / 2011	2011 / 2012	2012 / 2013	2013 / 2014	2014 / 2015	2015 / 2016	2016 / 2017	2017 / 2018	2018 / 2019	2019 / 2020	Significant difference?	
											2010/11 & 2019/20	2018/19 & 2019/20
Underweight	6%	4%	3%	4%	4%	6%	6%	5%	8%	7%	↔	↔
Normal weight	70%	67%	69%	73%	72%	70%	69%	67%	66%	69%	↔	↔

⁵⁶ <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/tables-health-survey-northern-ireland>

⁵⁷ <https://www.worldobesity.org/about/about-obesity/obesity-classification>

Overweight	17%	19%	20%	16%	18%	16%	17%	17%	17%	20%	↔	↔
Obese	8%	10%	8%	7%	6%	8%	8%	11%	10%	5%	↔	↓

Girls	2010 / 2011	2011 / 2012	2012 / 2013	2013 / 2014	2014 / 2015	2015 / 2016	2016 / 2017	2017 / 2018	2018 / 2019	2019 / 2020	Significant difference?	
											2010/11 & 2019/20	2018/19 & 2019/20
Underweight	9%	6%	6%	6%	7%	8%	6%	6%	4%	4%	↓	↔
Normal weight	61%	62%	68%	67%	60%	66%	70%	69%	68%	70%	↑	↔
Overweight	22%	22%	19%	19%	24%	15%	18%	18%	21%	19%	↔	↔
Obese	8%	10%	7%	8%	9%	10%	6%	7%	7%	7%	↔	↔

Obesity: Children, by age group

2 – 10 years old	2010 / 2011	2011 / 2012	2012 / 2013	2013 / 2014	2014 / 2015	2015 / 2016	2016 / 2017	2017 / 2018	2018 / 2019	2019 / 2020	Significant difference?	
											2010/11 & 2019/20	2018/19 & 2019/20
Underweight	7%	4%	5%	6%	5%	8%	5%	5%	7%	5%	↔	↔
Normal weight	65%	61%	71%	68%	69%	67%	73%	70%	67%	70%	↔	↔
Overweight	17%	22%	19%	18%	17%	16%	15%	16%	17%	18%	↔	↔
Obese	10%	12%	6%	7%	9%	9%	7%	8%	9%	7%	↔	↔

11 – 15 years old	2010 / 2011	2011 / 2012	2012 / 2013	2013 / 2014	2014 / 2015	2015 / 2016	2016 / 2017	2017 / 2018	2018 / 2019	2019 / 2020	Significant difference?	
											2010/11 & 2019/20	2018/19 & 2019/20
Underweight	7%	6%	4%	3%	7%	6%	7%	7%	5%	6%	↔	↔
Normal weight	66%	71%	64%	74%	62%	71%	63%	62%	67%	68%	↔	↔
Overweight	23%	18%	20%	16%	28%	14%	22%	20%	22%	22%	↔	↔
Obese	4%	6%	11%	7%	4%	9%	7%	11%	6%	4%	↔	↔

Obesity Prevention Strategy Project Board Revised Terms of Reference

Chair: Gary Maxwell DoH

Background

To help reduce the harm related to overweight and obesity the Department developed the '**A Fitter Future for All 2012 – 2022**' strategic framework which addresses obesity prevention across the life course of the population. The Framework described the nature, scale and prevalence of obesity in Northern Ireland. It set out its causes and highlighted the inter-relatedness of those factors that have led to a rapid increase in obesity in recent years.

In this context, as we are nearing the end of the current strategy, the Department of Health considers that, for obesity and physical activity, a refreshed direction is required. Health Development Policy Branch is therefore instigating the co-production of a new 10 year Strategy

Role

The purpose of the Project Board is to provide procedural oversight of the project and they will report to the Obesity Prevention Steering Group. The Project Board is designed to be streamlined. As such it is not all encompassing of all areas of the health and social care system and the onus is therefore on the members of the Project Board to liaise, as appropriate and relevant, with others.

Secretariat: DoH Health Development Policy Branch

Functions

The project is divided into eight distinct areas:

- 1. Preparatory work:** This work will create project structures centred on the principle of co-production which will explore methods for comprehensive stakeholder engagement through the use of stakeholder workshops.

It will also determine what baseline data should be gathered to ensure measurable outcomes and accessing relevant literature, reports, evidence based guidance, knowledge of services elsewhere and similar material.

2. **Develop themes via workshops** (these will probably be virtual). This will include engaging with stakeholders, including people with lived experience to co-produce the overarching themes of the Strategy.
3. **Undertake an assessment of the evidence** that has emerged since AFFFA was published, and review and benchmark against strategic plans in other countries.
4. **Analyse the results:** This work includes analysing the results from the workshops / Childhood Obesity SIL and the systems dynamic modelling to identify overarching themes of the Strategy.
5. **Develop outcomes / actions:** This will include engaging with stakeholders, including people with lived experience, to develop outcomes and actions within the themes identified in step 2 and 3.
6. **Draft Strategy:** This includes drafting the Strategy using the baseline data combined with the co-produced themes, outcomes and actions in the light of the strategic direction of the Department.
7. **Informal / formal consultation:** The draft plan must be shared with stakeholders and people with lived experience and their carers, either on a formal or informal basis before publication to ensure it meets the desired outcomes.
8. **Publish the Strategy**

Membership:

Membership of the Obesity Prevention Strategy Project Board will be limited but drawn from as wide a range of organisations as possible, including the statutory sector and voluntary/community organisations.

The Project Board will consist of the following members:

- persons with lived experience;
- representation from the community and voluntary sector;
- Health Development Policy Branch, Department of Health;
 - as required.
- professional representatives, Department of Health;
 - as required.
- representative(s) from the Public Health Agency;

- Seamus Mullen, Colette Brolly and David Tumilty
- representative(s) from DE, DAERA, DfI and DfC
- representative(s) from the Food Standards Agency
- representatives from the academic sector

Full list of consultation questions

Annex C

CONSULTATION QUESTION 1 – SCREENING:

Have you any comments on either the Equality/Good Relations or Rural screening documents?

CONSULTATION QUESTION 2 – SCREENING:

Are there any areas or issues you feel we should be considering in future Equality/Good Relations or Rural screenings?

CONSULTATION QUESTION 3 – VISION:

Do you agree with this vision?

Strongly agree:

Agree:

Disagree:

Strongly disagree:

Comments:

CONSULTATION QUESTION 4 – PRINCIPLES:	
Do you agree with these principles?	
Strongly agree: <input type="checkbox"/>	Agree: <input type="checkbox"/>
Disagree: <input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly disagree: <input type="checkbox"/>
Comments:	

CONSULTATION QUESTION 5 – OUTCOMES:	
Do you agree with these 4 population level outcomes?	
Strongly agree: <input type="checkbox"/>	Agree: <input type="checkbox"/>
Disagree: <input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly disagree: <input type="checkbox"/>
Comments:	

CONSULTATION QUESTION 6 – THEMATIC APPROACH:	
Are all the key areas covered within this thematic approach?	
Yes: <input type="checkbox"/>	No: <input type="checkbox"/>
Comments:	

CONSULTATION QUESTION 7 – HEALTHY POLICIES:	
Do you agree with this theme and what it is seeking to achieve?	
Strongly agree: <input type="checkbox"/>	Agree: <input type="checkbox"/>
Disagree: <input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly disagree: <input type="checkbox"/>
Comments:	

CONSULTATION QUESTION 8 – HEALTHY POLICIES:	
Do you agree with these priorities?	
Strongly agree: <input type="checkbox"/>	Agree: <input type="checkbox"/>
Disagree: <input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly disagree: <input type="checkbox"/>
Comments: Food environment priorities	
Comments: Food labelling and information priorities	
Comments: Heathier food options priorities	
Comments: Physical activity and active travel priorities	

CONSULTATION QUESTION 9 – HEALTHY POLICIES:

Is there anything missing that is likely to have a positive impact on this theme and what it is trying to achieve?

Comments:

CONSULTATION QUESTION 10 – HEALTHY PLACES:

Do you agree with this theme and what it is seeking to achieve?

Strongly agree:

Agree:

Disagree:

Strongly disagree:

Comments:

CONSULTATION QUESTION 11 – HEALTHY PLACES:

Do you agree with these priorities?

Strongly agree:

Agree:

Disagree:

Strongly disagree:

Comments: Early years settings priorities

Comments: School settings priorities
Comments: College, university, and workplace settings priorities
Comments: Healthcare settings priorities
Comments: Local government and community settings priorities

CONSULTATION QUESTION – 12: HEALTHY PLACES: Is there anything missing that is likely to have a positive impact on this theme and what it is trying to achieve?
Comments:

CONSULTATION QUESTION 13 – HEALTHY PEOPLE:	
Do you agree with this theme and what it is seeking to achieve?	
Strongly agree: <input type="checkbox"/>	Agree: <input type="checkbox"/>
Disagree: <input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly disagree: <input type="checkbox"/>
Comments:	

CONSULTATION QUESTION 14 – HEALTHY PEOPLE:	
Do you agree with these priorities?	
Strongly agree: <input type="checkbox"/>	Agree: <input type="checkbox"/>
Disagree: <input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly disagree: <input type="checkbox"/>
Comments: Pregnancy and early years priorities	
Comments: Prevention and awareness programmes priorities	
Comments: Weight management services priorities	

CONSULTATION QUESTION 15 – HEALTHY PEOPLE:

Is there anything missing that is likely to have a positive impact on this theme and what it is trying to achieve?

Comments:

CONSULTATION QUESTION 16 – WSA:

Do you agree with this theme and what it is seeking to achieve?

Strongly agree:

Agree:

Disagree:

Strongly disagree:

Comments:

CONSULTATION QUESTION 17 – WSA:

Do you agree with these priorities?

Strongly agree:

Agree:

Disagree:

Strongly disagree:

Comments: Whole System Approach and collaboration priorities

CONSULTATION QUESTION 18 – WSA:

Is there anything missing that is likely to have a positive impact on this theme and what it is trying to achieve?

Comments:

CONSULTATION QUESTION 19 – Final Comments:

Have you any other comments you wish to make at this stage?

Comments:



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Health

An Roinn Sláinte

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Healthy Futures

A Strategic Framework to Prevent the Harm caused by
Obesity, and Improve Diets and Levels of Physical
Activity in Northern Ireland

Consultation Questions

November 2023



MAKING LIFE **BETTER**

Overview

Consultation to seek views on Healthy Futures Strategic Framework to Prevent the Harm caused by Obesity, and Improve Diets and Levels of Physical Activity in Northern Ireland

Consultation opened on Friday 24 November 2023.

Consultation closes on Friday 16 February 2024 at 17:00.

Summary

The Department of Health has worked with key stakeholders to co-produce a new strategic framework to reduce the harm related to living with overweight and obesity in Northern Ireland.

Consultation Description

The new strategic framework for obesity – “**Healthy Futures**” – was issued for public consultation on 24 November 2023 and is available online at <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/consultation-obesity-strategy-healthy-futures>

How to Respond:

You can respond online by accessing the consultation documents on the ‘Citizen Space’ web service and completing the online survey there. The online version can be accessed at <https://consultations2.nidirect.gov.uk/doh-1/healthy-futures-consultation-2023-2032/>.

To respond in writing, please email the Department at: HDPB@health-ni.gov.uk or write to:

Health Development Policy Branch
Department of Health
Room C4.22, Castle Buildings
BELFAST BT4 3SQ

Next Steps

Following this consultation, we will collate and analyse all views and inputs, and begin the process of developing the final strategy. This will need to be agreed by the Minister of Health and the NI Executive before being published. It is important to note that AFFFA – and all the structures that support action and collaboration – will remain in place until any new strategy is put in place.

The Closing Date for responses is Friday 16 February 2024 at 17:00

Your details**Name: Patricia Mackey****Email: patricia.mackey@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk****Are you responding as an individual or organisation?**Individual Organisation **Name of organisation if appropriate: Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Screening

The strategic framework has been equality and rural screened to consider impacts on this important group. These documents are available at <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/obesity-strategy-2023-2033-rnia-and-eqia-0>.

CONSULTATION QUESTION 1 – SCREENING:

Have you any comments on either the Equality/Good Relations or Rural screening documents?

No comments

CONSULTATION QUESTION 2 – SCREENING:

Are there any areas or issues you feel we should be considering in future Equality/Good Relations or Rural screenings?

No comments

Vision, Principles, Outcomes, Thematic approach

CONSULTATION QUESTION 3 – VISION: the overall vision for this new strategic framework is to “*create the conditions in Northern Ireland which enable and support people to improve their diet and participate in more physical activity, and reduce the risk of related harm for those living with overweight and obesity*”.

Do you agree with this vision?

Strongly agree:

Agree:

Disagree:

Strongly disagree:

Comments:

The vision is clear but it does focus heavily on physical activity and diet rather than also considering the wider obesogenic system that is discussed within the narrative of the consultation document.

Page 23 of the consultation document says that “at the population level changing the food environments is more effective than measures that try to education or change behaviour in individuals”. The document goes on to say that “this disconnect means there is more support for measures to seek to change individual behaviour, rather than measures that change the wider food and physical activity environment and culture and which are more likely to be effective”. While this change in emphasis is implied by including the words ‘create the conditions’, including the words ‘enable and support people to improve’ potentially weakens this by suggesting in the vision that responsibility for obesity lies with the individual.

While we agree with the vision, it could be strengthened to reflect the wider determinants of obesity.

CONSULTATION QUESTION 4 – PRINCIPLES: The project board proposed a range of principles for the development and implementation of the new strategic framework, these are: taking **whole system approach** with the framework being **health led but not solely health owned**, taking **a life course approach** and targeting or prioritising certain groups, focusing on reducing **inequalities**, acknowledging the **alignment with other policy areas** and not duplicating effort, being **outcome-based**, and that the framework will provide an **umbrella for actions to prevent and address overweight and obesity**.

Do you agree with these principles?

Strongly agree:

Agree:

Disagree:

Strongly disagree:

Comments:

We agree with the principles identified but have some concern about how they will be applied across government. Robust mechanisms will need to be in place to ensure that this health led strategy is properly resourced and integrated across other strategies and aligned with other policy areas. To re-enforce the alignment with other policy areas it is important to acknowledge other non-health policy areas such as the work that is needed to develop an anti-poverty strategy for Northern Ireland.

We agree with the principle to take a life course approach while possibly targeting a specific group. This is similar to the approach being taken in Ards and North Down as part of Community Plan's whole systems approach to obesity work. We are also focusing on children between year 1 and year 8, but we acknowledge that this will not mean ignoring other demographics as we will need to identify actions that simultaneously tackle the obesogenic system

CONSULTATION QUESTION 5 – OUTCOMES: This strategic framework focuses on four main long-term population level outcomes across the life course: Reducing the percentage of people in Northern Ireland who are living with overweight and/or obesity; Improving the population’s diet and nutrition; Increasing the percentage of the population who participate in regular physical activity; and Reducing the prevalence of overweight and obesity-related Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs).

Do you agree with these 4 population level outcomes?

Strongly agree:

Agree:

Disagree:

Strongly disagree:

Comments:

The first outcome is the most important one to try and achieve. The other outcomes are also important, but these should happen as a way of working towards the first outcome.

CONSULTATION QUESTION 6 – THEMATIC APPROACH: The strategic framework takes a thematic approach to the issues focusing on four key themes: Health Policies, Health Places, Healthy People, and Collaboration and A Whole System Approach.

Are all the key areas covered within this thematic approach?

Yes:

No:

Comments:

We are pleased to see reference to a whole systems approach to obesity within the proposed themes. Considerable UK, ROI and global evidence exists to suggest that this approach, if adequately resourced, can work. Previous strategies have tended to focus on telling people to eat less and move more. These approaches have been shown not to be successful due to the impact of the wider determinants of health on people who are living with obesity.

Healthy Policies

CONSULTATION QUESTION 7 – HEALTHY POLICIES: Our ability to eat a healthy diet, participate in physical activity, and to maintain a weight that is good for our health, is very much influenced by the wider environment in which we live our lives. This theme focuses on the strategies, policies, regulations and stakeholders that control the wider food and physical environment, therefore playing a key role in addressing the obesogenic environment.

Do you agree with this theme and what it is seeking to achieve?

Strongly agree:

Agree:

Disagree:

Strongly disagree:

Comments:

While we accept that this Strategy must focus on diet, nutrition, physical activity, and health weight actions, we feel strongly that integration with other central government departments, and arms lengths bodies, is essential if the outcomes put forward in section 4.5 are to be achieved. Obesity requires urgent coordinated collaboration and alignment across agendas and organisational boundaries to support the necessary change towards diet and healthy weight.

We believe that an anti-poverty strategy (to be developed for Northern Ireland) should be added to the list of other relevant strategies.

In Ards and North Down we have used deprivation measures to help identify a location for our Whole Systems Approach to Obesity Early Adopter site. According to The King's Fund there is a strong systemic relationship between obesity and deprivation. They state that the repetitive fragmented approach to tackling obesity undertaken by recent governments has fallen short of the cross-cutting population health approach that is needed.

Between 2011/12 and 2018/19, one in three (36%) Primary Year 1 children living in the most deprived areas in Northern Ireland were more likely to be overweight or obese compared to those living in the least deprived areas, representing a 12% increase since 2011/12. Obesity prevalence in the most deprived 10% of children is approximately twice that of the least deprived 10%.

The design of the physical environment is increasingly important, and we need to encourage more active travel to improve people's health. Therefore, there is scope to align some of the actions needed to increase space available for active travel with the need to decarbonise our transport system. While the Climate Change Act is not a driver for the Healthy Futures Strategy, the Healthy Futures Strategy could help towards the net zero aspirations by promoting active travel. We are pleased to see that this connection has been made in point 5.14.

CONSULTATION QUESTION 8 – HEALTHY POLICIES:**Do you agree with these priorities?**Strongly agree: Agree: Disagree: Strongly disagree: **Comments: Food environment priorities**

We support the reference to working with local and national stakeholders to increase the affordability and accessibility to healthier options.

Comments: Food labelling and information priorities

It is important that food labelling is simple and easy to understand and that it can be applied to both the shopping environment and eating out environment. We are a participant in a project with Queen's University to test a shared nutrition and environmental label to enable people to make choices that are healthy for both people and the environment. This project is called SusHealth and involves living labs both in Belfast and other European countries.

Comments: Healthier food options priorities

It will be important to try and tighten the rules on how manufactures label their products i.e. low fat yoghurt is probably very high in sugar so not necessarily the healthy option. It is important to continue to work with the food industry to increase the health of all products, not just those listed as healthy. Lots of progress has been made to improve the nutritional standards of even unhealthy food.

We support the expansion of the nutritional standards, and as part of this strategy these should be strengthened to ensure that the public sector, in its entirety, implement them. This includes schools, health buildings and local government facilities.

Comments: Physical activity and active travel priorities

We support the reference to Health Impact Assessments and think that these could be used for lots of decisions, not just as a tool for planners.

CONSULTATION QUESTION 9 – HEALTHY POLICIES:

Is there anything missing that is likely to have a positive impact on this theme and what it is trying to achieve?

Comments:

It maybe useful to reference how health impacts in all policies should be used across all sections of government.

Healthy Places

CONSULTATION QUESTION 10 – HEALTHY PLACES: At all ages, we can spend a significant portion of our lives in places and settings that influence our ability or inability to eat healthily, be physically active and to manage our weight. This can be through a lack of access to opportunities, barriers to participation and lack of availability. However, settings can also play a positive role in supporting the health and wellbeing of the people who access them. This theme focuses on creating supportive places and settings.

Do you agree with this theme and what it is seeking to achieve?

Strongly agree:

Agree:

Disagree:

Strongly disagree:

Comments:

Creating healthy places thought supportive places and settings will be essential to achieving the desired outcomes. Settings should automatically be healthy by default rather than there being a healthy setting and unhealthy setting option.

CONSULTATION QUESTION 11 – HEALTHY PLACES:

Do you agree with these priorities?

Strongly agree:

Agree:

Disagree:

Strongly disagree:

Comments: Early years settings priorities

The earlier nutrition and physical activity are embedded in a person's development the more likely that these become second nature. These issues should be considered as important as language and social interaction skills.

Comments: School settings priorities

Healthy eating and physical activity should be embedded as part of the essential curriculum. These are not just nice things to do, but as explained in the consultation document, they are as important for learning as maths and English. Especially within a primary setting, these should be given increased emphasis along with a whole community approach to learning.

Comments: College, university, and workplace settings priorities

To follow through with the whole systems approach to the food environment it is essential that throughout a person's life course the messages and opportunities are consistent. If nutrition and physical activity are to be prioritised with early year and school settings, it is important that these follow through to all aspects of life. Parents, siblings and other community influences should also be supported to eat healthier and adopt more active lifestyles.

Comments: Healthcare settings priorities

As the benefits for achieving this policy will most directly, and positively, affect the health service due to reduced levels of obesity, it is absolutely essential that it very visibly practices what it preaches. The nutritional standards are an excellent place to start.

Comments: Local government and community settings priorities

We agree with the points made. It is important to note that there will be problems to address the obesogenic environment around schools due to the nature of takeaways, garages and shops already offering unhealthy options. It will have greater impact to improve the nutritional quality of what is being offered rather than to ban them in their entirety.

CONSULTATION QUESTION – 12: HEALTHY PLACES:

Is there anything missing that is likely to have a positive impact on this theme and what it is trying to achieve?

Comments:

Department for Infrastructure have a role to play in the transport environment and using this to make places healthier.

Healthy People

CONSULTATION QUESTION 13 – HEALTHY PEOPLE: As well as amending the wider policy and legislative environment and ensuring that a range of settings support people to be healthy, this theme therefore focuses on the need to help, support, and enable people to prevent poor health and wellbeing, to provide early interventions for those who may need additional help, and to provide appropriate treatment and interventions which seek to reduce the harm to those who may be living with overweight and obesity.

Do you agree with this theme and what it is seeking to achieve?

Strongly agree:

Agree:

Disagree:

Strongly disagree:

Comments: We strongly agree with this theme and its focus on preventing poor health. Within the narrative included in the Strategy document there is still a focus on the choices that people make and how these will influence a person's health and well-being. Given the consequences of living with obesity (on the individual and the health service) more work is needed to increase the opportunities to make healthy choices and reduce/eliminate the unhealthy choices available.

CONSULTATION QUESTION 14 – HEALTHY PEOPLE:**Do you agree with these priorities?**Strongly agree: Agree: Disagree: Strongly disagree: **Comments: Pregnancy and early years priorities****Comments: Prevention and awareness programmes priorities**

Prevention is key to try and address this issue. Prevention, and health impact across all policies, is something that needs to be considered across all levels of decision making in Northern Ireland. The ultimate success of this Strategy lies outside of the Department of Health. Other Central Government Departments are key to integrate the ethos of this Strategy within their own policy areas (e.g. DAERA's Food Strategy, DfC's Anti-poverty Strategy, DfI's Active Travel Policies, DE's Food in Schools Policy). Local Development Plans, and regional planning policies, also have a role to play in creating places that support prevention focused development activities.

Comments: Weight management services priorities

A person centred, non-judgemental approach, is essential within weight management services to help those who are already living with obesity. It is important that these services focus on more than nutrition and exercise and also includes behavioural science and emotional wellbeing support.

CONSULTATION QUESTION 15 – HEALTHY PEOPLE:

Is there anything missing that is likely to have a positive impact on this theme and what it is trying to achieve?

Comments:

As previously mentioned, the importance of integration with other government (central and local) strategies and the inclusion of behavioural psychology as part of the weight management service.

Collaboration and Whole System Approach

CONSULTATION QUESTION 16 – Collaboration and a Whole System

Approach: Overweight and obesity is complex and interrelated with other issues and outcomes. It is vital therefore that this strategic framework is a living document which is regularly updated in line with the latest international research and evidence, that we work collectively across the UK and Ireland, and that we enable people to come together to find solutions and take a systematic approach to achieving our goals.

Do you agree with this theme and what it is seeking to achieve?

Strongly agree:

Agree:

Disagree:

Strongly disagree:

Comments:

It is unsurprising that we strongly agree with this theme and what it is trying to achieve. As mentioned in the draft strategy documentation, Ards and North Down is the first early adopter site in Northern Ireland. The process of working towards implementing a whole systems approach has been considerably slower than the initial timeline we tried to follow using the Leeds Beckett Model. We spent some considerable time building the local picture to identify a sub-system and location to focus our limited resources on.

Engagement with a WSA Workstream Group and an extensive review of the available data has concluded in a decision to focus the Early Adopter Site Project on the **transition period between year 1 (age 4/5) and year 8 (age 11/12)**. This is when the data available within Ards and North Down indicates a notable increase in obesity/overweight statistics recorded. A decision-making matrix, with a weighting towards areas of high deprivation, was used to identify a geographical area. This decision-making matrix also considered the availability of assets to incorporate into an intervention focused action plan. The agreed geographical location for the first early adopter site is the **West Winds and Glen Estate** within the Newtownards DEA. The wards within the early adopter site will be Glen West Winds Ward and Conway Square Ward. The boundary of this area will be fluid due to the influences on the system, as well the potential intervention-based assets being outside the geographical boundary.

The obesity system for the WSA Obesity project in Ards and North Down, are: **the sum of all the relevant factors and their interdependencies that determine the condition of obesity for children between year 1 and year 8 within the West Winds, Glen and Conway Square wards of Newtownards DEA.**

The obesity system, as defined above, will be visualised via the creation of a causal loop model) or diagram). The causal loop model will be referred to as the 'systems map'. Phase III will focus on the development of the causal map. However, this is where the project is currently stuck while we try to find a resource

capable of undertaking this piece of work. There appear to be limited expertise in Northern Ireland to help us develop this complex systems map. But if a WSA is to be adequately implemented this barrier must be overcome or the initiative will not have the required impact.

CONSULTATION QUESTION 17 – Collaboration and a Whole System

Approach: Do you agree with these priorities?

Strongly agree:

Agree:

Disagree:

Strongly disagree:

Comments: Whole System Approach and collaboration priorities

It is important that the barriers to implementing this approach are addressed. As mentioned, a WSA is essential to address an issue as complex as obesity. However, taking a WSA is also complex and will require adequate resourcing and understanding across all levels of government. Within the context of community planning, poverty and mental health are consistently referenced as being serious issues across Northern Ireland and the existing policies do not seem to be adequately addressing these complex issues. These issues also feature in causal maps for obesity, but if we continue to try and address issues in isolation without looking at the wider system, we are only ever going to be able to make piecemeal progress.

While outcomes-based accountability can be a useful way of measuring progress. Thought is needed to determine what the baseline is that we are trying to improve. Given the length of time that will be needed before a whole population impact is noticed, interim measures of success will also be needed. This will be a challenge as the data needed to identify obesity and weight issues is not readily available, especially at below the areas of the health trusts.

CONSULTATION QUESTION 18 – Collaboration and a Whole System

Approach: Is there anything missing that is likely to have a positive impact on this theme and what it is trying to achieve?

Comments:

As previously mentioned, within this theme it is important to recognise the importance of being able to develop causal maps that will help explain the whole system. This is essential to enable the development of effective action plans. This is a resource that is lacking in Northern Ireland and we are struggling to identify a suitable organisation/individual to develop a complex systems map that will enable us to properly identify the reasons, and possible solutions, to the problem.

Thank you

Thank you for completing the consultation. We are keen to hear a wide range of views and ideas to make our new strategy, and proposed interventions, even better targeted at the factors that will make the most positive difference.

You may also be interested in the Department's consultation on a Proposed Regional Obesity Management Service (ROMS) for Northern Ireland which is running at the same time as this consultation. Details are available online at <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/consultations/proposed-regional-obesity-management-service-roms-northern-ireland>.

Unclassified

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ITEM 12**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Council Meeting
Date of Meeting	31 January 2024
Responsible Director	Chief Executive
Responsible Head of Service	
Date of Report	23 January 2023
File Reference	
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Changes to conducting Committee and Council meetings and changes to the Standing Orders
Attachments	

Background

At recent meetings of the Party Group Leaders and the Independent and Small Member Party Group, a number of potential changes to address the length and frequency of Council, Committee and other meetings were discussed. As a result, a number of 'good practice' actions were agreed by Council on 20 December 2023. In addition, the following changes to the Standing Orders were recommended for consideration and stood down without debate for one month.

Stand Down Standing Orders

Under Standing Order 29 – Suspension and Amendment of Standing Orders - that any motion to, add to, vary or revoke the Standing Orders will, when proposed and seconded, stand adjourned and be referred without discussion to the next ordinary meeting of the Council and any resultant amendment will be ratified at the meeting.

Not Applicable

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Any motion under this Standing Order to suspend the Standing Orders shall require the support of a qualified majority vote and suspension can only be for the duration of the meeting.

Changes to Standing Orders

The Standing Order as it is currently written (Standing Orders, version 9, December 2021) are outlined below, with changes to the text marked in red:

Standing Order 20.15, Duration of Speeches

- “Except with the permission of the Council, a Member, in introducing a Motion, shall not speak for more than ~~ten~~ **five** minutes and in replying, for more than **five three** minutes. Other speakers shall be allowed one interaction which last no longer than ~~five three~~ minutes. **The duration of speeches is not inclusive of the Officer’s response**”.

Standing Order 11, Attendance of Members at Committees

To address the number of questions raised at Council on reports previously taken to Committee, it is recommended that Members be given dispensation to request at Council that a report be taken back to the Committee where Members who are not members of the Committee will be, at the discretion of the Chair, permitted to speak but not vote. Members should note the risk of referring reports back to Committee which, if many, could impact the length of Committee meetings.

The changes are recommended as follows:

- “Any Elected Member may attend a Committee meeting of which he/she is not a Member, ~~but may not take a Council seat within the main meeting area and instead should sit in the public gallery if~~ and subject to permission of the Chairman of the Committee, shall be given dispensation to speak on a matter that has been referred back to the Committee for consideration, but shall not, unless he/she is a Member of the Committee, vote in any division or propose any resolution or amendment. A matter may only be referred back to the Committee once. Items considered by the Planning Committee may not be referred back by an Elected Member who is not a Member of the Planning Committee. If the public and press are excluded from the meeting the Member is not required to leave the room but rather be bound by the restrictions imposed at that part of the meeting.

Standing Order 17.1, Motions

The changes are proposed as follows:

- Notice of every motion, other than a motion which under Standing Order 17.2 may be moved without notice, shall be given in writing, signed by at least two Members of the Council giving the notice, to the Chief Executive not later than at least five working days before the next meeting of the Council. Each motion must have a proposer and seconder. The motion must be clear in meaning otherwise it shall be rejected until such time as it is resubmitted in clear language. **Prior to lodging a notice of motion, members should take the opportunity to engage with the relevant Director on current action being taken and options available to have the subject matter addressed. This may assist**

Not Applicable

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members in formulating the terms of notice of motion. The motion must be submitted ~~and~~ not later than five working days before the meeting.

Standing Order 17.1.7 –

- If the subject matter of any motion of which notice has been properly given comes within the remit of any Committee it shall, upon being moved and seconded, stand referred without discussion to that Committee, or to such other Committee as the Council may determine, for consideration and report. The Presiding Chairperson may, if they consider it urgent and necessary to the dispatch of business, allow the motion to be dealt with at the meeting at which it is brought forward. **Where such a motion is deemed urgent, the Presiding Chairperson shall give notice of this decision to the Members at least one day in advance of the meeting at which that motion is to be heard.**

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council agrees to adopt the changes to the Standing Orders as set out in this report which will be required to be passed by a qualified majority.

Unclassified

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ITEM 15**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
Council/Committee	Council Meeting
Date of Meeting	31 January 2024
Responsible Director	Chief Executive
Responsible Head of Service	
Date of Report	23 January 2024
File Reference	
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Notice of Motion Status Report
Attachments	Notice of Motion Status Report

Please find attached a Status Report in respect of Notices of Motion.

This is a standing item on the Council agenda each month and its aim is to keep Members updated on the outcome of motions. Please note that as each motion is dealt with it will be removed from the report.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council notes the report.

NOM REF	DATE RECEIVED	NOTICE	SUBMITTED BY	COUNCIL MEETING DATE	COMMITTEE REFERRED TO	OUTCOME OF COMMITTEE WHERE NOM DEBATED	MONTH IT WILL BE REPORTED BACK TO COMMITTEE	OTHER ACTION TO BE TAKEN	FINAL OUTCOME	Letter /Reminder prompt 4 weeks if no response	Officer lead
-	31/05/15	Rory McIlroy recognition	Councillor Muir	Jun-15	Corporate Services Committee – October 2015	Agreed	Mar-24	Further Report to follow in March 2024.			
	21/01/19	Shelter at slipway in Donaghadee	Councillor Brooks & Cllr Smith	Jan-19	Environment Committee	Agreed	TBC	Officers awaiting feedback from			
-	25/09/19	Report on feasibility of holding annual remembrance service for those lost to suicide	Councillor Martin	Oct-19	Corporate Services – November 2019	Agreed	TBC	Further Report to follow, awaiting proposer			
	20/10/20	"I would like to task officers to produce a report to consider what could be a more environmentally friendly and benefit the wellbeing of the community for the use of the disused putting green on the Commons and play park at Hunts park in Donaghadee . Following the success of the Dog park in Bangor and the demand for a Dementia garden, both should be considered as options in the report. The process should	Councillor Brooks	Oct-20	Community & Wellbeing Committee – December 2020	Agreed	TBC	Report to follow after consideration of Masterplan and application of play strategy			
	10/05/21	That officers are tasked to bring back a Report on how the Council might approach a Climate Change Action Plan and perhaps including - but not limited to - a review of all Council long-term investment, a Borough-wide engagement via an Innovation Lab, a Conference of Ideas, and values-based recommendations for next steps.	Councillors Walker & Egan	Jun-21	Environment Committee – October 2021 (deferred from September Committee)	Agreed	TBC	Various strands of work taking place across different departments on development of Council Climate Action Plan - led within Corporate Services			
	13.04.22	That this Council recognises the environmental damage caused by modern day packaging, much of which is disposed of in landfill or as litter. This Council agrees that producers, not ratepayers, should be responsible for the net costs of managing packaging waste and that litter payments must be included in any Extended Producer Responsibility scheme. This Council tasks Officers with bringing back a report detailing what initiatives Council have undertaken to encourage businesses within the Borough to review, change and/or reduce the packaging they use. The report should include analysis of achievements and challenges encountered to date and outline further initiatives that could be undertaken to encourage businesses to change or reduce the packaging they use.	Councillors McRandal and Douglas	Apr-22	Environment Committee – June 2022	Agreed	Reported to January 2024 Environment Committee - agreed to bring back another report on further actions - to be ratified by January 2024 Council	Agreed amendment: We propose the Officers bring back a further report outlining future initiatives that could be undertaken to encourage businesses to change or reduce the packaging they use,			

	17.05.22	2028 Centenary of the internationally renowned Ards TT races. Asking Council how best to commemorate this important sporting anniversary.	Alderman McIlveen and Councillor Kennedy	May- 22	Community and Wellbeing June 2022 - Place & Prosperity	Agreed	Reported to November 2023 P&P, agreed and ratified by Council	NoM transferred to P&P Committee.			
	19.05.2022	Business case for redesign of the parallel sports pitches and facilities at Park Way, Comber	Councillors Cummings and Johnson	Jun-22	Community and Wellbeing Committee – September 2022 – deferred to October 2022		TBC	Council agreed Comber 3G pitch is ranked 21st in project prioritisation. Stakeholder			
NOM164	20.06.2022	Review of health and safety process re community groups	Councillors MacArthur, Brooks, T Smith and Kennedy	Jun-22	Corporate Services Committee - deferred to October 2022	Agreed	TBC	Workshop took place on 20 January, feedback request being sent to			
NOM165	20.06.2022	Report exploring the possibility of introducing a policy that shows commitment to supporting the wellbeing of our workforce by ensuring appropriate support is available to anyone undergoing IVF.	Councillor Greer and Councillor McKee	Jun-22	Corporate Services Committee – deferred to October 2022	Agreed	TBC	Further Report to follow during 2024.			
	21.06.2022	Engagement with relevant community stakeholders to ascertain community need and desires in respect of the Queen’s Leisure Complex	Councillors Kendall, McRandal and McClean	Jun-22	Community and Wellbeing Committee – September 2022 – deferred to October 2022		April 2024 C&W Committee	Engagement Ongoing			
NOM181	5.07.2022	That this Council changes the name of Queen’s Parade to Queen’s Platinum Jubilee Parade in honour and recognition of the 70th anniversary of the Queen’s accession to the throne. *** Amendment Received from Councillor Cathcart - That this Council, in recognition of Her Majesty’s Platinum Jubilee and her conferment of City Status upon Bangor, agrees to name an appropriate place or building within Bangor in her honour and that future Council Bangor entrance signs make reference to Bangor being a Platinum Jubilee City.	Alderman Irvine & Keery	Jul-22	Environment Committee - September 2022	Amended and agreed	TBC	Officers considering report to be brought back to future Committee once advice from the Cabinet Office is received.			
NOM167	24.08.2022	That this council withdraws all funding to any sporting organisations with any political objectives or named references to terrorism in their constitution, club names, stadiums or competitions, and tasks officers to bring back a report outlining the specific relevant council policy.	Cllrs Cooper, T Smith and Councillor Irvine	Aug-22	Corporate Committee – deferred to October 2022	Amended and agreed	C&W - TBC	NoM Transferred to C&W Committee. Officers			
	22.08.22	Street Clutter Audit for the Borough	Councillor Dunlop and Councillor Douglas	Sep-22	Environment Committee – October 2022	Agreed	Reported to October 2022 EC Committee	Report to be brought back to a future meeting			
	21.09.22	Given the public health issues and the desire to encourage outdoor eating and entertainment in Conway Square, that officers look at humane means to address the pigeon problem in the Square to include a new bylaw to prohibit feeding of the birds in and around the Square and to erect in the meantime advisory signs to deter feeding of birds in the area.	Alderman McIlveen and Alderman Armstrong-Cotter	Sep-22	Environment Committee 2022	Agreed	Reported to October 2022 ENV Committee	Signage has been erected in Conway Square. Further report to be prepared for			

	16.11.22	That Council officers open discussions with Historic Environment Division regarding the return of the 13th century 'Movilla Stones' to the Borough and the provision of a suitable site for these to be located. Officers are also tasked with promoting these extremely important archaeological artefacts in the local community and local schools when the stones have been returned.	Alderman McIlveen & Councillor Cummings	Nov-22	Community & Wellbeing - December 2022	Agreed	March 2023 and June 2023 C&W Committee	Officers to discuss further with HED and report to future C&W Committee when final arrangements for return of the stones is			
NOM 172	09.12.22	That this Council adopts the White Ribbon Pledge to ' <i>Never commit, condone or remain silent about violence against women and girls</i> ', agrees to sign the Pledge, and tasks Officers to bring back a report outlining how we can amalgamate existing relevant policies, undertake the Listen, Learn, Lead programme within the Council, and identify effective routes to encourage other agencies and organisations in our Borough to engage with the White Ribbon Project.	Councillors Douglas & Walker	Dec-22	Corporate Services Committee – January 2023 Community and Wellbeing Committee - TBC	Agreed	January 2024 C&W Committee	Womens Night Charter reported to January C&W Committee to be ratified at Council. Action plan being			
	13.12.22	That this Council expresses concern with the number of residential and commercial bins left on public footways in the Borough long after the bin collection date. Bins left on public footways are not only unsightly, they can lead to hygiene and contamination issues, as well as safety concerns, forcing pedestrians onto the road due to the blocking of a footway. This Council notes its own lack of enforcement powers to tackle this issue and expresses concern at the Department for Infrastructure's reluctance to use its own enforcement powers. Accordingly, this Council agrees to write to the Department for Infrastructure asking the Department to engage with Councils with the aim of creating appropriate enforcement powers to tackle this issue. Council Officers, will in the meantime, bring back a report to the appropriate committee detailing action	Councillors Cathcart and MacArthur	Dec-22	Environment Committee – January 2023	Agreed	TBC	Alternative proposal agreed at June 2023 Committee. Update report to be brought to a future meeting (date to be confirmed) Letters sent to DfI and PSNI 12/10/23 -			
	08.12.22	This Council acknowledges the environmental and health benefits associated with the recent increase in cycling and declares Ards & North Down a cycling friendly borough. The Council also recognises that people who cycle are among the most vulnerable road users, and tasks officers with producing a report detailing ways in which we can help improve safety. The report should include possible sources of funding, potential partnerships, and ways in which we can promote	Alderman Wilson & Councillor Douglas (Postponed from Dec Council to Jan Council)	Jan-23	Community and Wellbeing Committee – February 2023		June 2023 C&W Committee	Further report to future C&WC including a report recommendation on declaration.			
	08.01.2023	That this Council writes to the Permanent Secretary of the Department for Infrastructure expressing concern that the provision of a footpath at Shore Road Ballyhalbert is currently not considered a priority by the Department following the completion of a feasibility study which demonstrated need. That the Council highlights the road safety concerns raised by residents for pedestrians using the Shore Road from the village to the residential developments including Park Homes and St Andrew's. That Council requests that the Department for Infrastructure makes the installation of a footpath a priority and commits to deliver the scheme as a matter of urgency.	Councillors Adair & Edmund	Jan-23	Place & Prosperity – February 2023	Agreed and ratified at Council 5.7.23	TBC - still awaiting response from DfI Perm Sec	Perm Sec's of DfI ltr of 10.8.23 reported to Sept P&P where it was agreed that that Council writes to the Permanent Secretary of the Department for			

	18.01.2023	The prolonged cold weather spells just before Christmas and last week resulted in icy, slippery, and dangerous footpaths and car parks in the Borough's City and town centres. It is not acceptable that in such circumstances the Council does not have a plan or the resources or facilities to grit these areas to enable residents to walk safely to and from the main shopping areas or fall when they step out of their cars onto ice. It is proposed that officers bring back a report with costs to outline what steps can be taken to ensure that Council car parks and footpaths in the City and town centres are gritted when the weather is forecast to have heavy snowfall or prolonged freezing weather conditions.	Councillors Morgan and McRandal	Jan-23	Environment Committee – February 2023	Agreed	01/10/2023 and ratified at October 2023 Council	Agreed that officers bring back a report detailing the legal advice that backs up this risk assessment and that this report is brought back to the Committee and a review is undertaken of other NI Council policies on Council owned car parks			
	18.01.2023	That Council, subject to consultation with addressees on the road, considers changing the name of that stretch of the A21 in Newtownards which runs from Portaferry Road to the junction with upper Greenwell Street, Newtownards currently named New Road to Viscount Castlereagh Avenue as a mark of the life and legacy of Robert Stewart, 2 nd Marquess of Londonderry, who was known by the courtesy title of Viscount Castlereagh during most of his life, in the 200 th year of his	Alderman McIlveen and Alderman Armstrong-Cotter	Feb-23	Environment Committee March 2023	Agreed	TBC	Report to be brought to future meeting			
	08.02.2023	That this Council tasks officers to begin discussions with the Education Authority with regards to the Future of Bloomfield playing fields, Bangor. This is to include the lease and the exploring of the possibility of bringing the facility up to intermediate level for football. A report to be brought back to	Alderman Irvine and Alderman Keery	Feb-23	Community and Wellbeing Committee March 2023	Agreed	TBC	Officers considering report to be brought back to future			
NOM180	14.02.2023	This Council rename the square at Portavogie War Memorial Queen Elizabeth Square in memory of our late Sovereign Queen Elizabeth II.	Councillor Adair and Councillor Edmund	Feb-23	Corporate Services March 2023		TBC	Officers considering next steps for further report			
	20.3.2023	That this Council explores the possibility of supporting the Bookstart Early Years Pilot across Ards and North Down. A report is brought back detailing information about the programme, how it could be supported across the Borough, including cost and potential delivery partners.	Councillors Gilmour & Cathcart	Mar-23	Community & Wellbeing Committee 21/06/2023	Agreed - subject to ratification by June Council	January 2024 C&W Committee	Report to January 2024 C&WC to be ratified at January 2024 Council will			
TBC	20.3.2023	That this Council recognises the issues and concerns detailed in the letter sent to the Chief Executive by The Kircubbin Harbour Action Group and agrees to write to the Permanent Secretaries of the Departments of Infrastructure and Communities, asking them to provide details of the responsibility they have in ensuring the public safety of the harbour and listing any details of dealings their departments have had with the owner.	Councillors Thompson & Adair	Mar-23	Place and Prosperity Committee June 2023	Agreed and ratified at Council 5.7.23. Discussed at P&P 7.12.23 - Amended and agreed that Council defer a decision on the Kircubbin Harbour report to February 2024	Feb 2024 P&P	CEx issued ltrs to Perm Secretaries of DfI and DfC 2.8.23 - Kircubbin HAG to consider response.			

575	31.07.2023	That this council notes that the number of households with homelessness status on the social housing waiting list across NI has increased from 12,431 to 26,310 households between 31 March 2013 and 31 March 2023, an increase of 111.7%; notes the enormous strain the homelessness system is under with the number of households in temporary accommodation at unprecedented levels; agrees that this council has a role to play in preventing homelessness in this borough alongside other organisations and bodies in the Public, Statutory and Voluntary sectors; calls on this Council to assess how it contributes to homelessness prevention through carrying out an audit of its services; and requests that Officers bring back a report detailing the homelessness prevention work currently	Councillors Creighton and Moore	Council - August 2023	Community & Wellbeing Committee-September 2023	Agreed - ratified at September Council	September 2024 C&W Committee	Officers considering report to be brought back to September 2024 C&W Committee			
576	01.08.2023	That this Council recognises the significant public concern created by the feud between rival organised crime groups within Ards and North Down. This feud which began in March 2023 has led to violence, criminal damage, and communities living in fear. We ask that Council contact representatives of the Talking Paramilitarism Programme including The Executive Office and Department of Justice seeking their shared engagement with Council and elected representatives focusing solutions to address this issue, and to reduce the prospect of a similar occurrence in the future. Further to this we ask the Communities in Transition Programme to broaden its remit across the Borough to help create a culture of	Councillors Smart & P Smith	Council - August 2023	Heard at Council August & Agreed						
577	02.08.2023	This Council condemns without reservation the threats made to District Judge Mark Hamill and the attack on Newtownards Courthouse as an attack on the rule of law which is the basis of a democratic and free society. Furthermore, this Council affirms its full support for the PSNI in investigating and bringing to justice those who have committed criminal acts within this Borough and encourages	Aldermen McIlveen & Armstrong Cotter, Councillor Kennedy	Council - August 2023	Heard at Council August & Agreed						
		That Council task officers to bring back a report on the costing to install signage identifying the townlands of Ballyblack and Kirkistown and that officers are tasked to bring forward proposals to incorporate townland signage across our Borough.	Alderman Adair, Councillors Edmund & Kerr	Council - August 2023	Environment Committee - September 2023	Agreed - ratified by September Council	To be confirmed				
581	18.09.2023	That Council notes the increasing complaints regarding the poor condition and appearance of our cemeteries across the Borough and tasks officers to bring back a report on options to improve the maintenance of our cemeteries which are places of special significance to those who have lost loved ones.	Alderman Adair, Councillor Douglas and Alderman McIlveen	27-Sep-23	Community and Wellbeing Committee	Agreed subject to ratification at October Council	December 2023 C&W Committee. June 2024 C&W Committee	December 2023 C&W Committee Report ratified at December 2023 Council. Officers to			

NOM 185	31.08.2023	Education should be accessible to all who seek it and embedding a culture of lifelong learning in our society is essential to enabling people to realise their potential. Part-time flexible learning is crucial to meeting the skills needed to build a modern, inclusive and green economy. Part-time students are a unique demographic, they are more likely to have disabilities, come from disadvantaged backgrounds, have caring responsibilities, such as children or elderly relatives, and in general, be part of a 'hard to reach' group who missed out on full-time study. Lifelong learning, including non-formal education, addresses social issues, strengthens communities and builds civic engagement. It is the most effective tool for meeting social policy objectives and creating positive social change. Recognises that lifelong learning must become a meaningful and developed policy area with tangible actions and outcomes, underpinned by the wealth of best practice and innovation from across the UK and Ireland. This Council therefore resolves to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To work with the Lifelong Learning Alliance to develop a Lifelong Learning campaign, to inform and raise public awareness of how lifelong learning transforms lives and communities. Engage with MLAs and MPs to prioritise funding for formal and informal part-time education when the Executive is formed. Encourage MLAs to form an All-Party Group on 	Councillor Moore and Councillor Creighton	Sep-23	Corporate Services-October 2023	Agreed to recommend	Feb-24	Letters sent to MLA's & MP's for Strangford and NDown and other Councils			
NOM 186	06.09.2023	That this Council, recognising its commitment as a responsible employer, and that staff are paid the current Living Wage, tasks officers to explore becoming 'Living Wage' accredited with the UK Living Wage Foundation, as well as ensuring any regularly contracted employees and workers, including those who are employed externally to deliver Council services, are paid the living wage hourly rate. It also explores becoming	Councillor Woods and Councillor McKee	Sep-23	Corporate Services-October 2023	Agreed to recommend	TBC	Accreditation to be sought by HR.			
		That Council recognise the value of our Beaches and coastal environment to our residents and tourists alike note the new DEARA regulations for the cleaning and maintenance of our beaches and task officers to bring forward a report on cleaning and maintaining our beaches on a proactive basis in line with the new DEARA regulations to ensure our beaches continue to be a clean, safe, attractive and well-managed coastal environments.	Alderman Adair, Councillor Edmund and Councillor Kerr	Oct-23	Environment Committee - November 2023 - Transferred to Community & Wellbeing Committee	Agreed subject to ratification at November Council	January 2024 C&W Committee	Report to January 2024 C&WC. Further report requested subject to ratification at January 2024			
		That this council asks officers to include the repainting of the traditionally styled bus shelter (owned by Council), located in Main Street, Greyabbey in the 2024/25 maintenance budget. Furthermore Council seeks an officer's report on the feasibility of Council painting the decorative Greyabbey lamp posts (in the ownership of DFI). This is a feature of the historic village, and we understand the current shabby condition impacts not only residents of the village, but the wider tourism and regeneration potential of this scenic conservation area.	Councillor Wray and Alderman Smith	Oct-23	Environment Committee - November 2023	Agreed - ratified at November Council		Agreed. That Council welcomes the repainting of the traditionally styled bus shelter located on Main Street, Greyabbey and tasks officers to ensure it is maintained to a high standard going forward.	Action agreed at Environment Committee, referred to Place and Prosperity for follow up.		

NOM 187	16.10.23	That this Council, further to recent positive discussions with landowners, agrees to reexamine the April 2014 decision of North Down Borough Council to accept a gift of open space at Ambleside, Bangor, which was never completed and tasks Council Officers to bring back a report looking at (i) acquiring the land and (ii) options <small>This Council recognises the importance of Bangor</small>	Councillor Cathcart and Councillor Martin	Oct-23	Corporate Services November 2023	Agreed	Feb-24	Report to February 2024 committee .			
NOM 592	27.10.23	Sportsplex for athletics, football and community leisure facilities in the Borough and notes with concern the deteriorating conditions of the site rendering several pitches unusable, and therefore tasks council officers with producing a report regarding the future of Bangor Sportsplex, including addressing maintenance and structural issues and exploring options for the long term provision of track and field athletics facilities in the	Councillor Creighton and Councillor Irwin	29.11.23	C&W December	Agreed	TBC	Officers considering report to be brought back to future C&W Committee			
NOM 188	16.11.23	That this Council amends its flag policy to include the flying of the Union Flag at every war memorial all year round.	Councillor S Irvine, Councillor W Irvine and Alderman Brooks	29.11.23	Corporate December	Agreed					
NOM 595	16.11.23	This Council recognises the importance of Bangor's early Christian heritage in the story of our city, and its role in local tourism strategies. This Council requests that officers bring back a report which evaluates how the physical link between two main sites, Bangor Abbey and the North Down Museum, could be improved, to include the renovation and potential remodelling of Bell's Walk, with consideration for improved wayfinding and lighting. The motion also requests that officers consider how Bangor Castle Gardens and The Walled Garden could be better incorporated into the walking route, and how the overall attraction could be packaged to create a more	Councillor McCracken and Councillor Blaney	29.11.23	C&W December	Agreed	TBC	Officers considering report to be brought back to future C&W Committee			
596	20.11.23	Ulster Scots - tasking Officers to develop a budget to ensure and encourage participation in future Ulster Scots Language weeks; develop and action plan, with advice from the Ulster-Scots Agency, to develop all aspects of the Borough's rich Ulster Heritage	Alderman McIlveen and Councillor Kennedy	29.11.23	C&W December	Agreed	TBC	Action Plan to be brought to future C&W Committee subject to budget being			
597	20.11.23	Arts Cuts to funding - this Council is alarmed at proposed 5% cut in funding to arts organisations funded by the Department for Communities through the Arts Council NI. Notes that Arts Council NI funding has decreased, in real terms, by 30% over the last decade, despite evidence that investment in the arts has a real terms economic benefit for Northern Ireland. With continued cuts our borough will see more initiatives end, more artists forced into seeking new careers, and more companies forced to close. Recognises that Stormont Permanent Secretaries are being forced to take, without mandate, difficult decisions that should be taken by locally elected Ministers and a devolved Executive and Assembly. Calls for a reversal in cuts to the arts and agrees to join as a signatory to Equity NI's latest open letter to the	Councillor Wray and Councillor Smart	29.11.23	C&W January	Agreed	TBC	January 2024 C&W Committee Minutes To be ratified at January 2024 Council and then removed from NoM Tracker			

598	20.11.23	That this Council continues discussions with the Education Authority concerning the redevelopment of the play area fronting Victoria Primary School, Ballyhalbert (which is a shared facility between the school and public) and tasks officers to source external funding streams to enhance recreation & sports facilities for the village and surrounding area. Further, Council notes the poor condition of Ballyhalbert children's play park and tasks officers to bring forward a report	Alderman Adair and Councillor Edmund	29.11.23	C&W January	Agreed	March 2024 C&W Committee	January 2024 C&W Committee Minutes To be ratified at January Council. Officers considering			
599	21.11.23	"That this Council recognises the invaluable work undertaken by community/voluntary groups and organisations in this Borough in identifying and tackling the needs of communities and residents. The Council therefore, commits to undertaking a root and branch review of community development funding, arts and heritage, sports development and all other funding streams to ensure that it provides the most efficient, effective and responsive service to our community, thus maximising impact, accessibility and equitable allocation of resources. The review should examine the following 4 categories: (see further wording on agenda)	Councillor Cathcart and Councillor Gilmour	29.11.23	C&W January	Agreed	TBC	January 2024 C&W Committee Minutes to be ratified at January 2024 Council. Grants transformation project already underway			
560	23.11.23	That this Council recognises the growing concerns and impact of single use vapes on young people, schools, and our local environment. Calls on Council Officers to undertake a full review of options available to address these concerns and strengthen enforcement. This Council also calls on a ban on the importation of illicit vapes and calls on Stormont, at the earliest opportunity, to bring forward legislation to enforce	Councillor McLaren and Councillor Hollywood	Dec-23	C&W January	Agreed	TBC	January 2024 C&W Committee Minutes to be ratified at January 2024 Council			
561	29.11.23	That this Council notes the continuing issue of dead seals washed up on our beaches and coastlines and the negative impact that this has on the use of beaches when the carcasses are not picked up in a timely manner. It therefore tasks officers to bring forward a report to ensure seal carcasses are prioritised for removal as soon as possible after reporting to ensure that our beaches continue to be a clean, safe, and well-managed coastal environment to be enjoyed by everyone.	Alderman Adair and Councillor MacArthur	Council December 2023	Environment Committee January 2024 - to be ratified at January 2024 Council	Agreed with amendment: That this Council notes the continuing issue of dead seals and all mammals washed up on our beaches and coastline and the negative impact that this has on the use of beaches when the carcasses are not picked up in a timely manner. It therefore tasks officers to bring forward a report to ensure seal carcasses are prioritised for removal as soon as possible after reporting to ensure that our beaches continue to be a clean, safe, and well-managed coastal environment to be enjoyed by everyone.	TBC				

NOM 189	30.11.23	That this Council writes to the Department for Infrastructure (DFI) objecting to the significant proposed percentage increases to charges involving the structures along with pedestrian and various vehicle usage, availing of the Strangford Ferry Services.	Councillors Boyle and Wray	Council - December 2023	Heard at Council and agreed				CE to write to Dfi	Letter sent to DFI and response received. Response to NOM drafted for Feb CS Committee		
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