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Corporate Plan 2020 – 2024

At the heart of our community



Comhairle Ceantair
Lár Uladh
Mid Ulster
District Council

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Chair's Foreword

In the autumn of 2019, we began to review Mid Ulster District Council's existing Corporate Plan, assessing our progress since the Council came into being in 2015, considering our strategic direction and developing priorities for the new term of a freshly elected Council.

By February 2020 we had consulted internally and externally on proposals, considered responses and a final Corporate Plan was agreed.

At that time, it's fair to say that one of the critical external issues we faced as an organisation, as a district and as a region, was the impending exit from the EU.

However, in a few short weeks, the world's attention, and ours with it, turned to a much graver matter and one of even larger, and previously unimaginable, proportions: a global pandemic.

By necessity, our focus switched from strategic planning to responding to a crisis and prioritising the health and safety of our residents and our staff. In time, we moved from the delivery of our essential services, which to the organisation's credit were uninterrupted throughout, towards the resumption and recovery of a broader range of facilities and services, as restrictions eased.

The pandemic is, of course, not over. We have no certainty about the length of time coronavirus will be with us, nor just how extensive its longer-term impact will be on our lives individually or collectively. However, we do know that we cannot stand still, put plans on hold and simply wait. Instead, we will take cognisance of the effects of COVID-19 as we understand them currently. We will anticipate future impacts. We will adapt, flex and respond as required.



And so, it is against this background and with this approach that we in Mid Ulster District Council are presenting our Corporate Plan 2020-2024 and demonstrating our continued commitment to the growth and development of this district for the betterment and benefit of our citizens.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to be 'C. Mallaghan'.

**Councillor Cathal Mallaghan, Chair
Mid Ulster District Council
2020-2021**

Introduction

No plan is developed in a vacuum and the new Mid Ulster District Council Corporate Plan (2020-2024) has evolved from the first such plan which was created by the newly formed Council in 2015.

It has also been influenced by the broader, collaborative Mid Ulster Community Plan (2017-2020) and a myriad of other sectoral strategic documents, from an Economic Development Strategy (2015-2019) to a Tourism Development Strategy (2017-2021) for Mid Ulster.

In its lifetime, the Community Plan and the new draft Local Development Plan which sets out the Council's vision for planning land use up to 2030 and spans housing, infrastructure, transport, tourism, community and recreational facilities, will be key documents.

Equally the broader external context in which we operate, from the political, social and environmental to the economic and financial, has informed this plan's development and these factors are woven into the plan's themes and reflected in the associated priorities.

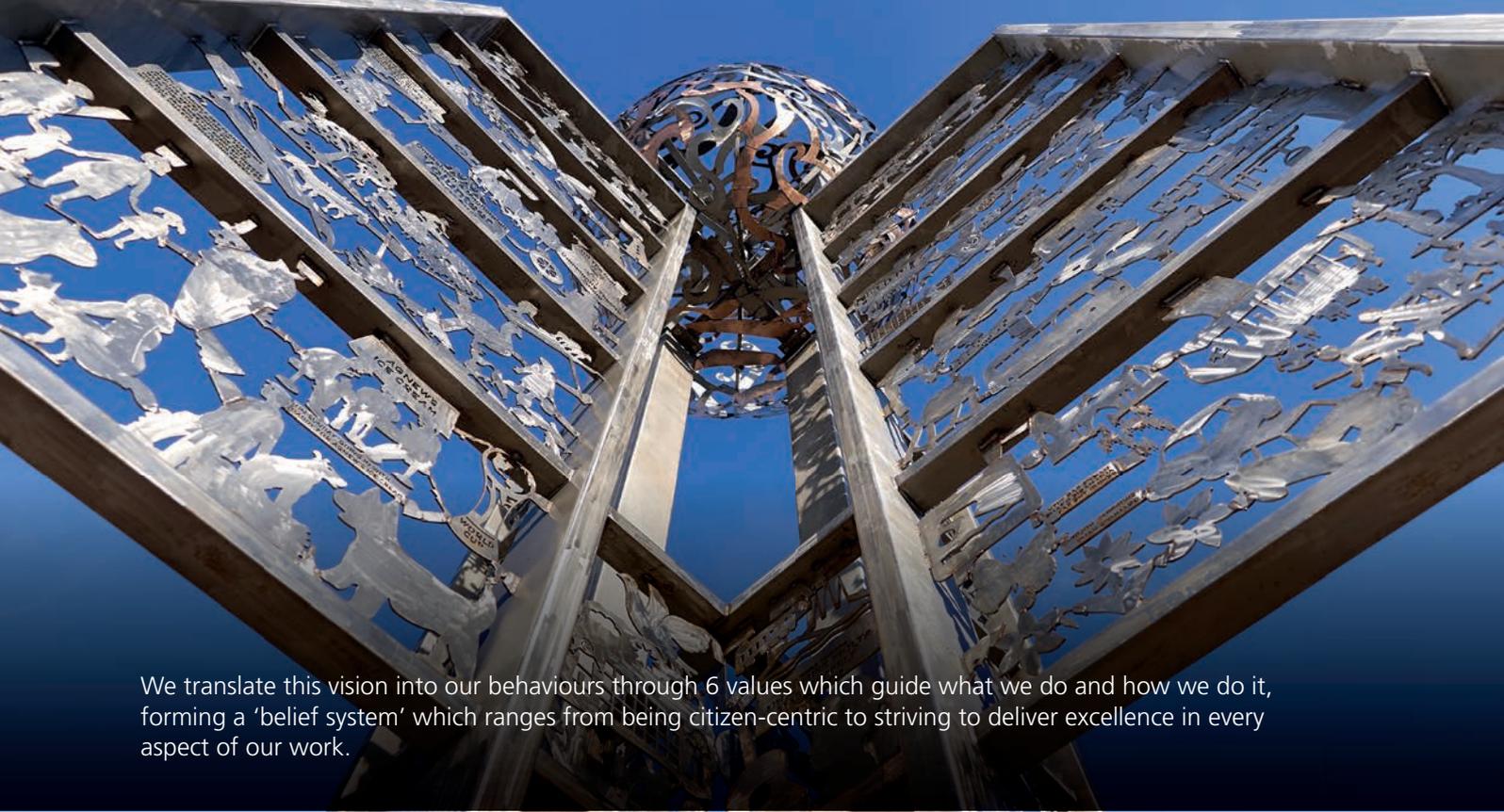
As the coronavirus pandemic has brought into stark relief, we must also be agile in terms of our ability to respond to the unknowns and to fast-changing circumstances.

Above all, however, tailoring what we do to meet the needs of this district and its people should continue to be at the core of all our work, as expressed through our vision:



To be at the **heart** of our community.





We translate this vision into our behaviours through 6 values which guide what we do and how we do it, forming a 'belief system' which ranges from being citizen-centric to striving to deliver excellence in every aspect of our work.

Values

Citizen and customer-focussed



Designing and delivering our services in response to and around the needs of our customers and within our resources.

Trustworthy



Working for our communities in a spirit of friendliness and openness by delivering fair, transparent, equitable and ethical services to all customers.

Respect



Treating each other, our customers and our stakeholders in the same considerate way that we wish to be treated ourselves.

Innovative



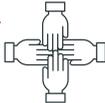
New and better ways of doing what we do.

Excellence



Striving to excel in every aspect of our work, being accountable for and delivering the best, value for money services.

Inclusive



Creating a culture which values, supports and celebrates diversity to the benefit of the organisation and the people we serve.



Our new corporate plan groups our work around 5 strategic themes, aligning very much with those identified in the wider, collaborative Mid Ulster Community Plan (2017-2027), while also reflecting our internal business requirements, processes and systems.

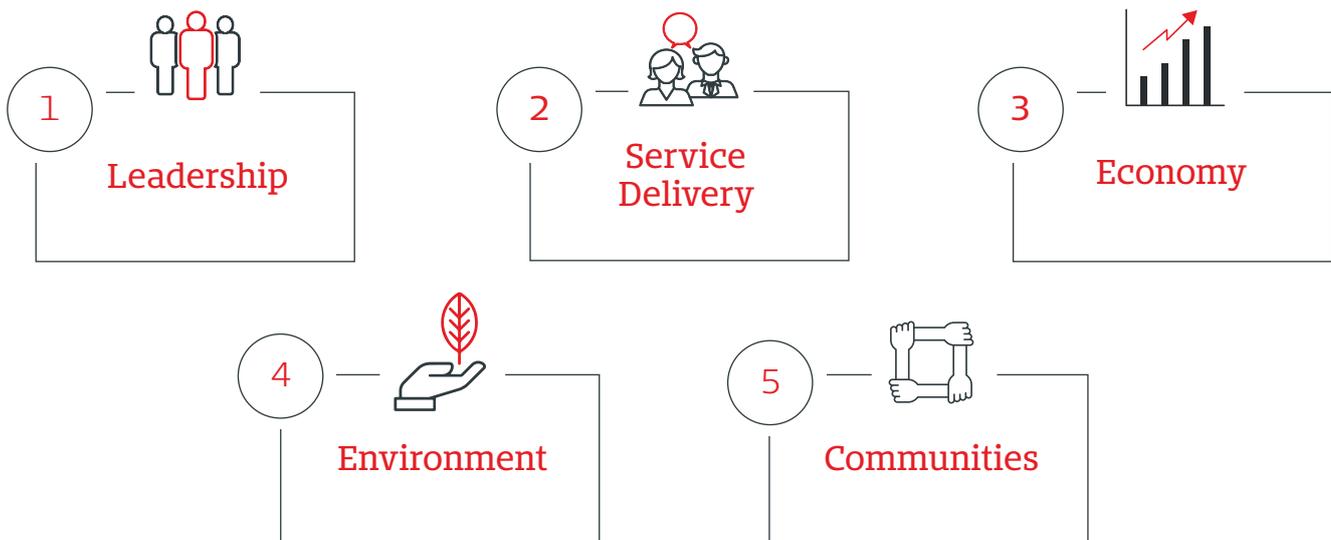


Our new **corporate plan** groups our work around 5 strategic themes.



The five themes are:

Themes



Our Corporate Commitments

While each of our strategic themes has a clear focus and purpose, there are also a number of corporate commitments which are not tethered to one area of work, but are common to all.

Addressing rurality

Close to 70% of Mid Ulster's population live in a rural setting, a fact which has strongly influenced the Council's approach to service delivery, investment and long-term planning. The importance of addressing the needs of a rural region, whether socially or economically, is undiminished and remains one of the Council's corporate commitments.

Promoting Equality of Opportunity and Good Relations

Beyond a duty of compliance with our equality scheme, we aim to mainstream the promotion of Equality of Opportunity and Good Relations throughout the organisation, actively seeking out ways in which to enhance those opportunities and to build positive relations between and among the diverse communities across Mid Ulster.

Continuously improving our services

Whether through our formal Corporate Improvement Objectives and service-specific Performance Improvement Plans or the small, regular, routine changes which we make to services through feedback, we are committed to continuously improving what we do and how we do it.

Designing and delivering our services sustainably

From large-scale investment projects to new or changing service models, we place a value on ensuring that what we do not only meets current needs, but is designed and delivered to be sustainable in the longer-term, ensuring the needs of future generations are uncompromised.

Working collaboratively across the public, private, community and voluntary sector to achieve shared objectives

Collaborative working is key to delivering successful outcomes for local people. The Council is committed to embracing the opportunities to work with a range of other organisations on issues, projects and plans as they relate to every theme, priority and aspect of our work.

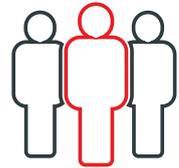
“

Each of our strategic themes has a clear focus and purpose.

”

Theme 1

Leadership



As an organisation, the Council's role extends far beyond the delivery of services, functions and facilities for which it has direct responsibility.

The Council is also a lobbyist, an influencer and a shaper of external policy.

This theme encapsulates the significance of the Council's political and civic leadership, through which it seeks to address the long-term deficits which adversely impact Mid Ulster, as well as to drive forward decisions which will enhance the region and benefit its people.

Connectivity, in its broadest sense, has long been identified as a primary issue for Mid Ulster.

Physical access to and from any region is critical to the growth of existing, indigenous businesses, as well as its attractiveness as an investment location. It is also a factor in the ability of a region's people to move freely and easily to access services, from health care and education to shops, leisure and recreation. As a result, physical connectivity cannot be divided from social cohesion, particularly in more isolated communities.

Our leadership priorities are **focussed**, therefore, on progressing the Council's role as an influencer locally, regionally and nationally.

The history of underinvestment in road and transport infrastructure in Mid Ulster is well-documented and while there has been some progress in recent years (Magherafelt Bypass, the A6), there are substantial schemes which must be delivered if this infrastructure deficit, and associated issues, are to be addressed.

The **Council's role** extends far beyond the delivery of services for which it has direct responsibility.

Moving from the physical to the virtual, investment in digital connectivity is no less important. Mid Ulster is one of the poorest served areas in terms of the availability of high speed broadband. The Council's commitment to addressing this aspect of connectivity was unflinching during the previous corporate plan period and continues to be a priority.

Once again, the positive impact of improved broadband touches on all aspects of people's lives, from the ability of businesses to be at the forefront of the next 'industrial revolution' (Industry 4.0) which centres on innovation via digital technologies, to the homes where a lack of connection restricts online, social, business and educational engagement and activity.

Our leadership priorities are focussed, therefore, on progressing the Council's role as an influencer locally, regionally and nationally, delivering positive outcomes relating to a myriad of touchpoints in people's lives.



Priorities

- **We will use our influence to shape and facilitate:**
 - the delivery of strategic infrastructure schemes including the road transportation network (including bypasses for both Cookstown and Dungannon)
 - the drainage and sewerage network
 - our energy and broadband connectivity
 - the future development of health provision, and in particular, mental health
 - the future development of education
 - the provision of adequate and affordable housing
 - the direction of wider policy impacting on economic growth.
- **We will continue to progress towards the adoption of our Local Development Plan 2030 and delivery against the plan objectives.**
- **We will work collectively to meet the identified needs and priorities of our citizens and to connect the people of Mid Ulster.**

Theme 2:

Service Delivery



This theme and its priorities are as wide-ranging as our portfolio of services.

As an organisation, we are responsible for some of the most visible of public services, from bin collections, recycling centres and street cleaning to leisure centres, sports pitches, parks and play areas.

Sometimes less visible, but no less significant, are our statutory functions where the work of services like environmental health and building control are fundamental to areas such as food safety, work place health and safety, animal welfare, pollution control and building safety standards.

As an organisation, we are **responsible** for some of the most **visible** of public services.

Growing the economy, developing the area's potential as a visitor and literary destination and supporting the creation of vibrant, safe and connected communities are also significant elements of the Council's work.

Behind the scenes, support services from finance to human resources, from capital projects to property services, are integral to ensuring that as an organisation which relies on its people, we can deliver for our customers.

Ensuring that as an organisation which relies on its people, we can **deliver** for our customers.

The outcomes associated with this theme are, therefore, centred around our internal agenda for making the best use of our resources: ensuring our people are performing and supported to perform to the best of their abilities; that our culture encourages idea-generation to find new and better ways of working; that our focus is always on excellence; that our property assets are configured through an Asset Management Plan to meet our organisational needs.

While never in doubt, but thrown into even starker relief by the Coronavirus pandemic, of critical importance is how we manage our finances and make plans to address ever-increasing financial pressures, particularly around the loss of core central government and EU funding and against increased public expectations and demands.

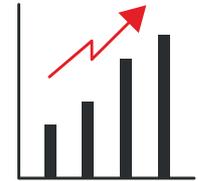


Priorities

- We will improve services for our citizens through the development and delivery of an innovation agenda.
- We will invest in our people to create a customer-focussed, purposeful, skilled, high performing, engaged, healthy and safe work-force.
- We will enhance our financial performance and strength, identifying opportunities to increase income and reduce deficits, as well as to leverage external funding.
- We will develop and implement an Asset Management Plan for the Council and, with our partners, work to develop a public sector-wide Asset Management Plan for Mid Ulster.

Theme 3

Economy



Economic growth has been a pillar of the Council's strategic direction since its inception.

While the long-term economic impacts of the coronavirus pandemic are as yet unknown, analysis of the shorter-term and potentially devastating effects on Mid Ulster's economy are already clear, principally as a result of the area's concentration of manufacturing, engineering and construction businesses.



£1M suite of business support programmes tailored to the micro and small business sector.



Even without the need to contend with a pandemic, the Brexit imperative had focussed minds on the challenges which Mid Ulster may face, particularly given its geographic position as a border region.

In this broader strategic context, ensuring that the economic strengths of the Mid Ulster region are supported and that opportunities to extend, expand and enhance the district's economic capacity are identified and capitalised upon, has taken on even greater significance.

Undoubtedly the confirmation of £252M in 'growth deal' funding for the Mid South West Region, of which Mid Ulster is part, will be a major factor in strategic planning and investment for economic growth during the lifetime of this Corporate Plan.

While this important regional partnership is ambitious in its aspirations, so too is the Council's economic development activity at a more local level.

From pandemic-related town centre recovery plans, ultimately aimed at town centre transformation, to a £1M suite of business support programmes tailored to the micro and small business sector which makes up 98% of Mid Ulster's business base, the economic development activity in this plan period will be wide-ranging and far-reaching.

Partnership working remains a priority, notably to address employability and skills issues through the Mid Ulster Skills Forum, while ever-closer relationships with the tourism sector which support and promote product development will continue unabated. Indeed, the Council's direct involvement in the tourism industry, through enhanced offerings at Seamus Heaney HomePlace and the unique OM Dark Sky Park and Observatory in the Sperrins, are central planks of the delivery of our tourism strategy.



Economic growth has been a pillar of the Council's **strategic direction** since its inception.





Priorities

- We will develop and deliver the Mid South West Regional Economic Strategy in collaboration with our partner Councils (Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council and Fermanagh and Omagh District Council).
- We will continue to build on our work to generate business diversification, innovation and expansion and increase employment opportunities.
- We will continue to support the work of our partners, including the Mid Ulster Skills Forum, to address employability and skills to ensure the existing and future needs of our region's business base are met.
- We will continue to identify opportunity sites for development proposals and to deliver against existing plans for other key strategic sites (including Ann Street, Dungannon and the former Maghera High School site).
- We will have a prioritised, sustainably resourced programme of capital investment supporting the enhancement of facilities for local people and contributing to the regeneration of our district.
- We will work to deliver tourism investment and employment concentrating on Mid Ulster's 3 identified tourism strands.

Theme 4

Environment



Protecting, preserving and enhancing the environment was articulated in the first Corporate Plan and continues into the new plan, reflecting not only the significance of our natural landscapes and heritage but also the importance of waste management as a direct council function.

A very clear emphasis on waste and the reduction of our dependency on landfill has meant Mid Ulster has not only been at the top of the recycling table every year since 2015, but was also the first Council here to meet the statutory 50% target for household waste recycling - 3 years ahead of the target date of 2020. Continuing to maintain these standards of performance and to meet statutory targets remains a priority in the 4 years ahead.

“The **first Council** in Northern Ireland to meet the statutory **50% target** for household waste recycling.”



Enhancing the environment is, of course, about much more than waste, particularly for a region like Mid Ulster, which encompasses Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Special Scientific Interest and which has international archaeological significance, is home to rare bog lands and bog plants, uncommon woodland, and priority and threatened species.



“**Enhancing** the environment is, of course, about much more than waste, particularly for a region like Mid Ulster.”



There is a balance to be achieved between the preservation of these unique natural landscapes and sustainable development to support the rural economy and rural life, a balance which the Council has always sought to achieve.

Indeed, issues of sustainability have grown in importance and are now articulated as one of our ‘corporate commitments’. Allied to those issues is the global movement to tackle climate change, a movement of which the Council is now part and which is expressed in a completely new priority in this Corporate Plan.



Priorities

- We will continue to reduce our dependency on landfill through waste reduction and increased recycling and recovery.
- We will continue to promote and protect our environment through our environmental and anti-littering programmes of education, awareness-raising and enforcement.
- We will increase the protection of, access to and development of our heritage assets, both natural and man-made, including our strategic visitor sites.
- We will work to mitigate against the impacts of climate change by taking steps to reduce our carbon emissions as an organisation.

Theme 5

Communities



While everything the Council does will ultimately have an impact on our communities at some level, this theme encompasses priorities which, when combined, can make a tangible difference to the health and well-being of local people, and contribute to the creation of viable and vibrant, safe and prosperous communities.

There is a deliberate focus on accessibility in this theme, recognising that the more and differing opportunities there are for people to adopt a more active lifestyle in a greater range of settings, the better the outcome will be.

Everything the Council does will ultimately have an **impact** on our communities at some level.

Only a varied and committed **partnership** approach will make a difference.

This theme also tackles the hard social issues, from affordable housing to employment, which are so inextricably tied to addressing poverty and deprivation in a meaningful way, and makes clear that only a varied and committed partnership approach will make a difference.

Enhancing the strength of our voluntary and community sector, with direct interventions, funding and capacity building programmes remains an integral element of our Communities theme.

The enormous benefits of the outdoors for physical and mental health, whether a walkway or a mountain trail, are prioritised in this theme also, and the positive socio-economic impact of engaging with culture and the arts also remains to the fore.



Priorities

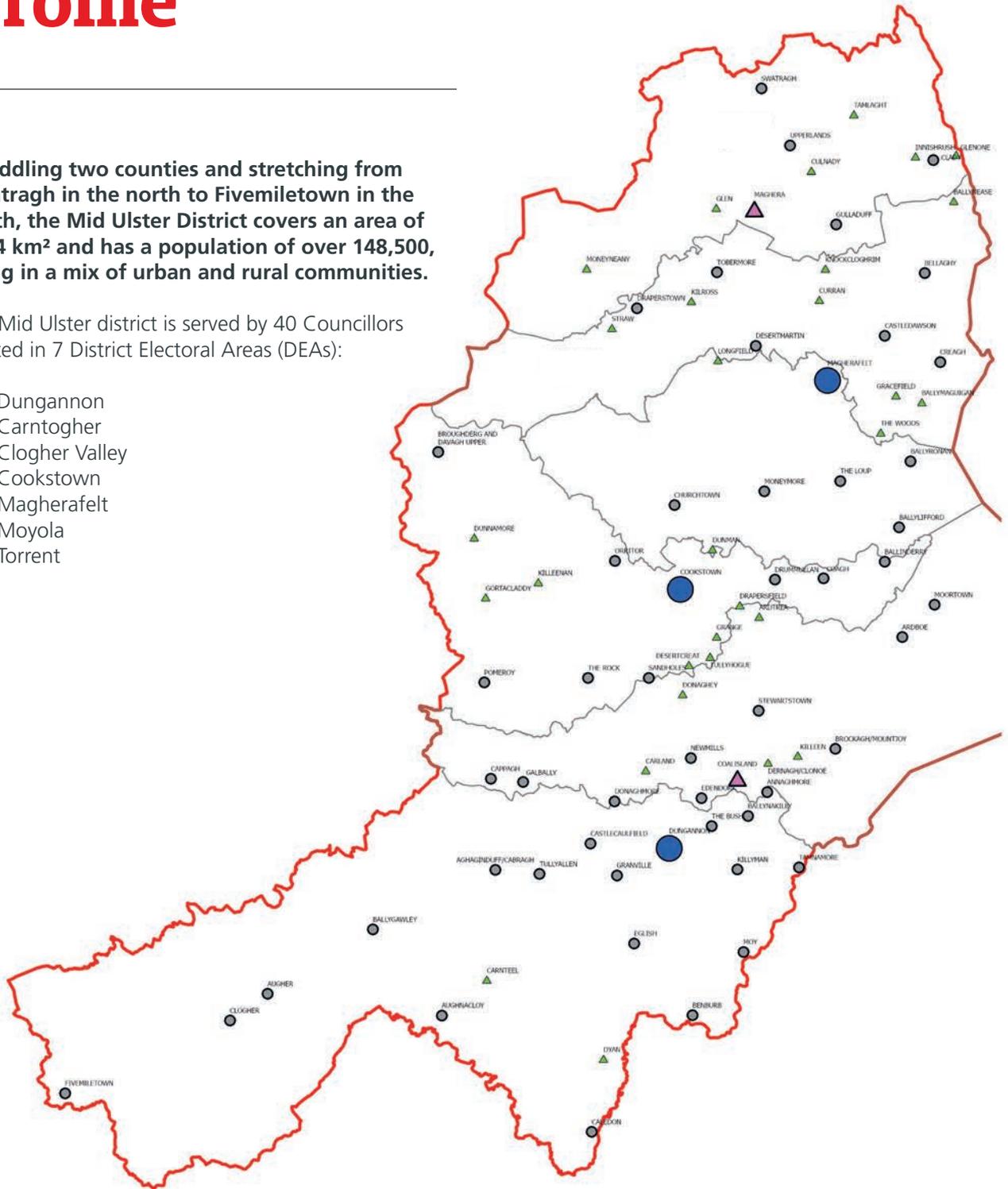
- We will open up and sustain accessible pathways to participation in leisure and outdoor recreation activities which enhance health and well-being by providing high quality, accessible facilities in local communities and through programmes tailored to community need.
- We will continue to support the sustainable development of our parks, forests and green spaces, together with access to outdoor assets, including walking and cycling trails, and water recreation.
- We will, along with our community planning partners, work to address poverty and deprivation across the Mid Ulster region.
- We will support and promote respect for diversity and the integration of our minority communities.
- We will develop, promote and sustain the arts in Mid Ulster.
- We will continue, through our community development programmes, grant aid schemes and our partnership-working, to support local communities and to build capacity in the community and voluntary sector.

Mid Ulster Profile

Straddling two counties and stretching from Swatragh in the north to Fivemiletown in the south, the Mid Ulster District covers an area of 1714 km² and has a population of over 148,500, living in a mix of urban and rural communities.

The Mid Ulster district is served by 40 Councillors elected in 7 District Electoral Areas (DEAs):

- Dungannon
- Carntogher
- Clogher Valley
- Cookstown
- Magherafelt
- Moyola
- Torrent





At a glance

- We serve a population of 148,500.
- We cover an area of some 1714km².
- By population, Mid Ulster is the 6th largest of the 11 councils.
- Mid Ulster's population grew by 9.7% between 2009 and 2019, making the district the 3rd fastest growing of the 11 councils.
- Around 70% of our people live in rural areas, with the remaining residents in urban settings.
- We have the highest proportion of children (0 – 15 years) at 23.3% of our population.
- Of all 11 councils areas, Mid Ulster has the lowest proportion of population aged 65+ at 14.5%.
- Our working age population (16 – 64) is 62.1%.
- We are the centre of manufacturing and engineering here.
- Manufacturing, construction, retail and agri-food are among our most significant economic sectors, accounting for 25% of our employment.
- Mid Ulster has the highest concentration of VAT-registered businesses outside of Belfast.

Contact Us

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