# Mid Ulster District Council

# Corporate Performance Improvement Plan (PIP)

#  2025-2026

# May 2025

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## Foreword

As Chair of Mid Ulster District Council, I am pleased to introduce our Performance Improvement Plan for the years 2025/26 and 2026/27. This plan outlines our commitment to continuous improvement and our dedication to serving the needs of all our citizens in a rapidly evolving landscape.

We operate in a dynamic local, regional, and global context. Locally, we continue to foster strong community links and address the unique needs of our diverse population. Regionally we are collaborating with other Councils and statutory bodies to enhance services and contribute to overall prosperity within the region. Globally we are mindful of the challenges and opportunities presented by issues such as climate change and technological advancements, which require us to be adaptable and forward-thinking in our approach.

This year’s Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) is driven by three core ambitions for Mid Ulster. Firstly, we are determined to enhance the experience of our customers by diligently working to embed a culture where their needs are central to how our services are both offered and accessed. This means striving to ensure all Council services are accessible, efficient, and truly responsive to the diverse needs of communities’ right across the district.

Secondly, recognising that Mid Ulster currently has the highest proportion of its population aged 0-14; as highlighted by the 2021 census data, therefore, our focus extends to our significant youth population. We aim to provide diverse opportunities for children and young people to engage in inclusive activities that not only promote crucial skills development, physical health and wellbeing but also encourage creativity and actively supports their participation in community life.

Finally, as a key corporate improvement priority, we are committed to environmental sustainability and achieving a reduction in our carbon emissions through the robust implementation of our Sustainability Strategy and Climate Action Plan. This goal is central to our corporate plan, ensuring the full integration of climate action and sustainability into our strategic performance and operational service delivery across all council functions. As a public body, the Climate Change Act (NI) legally requires Mid Ulster District Council 2022, to take action to reduce emissions, aiming for net zero by 2050.

These improvement objectives are ambitious, but with the dedication of our staff, the support of elected members, and the engagement of our communities, I am confident that we can achieve considerable progress over the next two years. This performance Improvement plan is a living document, and we will regularly check our progress and adapt our approach as needed, to ensure we deliver meaningful improvements to the people of Mid Ulster.



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Councillor Eugene Mc Connell

Chair, Mid Ulster District Council

May 2025

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

### **1.1 Introduction**

Each year Mid Ulster District Council is required to develop a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) to show our commitment to continuously improving service delivery in accordance with the priorities set out by the Council. In the PIP, we set out Council’s intentions for our services, and include details, of how we will do the work. This current plan forms part of the of a two-year plan which spans from 2025/26 to 2026/27.

## 2.0 DEVELOPING OUR IMPROVEMENT PLAN OBJECTIVES

### **2.1 Setting Our Improvement Objectives**

The process of developing the Council’s improvement objectives involved engagement between Senior Management, Assistant Directors, Heads of Service, and members and the Strategy and Engagement Team. The council previously approved four improvement objectives in 2021, which were incorporated into corporate improvement projects. The improvement objectives and associated project plans were structured as two consecutive, two-year improvement initiatives (led by Senior Responsible Officers i.e. Assistant Directors and Heads of Service). The improvement initiatives have successfully implemented planned activities, measures and outcomes within scope. As the improvement projects drew to their conclusion (project scope), work was undertaken to develop new improvement objectives, moving forward. A review was commenced in November 2024 to look at areas for improvement, in order to ensure that the improvement objectives were based on:

* A thorough, evidence-based understanding of the communities Council serves.
* Local needs and Council’s capacity to address those needs.
* Improvement objectives correspond directly with the council’s priorities for improvement in the hierarchy of plans, and
* The context of the current economy
* Short-, medium- and long-term needs of the Council.
* Many drivers and enablers both external and internal relating to improvement.

The outworking’s from this piece of work were discussed, at various meetings with the senior staff and, after review, revision and consideration, three new draft improvement objectives were developed, with supporting rationales.

The Committee at its February 2025 meeting, considered and approved the proposed three new draft Corporate Improvement Objectives for 2025 to 2026 and 2026 to 2027, their rationale and associated links to the community and corporate plan, as well as a timeline for a public consultation exercise. The new Improvement Objectives are outlined as follows:

**Table 2.1 – Council’s Improvement Objectives 2025-2026:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Number** | **Objective** |
| **One** | Enhance the experience of our customers by working to embed a culture which puts them at the centre of how services are offered and accessed. Ensuring Council services are accessible, efficient and responsive to the needs of communities across our District. |
| **Two** | Provide diverse opportunities for children and \*young people to access inclusive and engaging activities that promote skills development, physical health and well-being, encourages creativity and supports active community participation. |
| **Three** | Achieve a reduction in Council’s carbon emissions through implementation of our Sustainability Strategy and Climate Action Plan |

\**The United Nations defines young people as those aged 15 – 24 years*

To lead the delivery of our improvement objectives council has established project teams to drive the objectives forward; under the direction of a Senior Responsible Officer (SRO); i.e. either an Assistant Director or Head of Service, appointed by the Chief Executive.

Each year we consult on our proposed improvement objectives. The outcome of the consultation, which was undertaken throughout late February, to the latter part of April 2025, produced a report on the final improvement objectives, which were considered by Senior Management, and subsequently considered by elected members for approval at their May 2025 Policy & Resources Committee before being considered by Council.

The review of the improvement projects for 2025-2026, along with other statutory and corporate indicators (i.e. contained within the Council’s PIP plan) will be reported by the 30th of September 2026 in Council’s Annual Assessment Report, where we will look at the performance over the previous financial year (setting out how we have performed against the Improvement Plan for 2025- 2026 through a retrospective report).Where possible, the Council will benchmark indicators against the performance other Councils.

**2.2 Consultation**

A consultation was undertaken on our proposed improvement objectives, as well as a rationale/associated activity (for their inclusion), from Friday 28th February to Friday 25th April 2025 at 12 noon. Our consultation involved a survey made available for completion and submission online and by post to the council.

To ensure maximum engagement, the consultation process was promoted through a variety of communication channels including press releases, video message from the Chair of P & R committee, council social media outlets, mailing lists, internal staff meetings/intranet, and the council’s website.

**2.3 What the Consultation told us**

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* **97.56% of respondents agreed with objective one**: -
* **90.24% of respondents agreed with objective two**: -***.***
* **82.93% of respondents agreed with objective three**: -

With such significant support for the three proposed improvement objectives, together with additional commentary provided, the council has developed its 2025-2026 Performance Improvement Plan around them. When reviewed, respondent commentary did not warrant the removal, amendment to or addition to the objectives proposed. Additional commentary and views provided are also informing our wider improvement activity across services.

**3.0 DUTY TO IMPROVE & COUNCIL’S PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK**

**3.1 Duty to Improve**

Part 12 of the Local Government (Act) 2014 requires Councils to “*make arrangements to secure continuous improvement”* in the exercise of our functions (section 84). Council is also required to set improvement objectives for services and secure arrangements for achieving them each year (section 85). We are also required to publish an annual performance improvement plan (PIP) before the 30th of June each year.

Statutory guidance defines improvement as “… *more than just quantifiable gains in service output or efficiency, or the internal effectiveness of the organisation. Improvement for Council’s should mean activities that enhances the sustainable quality of life and environment for ratepayers and communities*”.

Each corporate improvement objective has been developed to focus improvement on at least one of the seven improvement aspects detailed in S84 (2) of Local Government (NI) Act 2014:

* Strategic Effectiveness
* Service Availability
* Sustainability
* Service Quality
* Fairness
* Efficiency
* Innovation

In addition, guidance determines that improvement objectives should be:

* Legitimate – making a contribution to at least one (or probably more than one) of the seven aspects of improvement
* Clear – setting out the visible improvement that citizens can expect
* Robust – with defined terms of success (whether qualitative or quantitative)
* Deliverable – with established links to individual service programmes and budgets
* Demonstrable - capable of being supported by objective (but not necessarily measured or quantitative) evidence.

**3.2 Community Plan, Corporate Plan and Council’s Performance Management Framework**

The Local Government (Act) 2014 has changed the way we plan and encouraged us to look much more to the future. Reducing budgets, increasing demands and higher public expectations means that we must change our approach to delivering and improving public services. Public services need to think more about the long-term, in order to work better with people and communities, look to prevent problems before they arise, and take a more joined up approach.

We need to look at balancing short to medium-term needs (which are reflected in the improvement objectives contained in this current plan), with our responsibilities to think about some of the big challenges facing our district in the future (as outlined on the Mid Ulster District’s Ten-Year Community Plan). We are working with other public services, the private and voluntary sector on the delivery of the ten-year community plan, as well as our local communities. This includes well-being outcomes that provide a focus for the public sector as part of the Community planning for the area; these are related but separate from the objectives detailed in this report that focuses specifically on the Council.

The “peak” plan is the District’s Ten-Year Community Plan, which encapsulates the communities’ vision and long-term aspirations. Sitting beneath the Community Plan is the Corporate Plan. The Corporate Plan is a key component of the Council’s Integrated Performance Management Framework. The performance framework consists of a hierarchical set of inter-related plans, which deal with the organisation’s delivery of services.

The Corporate Plan is the point where the Council responds to the Community Plan’s objectives that are within its area of responsibility; therefore, if the Community Plan is seen as the Community’s aspirational document, the Corporate Plan is the Council’s policy response to what residents and ratepayers desire to see happen in their community.

The Corporate Plan for 2024 to 2028 is a four-year plan. Corporate plans within Councils are in general designed as a fixed term plan to align with the council’s electoral cycle. Each newly elected Council is responsible for preparing a new corporate Plan setting out what they want to achieve during the electoral term.

**3.3 Performance Improvement Plan (PIP)**

Each year we are required to develop a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) to show our commitment to continuously improving the delivery of our services. The Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) outlines what Council hopes to achieve with regard to its considered annual improvement objectives. It outlines the activities we plan to do, the measures we will use to ensure we are on the right track, demonstrates how we will achieve improvement and outlines how our citizens will be better off as a result. The PIP plan does not detail every improvement the Council intends to deliver, rather it focuses on improvement through the Community and Corporate planning processes, stakeholder engagement and research analysis. The PIP plan also contains how Council performs and benchmarks against statutory and set by us performance indicators/measures.

**3.4 Improvement, Corporate Values, Service and Individual Planning**

Whilst the PIP plan focuses specifically on Corporate Improvement Objectives, statutory and ‘set by us ‘measures, we are still seeking to bring about improvement in other areas. Planned improvements in our day-to-day work are set in our service plans. Departmental service delivery plans translate corporate objectives into service targets and operational activity, aligning with finance, workforce and risk issues.

Individual plans (staff appraisals) translate service or group delivery plan objectives into practical measures and targets for all members of staff within the Council. This ensures that all our employees understand their contribution and accountability towards meeting the Council’s values, priorities and vision. Council over the past few years has rolled out a phased approach with the introduction of a new appraisal scheme, entitled Personal Contribution and Support Process (PCSP).

We are committed to delivering our improvement objectives within the context of our adopted Corporate Values; this is at the core of what we do and guides how we deliver our service by being:

* **Customer first** – we will engage and listen to our customers to better understand what you want and need to offer excellent access to good quality services.
* **Respect** – we will celebrate diversity and treat everyone equitably and with respect
* **Excellence** – we will continuously improve our services and work towards the best Mid Ulster there can be
* **Honest and Trustworthy** – we will be open and accountable in developing our plans and delivering services.
* **Innovative** – we will seek to make maximum use of technology and other opportunities to improve services in our district

**3.5 Statutory Indicators**

In addition to the Council’s improvement objectives and associated actions used to measure our performance, the Northern Ireland Assembly has set a series of performance measures (indicators and standards) which the council will report on annually. Where relevant, the council’s improvement objectives incorporate statutory performance standards and indicators for Economic Development, Planning and Waste Management. The statutory performance indicators and standards are set out as Appendix One.

For the last ten years, the arrangements for managing, improving and tracking Council’s performance in relation to set statutory indicators has been progressed through our service plans, which are developed on an annual basis and endorsed by Council. Quarterly reviews and update reports relating to Council’s statutory indicator performance are collated and forwarded to our Senior Management Team, respective committees and Council. Unless otherwise highlighted in this plan, statutory performance indicators are managed at a directorate performance management level.

**3.6 Corporate Indicators**

Previously during 2017 to 2018, the Council developed a suite of Corporate “Health” Indicators. This suite of corporate level indicators was linked to 8 key areas; Economy, Waste management, Council facilities, Better Responses, Resident satisfaction, Staffing, Engaged workforce and Finance.

These measures were re-evaluated and revised and a new set of corporate performance measures (‘Set by Us’ indicators) were developed and are aligned to Council’s new Corporate Plan for 2024 to 2028 (refer to Appendix Two). The new corporate performance measures are monitored and reported regarding their performance status. The performance updates continue to be reported to Senior Management and Council on a regular basis. Progress made against the corporate performance indicators are also reported in Council’s Annual Assessment report (a retrospective assessment report of performance in the previous financial year, published in September).

The council is engaged with the Department for Communities, along with other local authorities to inform the development of a benchmarking framework for local government. This will focus on areas where the greatest overall benefit; in terms of delivering outcomes.

**4.0 DELIVERY & SCRUTINY OF OUR IMPROVEMENT OBJECTIVES**

The council in order to inform how it delivers effective services to its communities uses a series of processes and policies. This helps the council to plan, govern and drive service delivery. The following section provides information on the key processes and activities, which we utilise to strengthen improvement.

**4.1 Managing and Reporting Improvement.**

Mid Ulster District Council has a statutory duty to put in place a framework to support continuous improvement in the delivery of council services, which are important to all our citizens and stakeholders. The Council’s performance management framework and planning process establishes clear links between the District Community Plan, Corporate Plan priorities, other Council Strategic Plans (such as the Local Development Plan), the PIP plan, corporate level Improvement Objectives, Project Plans and Service Plans. It ensures everyone working for the Council is able to see how their work contributes to the work of the organisation.

Each year the Council’s Performance Improvement Objectives appear within the Council’s annual Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) and has a project delivery plan aligned to the improvement objective. The improvement projects (known as CIP’s) are project managed by an Assistant Director or Head of Service, documenting clear milestones, activities, resources and associated risk mitigation. Each improvement plan also identifies with whom the council will work in partnership with for each objective, thus ensuring the successful delivery of outcomes for citizens (visible improvements). The improvement project delivery plans are reported regularly to Senior Management and Council, along with statutory performance indicators and the suite of corporate performance indicators.

Departmental service plans are in place across Council, setting out key programmes of work being progressed throughout the year, along with resources required to deliver on the identified actions. Services regularly monitor their plans and where they are involved in one or other of the improvement objectives, within this improvement plan, the Service will report this through to the senior management team and council’s Policy & Resources Committee on progress to date.

Elected members have an important role in monitoring how well the Council is achieving its improvement objectives. They are prepared to challenge officers on service improvement performance to ensure that the priorities are delivered and that the needs of the local community are met.

A mid-year report (April to September 2025) on progress against this year’s Improvement Plan objectives and how we have performed against the statutory performance indicators and standards for Economic Development, Planning and Waste (set for us), as well as progress against corporate measures (set by us) will be presented to Council’s Policy & Resources committee.

**4.2 Audit, Inspection and Regulation**

The council is inspected by the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) to challenge and examine its performance and effectiveness, through an annual audit and assessment. Post an audit and assessment of Council, the Local Government Auditor (LGA) certifies the improvement and assessment for the Council with an audit opinion.

To date Mid Ulster has received annual standard, unqualified opinions. As a result of the NIAO audits, the LGA believes that the Council to date has discharged its duties in connection with (1) improvement planning and (2) publication of improvement information in accordance with section 92 of the Local Government (NI) Act 2014 and has acted in accordance with the Department of Communities’ guidance sufficiently. LGA to date have made no recommendations under section 95(2) of the Act and were not minded to undertake a special inspection under section 95 (2) of the Act.

**5.0 IMPROVEMENT OBJECTIVES**

**Improvement Objective One**

1. **Objective One:**  Enhance the experience of our customers by working to embed a culture which puts them at the centre of how services are offered and accessed. Ensuring Council services are accessible, efficient and responsive to the needs of communities across our District.

**“***Services should be shaped around the needs and demands of customers*.”

(Mid Ulster Councils Corporate Improvement Objectives Survey Consultee Excerpt; April 2025)

**Lead Officer:** Assistant Director Organisational Development, Strategy & Performance*.*

**Why have we chosen this Improvement Objective?**

We want to put our citizens and customers first and to do so, we need to understand what people want, need and value. Embedding a positive customer experience journey into our service delivery will ensure that we put our customers are at the heart of everything we do, and we serve their needs. It is critical to the sustained growth of our Council. Mid Ulster Council has a substantial offering of leisure, outdoor recreation and arts, cultural and literary provision which includes our leisure centres, parks, green spaces, play areas, theatres and cultural sites. These services are at the core of Council’s direct service delivery to our citizens. We want to increase customer satisfaction, accessibility and participation in our leisure, outdoor recreation and arts, culture and literary facilities by March 2028. We want to hear from, listen to and act on (co-design) what our citizens tell us so that our community-based leisure and outdoor recreation facilities and programmes meet their needs.

Council serves diverse communities, implementing customer centric principles and customer voice will ensure that our services respond to the unique needs of our residents and customers. Services should be easy to access, operationally efficient, with a reduction in waiting times and move to minimise duplication of effort across Council departments. It is about moving beyond traditional service models and recognising resident expectations for on-demand services. This will encompass the use of technology, through leveraging digital optimisation, alongside the development and collation of data relating to ‘customer insights’. Council by concentrating on customer experience, in effect recognises entire customer journeys, from first point of contact through to post interaction/purchase. We will also commit to review our processes and current systems in tandem with our customer touchpoints, as well our staff knowledge and skills sets, marketing, web-site navigation, products, service quality, and brand perception.

Council is committed to the core customer service principles of, accessibility, responsiveness, transparency, fairness and respect. We will strive to ensure consistency in the application of defined service standards, while embedding core values of staff being polite, knowledgeable and helpful. The UK government’s Communications Service1 defines ‘customer insight’ as, “a deep truth about the customer based on their behaviour, experiences, beliefs, needs or desires, that is relevant to the tasks”. We want to gather and act on public feedback, including customer ‘pain points’ which focus on problems or frustrations from customer experience and will use ‘customer insights’, (both qualitative and quantitative) from demographic data, surveys, focus groups, consultation exercises, service usage data and complaints, compliments and comments etc. Having a comprehensive understanding of our customers based on ‘insight’ is a starting point to answer the challenge of delivering services aligned to our customers’ needs and expectations.

**Actions - What are we going to do?**

|  **What are we going to do?** **(Activities)** | **What difference will it make? (Outcomes)** |
| --- | --- |
| 1. Development and Implementation of a Customer Services Policy and embedding of Customer Care Charter Principles across the organisation through the; delivery of a Customer Service Training Plan/team briefs, start to embed Customer Care Charter principles with associated signage/poster in place by March 2026. Review 3 service areas where there are high volumes of service enquiries: Building Control, Environmental Health & Environmental Services, with remaining services completed by March 2026.
 | Council lives out the values and principles of its Customer Care Charter, provides excellent standards of customer service across all areas of the Council, cultivate a citizen-first approach, enhancing trust and satisfaction in council services across the district. |
| 1. Establishing Customer Satisfaction with Council Services through expanding customer engagement surveys to 4 additional services and review options, specification, procure then install facility touchpoints in three civic offices (where practicable) by March 2026
 | Using customer data that shapes and informs how we deliver services by expanding our satisfaction surveys, installing new touch points, which will provide broader, current views of customer satisfaction, enabling enhanced Council services. |
| 1. Improving Customer access to front-line services through maximising the use of the Government. "Notify text" renewals for dog licensing service across Cookstown and Magherafelt Offices. Then compile benefits-realisation (review) of the project and new service, with view to roll out to other services (i.e. leverage and scale).
 | Assist to reduce costs and promote digitalisation through enhanced online accessibility for frontline customers.  |
| 1. Development of suitable digital platforms for capture of corporate data through developing an internal online portal to enable staff to post ongoing business activities, establish a new SharePoint site features by March 2026, research and develop a recommended plan of action for the capture of complaint data in compliance with the NI Ombudsman requirements and statutory governance legislation
 | Streamline the capture of business activities and data collation to assist customer care team when interfacing with customers. |
| 1. Leisure Service will develop a phased customer engagement/experience framework to enhance their service provision, to include: developing a customer experience baseline report, benchmarking good practice through quality standards/ other Councils, map and understand customer journeys (e.g. joining, booking, visiting, complaints resolution), customer touch points and pain points, draw up a prioritised list of proposed process review/changes (e.g. review of Swimming Lessons process) and enhancements, introduce customer service training programmes, streamline complaints and feedback channels (engagement), update digital booking platforms and apps (Course Hub implementation) , maximise use of XN leisure and “MyFit” App for improved useability, and explore the potential of adopting a customer charter. Draft Customer Experience and Service Recommendations /Improvement Plan

  | Customers experience quicker, easier and more personalised access to leisure services, supported by a responsive digital-first approach and a culture of service excellence. |
| 1. Upgrade and development of Content Management System - refresh/rebrand, by exploring options for migration from Kentico 12 to Experience 13, conduct, complete an assessment of current site, define requirements and market research then develop Business Case.
 | Completed Business Case by March 2026 to improve security, functionality and useability for Council's web-site users  |
| 1. To attain Deafblind Friendly Organisation accreditation status by engaging with Deafblind UK to complete assessment, identify gaps, implement proposed recommendations to seek accreditation for Dungannon Civic Office (2025) and Magherafelt Civic Office (2026), and ensure Customer Services Team are trained and conversant in dealing with sight or hearing-impaired customers to provide support and guidance as necessary.

  | To promote accessibility for customers using Council facilities and ensure support systems and processes are in place. |
| 1. Support our Services to excel in the provision of customer service by building the capacity of our teams and services to meet the needs of our customers (Customer First), by reviewing current relevant Learning and development schedules /modules / induction, aligning with Council’s Values; Code of Conduct training; Equality/Dignity/Respect for our customers; through accredited World Host Principles of Customer Service Training. Two leisure sites to attain World Host accreditation in 2025-26 year, with 50% of full-time equivalent (fte) staff trained (two sites accredited in 2024-25). Finally undertake a review of current ‘World Host’ customer service training to align with the Council's arrangements/values/standards/ principles.
 | Taking steps to improve the customer journey through building staff capacity (knowledge /skills / behaviours), by embedding a customer -first culture to continuously improve service accessibility and the user journey. |

**How will we know?**

* Customer Service policy completed, customer service training plan/team briefs delivered and customer Care Charter signage/ posters in place by March 2026.
* All services reviewed regarding customer enquiries by March 2026.
* Four additional services included in customer engagement surveys by March 2026.
* Three Council civic centres have “touchpoints” in place by March 2026.
* "Notify text "dog licence renewals in Cookstown and Magherafelt in place by June 2025 and best practice review to leverage and scale project completed by September 2025.
* Staff Online Portal/ New SharePoint site in place by January 2026.
* Compliant Data “Capturing Complaints” plan in place by September 2025.
* Leisure Services Phased Customer Experience and Engagement Framework developed.
* Leisure services ICT optimisation review and ‘Course Hub’ in place by March 2026.
* Content Management System business case developed by March 2026.
* Attained ‘Deafblind’ accreditation for Dungannon and Magherafelt civic offices by October 2026.
* ‘Customer First’ learning and development review completed by end of March 2026.
* Two additional Leisure services attain ‘World Host’ accreditation by the end of March 2026.

**Visible improvement residents, businesses or visitors expect to see.**

Expanded digital interfaces with customers, improved customer accessibility and more efficient Council processing (standardised), and customer booking/enquiries are ‘right first time,’ with enhanced staff customer care. Engaged customers and stakeholders, using their voice and experience to develop and shape services. Generating and increasing the Council’s data insights into customer service provision.

**Partnerships: Who do we need to work with?**

Citizens, Visitors, Schools, Further /Higher Education Colleges, Employers, Staff, Members, Community/Voluntary/Statutory organisations, Suppliers, Accreditation bodies.

**Link to District Community Plan Theme and Outcomes:**

THEME ONE & TWO- ECONOMIC GROWTH & INFRASTRUCTURE: Objective 2.2b - Improve the quality and sustainability of our environment for our citizens and for future generations - Work in partnership to reduce dependency on landfill through increased recycling and recovery.

THEME ONE & TWO- ECONOMIC GROWTH & INFRASTRUCTURE: Objective 2.2c - Improve the quality and sustainability of our environment for our citizens and for future generations - Work in partnership with local communities to participate in place making, planning and regeneration initiatives.

**Link to Corporate Plan Themes:**

1.9 OUR SERVICE DELIVERY - Increase customer satisfaction & participation in our leisure, outdoor recreation and arts, culture, and literary facilities by March 2028.

1.10 OUR SERVICE DELIVERY - Co-design & deliver accessible community-based leisure and outdoor recreation facilities and programmes that meet our citizens’ needs.

3.4 BEING THE BEST COUNCIL POSSIBLE - Ensure our governance framework is appropriately integrated within our service delivery models.

**Performance Improvement Aspects which this improvement objective aims to deliver against.**

*Strategic Effectiveness, Service Quality, Sustainability, Service Availability, Fairness, Efficiency, Innovation*

**Improvement Objective Two**

**5.2 Objective Two**: - Provide diverse opportunities for children and young people to access inclusive and engaging activities that promote skills development, physical health and well-being, encourages creativity and supports active community participation.

***“****Absolutely!! Let’s hope this is implemented. Greater collaboration with education and youth services. More exercise programmes for youth to instil the importance of physical activity from a young age that will hopefully stay with them for life. Perhaps bring together schools from different religions together for activities”.*

(Mid Ulster Councils Corporate Improvement Objectives Survey Consultee Excerpt, April 2025)

**Lead Officer:** Head of Strategic Services and Engagement.

**Why have we chosen this Improvement Objective?**

The last census in 2021 has seen a demographic shift in terms of size of population by Council area1. Mid Ulster is expected to grow from 150K (2021) to 165K by 2030 relative to population size, with a substantial proportion of this increase coming from young people. Mid Ulster has a significant proportion of its population under the age of 30 (35%) compared to the other 10 Council areas and has the highest percentage of residents under the age of 15 (21.7%). In effect this means the district has a youthful population, i.e. in the early stages of education or career development. We want to ensure a continued commitment to providing diverse opportunities for children and young people. We see this as a strategic investment in the future workforce, the social and physical wellbeing of our present and future generations, which in turn contributes to the districts’ social and economic prosperity in the coming decades.

To enable children and young people to be healthy, independent and resilient, many of our current Council service provision offers this demographic, the opportunity to attend additional educational opportunities/programmes2 (heritage, arts, cultural, environmental etc.), take part in social activities and contribute to their communities. Our sports, outdoor facilities and parks promote access to recreational activities which help children and young people by fostering social interaction, encourages physical fitness3, provides access to sports/recreational activity that may otherwise not be available, builds confidence, teamwork, all of which are vital for personal development and later career opportunities. Many facets of our service provision create inclusive and supporting environments for youth to thrive in both recreational and competitive settings.

Focusing on youth development ensures long–term sustainability of the regions workforce helps address issues like youth unemployment and skills gaps, creating pathways to employment and skills. The Labour Force Survey (2021) cites youth unemployment in Northern Ireland is higher than the national average. Young people in NI have historically faced higher unemployment rates compared to older age groups. Council is a large employer within the district with a vast array of posts, qualifications and skill sets, we want to ensure that our pathways for young people to gain, experience and job opportunities (through our on-job experience, and student, graduate placement programmes) form part of our workforce development plan. Council will also include alignment and collaboration with our community planning partners to ensure that children and young people’s opportunities remain as part of our place shaped work.

1 <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/census/2021-census>

2 <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/raise-programme-summary-document>

3. <https://www.communities-ni.gov.ul/publications/active-living-sport-and-physical-activity-strategy-northern-ireland>

**Actions - What are we going to do?**

| **What are we going to do?** **(Activities)** | **What difference will it make? - (Outcomes)** |
| --- | --- |
| 1. Delivery of an environmental education programme to Mid Ulster Schools, Community Groups and Sports Clubs teaching about the importance of climate change, biodiversity, the circular economy and protection of our natural environment. Programmes will include school visits/ educational talks, attend community events with recycling stand, hold a series of "Bioblitz" days at Council facilities across the district. Support the work of the Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful (KNIB) - (i.e. provide financial contribution to KNIB) for continued delivery of Eco School Programme. Deliver the annual Mid Ulster “Eco Speak” competition. Develop an “Eco Vision” competition. Provide support to schools, community groups and sports clubs to develop environmental initiatives.
 | Schools, Community Groups and Sports Clubs in Mid Ulster engaged in the programme, with children and young people well informed on the importance of climate change, biodiversity, the circular economy and protection of our natural environment |
| 1. Deliver a programme of "Young People in Democracy Programme", by building awareness of local democracy and governance within a Council by being able to participate directly in accessing democracy (attended by primary, post primary and special schools). Research and develop a paper by October 2025 on how to further raise awareness of the "Young People in Democracy Programmes" to other hard to reach/ youth /community groups in the district. Research use of QR codes in partnership with schools etc to provide feedback to revise and review and refresh programme by March 2026.
 | Young people have an enhanced broadened view of the services, governance, and workings of local democracy in a council in order to become potential "Voices of the Future" in democracy. |
| 1. Development of an inclusive cycling skills programme to provide children and young people with the opportunity to learn to cycle with a bike -appropriate to their requirements, (targets children and young people who either require cycling support because of a disability or because of the lack of opportunities to access cycling skills at home or at school) - in place by September 2027.
 | Children and young people are provided with the opportunity to develop cycling skills in asafe and supportive environment with appropriately trained staff, using specially adapted bikes and equipment (if required). |
| 4.Develop and implement a range of neurodivergent programmes to provide children and young people with the opportunity to move around and play games, through weekly sessions (across leisure centres), and holiday camps by December 2026.  | Children and young people are provided with the opportunity to be active and play in a safe and supportive environment with appropriately trained staff. |
| 1. Strengthen and sustain current coverage of the Forest Schools Programme at Knockmanny and Dungannon Park. Programme from September 2025 to May 2026. Undertake to deliver three Family fun "Pop Up" Forest Schools Days over 2025/26 over summer months.
 | Work in partnership to broaden the invitation to schools, to take part in the Forest Schools Programme. |
| 1. Through partnership, research, commission and support the delivery of two targeted youth engagement programmes (initiatives) addressing underlying social issues - 'At Risk' (At risk for young people topics – i.e. "How to Stay Safe Online" programme to 16 primary schools) and 'Positive Relationships' (school-based programme on domestic abuse and healthy relationships) by March 2026.

  | Reduce anti-social behaviour, crime and fear of crime. |
| 1. Achieve Autism Impact NI Accreditation for Council's Hill of the O' Neill and Ranfurly House Centre and the Burnavon Arts and Cultural Centre, increase the number of staff ‘Autism Champions’ from 4 to 8. Research and develop a “Neurodiversity Pre-Visit Guide” for council centres by September 2026. Develop “Quiet Spaces” at all events (i.e. Santas Grotto, St Patrick’s Day, Easter Saturday Funday). Meet with management colleagues to leverage this success (tested accreditation model) to inform and support the potential scaling of autism friendly approaches/accreditation within Leisure Centre facilities.

  | Enhanced inclusivity, accessibility and better experiences across Council facilities ensuring every child, young person and family can engage, belong and thrive, commencing with Burnavon Arts and Cultural centre and Hill of the O’ Neill and Ranfurly as a recognised model. |
| 1. Mid Ulster District Council aims to support the delivery of an Irish Language and Heritage Programme across schools in the district, focused on enriching the classroom experience and deepening pupils ’ cultural understanding. This initiative seeks to promote awareness of the Irish language and Gaelic heritage through a range of engaging and educational activities. That is promote opportunities to learn and use Irish, within the community, making it more accessible for children and young people through support, advice, information, guidance, educational programmes, and bursaries/funding. Deliver Irish language lessons. Seek partnership with Gael Linn to deliver Scoil Spreagtha programme across schools and provide Irish language Bursaries to support pupils attending the Gaeltacht.

  | Focused on enriching pupils’ cultural understanding, promoting awareness of the Irish language and Gaelic heritage through a range of engaging and educational activities. |
| 1. Develop and deliver immersive, place-based learning programmes for children and young people at "The Hill of The O’Neill and Ranfurly House", via the “Heritage & Visitor Experience Programme – Where I live”, as well as the STEM and Young People Programme (Re-imagining the Hill of the O’ Neill with Minecraft”). Avail the opportunity for 6 Teachers/School staff within District to undertake Forest School Leader (OCN) level 3 qualification. Deliver a series of family events/workshops (orientated to families, children and young people) by March 2026.

  | Educating and inspiring future generations - children and young people can explore, understand, and celebrate the cultural legacy of this iconic site. |
| 1. Mid Ulster District Council will to develop and deliver a district-wide Outreach Arts Plan, (aligned with the Burnavon Arts Centre programme), through the “Education and Youth Programme” - to 48 schools and 8 special schools, delivery of a series of “Early interest in the Arts” workshops (to 100 participants), as well as the delivery of the “Arts Cultural Programme- traditional music in schools” (e.g. St. Patrick’s concert and “The Ulster Scots Cultural Showcase - Mid Ulster Pipe Band Project). The programmes focus on engaging with children and young people, with a particular emphasis on reaching those who face barriers to participation.
 | Increased creative engagement of children and young people across Md Ulster, with improved access for those facing barriers to participation in the Arts. |
| 1. Scope the Environmental Health Service's existing engagement with young people and develop new opportunities through an action plan to promote an improved awareness of key themes relating to health, safety and environmental messages by March 2026.
 | There will be a plan in place to build upon existing engagement with young people which will deliver messaging and raise awareness of key Environmental Health messaging |
| 1. To provide opportunities for young people through our “Workforce planning for the future”, to ‘skill them up’, whilst supporting the strategic direction and services of the Council through; the roll out of: the Student (Undergraduate ) placement programme, accommodating 45 “work placement” opportunities for post-primary students , maintain the current 6 apprenticeships in Council, initiate an annual work placement programme for 9 persons with disabilities and review Council’s Mentoring Support Programme for Apprentices and Student placements by March 2026.
 | Councils programmes increase skills development and social inclusion, while strengthening community engagement and supporting local economic growth, as well as boosting confidence, aspirations and long-term career prospects for participants |

**How will we know?**

* Number of school visits/educational talks and community events attended regarding the promotion of recycling.
* Number of pupils attending ‘Bioblitz’ events.
* Number of schools with ‘Green Flag status’ and financial contribution to KNIB.
* Number of environmental initiatives supported in the community.
* Number of primary schools, post primary schools and special schools attending ‘Young people in Democracy Programme.’
* ‘Young People in Democracy’ action plan in place by October 2025.
* ‘Inclusive Cycling Skills’ programme implemented by September 2027.
* ‘Forest schools’ programme delivered to 450 participants in 2025/26.
* ‘Internet Safety’ programme delivered to sixteen primary schools, no of participants and % of participants assessed their participation as positive during 2025/26.
* Positive Relationships' (school-based programme on domestic abuse and healthy relationships) delivered.
* Autism Impact NI Accreditation for Council's Hill of the O' Neill and Ranfurly House Centre and the Burnavon Arts and Cultural Centre, four additional ‘Autism Champions’ and ‘Neurodiversity Pre-Visit guide’ in place by September 2026.
* Number of young people attending Irish language lessons, Scoil Spreagtha programme delivered, and bursary amount awarded to pupils attend Gaeltacht in 2025/26.
* Number of participants attend “Where I live” programme, number of STEM workshops ‘Re-imagining with Minecraft” and six additional Teachers/schools staff qualified in level 3 (OCN) Forest Schools qualification.
* Number of schools and number of participants in delivery of Outreach Arts Education and Youth Programmes – to include Arts project, Early Interest in Arts and Traditional Music during 2025/26.
* Environmental Health Service Engaging Young People’s Action Plan in place by March 2026.
* Number of paid undergraduate student placements, number of ‘unpaid’ work placements undertaken, number of work placements for persons with disabilities in place and number of apprenticeships in place during 2025/26.

**Visible improvement residents, businesses or visitors expect to see.**

By investing in Mid Ulster’s youth, the improvement project will provide diverse, fully accessible, and neurodiversity-friendly activities for Mid Ulster’s children and young people by strengthening the community and benefiting the district. We will see increased participation from all young people, with all abilities, resulting in busier, more vibrant community spaces, fostering a greater sense of belonging and civic pride, and contribute to reducing anti-social behaviour. Young people will visibly ‘showcase’ their developed skills, improved educational knowledge and creativity, all of which will boost their educational pathways and future employability. Increased engagement in adapted physical activities leads to improved overall health and well-being.

**Partnerships: Who do we need to work with?**

Youth Groups, Citizens, Schools, Further and Higher Education Colleges, Education Authority, Businesses, Community Planning Partners, Community and Voluntary Sector, Accreditation Bodies, Statutory Bodies, Staff, and Members.

**Link to Community Plan Theme and Outcomes**:

THEME ONE & TWO - ECONOMIC GROWTH & INFRASTRUCTURE: Objective 2.2a - Improve the quality and sustainability of our environment for our citizens and for future generations - Mitigate against the impacts of climate change by developing opportunities to work together to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

THEME THREE - EDUCATION AND SKILLS: Objective 3.1a Ensure that our citizens receive an education that helps to reach their full potential, make the right career choices and participate in lifelong learning as they progress through life - Work in partnership to address educational underachievement.

THEME THREE - EDUCATION AND SKILLS: Objective 3.1b Ensure that our citizens receive an education that helps to reach their full potential, make the right career choices and participate in lifelong learning as they progress through life - Work in partnership to develop and link skills to sustainable employment opportunities, support people to prepare for work and promote opportunities for lifelong learning.

THEME FOUR - HEALTH AND WELL-BEING: Objective 4.1a: Enable our citizens to live longer, healthier, and more independent lives - Work in partnership to identify and address areas for improvement in children and young people’s wellbeing and resilience.

**Links to Corporate Plan Themes:**

1.1 OUR SERVICE DELIVERY - Achieve a 20% reduction in Council's carbon emissions by March 2028 through implementation of our Sustainability and Climate Action Plan

1.10 OUR SERVICE DELIVERY - Co-design & deliver accessible community-based leisure and outdoor recreation facilities and programmes that meet our citizen’s needs.

2.4 LEADERSHIP & PARTNERSHIP FOR LOCAL GROWTH - Continue to engage & work alongside our Community Planning partners to deliver Mid Ulster Community Plan outcomes and have a new plan in place by 2028.

3.2 BEING THE BEST COUNCIL POSSIBLE - Implement a Workforce Plan to attract and retain the top talent we need to deliver our services.

3.4 BEING THE BEST COUNCIL POSSIBLE - Ensure our governance framework is appropriately integrated within our service delivery models.

**Performance Improvement Aspects, which this improvement objective aims to deliver against:**

*Strategic Effectiveness, Service Quality, Service Availability, Fairness, Sustainability, Efficiency, Innovation.*

**5.3 Objective Three**: Achieve a reduction in Council’s carbon emissions through implementation of our Sustainability Strategy and Climate Action Plan

*“It’s a no brainer to ensure a policy of decarbonisation. In relation to council’s move to a Community Wealth Building model in terms of our economy, all opportunities should be availed of in relation to decarbonisation and energy security. Real partnership must be formed with our local agriculture and food sectors to effectively deal with farm waste while generating safe clean energy and community wealth.*

*”*

(Mid Ulster Councils Corporate Improvement Objectives Survey Consultee Excerpt, April 2025)

**Lead Officer:** Assistant Director of Environmental Services

**Why have we chosen this Improvement Objective?**

The impact of climate change on water availability, food production, the environment and the livelihoods of the global population is growing. We know the risks around Climate Change will continue to increase if we do not take steps to cut our carbon emissions. We must act now as what we do today will affect the lives of our children and future generations. Our Climate Change Adaptation Plan sets out how we will assess and adapt to the risks and opportunities from climate change. Recycling waste protects the environment and saves on, or reduces, the costs of disposal. Recycling and/or reusing waste benefits the environment by lessening the need to extract resources or source new materials. It lowers the potential for contamination and saves energy.

Locally the Stormont Executive through the Climate Change Act1 (2022); hereafter referred to as ‘The Act’, sets out ambitious commitments to achieving net zero that aligns with commitments in Great Britain, Republic of Ireland and the European Union, and also recognises the need to achieve a transformational transition to net zero in a way that is fair and balanced for everyone by supporting the cost of a ‘just‘ transition. The Act sets a target of at least 100% reduction in net zero greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2050 (i.e. net zero emissions by 2050) for Northern Ireland compared to baseline, along with interim targets in net emissions by 2030. DAERA must also, review and potentially set updated 2030 and 2040 interim emissions reduction targets to ensure that they are in line with the 2050 net zero target. The Act also sets other sectoral targets including 2030 targets at least 80% of electricity consumption from renewable sources (DfE) and 70% of waste is recycled (DAERA) as well as a target for a minimum spend of 10% of overall transport budgets on active travel (DfI).

The Act came into effect on the 6th of June 2022 and specifies the Waste Management2 sector as a priority area for the reduction of GHG emissions to contribute to NI’s Net Zero ambitions. The waste management sector is responsible for 4% of NI’s total emissions and includes a key aim of achieving 70% recycling by 2030, the affected stakeholders are local authorities, central government and waste management operators.

1. https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/climate-change-act-northern-ireland-2022-key-elements

2. https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/recycling-climate-change-act-northern-ireland-2022-recycling-net-zero-targets

**Actions - What are we going to do?**

|  **What are we going to do?** **(Activities)** | **What difference will it make? - (Outcomes)** |
| --- | --- |
| 1. Develop and implement a clear and effective performance reporting system aligned with the Sustainability Strategy and Climate Action Plan (CAP). This will determine data sources, collection methodologies, establish clear procedures and responsibilities for data collation and monitoring (e.g. KPI’s & targets in themes such as emissions reduction, energy efficiency, sustainable transport, biodiversity, engagement), with clear schedules for performance reporting, while exploring potential digital platforms/system for centralising data, regarding carbon emissions by March 2026.

  | A clear and effective performance reporting system aligned with the Sustainability Strategy and Climate Action Plan (CAP) will have been developed to aid the implementation of the CAP and determine its progress and success.  |
| 1. Establish a formal governance framework with defined roles, responsibilities and reporting lines to effectively manage, monitor and lead the delivery of the Sustainability Strategy and Climate Action Plan. Identify and form an internal Council cross-departmental team to act as Sustainability & Climate Action ‘Champions’, with defined term of reference, meetings schedule, and an identified secretariat. Work with Democratic Services colleagues to assist in drawing a meetings schedule for a member Sustainable Transformation Working Group by March 2026.
 | A Formal governance structure will have been developed to aid the implementation of the CAP and to facilitate collaboration and disseminate information between Council departments. |
| 1. Develop a phased bespoke learning and development (L&D) programme for Councillors and staff and raise awareness through a series of initiatives, events and promotions regarding sustainability and climate action best / next practice. Undertake and develop recycling and re-use initiatives - create and deliver promotional activities regarding reusable items (e.g. coffee cups, bottles) and review the use of single use items at Council events. Broaden staff’s awareness of Fair Trade and develop educational materials for staff regarding sustainable products for meetings.
 | Well informed Councillors, Strategic Engagement Team (SET) / Senior Management team (SMT) and wider workforce who are aware of the issues around Sustainability and Climate Change. |
| 1. Research and develop a phased Carbon Management Plan, setting new ambitious annual reduction targets for energy consumption. Phase One; Benchmark best practice exercise other Councils in the areas of - buildings, transport, travel, policies, services. Review of current data sets (energy, fuel, waste, procurement), identify any data gaps & set up procedures/ processes & templates for collation/monitoring/reporting databases and associated dashboards. Undertake emissions calculations - utilising a recognised protocol. Undertake a "hotspot hunt" to identify major sources of carbon emissions and determine baselines. Conduct a comprehensive energy audit of all Council facilities supported by energy efficiency programmes. Review 10 initial decarbonisation studies & develop feasibility plan of works, (Cookstown Council Offices, Bridewell, Ranfurly House, Burnavon, Dungannon Leisure Centre, Meadowbank, MUSA, Moneymore Recreation Centre, Seamus Heaney Homeplace, and Cookstown Leisure Centre). Review Lighting at 3 main Council Civic Offices. Conduct PV / Battery Storage Studies of High Energy Usage buildings. HR undertake review of all Council staff commuting & business mileage to establish baselines. Phase 2 - Define long term carbon reduction ambitions in an overarching plan and link to performance framework (i.e. for collation of data and reporting templates utilised by working group). Set interim measurable reduction targets & develop a roadmap document outlining the key areas for emission reduction by quarter four 2025/26.
 | Clearly defined roadmap developed showing how the Council will meet the Corporate Improvement target of a 20% reduction in Carbon emissions by 31st March 2028 and achieve net zero by 2050.  |
| 1. Improve the energy performance of council facilities and the sustainable consumption of resources across Council estate. Large Council buildings to be assessed & certificated with Display Energy certificates (DEC’s) published / displayed. Undertake a review and implement recommendations through a report to reduce food waste and food miles at all Council facilities. Undertake audit of resources, for example paper consumption, across Council, liaising with Transformation team to generate a plan for the greater use of digital technologies to additionally reduce carbon footprint (taking into consideration the additional impact from digital storage and online platforms). Green energy tariffs plan in place for some or all the electricity purchased. Review swimming pool temperature levels and investigate other leisure facility energy efficiency measures. Develop and introduce annual energy saving / carbon reduction measurement plans and reporting/dashboards requirement for all Council facilities and publish the energy performance of each building and their annual monitoring reports. Investigate the feasibility of the installation of a rainwater harvesting system to reduce water consumption for vehicle washing and flowerbed irrigation.
 | Reduced consumption of recourses across the Council Estate. |
| 1. Develop infrastructure and a phased plan to support the replacement/transitioning of Council’s fleet with alternative fuel vehicles (e.g. electric and HVO known as Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil, initially) and investigate the feasibility of electrifying/automating small to medium sized equipment (e.g. lawn mowers etc). Formulate a phased resourced plan for the use of alternative fuel vehicles within the Councils fleet. Formulate a plan for the phased introduction of electric vehicle charge points at Council facilities inc. discussions with NIE. Review existing provision of bicycle friendly and shower facilities installed across the estate & investigate the scope for enhancement. Investigate and develop a report on the feasibility of electrifying / automatic small / medium sized equipment, for example using robotic lawnmowers as a greener alternative to petrol run mowers.
 | Increased sustainability and reduced carbon emissions from the Councils Fleet and small to medium sized engine-based equipment. |
| 1. Research and develop policies, tools, templates, guidance materials and funding that will assist staff to embed and support the delivery of the Sustainability Strategy & Climate Action Plan objectives by; revising the Procurement Policy to incorporate social value, sustainability and climate action, pilot a sustainability screening tool (phase one) for a sample number of capital projects, then review/revise and roll out Phase 2 programme for Capital Projects moving forward. Review Building Condition survey template/audits/guidance to include surveyors should identify opportunities for the installation of renewable energy where possible across the Council estate. Undertake a review of Councils Travel & Subsistence Policy to minimise non-essential travel and to promote and incentivise active travel, use of public transport, car sharing and the use of online meeting technology. HR team develop a Hybrid / Agile Working guidance note / protocol. Undertake reviews of potential outside funding opportunities in order to leverage and support the delivery of the Sustainability Strategy & Climate Action Plan objectives.

  | Council policies and procedures aligned with the objectives of the Sustainability Strategy and Climate Action Plan.  |

**How will we know?**

* Benchmaking other Councils best practice study completed by March 2026.
* Data sets reviewed of energy, fuel, waste, procurement by June 2025
* 2024/25 Emissions Data Calculated completed by September 2025
* All carbon emissions baseline data in place by September 2025.
* No. of Decarbonisation Studies Reviewed by Q2 2025.
* No. of Lighting Council Civic Centres Studies Completed by June 2025.
* PV/Battery Storage High Energy Usage (Buildings) Study in place by Q3 2025.
* Staff commuting/business mileage baselines established September 2025.
* Emissions Reduction Roadmap Developed by March 2026
* No. of Display energy certificates (DEC’s) certified by September 2025.
* Council facilities Food waste/Food miles Review completed March 2026.
* Resources Audit (e.g. Council’s paper consumption) completed March 2026.
* % of Council electricity traceable to renewable energy.
* Swimming Pool Temperatures review in place by September 2025.
* Council Buildings Energy Performance Report / Dashboard in place by March 2026.
* Installation of a rainwater harvesting system feasibility study completed by March 2026’
* Plan in place ref for ‘Phasing in of Alternative Fuelled Vehicles’ and # of Electric Vehicles in Fleet.
* # of Electric Vehicle Charging Points and # of bicycle friendly facilities installed
* Feasibility Report on electrifying / automatic small / medium sized equipment in place by March 2026.
* New Procurement Policy Approved through Council by March 2026.
* Pilot and review then roll out to 50% of capital projects are screened with sustainability tool.
* Building Condition survey template/audits/guidance reports reviewed by March 2026.
* Travel & Subsistence Policy developed & approved through Council by March 2026
* Hybrid / Agile Working guidance note / protocol developed & approved through Council by 2026
* Scoping Study carried out of the potential funding available by December 2025.

**Visible improvement residents, businesses or visitors expect to see.**

A tangible decrease in the Council’s own carbon footprint, specifically achieving a reduction in its operational emissions by 2028. Council will accomplish this, through concrete actions such as replacing Councils vehicles, systems, and machinery with low or zero emissions alternatives, improving the energy efficiency of Council facilities, and committing to sustainable resource consumption across its estate. The result will be a more efficient, environmentally responsible, and cost-effective council operation, directly contributing to Northern Irelands wider climate targets.

**Partnerships: Who do we need to work with?**

Sustainable NI, Climate NI, WRAP, Other NI Councils, Statutory bodies (e.g. DAERA), NI Resources Network, Councillors, Staff, Community/Voluntary Sector, Suppliers, Specialist Consultants.

**Links to Community Plan Theme:**

THEME ONE & TWO - ECONOMIC GROWTH & INFRASTRUCTURE: Objective 2.2a - Improve the quality and sustainability of our environment for our citizens and for future generations - Mitigate against the impacts of climate change by developing opportunities to work together to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

**Links to Corporate Plan Themes:**

* 1. OUR SERVICE DELIVERY - Achieve a 20% reduction in Council's carbon emissions by March 2028 through implementation of our Sustainability and Climate Action Plan.

**Performance Improvement Aspects, which this improvement objective aims to deliver against**

*Strategic Effectiveness, Service Quality, Service Availability, Fairness, Sustainability, Efficiency, Innovation*

## Contacting Us

As always, your feedback is important to us and as such, Council is committed to improving its services and welcomes your comments or suggestions at any time of the year. If you, have any comments, feedback, would like any further information or would like a copy of this plan in an alternative format please contact:

Strategic Services and Engagement Team

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Telephone: 03000 132132 Email: info@midulstercouncil.org

## Appendix One – Statutory Performance Indicators and Standards

Local Government (Performance Indicators and Standards) (Amended) Order (NI) 2023 has specified performance indicators and standards for Mid Ulster District Council on Economic Development, Planning and Waste Management. Improvement in relation to the statutory measure as and indicators are managed through our service plans and reported to Council ion a regular basis.

| **Reference** | **Statutory Indicator** | **Standard to be Met (annually)** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| \*ED1 | The number of jobs promoted through business start-up activity.[Business start –up activity means the delivery of completed client led business plans under the Department of the Economy’s Regional Start initiative or its successor programmes] | 153 |
| P1 | The average processing time of major planning applications.[An application in the category of major development within the meaning of the Planning (Development Management) Regulations (NI) 2015 (a)] | Major applications processed from date valid to decision or withdrawn within an average of 30 weeks  |
| P2 | The average processing time of local planning applications.[An application in the category of local development within the meaning of the Planning (Development Management) Regulations (NI) 2015, and other applications for approval or consent under the Planning act (NI) 2011 or any Regulations made under the Act] | Local applications processed from date valid to decision or withdrawn within an average of 15 weeks. |
| P3 | The percentage of planning enforcement cases processed within 39 weeks.[Enforcement cases are investigations into alleged breaches of planning control under Part 5 of the Planning act (NI) 2011 or any regulations made under the Act]. | 70% of all enforcement cases are progressed to target conclusion within 39 weeks of receipt of complaint. |
| W1 | The percentage of household waste collected by district councils that is sent for recycling (including waste prepared for reuse) [Household waste is as defined in Article 2 of the Waste and Contaminated Land (NI) Order 1997(a) and the Controlled Waste and Duty of Care Regulations (NI) 2013(b)] | Set by the Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) |
| W2 | The amount (tonnage) of biodegradable Local Authority Collected Municipal Waste that is landfilled.[Local Authority collected municipal waste is as defined in section 21 of the Waste and Emissions Trading Act 2003(c)] | Set by DAERA |
| W3 | The amount (tonnage) of Local Authority Collected Municipal Waste arisings(Local Authority collected municipal waste arisings is the total amount of the local authority collected municipal waste which has been collected by a district council] | Set by DAERA |

**\*** On the 13 November 2023, ‘Go Succeed’ launched across all Councils replacing all other Economic Development programmes including ‘Go for It’ which ceased implementation on the 30 September 2023. ‘Go Succeed’ is the new go-to source for free expert business advice focusing on the three pillars of starting, growing and scaling your business.

# Appendix Two:

# Mid Ulster District Council’s Corporate Plan: Objectives, Measures and Rationale – Our Focus for 2024 to 2028

## Corporate Plan Theme One: Our Service DeliveryObjective 1.1: Achieve a 20% reduction in Council’s carbon emissions by March 2028 through implementation of our Sustainability Strategy and Climate Action Plan.

Measure: Percentage (%) reduction in operational emissions by March 2028

**Objective 1.2:** **Complete a Climate Change Adaptation Plan by 2025.**

Measure:Climate Change Adaptation Plan completed by 2025.

**Rationale/Why:** The impact of climate change on water availability, food production, the environment and the livelihoods of the global population is growing. We know the risks around Climate Change will continue to increase if we do not take steps to cut our carbon emissions. We must act now as what we do today will affect the lives of our children tomorrow and our future generations. Our Climate Change Adaptation Plan sets out how we will assess and adapt to the risks and opportunities from climate change.

**Objective 1.3**: **Achieve the Circular Economy Target to recycle 60% of municipal waste by March 2028.**

Measure: Percentage (%) of municipal waste recycled by March 2028

Measure: Statutory Waste Performance Standards and Indicators met.

**Rationale/Why:** Recycling waste protects the environment and saves on, or reduces, the costs of disposal. Recycling and/or reusing waste benefits the environment by lessening the need to extract resources or source new materials, lowers the potential for contamination and saves energy.

**Objective 1.4: Build on our place-shaping capital investment programme to develop new, and enhance our existing, physical assets.**

Measure: Number of capital investment projects committed between 2024 and

March 2028

Measure: Number and Amount in £ capital investment spent over the period

Measure:Percentage (%) improvement in life satisfaction in Mid Ulster (NISRA Wellbeing)

**Rationale/ Why:** Our Capital Investment Programme helps us build a better future for our citizens. It includes a programme of works to extend, refurbish, upgrade, redevelop and revitalise our existing and new assets, all set within our budgetary constraints. Our programme seeks to benefit the environment and promotes opportunities for our citizens to access and enjoy our facilities and outdoor spaces.

**Objective 1.5: Implement a Customer Experience Platform by 2026 and have it fully operational for two customer facing services by March 2028**

Measure: Customer Experience Platform (CEP) implemented by 2026

Measure: CEP fully operational for two customer facing services by March 2028

Measure: % increase in customer satisfaction for service accessibility and response.

**Rationale/Why:** We want to put our citizens and customers first and to do so we need to understand what people want, need and value. Embedding a positive customer experience journey into our service delivery will ensure that we put our customers first and serve their needs. It is critical to the sustained growth of our Council.

**Objective 1.6: Support delivery of a strong business economy by fostering start-ups; creating growth and scalability opportunities; promoting jobs; and developing Mid Ulster as a vibrant tourist destination.**

Measure: Number of jobs promoted through business start-up activity

Measure: Number of businesses supported through growth orientated scaling programmes and events (including tourism)

Measure: Number of visitors (footfall) to Council visitor attractions.

**Rationale/Why:** Mid Ulster district has a strong economy, especially in the fields of agriculture, construction, engineering and manufacturing. Growth in the production of goods and services means that their quality and quantity increase. Our economy contributes to the standard of living enjoyed by our citizens.

**Objective 1.7: Work collaboratively with central government to align existing community development and support programmes and implement our Community Development Strategy and Action Plan by March 2028**

Measure: Community Development Strategy and Action Plan implemented by 2028 Measure: Number of programmes integrated

Measure: Percentage (%) of CVS consultee participants satisfied with the

Co-design process

Measure: Percentage (%) improvement in life satisfaction in Mid Ulster

(NISRA Wellbeing)

Measure: Percentage of improvement in locus of control for people in Mid Ulster (NISRA Wellbeing)

**Rationale/Why:** Mid Ulster has a vibrant community and voluntary sector. We want to shape new ways of working across central and local government by aligning programme delivery and funding, exploring how things could be done differently to reflect local need. The motivation to work towards achieving improved processes is driven by the desire to ensure that people in communities are ultimately better off.

**Objective 1.8: Redirect wealth and public spending into communities by promoting a Community Wealth Building approach to local economic development**

Measure: Community Wealth Building Framework and Action Plan implemented by 2028

Measure: Amount of social value generated per £ invested

Measure: % improvement in locus of control for people in Mid Ulster (NISRA Wellbeing)

Measure: % improvement in self-efficacy for people in Mid Ulster (NISRA Wellbeing)

**Rationale/Why:** Community Wealth Building (CWB) seeks to contribute to a more stable and equitable economy by capturing the power of public organisations to better address poverty, marginalisation and economic injustice. CWB supports collective community ownership of, and democratic control over, the local economy. It does this through community land and property trusts, community development financial institutions, anchor institution procurement strategies, fair employment and just labour markets, local social enterprise, and public and community banking.

**Objective 1.9: Increase customer satisfaction and participation in our leisure, outdoor recreation and arts, culture and literary facilities by March 2028**

Measure: Percentage (%) increase in participation across each service area

Measure: Percentage (%) increase in customer satisfaction across each service area

Measure: Percentage (%) improvement in life satisfaction in Mid Ulster (NISRA Wellbeing)

**Objective 1.10: Co-design and deliver accessible community-based leisure and outdoor recreation facilities and programmes that meet our citizens’ needs**

Measure: Percentage (%) increase in customer satisfaction with community-based leisure and outdoor recreation
Measure: Percentage (%) increase in participation in leisure and outdoor recreation
Measure: Percentage (%) of citizens satisfied with their involvement in the co-design process

Measure: Percentage (%) improvement in life satisfaction in Mid Ulster

(NISRA Wellbeing)

**Rationale/Why:** Council has a substantial offering of leisure, outdoor recreation and arts, cultural and literary provision including our leisure centres, parks, green spaces, play areas, theatres and cultural sites. These services are at the core of Council’s direct service delivery to our citizens. We also want to hear from our citizens and listen to what they tell us so that our community-based leisure and outdoor recreation facilities and programmes meet their needs

**Objective 1.11: Advance our vision to meet the strategic planning and wellbeing needs of our citizens by progressing the Local Development Plan 2030 Draft Plan Strategy to Public Inquiry Stage by March 2028**

Measure: LDP Draft Plan Strategy progressed to Public Inquiry Stage by March 2028

**Objective 1.12: Listen to and reflect the needs of our citizens in shaping the Planning Service**

Measure: Percentage (%) of improvements identified by Planning Service users implemented by March 2028

**Objective 1.13: Meet statutory planning targets during the life of the Corporate Plan**

Measure: Number of Statutory planning targets met

**Rationale/Why**: The Council's Local Development Plan is made up of the Plan Strategy and Local Policies Plan. Its purpose is to inform the general public, statutory authorities, developers and other interested bodies of the policy framework and land use proposals that will implement the strategic objectives of the Regional Development Strategy and guide development decisions within Mid Ulster District Council up to 2030. Our Planning system is about getting the right things built in the right places, about spaces around buildings and other issues such as job creation, regeneration and climate change. We want to meet the statutory targets that have been set for our Planning Service, and we want to improve our service delivery by listening to and reflecting the needs of our citizens in shaping our Planning Service.

**Corporate Plan Theme Two: Leadership and Partnership in Local Growth.**

**Objective 2.1: Visibly progress the Mid-Southwest Growth Deal initiatives**

Measure: Number of Mid-Southwest Growth Deal projects approved by March 2028

Measure: Number of Full Growth Deal Business Cases progressed by March 2028

**Rationale/Why:** Growth Deals are packages of investment provided by the NI Executive and UK Government, complemented by other sources of funding. They are drivers for innovation and growth helping to raise productivity and driving competitiveness across Northern Ireland. The Mid-Southwest Growth Deal is a collaboration between Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon; Fermanagh and Omagh and Mid Ulster District Councils. Our region is fortunate to have many strengths however, there are challenges around productivity levels, an infrastructure deficit, a need to attract new workers, migration issues and a weaker outlook for population growth. We have developed a number of Growth Deal projects designed to supercharge the growth of our economy including for example, a new A29 Cookstown Bypass which will relieve traffic congestion in the town centre, reduce journey travel times, improve road safety and enhance the town centre environment.

**Objective 2.2: Actively participate with other partners to substantially progress the co-ordinated management of Lough Neagh**

Measure: Number of engagements with other bodies responsible for the co-ordinated management of Lough Neagh.

**Rationale/Why:** Lough Neagh is the biggest freshwater lake in Britain or Ireland. It supplies 40% of Northern Ireland’s drinking water and is a haven for wildlife. It is a globally important Ramsar site, a European Special Protection Area and a NI Area of Special Scientific Interest. However, there are problems around falling fish populations, deteriorating water quality and reduced bird life. Council will actively participate with the many other partners who have a vested interest in and responsibility for the protection and conservation of this unique natural environment.

**Objective 2.3.: Collaborate with local and regional governments and jurisdictions to improve the services we deliver to our citizens and advocate on their behalf**

Measure: Number of advocacy engagements with local and regional government ministers and officials

Measure: Number of cross-cutting strategic collaborative working opportunities developed

**Objective 2.4: Continue to engage and work alongside our Community Planning (CP) partners to deliver Mid Ulster Community Plan outcomes and have a new Plan in place by 2028**

Measure: Number of Community Planning Partnership meetings facilitated

Measure: Number of CP actions progressed where Council has the lead role

Measure: New Community Plan in place by 2028

Measure: Percentage (%) improvement in life satisfaction in Mid Ulster

(NISRA Wellbeing)

**Rationale/Why:** We are an outward looking, progressive Council. We will collaborate across local and regional governments and jurisdictions to deliver better results, seek out opportunities to identify where best practice exists and work with others on similar projects to bring about greater gains for our citizens. In our leadership capacity, we will identify and raise key issues that impact on our citizens, supporting them to have their say and identifying solutions that meet their needs.

**Corporate Plan Theme Three: Being the Best Council Possible.**

**Objective 3.1: Increase staff engagement and wellbeing by 2028**

Measure: Percentage (%) days lost to sickness

Measure: Percentage (%) staff satisfied with their job

Measure: Percentage (%) of staff who feel their wellbeing has improved

Measure: Percentage (%) staff turnover

Measure: Percentage (%) of staff completing mandatory learning and development training

**Objective 3.2: Implement a Workforce Plan to attract and retain the top talent we need to deliver our services**

Measure: Workforce Plan implemented in 2026

Measure: Percentage (%) staff progression across the organisation

Measure: Number of apprenticeships successfully completed by March 2028

Measure: Number of external awards achieved by March 2028

**Rationale/Why**: Investing in our employees’ wellbeing brings about many benefits including increased resilience and employee engagement, reduced sickness absence, higher performance and productivity, better work-life balance and ultimately improved service delivery for our citizens. We want to foster a workplace culture of loyalty and high morale with staff who feel their wellbeing needs are being met. Workforce planning will help us strategically align our business goals with our people strategy. Workforce planning helps us to respond to changing customer needs by developing a more skilled pool of staff. It helps reduce the cost of labour by promoting efficiency within the workforce and eliminating unproductive practices. It helps us retain our employees, develop our people, and deliver best value for money through our talent**.**

**Objective 3.3: Remain a financially sustainable and viable Council that takes a prudent approach to spending public money.**

Measure: Pounds (£) cash balance maintained within the Council’s pre-established cash limit s

Measure: Pounds (£) loans outstanding – remain within Council’s operational & authorised borrowing limits

Measure: Medium Term Financial Plan & associated prudential indicators developed and reviewed

**Rationale/Why:** The services delivered by Council impact on many aspects of our lives and the communities we are part of. We face bigger pressures and challenges including cost of living increases, higher inflation, reduced income streams and heightened demand for services. The financial challenges which lie ahead mean that we must focus on ensuring that our financial position is resilient, affordable, responsible and sustainable

**Objective 3.4: Ensure our Governance Framework is appropriately integrated within our service delivery models**.

Measure: Annual unqualified independent audit certificate

Measure: Number of reportable data breaches

Measure: 80% of Freedom of Information requests responded to within 20 working days

Measure: Number of successful (above threshold) legal challenges to Council’s Procurement exercises.

**Rationale/Why:** Our corporate governance framework centres around decision-making and accountability. It is an essential support structure setting out our rules, procedures, practices and organisational roles that ensure accountability, fairness and transparency. It helps us build trust amongst our ratepayers and citizens. It includes processes for identifying, assessing and managing risks and helps us to avoid regulatory violations or litigation, thereby increasing our performance and long-term sustainability.

**May 2024**