



04 May 2022

Dear Councillor

You are invited to attend a meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee to be held in The Chamber, Dungannon and by virtual means Council Offices, Circular Road, Dungannon, BT71 6DT on Wednesday, 04 May 2022 at 19:00 to transact the business noted below.

A link to join the meeting through the Council's remote meeting platform will follow.

Yours faithfully

Adrian McCreesh  
Chief Executive

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## AGENDA

### OPEN BUSINESS

1. Notice of Recording  
This meeting will be webcast for live and subsequent broadcast on the Council's You Tube site [Live Broadcast Link](#)
2. Apologies
3. Declarations of Interest  
Members should declare any financial and non-financial interests they have in the items of business for consideration, identifying the relevant agenda item and the nature of their interest.
4. Chair's Business

### Matters for Decision

- |    |                                                                                                                        |         |
|----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| 5. | Performance Improvement Objectives 2022-23:<br>Consultation Outworking's Report on Improvement<br>Objectives 2022-2023 | 3 - 26  |
| 6. | Request(s) to Illuminate Council Property - May 2022                                                                   | 27 - 30 |
| 7. | Development - Burnavon Arts Centre                                                                                     | 31 - 32 |
| 8. | Member Services                                                                                                        |         |

### Matters for Information

9	Minutes of Policy and Resources Committee held on Thursday 7 April 2022	33 - 38
10	Annual Progress Returns: Department of Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs (DAERA) for 2021/2022	39 - 44
11	Performance Improvement - Local Government Auditor's Audit and Assessment (Section 95) Report 2021-22	45 - 68

**Items restricted in accordance with Section 42, Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014. The public will be asked to withdraw from the meeting at this point.**

Matters for Decision

12. Staffing Matters for Decision
13. Council Electricity Supplier Renewal
14. Update - Proposed Cookstown A29 Bypass
15. Property Update

Matters for Information

16. Confidential Minutes of Policy and Resources Committee held on Thursday 7 April 2022
17. Staffing Matters for Information
18. Managing Employee Attendance –Interim Report for the period from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022
19. Financial Report for 12 months ended 31 March 2022
20. Contracts and DAC

<b>Report on</b>	Performance Improvement Objectives 2022-23: Consultation Outworking's Report on improvement objectives 2022-2023
<b>Date of Meeting</b>	Wednesday 4 <sup>th</sup> May 2022
<b>Reporting Officer</b>	P Moffett, Assistant Director of OD, Strategy & Performance
<b>Contact Officer</b>	L Jenkins, Performance & Quality Officer

<b>Is this report restricted for confidential business?</b>	Yes	
If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	No	X

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report</b>
1.1	To update the committee on the findings and outcome of the consultation undertaken on the Council's proposed improvement objectives 2022 - 2023.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Background</b>
2.1	Statutory guidance issued by the Department to Councils on taking forward the general duty on to improve, in deciding how to discharge its duty under section 84 and 85, requires that the council consult on a yearly basis on their improvement objectives. This requirement on consultation falls from section 87 of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014.
2.2.	There is no statutory duty to consult on the improvement plan, but rather the improvement objectives. Four new improvement objectives were proposed for a two year period from 2021-2022 to 2022-2023. Each improvement objective and their assigned Senior Responsible Officer (SRO), develop Improvement projects and these form part of Council's Performance Improvement Plan (PIP plan). The SRO's also conduct a review at the end of 2022 to ensure that the improvement objectives and associated milestones and activities/measures are still relevant.
2.3	<p>The Committee at its March 2021 meeting, considered and approved the proposed four Draft Corporate Improvement Objectives for 2021 - 2022 to 2022 - 2023, the objective's rationale and associated links to the community and corporate plan. The committee agreed the council's Improvement Objectives as:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Mid Ulster District Council will seek to reduce the environmental impacts of our own activities and will contribute to the improvement of the wider environment through local action.</li> <li>2. We will ensure a more connected Mid Ulster where new technologies and ways of working, empower citizens to get the best services that matter to them.</li> <li>3. To create cleaner neighbourhoods, where everyone takes responsibility for their waste and the environment.</li> <li>4. We will contribute to the ongoing regeneration of our district by delivering a capital investment programme, enhancing facilities and opportunities for local people</li> </ol>

<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
	<b>Results from the Improvement Objectives Consultation April 2022</b>
3.1	This year the consultation exercise ran from Friday 4 <sup>th</sup> March to Friday 15 <sup>th</sup> April 2022 and focused on our proposed objectives. Under each improvement objective, the Council asked whether respondents agreed with the objective or disagreed with the objective. Respondents were also asked to provide any related commentary they had regarding the proposed improvement objectives. The consultation survey also asked respondents to outline any improvements the council should consider in the future. The final question asked respondents to provide any further comments relating to the draft Improvement objectives.
3.2	The consultation involved a survey made available for completion and submission online and by post to the council. To ensure maximum engagement the process was promoted through a variety of communication channels including social media outlets, the council's website, press releases, e-mails, staff intranet and internal staff meetings. In total 31 consultees responded to the consultation. This is down from last year's consultation where 55 consultees responded to the exercise.
3.3	<p>A report on the outcome of the consultation is appended in Appendix One. In summary;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>93.55% of respondents agreed with objective one:</b> - <i>Mid Ulster District Council will seek to reduce the environmental impacts of our own activities and will contribute to the improvement of the wider environment through local action.</i></li> <li>• <b>90% of respondents agreed with objective two:</b> - <i>We will ensure a more connected Mid Ulster where new technologies and ways of working, empower citizens to get the best services that matter to them.</i></li> <li>• <b>86.21% of respondents agreed with objective three:-</b> <i>To create cleaner neighbourhoods, where everyone takes responsibility for their waste and the environment.</i></li> <li>• <b>90% of respondents agreed with objective four:</b> - <i>We will contribute to the ongoing regeneration of our district by delivering a capital investment programme, enhancing facilities and opportunities for local people</i></li> </ul>
3.4	With such significant endorsement of the four proposed improvement objectives, together with additional commentary provided, the council will be able to develop its Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) around them. When reviewed, the respondent's commentary did not warrant the removal, amendment to or addition to the objectives proposed. The additional commentary and views provided, will inform our wider improvement activity across the services.
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Other Considerations</b>
<b>4.1</b>	<b>Financial, Human Resources &amp; Risk Implications</b>
	Financial: NA
	Human: NA
	Risk Management: N/A.

4.2	<b><u>Screening &amp; Impact Statements</u></b>
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: N/A
	Rural Needs Implications: N/A
5.0	<b>Recommendation(s)</b>
5.1	That the Committee consider the outcome of the Corporate Improvement Objectives Consultation 2022 to 2023
6.0	<b>Documents Attached &amp; References</b>
	Appendix One: Consultation Report on Mid Ulster District Council's Performance Improvement Objectives 2022-2023



# Outworking's from Consultation on Mid Ulster District Council's Performance Improvement Objectives 2022-2023

April 2022

## **Background**

As required under Section 84 of the Local Government (NI) Act 2014 (hereafter referred to as 'The Act'), the Council is placed under a general duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions.

Part 12 of the Act sets out a series of provisions which the Council should be mindful of in "making arrangements to secure continuous improvement", under section 85, the Council is to identify and set itself corporate level performance Improvement Objective(s) for improving the exercise of its functions and to have arrangements in place to achieve these objectives. Under section 87 of the Act, the Council is also required to consult on our improvement objectives.

This year the consultation exercise ran from Friday 4<sup>th</sup> March to Friday 15<sup>th</sup> April 2022 at 12 noon and focused on our proposed objectives for 2022/2023.

Under each improvement objective the Council asked whether respondents agreed with the objective or disagreed with the objective. Respondents were also asked to provide any related commentary they had regarding the proposed improvement objectives.

The consultation survey also asked respondents to outline any improvements the council should consider in the future. The final question asked respondents to provide any further comments relating to the draft Improvement objectives.

The consultation exercise was promoted via a variety of communication channels including social media, our Council website, staff intranet/e-mails, and press releases. In total, there were 31 respondents to the Mid Ulster District's Performance Improvement Objectives 2022-2023 consultation.



## **Responses to Improvement Objectives Consultation Questionnaire 2022-2023**

### **QUESTION 1**

Consultees were asked what was their main interest in responding to this consultation.

**Table 1.0- What is your main interest in responding to the consultation?**

<b>Capacity in which responding to survey</b>	<b>Percentage Responses</b>
Citizen/Ratepayer	70.97%
Local Business	3.23%
Community /Voluntary Group	9.68%
Statutory Sector	3.23%
Other	12.90% (employees)

### **QUESTION 2 –**

Percentage of consultees who provided contact details 54.8%

### QUESTION 3 -

**Do you agree that the proposed Performance Improvement Objectives are appropriate for our district?**

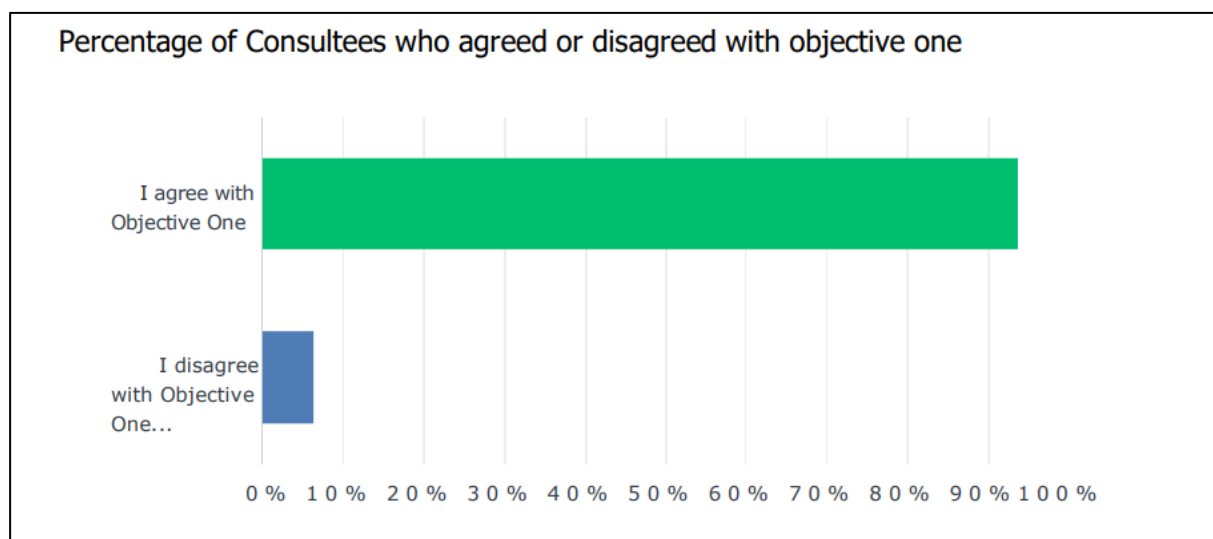
Consultees were asked to indicate if they agreed or disagreed with objective one, and to add comments where applicable

#### **Improvement Objective One**

- 1. Mid Ulster District Council will seek to reduce the environmental impacts of our own activities and will contribute to the improvement of the wider environment through local action.**

Table 1.1 Percentage of Consultees who agreed or disagreed with objective one.

	Percentage
<b>Number of Consultees agreed with objective one</b>	<b>93.55%</b>
<b>Number of Consultees disagreed with objective one</b>	<b>6.45%</b>



Outlined below are the consultees' commentary in relation to objective one. There were 16 comments received in total.

#02	This is useful. The detail of how it is intended to be carried out using SMART measures would be useful to see, as the objective is very high level. Would also be useful to see an explanation of "our own activities" means. For example is that an internal objective? If so, how will the public know how it is being achieved? Does this include effective use of green spaces/clean public spaces/waste collection? And then show the KPIs? e.g Percentage of waste recycled Carbon emissions across the district Level of CO2 emissions from council buildings and operations Number of residential and commercial properties moved to a lower level of flood risk Improved energy and thermal efficiency performance of houses Number of households in fuel poverty.
#03	I welcome the opportunity to provide comment to the Council's corporate objectives and outcome based results. Climate Change is the biggest issue on a global scale which all government departments at all levels must be resolved to tackle head on. There is a wealth of statistical information and data available from Climate NI website. <a href="https://www.climateinireland.org.uk/">https://www.climateinireland.org.uk/</a> Existing NGOs and arm's length bodies could become critical friends for the Council to bring forward proactive, specific, outcome based, achievable and time bound strategies focusing on practical solutions to physical, environmental, social and economic impacts that climate change, alongside unpredictable access and availability of energy resources and food security / production - to reduce the Councils overall carbon footprint. This is a timely opportunity to put in place nature based solutions, utilising the districts access to and availability of nationally and internationally important natural habitats on our doorstep. Please note existing examples to nature based solutions such as those linked to <a href="https://www.pollinators.ie/">Pollinators.ie</a> and <a href="https://www.pollinators.org/">Pollinators.org</a> Reuse what already exists - Embodied Carbon and existing buildings / structures <a href="https://historicengland.org.uk/whats-new/news/recycle-buildings-tackle-climate-change/">https://historicengland.org.uk/whats-new/news/recycle-buildings-tackle-climate-change/</a> <a href="https://www.historicenvironment.scot/archives-and-research/publications/publication/?publicationId=843d0c97-d3f4-4510-acd3-aadf0118bf82">https://www.historicenvironment.scot/archives-and-research/publications/publication/?publicationId=843d0c97-d3f4-4510-acd3-aadf0118bf82</a> A Guide to Climate Change Impacts <a href="https://cadw.gov.wales/advice-support/climate-change/adapting-to-climate-change">https://cadw.gov.wales/advice-support/climate-change/adapting-to-climate-change</a>
#06	I agree with the comments but am struggling to know the detail of how? We are in a global economic crisis so the timing of implementation the changes is wrong. To get people and businesses to change how they do things there needs to be widespread, easily attainable and affordable alternatives. Don't think Government or Council have thought it through. Easy to make statements.
#11	Please can we work in shared protocols re all environment agencies to maintain our rivers and look after our countryside.
#12	No. You are trashing the high school site and proposing a park on a flood plain. This will cost millions to achieve through huge groundworks required. As a qualified engineer and landscape architect I know this.

#13	Don't destroy Maghera high school site
#14	I agree that Mid Ulster district council should improve the environment. The plan to remove mature trees in the former Maghera high school site to make way for units it not helping the environment, and is taking away opportunities for green space in Maghera where it already falls short of the requirements per head.
#15	I agree that you should consider the environment especially where mature trees are concerned and therefore believe that you should reconsider your plans to destroy the mature lands at the former Maghera high school grounds. The people of the town and surrounding areas have consistently asked that you abandon your destructive plans to destroy the rich and diverse ecosystem on order to build business units.
#18	How can the council reduce the environmental impacts of our activity if they destroy the Maghera High school site which is so biodiverse.
#21	Mid Ulster Council can reduce its environmental impact by not industrialising the former Maghera High School site, saving it for use as a community park instead. Destroying this mature ecosystem to develop industrial units runs contrary to urgent measures promised by local government at COP22 to mitigate climate crisis and is an anathema to the gift of the natural legacy we enjoy as a local community. The local community supports the retention of this beautiful environment, which the Council can use and develop to contribute to the health & wellbeing of locals, young and old. Many schemes and collaborations can also be entertained through local action, utilising the natural environment to build community cohesion. Mid Ulster Council can play an important role in showing support for local people who are passionate about protecting and saving local natural environment.
#22	I strongly agree with this however the destruction of a mature environmental location, the old Maghera high school site, does not appear to be in line with this. How do we hold council accountable?
#23	Good to see Council seeking to reduce its impact on the environment, the reality of climate change is here, we're seeing more localised flooding, near drought conditions affecting our farming and habitats pushed to extinction, we all need to take ownership and reduce our carbon emissions.
#27	I agree with this to the extent that the Council as a public authority should not only be doing its bit to minimise our impact but act as leaders to encourage others to do likewise in whatever way they can.
#29	It is good that the Council are going to lead by example and reduce environmental impacts themselves of their own activities. This should help deliver the message to the wider community.
#30	As a result of the review of the Mid Ulster Community Plan, a climate change action was included 'We will work to mitigate against the impacts of climate change by taking steps to reduce our carbon emissions.' It is therefore important to involve wider Community Planning partners to achieve this objective. We will

	need to support our businesses and communities to build their capacity and resilience to deal with the impact of climate change.
#31	Would like to see sticky labels for my bins reminding me what each bin is for as I am a new homeowner, it's just so that I don't put the wrong things in the bins.

## QUESTION 4 -

**Do you agree that the proposed Performance Improvement Objectives are appropriate for our district?**

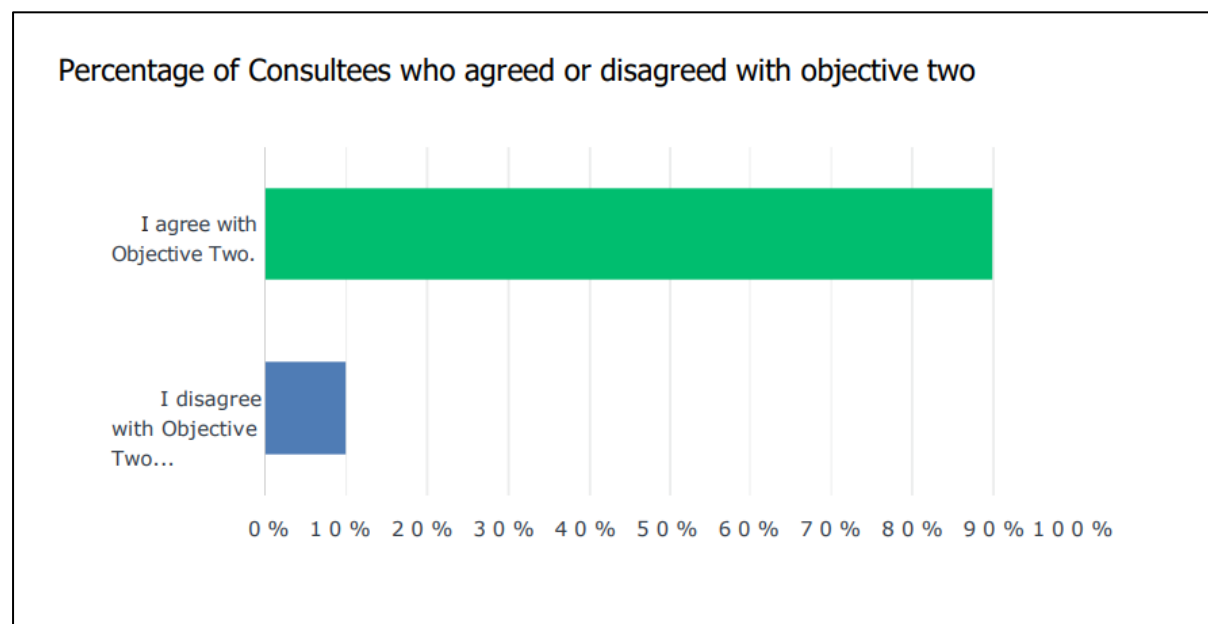
Consultees were asked to indicate if they agreed or disagreed with objective two, and to add comments where applicable.

### Improvement Objective Two

- 2. We will ensure a more connected Mid Ulster where new technologies and ways of working, empower citizens to get the best services that matter to them.**

Table 1.2 – Percentage of consultees who agreed or disagreed with objective two.

	Percentage
<b>Number of Consultees agreed with objective two</b>	<b>90%</b>
<b>Number of Consultees disagreed with objective two</b>	<b>10%</b>



Outlined below are the consultees' commentary in relation to objective two. There were 15 comments received in total.

#01	Rural communities have been disadvantaged for years. We pay the same tax as everyone else and deserve the same advantages as everyone else! The Project Stratum initiative is not doing anywhere near enough to address rural broadband quality issues. Folks with just over 30MB broadband speed are getting severely disadvantaged as there are no plans to bring them into the fold for FTTP. As usual, properties in towns get connected first. In this case, next in line are the most disadvantaged rural properties, which makes a lot of sense, but rural folks like myself with a mediocre broadband service are left out in the cold. This should not be a business viability issue .... good internet connectivity is a critical part of modern life and as such everyone should be given timely access to fibre broadband. I'm a permanent home worker who works in IT. 30MB may seem decent to a lot of people but it is nowhere near good enough for my purposes as I have to run a VPN all of the time. It's high time councils and government sort this issue out once and for all. We seem to be able to squander money on all sorts of stupid schemes but don't have enough money for critical services such as broadband connectivity. It's not good enough!
#02	Again would be helpful to see the SMART objectives behind it. And to understand what is being measured e.g. things like: Skills in the workforce Skills in the community Proportion of people using self-service when getting in touch with the council Number of employees in the creative industries in the District Supporting broadband access in rural areas. Increase in tenants/residents digital skills/confidence, access to equipment and motivation.
#03	Connectivity is key to a people first approach to all facets of legislative duties required from the Council. Clear, consistent and reliable communication between people and local government is vital to enable objective two. Connectivity between place, urban and rural, town and village, work, home and leisure is key to the economic, social, physical and mental health and wellbeing of the citizens of the District. The Council should consider developing a greenways and waterways strategy that identifies opportunities to physically link active modes of travel to existing towns and villages to enable and advocate for an active lifestyle for citizens. A network of interconnected public greenways for pedestrians, cyclist by mapping what is already in place against what citizens want public access too would provide a good baseline for proactive and structured discussions with central government departments and their arm's length bodies. People within the district need access to and availability of high quality and reliable digital technologies including broadband and Wi-Fi; however not to the detriment of actual publicly accessible open green space, local parks, equipped play parks, people first walkable local 15-min neighbourhoods with direct access to a network of public open spaces, walkways, wildlife, soft landscaping, trees and waterways, ponds, streams and rivers (blue infrastructure). Connectivity and interconnections need to be identified and built into Council corporate strategies at all levels and across all directorates. Each corporate strategy should work operationally in synergy to the other facilitating a clear understanding of each directorate's duties, remit

	and responsibilities to the public (residents, citizens, the people) in order to support the Councils public services deliver and outcome measured results.
#04	Better mobile phone service required- too many black spots.
#06	We live in rural Ulster and are very not more connected. Technology is not meeting expectations. Mobile phone connectivity is poor, how does Council propose to fix this?
#12	Perhaps you'll need some form of carbon sequestration technologies given you are proposing to kill the oldest trees in County Derry.
#13	Rural connectivity.
#14	I feel mid Ulster is already well connected, the rural areas received super-fast broadband from a government funded scheme that fibrus have been rolling out. I think money could be better spent in other ways. The community need money spent on thing that bring them together face to face rather than technology.
#15	I believe that we should slow down on technology. We really need to create environments where people can meet face to face. Where they can partake in activities that will connect them physically. The more we isolate mankind with virtual connectivity through social media, the more of a depressed and despondent society we create.
#17	The trees that are in this area would be chopped down and they are over 100 years old with habitats for wildlife. Council could never put up and replace these areas.
#23	Good to see broadband reaching many areas previously not covered in the district, the pandemic has shown us just how much we rely on and need good connectivity.
#27	Again this is an objective which is integral to allow our local council to continually improve on how it provides its services where it can beyond the routine 9 to 5 environment.
#29	There is a wide variety of differences between one end of Mid Ulster Council area to the other in terms of Broadband connectivity etc and it would be good to give everyone the change to avail of the same service.
#30	We are not entirely sure what this means. Is this about better access to services or the quality of the service the citizen receives.
#31	My gran would like to be able to use her phone to do more things on-line and would love to be able to link in with a community group or maybe the Council runs classes to help out with this, just to boost her confidence and make life easier for her as more and more companies expect everything to be done on-line like energy companies etc., looked on the web-site but could not see anything.



## QUESTION 5 -

**Do you agree that the proposed Performance Improvement Objectives are appropriate for our district?**

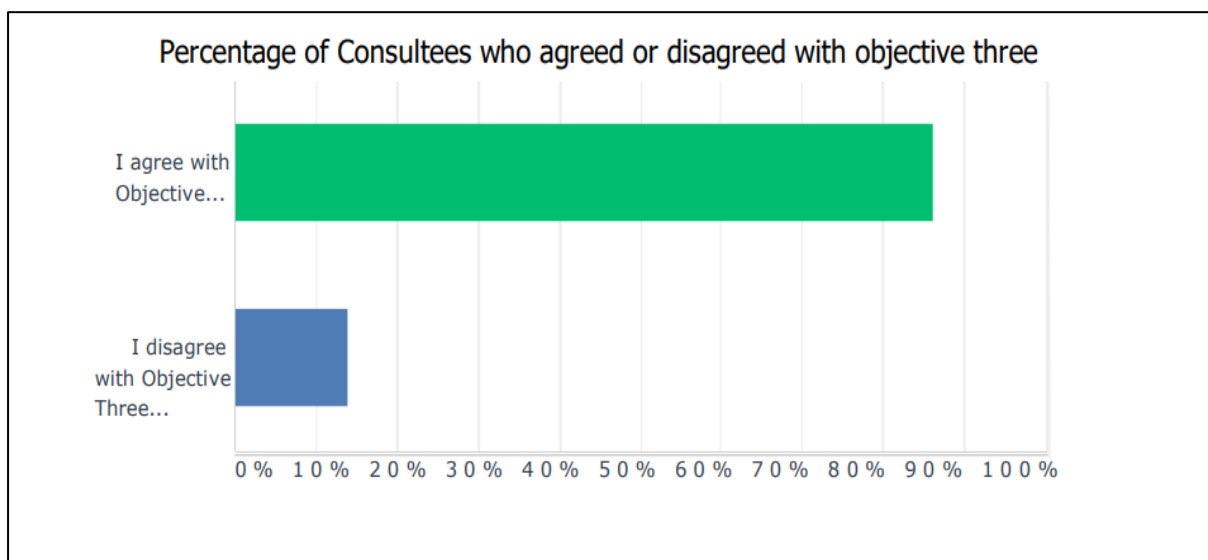
Consultees were asked to indicate if they agreed or disagreed with objective three, and to add comments where applicable.

### **Improvement Objective Three.**

- 3. To create cleaner neighbourhoods, where everyone takes responsibility for their waste and the environment.**

Table 1.3 – Percentage of consultees who agreed or disagreed with objective three.

	Percentage
<b>Number of Consultees agreed with objective three</b>	<b>86.21%</b>
<b>Number of Consultees disagreed with objective three</b>	<b>13.79%</b>



Outlined below are the consultees' commentary in relation to objective three. There were 15 comments received in total.

#01	We need to do more about fly tipping and people throwing rubbish out of vehicles onto the road.
#02	As above - SMART Objectives and KPIS e.g. Bin collection measures Satisfaction with a neighbourhood as a place to live Percentage of residents who say they feel safe in their local area Number of reported anti-social behaviour / nuisance incidents Number of reported hate incidents.
#05	I think this is very important. The amount of litter thrown out of cars and strewn at the sides of roads is horrific. If everyone disposed of their own litter in a responsible way we would not have this issue. Plastic containers from fast food - people should be encouraged to bring their own reusable dishes etc. Drinks cans - something needs to be done to discourage the dumping.
#06	Agree but unclear of specific details on how this can be achieved. How many fines were issued for littering in the last 5 years? Joke
#07	While I agree that everyone should take responsibility for keeping their neighborhood clean, this is ultimately the responsibility of the Council as we are paying significant rates for this task to be undertaken. This is a problem for MUDC and one that is getting worse every week. The amount of rubbish in the country side is increasing, and I appreciate it is difficult to man this and cover all areas - however the town centres and urban areas in Mid Ulster are a disgrace - the amount of rubbish not being collected is a poor showing by this Council. Public areas such as the graveyard, in around housing estates, dog foul never cleaned.
#11	But this does not negate the requirement for council cleaning of roads and shared spaces. A more active approach to fines for dropping litter has to be introduced, More wardens and education/ high profile zero tolerance approach.
#12	Once again Mid Ulster and Maghera in particular has no green environment credentials. If you want to teach the youth of tomorrow to care for their environment you can start with building a park.
#13	More rural litter picking or encouragement of individual action rather than just annual GAA Working with recycle for KC ni to keep single use plastic out of the environment and landfill.
#14	I think looking after the environment and having a clean place to live is important. Most citizens already do their best to recycle and help keep a tidy area. I also think Maghera recycling centre should take more items, having to get paint tins etc. to Magherafelt recycling centre if you don't drive is not really acceptable. I think the council should also have a service that will collect all items from resident's homes. An elderly person with no family is going to find it impossible to get large items to the recycling centre, the council should really consider this when expecting people to take responsibility for their waste and the environment!

	I understand it is the council's responsibility to keep the streets clean and I don't think there is enough done about over grown hedges and weeds taking over footpaths. I think the council should be doing more to keep neighborhoods clean, is that not the purpose of paying rates?
#15	People have a responsibility to ensure that they live in a safe and clean neighborhood. What happens to people who do not live in Magherafelt and do not drive or have connections to others who could help, when it comes to disposing of paint tins? As we are not allowed to take them to Maghera recycling centre When it comes to household rubbish. We are very good here in Maghera at recycling. What about the uneven pavements and weeds that seem to be everywhere here in Maghera? I see the rates going up and the onus of responsibility being pushed on to communities?
#21	Local people who care about their areas and wish to protect associated natural environment from destruction to ensure a better future for us all should be fully supported by Council.
#23	Amount of rubbish left behind by people in local parks, walkways and play areas, take it home!
#27	General littering continues to a problem within our district and this needs to be kept on the radar. More community initiatives and profile to clean up our areas.
#29	Absolutely agree, keeping Mid Ulster clean also keeps Mid Ulster healthy and allows everyone to enjoy the facilities like parks etc. to the fullest. Dog fouling is a major concern across the district and hopefully the council can keep addressing this problem.
#31	Would like to see clearer signage of where bins are available on pathways/parks etc.

## QUESTION 6 -

**Do you agree that the proposed Performance Improvement Objectives are appropriate for our district?**

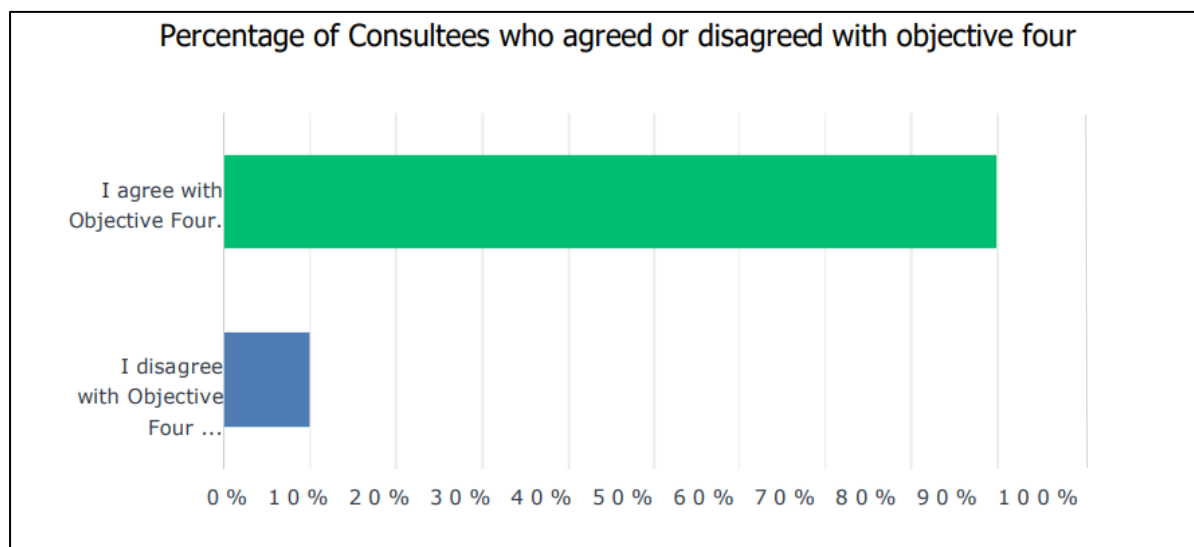
Consultees were asked to indicate if they agreed or disagreed with objective four, and to add comments where applicable.

### Improvement Objective Four

4. **We will contribute to the ongoing regeneration of our district by delivering a capital investment programme, enhancing facilities and opportunities for local people.**

Table 1.4 – Percentage of consultees who agreed or disagreed with objective four.

	Percentage
<b>Number of Consultees agreed with objective four.</b>	<b>90%</b>
<b>Number of Consultees disagreed with objective four.</b>	<b>10%</b>



Outlined below are the consultees' commentary in relation to objective four. There were 19 comments received in total.

#01	Make the first capital investment in fibre broadband connectivity for all, not just the lucky few!
#02	Might need to be more specific? E.g. Supporting economic recovery from Covid 19 and building longer-term economic resilience Supporting growth and investment, helping everyone benefit from the economy to their full potential Supporting businesses and residents to improve skills, helping people into work and into better jobs Targeting interventions to tackle poverty in priority neighbourhoods Tackling low pay KPIs Number of new business startups and scale-ups Business survival rate (after 5 years) Visitor economic impact for the District Expenditure with (a) local suppliers and (b) small and medium-sized enterprises as a percentage of the council's overall spend
#03	Any Capital Investment Programme needs to be based on sound and robust evidence of what the public, citizens residing within the district, really need and what they want. Regeneration powers were retained by the Department for Communities, any proposed financial investment could be in partnership with DfC, Regeneration Division. Any Capital Investment Programme should be council led with input from across directorates and utilising existing experienced staff officers, reduce outsourcing for projects and programmes that could be achieved in-house, with an investment in engaging appropriately qualified and accredited professionals and retaining their expertise for future projects, programmes, technical advice, guidance and input to Council Strategies and programme of works - thus making the Council more resilient, adaptive and sustainable into the future where financial security will be an issue. Investment in staff should result in a dedicated team of multidisciplinary professional experts available to the Council to provide expert advice, guidance and input for District level scale investment to individual projects that deliver outcome based, measurable and achievable results for public service delivery through locally accessible staff officers who can act as expert witnesses in their own right. Reduce procurement and outsourcing for individual projects, programmes and schedules of work which could be undertaken in-house by existing cohort of staff with support through training, qualifications and accreditation - retain staff and improve resilience of the organisation.
#05	Get young people out of the house. Allow and encourage family cycling in off road areas. More off road walks and cycles, green ways etc. Roads are too dangerous now for families. We need places off road and not just short stretches.
#06	There is a lot of positive work done by the Council in trying to regenerate the district and I acknowledge this. Keep it up
#07	It is important to continue to enhance facilities - however - there is no point in building new facilities while allowing the facilities that are in place to become run down e.g. MUSA. Building a new multi-million pound sports complex in Coalisland, when the nets / catch nets, fencing is falling down around MUSA? Does this make sense? Weeds / maintenance at this site a problem. Need to focus on urban regeneration, for years the rural areas have been receiving funding for community

	hubs - community centres - enterprise units - directly to support individual communities - through RDP etc - what support has been given to community groups/sports groups in urban areas - none. The Council should be identifying projects which will benefit urban communities - sports groups, community groups through this investment - the people of this district who are most in need and where impact will be felt - should not always be business lead around capital investment.
#12	Build the park!
#13	Enhance Maghera high school site into a green space for mental and physical health with more community events.
#14	I agree facilities need to be enhanced, there are still areas in mid Ulster with no green space and outdoor leisure. The former Maghera high school site would be the perfect opportunity for local people to have an outdoor area to socialize and enjoy community activities. It could be used for events and markets while protecting the environment already established within the site. There are so many opportunities for the whole community to use this area, people of all ages should be able to have a place to go away from the traffic to exercise or enjoy some quiet time. Mid Ulster district council need to start listening to the residents of Maghera regarding this matter, we do not want the Mullagh road field site where proposals of parks and tree planting has been rumoured. We wish to keep the high school site and protect the established wooded areas. You may have added a new football pitch which is no longer accessible unless you pay, and added a few items to the children's park but this only benefits a small part of the community. So please listen and give Maghera the Park site it wants.
#15	This is where we need to agree that we already have a wonderful location that could very well facilitate great opportunities for young and old alike. The former high school grounds could facilitate a new community centre. With a safe environment for outdoor play and activities for young people. A more private location for those who rely on food banks. Nature trails where school children can follow the paths through the wooded areas. Maybe a bowling area where older and younger ones can come together. A pump track for energetic younger folk. The all-weather could be used for functions including farmers markets, craft fairs, car boot sales. Cyclists, cricket, the list is endless. This is how you could invest. In a location that is already quite adequate for many of the things mentioned above. Let's use it! Not lose it.
#16	I hope the investment contributes to our green spaces.
#18	The council should then develop the High school site to enhance facilities for locals and choose an alternative site for their business development.
#21	Capital investment to enhance facilities and opportunities for local people must include development of local natural environment, wherever it is close to towns, as a priority. These increasingly rare areas risk being lost forever if not taken under the protection of Council and valued for the benefits natural environments provide families and individuals, especially following the recent pandemic and with climate change now an urgent priority for government.

#22	Although I have no objection to capital investment, as such, council have already proved they do not consider the opinions of the local community. By summarily dismissing over two thousand objections to one of their proposed schemes, this has cast great doubt if MDC could be trusted to designate the capital investment into projects the local population actually want.
#23	Post pandemic and rising cost of living prices need to inject money into our towns and villages and ensure local builders and suppliers are used.
#27	Can the council take account of all people when designing its facilities so everyone can enjoy them and access them equally.
#29	It would be good to see something done about the abandoned / dilapidated properties in each of the towns. It would make the towns and villages more welcoming. Projects that involve the youth and older generation, working together are always a good thing e.g. community gardens etc..
#30	To ensure the sustainability of an investment programme in the long term, we feel it is important that Council supports meaningful community engagement and ensures community ownership of our investment programmes at all times.
#31	Are the capital projects available to view on the Council's web-site or face book pages , would be good to see proposed plans and pictures of where they are and what they look like, as well as projects that are completed.

## QUESTION 7.

**Consultees were asked to outline any improvements that they felt could be made by Mid Ulster Council in the future.**

**There were 13 responses received in total in relation to question 7.**

#02	Would be useful to focus on rural areas, where there is a paucity of infrastructure and social isolation. Tourism opportunities around the western shores of Lough Neagh are there to be exploited - needs more specific help and a single line of accountability.
#05	Off road trails, Green ways.
#06	Provide rate subsidies to businesses next time instead of Spruce up grants or marketing grants.
#07	Urban regeneration for groups.
#12	More trees, by building a park in Maghera it will increase visitors to the town, enhancing local businesses. An industrial park will destroy local habitat only 1 or 2 wealthy businessmen.

#13	A look at whole Council use of single plastics and a media strategy that is in line with that. More community building events.
#14	I think that the Maghera town regeneration scheme needs to be started also, our footpaths are getting very dangerous and this was talked about at least two years ago. It's about time it was completed. I also think the Council should listen more to the feedback from surveys. I feel like we fill these in so a box can be ticked and that our words fall on deaf ears as the council seem to do as they see fit and are out of touch with what communities need.
#15	There are not enough community projects. There really is not much going on that would involve the vast majority of the public. It's not so bad if you play football and have enough friends to make up teams and then divide the costs. Or if your happy to play bingo once or twice a week. But generally, there is nothing to do and nowhere to go. If you have a car you can go to other locations away from our town for walks, runs recreational purposes. But here in Maghera we need a place to go that is within easy access. That is away from traffic. Where we can meet and talk to others and get involved in recreational pursuits if we choose. It is not acceptable say that walking next to constant traffic should suffice or sitting in an ornamental walled garden should meet all our requirements. We need our green space surrounded by wood land. That's what we need. That is what we have asked for.
#16	We REALLY need a quiet clean air space to relax in.
#17	To leave this area alone as we the people like it as it is.
#18	This is the 6th survey I have completed. The council clearly are not listening to the people's views as the people have been fighting to keep our high school site as a green area for families which is desperately needed in the town.
#21	Listening to local people in an open and transparent way is more likely to encourage a sense of ownership for Council plans. Decisions around investment and development seem to be taken behind closed doors and presented to communities for consultation, after determinations have been made. A more open dialogue would be useful for citizens to feel ownership and involvement in the outworking before decision making.
#27	I don't know

## QUESTION 8

**Consultees were asked to use the space provided for any further comments relating to the draft Corporate Improvement objectives.**

**There were 7 responses received in total relating to question 8.**



#02	The Council “shop window” the MUDC website desperately needs to be brought into the modern ae. Customer service skills would also benefit from modernisation across the District. There is a perception of silo mentality in terms of organisation. The switchboard method of access is woeful. A call centre development would enhance and provide scale economies.
#06	Lack specific details including actual actions and money required to achieve outcomes.
#15	Maghera town was once a market town. One of the oldest market towns on the island. We do not have any room for markets in the town anymore. But we do have room at the former high school grounds to have markets and vintage car rallies and fun days, firework displays and much more. We have realised over the last two years that green space is vital for physical and mental health. That is exactly how you can improve Maghera town.
#21	Environmental protection must become a priority for MUDC if it is to set an example in relation to a sustained climate change strategy.
#23	Seems to be relevant to what’s going on in the economy and socially.
#27	Nothing else to add to this
#31	All seem to be relevant



<b>Report on</b>	Request(s) to Illuminate Council Property - May 2022
<b>Date of Meeting</b>	Wednesday 4 <sup>th</sup> May 2022
<b>Reporting Officer</b>	P Moffett, Assistant Director Org. Development Strategy & Performance
<b>Contact Officer</b>	Eileen Forde, Member Support Officer

<b>Is this report restricted for confidential business?</b>	Yes	
If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	No	X

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report</b>
1.1	<p>To consider requests received to illuminate and light up the Council's three designated properties to raise awareness for the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parenting Week NI: Parenting Week 2022 (October)</li> <li>• In Solidarity with the People of Ukraine</li> </ul> <p>Details on request received are set out below.</p>
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Background</b>
2.1	The Council has a policy and procedural arrangements in place to facilitate the illuminating/lighting-up of its designated properties from requests made by charitable organisations for charitable causes. The designated properties are the Bridewell, the Burnavon and Ranfurly.
2.2	The policy confirms that requests are considered by the Council's Policy and Resources Committee. Should the scheduling of the committee not permit requests being considered within the timeframes for determination, they can be presented to monthly Council.
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
3.1	<p>The Council has received correspondence from two organisations requesting that consideration be given to lighting up our three designated council properties. Requests for consideration and recommendation by Committee:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Monday 17<sup>th</sup> October 2022 for Parenting Week - Parenting NI</li> <li>2. In Solidarity with the People of Ukraine - Ards &amp; North Down Borough Council</li> </ol>

	<b>Scope of the Council Arrangements</b>
3.2	The policy scope extends to requests made by charitable organisations for the promotion of its charitable cause on a given date or set of dates.
3.3	In reflecting on the requests received it has been determined that the request and correspondence received from Ards & North Down Borough Council calling upon councils to light up its buildings in support of and in solidarity with the people of Ukraine when there are no other scheduled lighting up commitments would fall outside the scope of the policy/procedural arrangements (refer to appendix A) Arrangements extend to requests made by charitable organisations for the promotion of their charitable causes only.
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Other Considerations</b>
<b>4.1</b>	<b>Financial, Human Resources &amp; Risk Implications</b>
	Financial: Not applicable
	Human: Not applicable
	Risk Management: Not applicable
<b>4.2</b>	<b>Screening &amp; Impact Assessments</b>
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: Council policy and procedural arrangements have been referred to.
	Rural Needs Implications: Not applicable
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Recommendation(s)</b>
5.1	That the Committee considers making recommendation to light up the designated properties on the dates specified to mark: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monday 17 October 2022 to highlight Parenting Week 2022 - colour purple</li> </ul>
5.2	That the Committee notes the correspondence/request received from Ards & North Down Borough Council and determination made at 3.2 and 3.3 within the report, which Members may wish to consider
<b>6.0</b>	<b>Documents Attached &amp; References</b>
	Appendix A - Letter from Ards & North Down Borough Council

SR/AC/cd/CS8.3.2022/Item 11b

25 April 2022

Mr. Adrian McCreesh  
Chief Executive  
Mid Ulster District Council  
50 Ballyronan Road  
Magherafelt  
BT45 6EN

Via email: [chief.executive@midulstercouncil.org](mailto:chief.executive@midulstercouncil.org)

Dear Adrian

I would advise you that Ards and North Down Borough Council recently agreed to continue to light up its buildings in support of and in solidarity with the people of Ukraine, where there are no other scheduled lighting up commitments, and that the Council writes to the other Council's calling upon them to do the same.

I would be grateful if you would present this request to your Council for its consideration.

Yours sincerely



**Stephen Reid**  
**Chief Executive**



<b>Report on</b>	Development - Burnavon Arts Centre
<b>Date of Meeting</b>	4 <sup>th</sup> May 2022
<b>Reporting Officer</b>	Claire Linney, Assistant Director of Development

Is this report restricted for confidential business?	Yes	
If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	No	X

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	To request funding for capital works to the required upgrade of the Burnavon Arts Centre auditorium.
2.0	Background
2.1	Burnavon Arts Centre is the main arts performance space for Mid Ulster. It hosts a diverse range of performances throughout the year and provides for quality conference provision, and community use.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p>As part of the Council commitment to the provision of quality facilities. An upgrade to the Burnavon Arts Centre front foyer area was undertaken in 2020. At this time, due to limited budget it was decided to complete the refurbishment of the front public areas through a phased approach.</p> <p>The development of the auditorium is required due to wear and tear over a number of years and due to high level usage of the facility. It is proposed to do a full maintenance upgrade to the auditorium to include: seating, curtains, carpet, painting, and lighting. The lighting will upgrade to new led energy efficiency system to provide for sustainable development and revenue cost reduction.</p> <p>The estimated budget for the works is £150,000 in total for all elements: budget, Seating £85,000 Curtains £15,000 Carpets £15,000 Painting and general maintenance £10,000 Lighting upgrade £25,000</p> <p>Works will be undertaken under the Capital programme and led by Council Technical Team. A full design and cost will be developed and value for money sought re contract provision.</p>

<b>4.0</b>	<b>Other Considerations</b>
<b>4.1</b>	<p><b><u>Financial &amp; Human Resources Implications</u></b></p> <p>£150,000 estimated budget from Capital budget.</p> <p><b><u>Professional Support</u></b></p> <p>None</p>
<b>4.2</b>	<p><b><u>Equality and Good Relations Implications</u></b></p> <p>None</p>
<b>4.3</b>	<p><b><u>Risk Management Implications</u></b></p> <p>None</p>
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Recommendation(s)</b>
5.1	To request funding for capital works to the required upgrade of the Burnavon Arts Centre auditorium.
<b>6.0</b>	<b>Documents Attached &amp; References</b>
	None



**Minutes of Meeting of Policy and Resources Committee of Mid Ulster District Council held on Thursday 7 April 2022 in the Council Offices, Ballyronan Road, Magherafelt and by Virtual Means**

**Members Present**

Councillor Kearney, Chair

Councillors Ashton\*, Buchanan, Cuddy\* (7.34 pm), Doris\* (7.24 pm), Elattar\*, Forde, Gildernew\*, S McAleer, S McGuigan\*, S McPeake, Molloy\*, Totten

**Officers in Attendance**

Mrs Canavan, Strategic Director of Organisation Development, Strategy and Performance  
Mr Kelso, Director of Public Health & Infrastructure  
Mrs Dyson\*\*, Head of Human Resources  
Ms Mezza\*\*, Head of Marketing and Communications  
Mr Moffett, Assistant Director of Organisation Development, Strategy and Performance  
Ms McNally\*\*, Assistant Director of Finance, Legal, Governance and Transformation  
Mr O'Hagan\*\*, Head of ICT  
Mr Tohill, Strategic Director of Corporate Service and Finance  
Miss McIlwrath, Business Support Manager

\* Denotes members present in remote attendance

\*\* Denotes Officers present by remote means

\*\*\* Denotes others present by remote means

In the absence of the Chair, Councillor McKinney, Councillor Kearney, Deputy Chair took the Chair.

The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm

*The Chair, Councillor Kearney welcomed everyone to the meeting and those watching the meeting through the Live Broadcast. Councillor Kearney in introducing the meeting detailed the operational arrangements for transacting the business of the committee in the chamber and by virtual means, by referring to Annex A to this minute.*

**PR067/22 Notice of Recording**

This meeting will be webcast for live and subsequent broadcast on the Council's You Tube site.

**PR068/22 Apologies**

Councillors McKinney, McLean and Quinn.

## **PR069/22    Declarations of Interest**

The Chair, Councillor Kearney reminded Members of their responsibility with regard to declarations of interest.

## **PR070/22    Chairs Business**

None

## **Matters for Decision**

### **PR071/22    Report of Corporate Good Relations Working Group Meeting: March 2022**

The Assistant Director: ODSP presented previously circulated report which provided details of the outworkings of the Corporate Good Relations Working Group that was held on Wednesday 9 March 2022.

Proposed by Councillor S McPeake  
Seconded by Councillor Molloy and

**Resolved**    That it be recommended to Council to approve the report of the Corporate Good Relations Working Group meeting held on Wednesday 9th March 2022 as set out at appendix A of report.

Councillor Ashton asked to note that the makeup of the Council Good Relations Working Group is now the Nationalist Working Group of Council as there are no Unionist Members attending the meetings of the group. Councillor Ashton advised that her party objected to the amount of money being spent through this channel on looking at a united Ireland.

Councillor S McPeake invited the Unionist parties to participate in the Working Group once again as they have essentially boycotted the Working Group from its inception. Councillor S McPeake stated that the Working Group would be stronger if there was Unionist representation and appealed to Unionist Members to come on board with the group.

### **PR072/22    Committee and Council Meetings: 2022-2023**

The Assistant Director: ODSP presented previously circulated report which considered the rescheduling of the Policy and Resources Committee meeting scheduled to take place on Thursday 5th May 2022 in light of the Northern Ireland Assembly Election. The report further considered the 2022-2023 Committee and Council Meeting Schedule for approval due to commence from June 2022.

Proposed by Councillor Forde  
Seconded by Councillor S McAleer and

**Resolved**    That it be recommended to Council that –

- I. In light of the NI Assembly Election due to take place on Thursday 5 May 2022, that the May Policy and Resources Committee be brought forward to Wednesday 4 May at 7.00 pm.
- II. The Council and Committee Meeting Schedule for the period June 2022 to April 2023 be approved.

### **PR073/22 Requests to Light Up Buildings**

The Assistant Director: ODSP presented previously circulated report which considered requests to illuminate/light up the Council's three designated properties to raise awareness of and mark;

- Foster Care Fortnight
- International Nurses Day
- Irish Vasculitis Organisation (IVO)
- World Neurofibromatosis Awareness Day
- Boom Foundation: Sarcoma Awareness

Further to the report, the Assistant Director: ODSP advised of additional request received from Linking Generations Group Northern Ireland. The officer advised that the request was to light up designated buildings at a time between 25 April and 1 May to highlight global intergenerational week, the designated colour to be pink.

Proposed by Councillor S McPeake  
Seconded by Councillor S McAleer and

- Resolved** That it be recommended to Council to illuminate the three designated Council properties as follows –
- I. 9 May 2022 to highlight Foster Care Fortnight designated colour to be orange
  - II. 12 May 2022 to highlight International Nurses Day designated colour to be blue
  - III. 15 May 2022 to highlight Irish Vasculitis Organisation (IVO) designation colour to be red
  - IV. 17 May 2022 World Neurofibromatosis Awareness Day designated colour to be blue
  - V. 4 July until 8 July 2022 to highlight Boom Foundation: Sarcoma Awareness month the designated colours to be yellow.
  - VI. 25 April 29 April 2022 to highlight Linking Generations Group – Global Intergenerational Week, designated colour to be pink.

### **PR074/22 Member Services**

None.

## **Matters for Information**

### **PR075/22 Minutes of Policy and Resources Committee held on Thursday 3 March 2022**

Members noted Minutes of Policy and Resources Committee held on 3 March 2022.

### **PR076/22 Digital Transformation Strategy: Update**

Members noted previously circulated report which provided an update on the progress towards the development of a Digital Transformation Strategy.

### **PR077/22 Ability to hold Remote/Hybrid Meetings - Update**

Members noted previously circulated report which provided update on legislation that was passed which enables the Council to continue to hold remote/hybrid meetings until 24 September 2022.

*Live broadcast ended at 7.10 pm*

## **Local Government (NI) Act 2014 – Confidential Business**

Proposed by Councillor Forde  
Seconded by Councillor S McAleer and

**Resolved** In accordance with Section 42, Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014 that Members of the public be asked to withdraw from the meeting whilst Member consider items PR078/22 to PR089/22.

### **Matters for Decision**

- PR078/22 Staffing Matters for Decision
- PR079/22 Members Allowances Update
- PR080/22 Postal VAT Claim – Update and Agreement re Discontinuance
- PR081/22 Treasury Management
- PR082/22 Procurement Policy Review
- PR083/22 Banking Services – Resolution and Update
- PR084/22 Property Update, Cookstown

### **Matters for Information**

- PR085/22 Confidential Minutes of Policy and Resources Committee held on Thursday 3 March 2022
- PR086/22 Staffing matters for Information
- PR087/22 Staffing Matters for Information – Planning Team
- PR088/22 Financial report for 11 months ended 28 February 2022
- PR089/22 Contracts and DAC

**PR090/22    Duration of Meeting**

The meeting commenced at 7 pm and concluded at 8.12 pm

Chair \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Annex A – Introductory Remarks from the Chairperson

Good evening and welcome to the Council's [Policy & Resources/Environment/Development] Committee in the Chamber, [Dungannon/Magherafelt] and virtually.

I specifically welcome the public watching us through the Live Broadcast. The Live Broadcast will run for the period of our Open Business but will end just before we move into Confidential Business. I let you know before this happens.

Just some housekeeping before we commence. Can I remind you:-

- If you have joined the meeting remotely please keep your audio on mute unless invited to speak and then turn it off when finished speaking
- Keep your video on at all times, unless you have bandwidth or internet connection issues, where you are advised to try turning your video off
- If you wish to speak please raise your hand in the meeting or on screen and keep raised until observed by an Officer or myself
- Should we need to take a vote this evening I will ask each member to confirm whether they are for or against the proposal or abstaining
- When invited to speak please introduce yourself by name to the meeting
- For any member attending remotely, if you declare an interest in an item, please turn off your video and keep your audio on mute for the duration of the item
- If referring to a specific report please reference the report, page or slide being referred to
- Lastly, I remind the public and press that taking photographs of proceedings or using any means to enable anyone not present to see or hear proceedings, or making a simultaneous oral report of the proceedings are not permitted

Thank you and we will now move to the first item on the agenda - apologies and then roll call of all other Members in attendance.

<b>Report on</b>	Annual Progress Returns: Department of Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs (DAERA) for 2021/2022
<b>Date of Meeting</b>	4th May 2022
<b>Reporting Officer</b>	Philip Moffett, Assistant Director: OD, Strategy and Performance
<b>Contact Officer</b>	Ann McAleer, Corporate Policy and Equality Officer

<b>Is this report restricted for confidential business?</b>	Yes	
If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	No	X

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report</b>
1.1	The purpose of this report is to set out Mid Ulster District Council's Annual Progress Report to the Department for Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs (DAERA) for the period 2021-22, under the Rural Needs Act NI (2016).
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Background</b>
2.1	<p>Mid Ulster District Council is bound by the Rural Needs Act NI (2016) to 'have due regard to rural needs when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• developing, adopting, implementing or revising policies, strategies and plans, and;</li> <li>• designing and delivering public services'</li> </ul>
2.2	Section 3 of the Rural Needs Act NI requires DAERA to publish an annual monitoring report containing the information sent to it by public authorities on how they have paid due regard to rural needs and information of the exercise by DAERA of its functions under the Act.
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
3.1	The Annual Progress Report for the reporting period 2021-22 should be submitted to DAERA by 30 <sup>th</sup> June 2022.
3.2	Mid Ulster District Council's Annual Progress Report (2021-2022) sets out to what extent the Council has demonstrated regard to rural needs within its decision processes. The progress report is attached as Appendix A to this report.

<b>4.0</b>	<b>Other Considerations</b>
<b>4.1</b>	<b>Financial, Human Resources &amp; Risk Implications</b>
	Financial: N/A
	Human: N/A
	Risk Management: N/A
<b>4.2</b>	<b>Screening &amp; Impact Assessments</b>
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: Equality screening is not required for this progress report.
	Rural Needs Implications: As detailed
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Recommendation(s)</b>
5.1	That committees reviews, considers and notes the Annual Progress Report (2021-22) which documents the implementation and activities surrounding its statutory requirements as detailed in the Rural Needs Act NI (2016).
<b>6.0</b>	<b>Documents Attached &amp; References</b>
6.1	Appendix A: Mid Ulster DC Annual Rural Needs Progress Report (2021-22)



## Appendix 2 - Template for Information to be Compiled

### Information to be compiled by Public Authorities under Section 3(1)(a) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.

(To be completed and included in public authorities' own annual reports and submitted to DAERA for inclusion in the Rural Needs Annual Monitoring Report).

Name of Public Authority:

Reporting Period: April 20  to March 20

The following information should be compiled in respect of each policy, strategy and plan which has been developed, adopted, implemented or revised and each public service which has been designed or delivered by the public authority during the reporting period.

<i>Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016<sup>1</sup>.</i>	<i>The rural policy area(s) which the activity relates to<sup>2</sup>.</i>	<i>Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service<sup>3</sup>.</i>
Mid Ulster Gift Card Programme	Rural Business	The Mid Ulster Gift Card Programme will impact on people in rural areas in a positive manner. The aim of Mid Ulster Gift Card Programme is to lock in spend, drive footfall and stimulate additional economic activity across the towns and villages of Mid Ulster. All commercial businesses located within Mid Ulster District are eligible to participate, with all public able to avail of the benefits of a Mid Ulster Gift Card from participating businesses
Dual Language & Nameplate Signage	N/A	No specific rural need was identified that would differ from that of an urban need in relation to this policy which is the outworking's of the legislative provisions currently in place

		to provide statutory guidance/requirements in relation to the implementation of the policy and does not differentiate between either Rural or Urban areas. This Legislation is the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (NI) Order 1995
Safeguarding Policy	Community Safety	The Policy has identified various type of abuse and self-harm including bullying, on-line bullying, physical and emotional abuse. Appendix A of the Policy identifies a range of support services and information, which can be accessed by children/young people and adults living in rural areas. A children's version of Child Safeguarding Policy will be developed in conjunction with relevant community partners.
DfC Coalisland Revitalisation Scheme	Rural Business	<p>The scheme will contribute to building strong, inclusive and sustainable rural communities by supporting the following:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sustain and support rural businesses through provision of better services in local Towns and making those services easier to access for the long term</li> <li>- Encourage retention and development of essential services</li> <li>- Encourage urban and rural business owners to invest in their businesses</li> </ul>
Payment of Subscriptions to Professional Bodies Policy	Internal Policy	The policy sets out how to reimburse employees for payment of subscriptions to professional or other relevant bodies which they are required to maintain in order to effectively discharge their duties and/or conditions of employment. The policy aims to ensure

		that employees are appropriately financially supported in an affordable and equitable manner.
Flexible Working Arrangements Policy	Internal Policy	The policy sets out options for flexible working as part of Council's wider commitment to equality of opportunity for all employees. Revisions by way of these addendums include opportunities for staff to avail of Carer's leave, Term time working & Flexible Retirement.
Menopause Support Policy	Internal Policy	The Council recognises that perimenopause and menopause are workplace issues. This policy sets out the guidelines for members of staff and managers on providing appropriate support to manage menopausal symptoms at work.

## NOTES

1. This information should normally be contained in section 1B of the RNIA Template completed in respect of the activity.
2. This information should normally be contained in section 2D of the RNIA Template completed in respect of the activity.
3. The information contained in sections 3D, 4A & 5B of the RNIA Template should be considered when completing this section.



<b>Report on</b>	Performance Improvement - Local Government Auditor's Audit and Assessment (Section 95) Report 2021-22
<b>Date of Meeting</b>	Wednesday 4 <sup>th</sup> May 2022
<b>Reporting Officer</b>	P Moffett, Assistant Director OD, Strategy & Performance
<b>Contact Officer</b>	L Jenkins, Performance & Quality Officer

<b>Is this report restricted for confidential business?</b>	Yes	
If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	No	X

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report</b>
1.1	To update the committee and members of the findings of the Local Government Auditor's Audit and Assessment Report 2021-22.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Background</b>
	<b>Local government Auditor's Improvement Audit and Assessment Report 2021-22</b>
2.1	Part 12 of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014 places a duty on Councils to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of their functions. This includes setting improvement objectives for each financial year and putting in place arrangements to achieve those objectives, as well as publishing annual progress reports.
2.2	<p>The Act places a statutory duty on the Local Government Auditor to:</p> <p>a) Report (the Improvement Audit) whether each Council has discharged its duties in relation to improvement planning, the publication of improvement information and the extent to which each Council has acted in accordance with the Department's Guidance (LG Circular 21/2016 - <i>Guidance for Local Government Performance Improvement 2016 onwards</i> – the Guidance). During the course of this work, the LG Auditor may make statutory recommendations</p> <p>b) Assess (the Improvement Assessment) whether a Council is likely to make the required arrangements to secure continuous improvement in that year. This is called the "improvement assessment". The Local Government Auditor also has the discretion to assess and report whether a Council is likely to comply with these arrangements in future years.</p>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
	<b>Audit and Assessment (Section 95) Report 2021 to 2022 and Certificate of Compliance</b>
3.1	NI Audit Office issued correspondence on 25 <sup>th</sup> February 2022, which included a letter to the Chief Executive (Appendix One), which clarified that the Local Government Auditor had now certified the improvement audit for Council with an unqualified opinion. The correspondence also highlighted, in terms of the audit assessment, that the LGA concluded that she was unable to assess whether Council is likely to comply with Part 12

	of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 (the Act) during 2021-22, due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Council services, similar to other Councils. No statutory recommendations have been made to the Department this year in respect of the Council nor is there a requirement for a special inspection.
3.2	Accompanying the letter was a copy of the Audit and Assessment Certificate of Compliance (Appendix Two) and the final Audit and Assessment Section 95 Report 2021-22 (Appendix Three). The Local Government Auditor had also forwarded the Council's letter and attachments to the Department of the Communities (DfC).
3.3	It is noted that due to the impact of COVID-19, legislation was amended so that Councils were not required to produce a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) for 2020-21, and thus there was no requirement to set self-imposed objectives for that year. As a result, Council did not have to perform a self-assessment of self-imposed objectives in their 2020-21 self-assessment report, nonetheless the report still required to note outturn performance on the statutory indicators and how the general duty to improve was taken forward during the year
	<b>Certificate of Compliance – Council's Performance Improvement Arrangements</b>
3.4	<b>Improvement Audit</b> - The LGA has certified the performance arrangements with unqualified opinion. She certifies an improvement audit and improvement assessment has been conducted. The LGA states that as a result, she believes that Mid Ulster District Council (the Council) has discharged its performance improvement and reporting duties, including its assessment of performance for 2020-2021 and its improvement plan for 2021-2022, and has acted in accordance with the Guidance.
3.5	<b>Improvement Assessment</b> - The LGA has assessed whether Mid Ulster District Council is likely to comply with its performance improvement responsibilities under Part 12 of the Act. This is called the "Improvement Assessment". In normal circumstances this work would have been undertaken at the time of the report being issued by November 2021. However, this was impacted in delays completing the previous period's report when legislative changes were required to clarify the performance improvement arrangements before work could be concluded. In light of the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on Council services, the LGA concluded that she is unable to reach an opinion on whether the Council was likely to have complied with its performance responsibilities for 2021-2022.
3.6	The LGA did not exercise her discretion to assess and report whether the Council is likely to comply with these arrangements in future years.
3.7	<b>Audit Findings</b> - During the audit and assessment the LGA identified no issues requiring a formal recommendation. The LGA made one proposal for improvement. Proposals for improvement represent good practice which should assist the Council in meeting its responsibilities for improvement.
3.8	<b>Audit &amp; Assessment (Section 95) Report 2021-22 – Proposal for Improvement</b> Following significant engagement with relevant council officers throughout December 2021 and January 2022, no formal recommendations were issued to the Council as a result of the audit. One proposal for improvement was introduced, as outlined under the thematic area of, <i>"Collection, use and publication of performance information"</i> .

Thematic Area	Proposal For Improvement (Assessment from Auditor)	Management Response
1. Collection, use and publication of performance information	<p>Appropriate validation procedures should be in place for all information reported.</p> <p>The Council continues to use Microsoft Excel for all performance improvement data recording, from identification to measurement and monitoring. This is however, a very labour intensive method of collating performance information, and is more susceptible to human error in terms of its robustness and accuracy.</p> <p>An electronic performance management system would be more efficient way of capturing the growing central repository of performance information. It would also provide a platform to demonstrate the alignment and interdependencies across the Business Planning and Performance Management Framework, create capacity for further analysis of the information and focus on key improvement areas across the organisation.</p> <p>Pending the implementation of any such system, data input to or extracted from excel (or other sources) should be checked for accuracy prior to publication.</p>	<p>Officers will research benchmark (good practice in other Councils) and introduce a validation procedure.</p> <p>Officers will undertake a business process improvement tool (BPI) to establish the "as is" process with view to determining /analysing/improvements/efficiencies for utilisation in moving to an electronic platform (business intelligence/data platform).</p> <p>Officers have commenced research into current data performance/business intelligence electronic platforms, which would capture Council's hierarchy of plans (Strategic and Operational Performance Management) and cross checks will be utilised for accuracy of data prior to publication</p>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Other Considerations</b>	
<b>4.1</b>	<b>Financial, Human Resources &amp; Risk Implications</b>	
	<b>Financial:</b> not applicable, arrangements being delivered within existing resource	
	<b>Human:</b> not applicable, arrangements currently being delivered within existing resource	
	<b>Risk Management:</b> Will assist in council's compliance with Part 12 of the Local Government (NI) Act 2014	

4.2	<b><u>Screening &amp; Impact Statements</u></b>
	<b>Equality &amp; Good Relations Implications:</b> Not applicable No specific implications neutral impact on S75 groups and neutral impact on promotion of good relations
	<b>Rural Needs Implications:</b> not applicable
5.0	<b>Recommendation(s)</b>
5.1	That the committee notes the findings of Audit and Assessment (Section 95) Report 2021-22 presented by the Northern Ireland Audit Office
6.0	<b>Documents Attached &amp; References</b>
	Appendix One: NIAO Correspondence dated 25 <sup>th</sup> February 2022 Appendix Two: Audit & Assessment Certificate of Compliance Appendix Three: Audit and Assessment (Section. 95) Report 2021-22





**Karen Beattie**  
**Audit Manager**

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Adrian McCreesh  
Chief Executive  
Mid Ulster District Council  
Ballyronan Road  
Magherafelt  
BT45 6EN

25 February 2022

Dear Adrian,

### **Mid Ulster District Council: - Section 95 of the Local Government Act 2014 Improvement Audit and Assessment**

The Local Government Auditor has now certified the improvement audit for the Council with a standard, unqualified opinion. In terms of the audit assessment, the LGA has concluded that she is unable to assess whether Council is likely to comply with Part 12 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 (the Act) during 2021-22 due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Council services. No statutory recommendations have been made to the Department this year in respect of the Council nor is there a requirement for a special inspection. I attach a copy of our final audit and assessment report.

The report sets out the findings and conclusions from our work, it includes the audit and assessment certificate as an Annex. I also attach a copy of the original certificate signed by the Local Government Auditor.

This letter and attachments have been copied to the Department for Communities as the legislation requires. I would like to thank you and your staff for the assistance and cooperation we received throughout the audit.

Yours sincerely,

**Karen Beattie**  
**Audit Manager**

## **Audit and assessment of Mid Ulster District Council's performance improvement arrangements**

### **Certificate of Compliance**

I certify that I have audited Mid Ulster District Council's (the Council) assessment of its performance for 2020-21 and its improvement plan for 2021-22 in accordance with section 93 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 (the Act) and the Code of Audit Practice for local government bodies.

I also certify that I have performed an improvement assessment for 2021-22 at the Council in accordance with Section 94 of the Act and the Code of Audit Practice.

This is a report to comply with the requirement of section 95(2) of the Act.

### **Respective responsibilities of the Council and the Local Government Auditor**

Under the Act, the Council has a general duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions and to set improvement objectives for each financial year. The Council is required to gather information to assess improvements in its services and to issue a report annually on its performance against indicators and standards which it has set itself or which have been set for it by Government departments.

The Act requires the Council to publish a self-assessment before 30 September in the financial year following that to which the information relates, or by any other such date as the Department for Communities (the Department) may specify by order. The Act also requires that the Council has regard to any guidance issued by the Department in publishing its assessment.

As the Council's auditor, I am required by the Act to determine and report each year on whether:

- The Council has discharged its duties in relation to improvement planning, published the required improvement information and the extent to which the Council has acted in accordance with the Department's guidance in relation to those duties; and
- The Council is likely to comply with the requirements of Part 12 of the Act.

### **Scope of the audit and assessment**

For the audit I am not required to form a view on the completeness or accuracy of information or whether the improvement plan published by the Council can be achieved. My audits of the Council's improvement plan and assessment of performance, therefore, comprised a review of the Council's publications to ascertain whether they included elements prescribed in legislation. I also assessed whether the arrangements for publishing the documents complied with the requirements of the legislation, and that the Council had regard to statutory guidance in preparing and publishing them.

For the improvement assessment I am required to form a view on whether the Council is likely to comply with the requirements of Part 12 of the Act, informed by:

- A forward looking assessment of the Council's likelihood to comply with its duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement; and
- A retrospective assessment of whether the Council has achieved its planned improvements to inform a view as to its track record of improvement.

My assessment of the Council's improvement responsibilities and arrangements, therefore, comprised a review of certain improvement arrangements within the Council, along with information gathered from my improvement audit.

The work I have carried out in order to report and make recommendations in accordance with sections 93 to 95 of the Act cannot solely be relied upon to identify all weaknesses or opportunities for improvement.

### **Audit opinion**

#### **Improvement planning and publication of improvement information**

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

#### **Improvement assessment**

In light of the impact of COVID-19 on Council services I have been unable to assess whether the Council has discharged its duties under Part 12 of the Act and has acted in accordance with the Department for Communities' guidance sufficiently during 2021-22.

I have not conducted an assessment to determine whether the Council is likely to comply with the requirements of Part 12 of the Act in subsequent years. I will keep the need for this under review as arrangements become more fully established.

#### **Other matters**

I have no recommendations to make under section 95(2) of the Local Government (Northern Ireland) Act 2014.

I am not minded to carry out a special inspection under section 95(2) of the Act.



COLETTE KANE  
Local Government Auditor  
Northern Ireland Audit Office  
1 Bradford Court  
Galwally  
BELFAST  
BT8 6RB

25 February 2022

## Mid Ulster District Council

### Audit and Assessment Report 2021-22

Report to the Council and the Department for Communities  
under Section 95 of the Local Government (Northern  
Ireland) Act 2014



25 February 2022

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<b>4. Annexes</b>	<b>8</b>

*We have prepared this report for sole use of the Mid Ulster District Council and the Department for Communities. You must not disclose it to any third party, quote or refer to it, without our written consent and we assume no responsibility to any other person.*

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## 1. Key Messages

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### Summary of the audit

Audit outcome	Status
Audit opinion	Unqualified opinion
Audit assessment	The LGA has concluded that she is unable to assess whether Council was likely to comply with Part 12 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 (the Act) during 2021-22 due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on normal services.
Statutory recommendations	The LGA made no statutory recommendations
Proposals for improvement	The LGA made one new proposal for improvement

This report summaries the work of the Local Government Auditor (LGA) on the 2021-22 performance improvement audit and assessment undertaken on Mid Ulster District Council. We would like to thank the Chief Executive and his staff, particularly the Performance Improvement Manager, for their assistance during this work.

We consider that we comply with the Financial Reporting Council (FRC) ethical standards and that, in our professional judgment, we are independent and our objectivity is not compromised.

### Audit Opinion

The LGA has certified the performance arrangements with unqualified audit opinion, without modification. She certifies an improvement audit and improvement assessment has been conducted. The LGA also states that, as a result, she believes that the Mid Ulster District Council (the Council) has discharged its performance improvement and reporting duties, including its assessment of performance for 2020-21 and its 2021-22 improvement plan, and has acted in accordance with the Guidance.

## Audit Assessment

The LGA has assessed whether the Mid Ulster District Council (the Council) is likely to comply with its performance improvement responsibilities under Part 12 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 (the Act). This is called the 'improvement assessment'.

In normal circumstances this work would have been undertaken in time for this report to be issued by 30 November 2021. However, this was impacted in delays in completing the previous period's report when legislative changes were required to clarify the performance improvement arrangements before work could be concluded.

In light of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on council services, the LGA has concluded that she is unable to reach an opinion on whether the Council was likely to have complied with its performance improvement responsibilities for 2021-22.

The LGA did not exercise her discretion to assess and report whether the council is likely to comply with these arrangements in future years.

## Audit Findings

During the audit and assessment we identified no issues requiring a formal recommendation under the Act. We made one proposal for improvement (see Section 3). These represent good practice which should assist the Council in meeting its responsibilities for performance improvement. Detailed observations on thematic areas are provided in Annex B.

## Status of the Audit

The LGA's audit and assessment work on the Council's performance improvement arrangements is now concluded. By March 2022 she will publish an Annual Improvement Report on the Council on the NIAO website, making it publicly available. This will summarise the key outcomes in this report.

The LGA did not undertake any Special Inspections under the Act in the current year.

## Management of information and personal data

During the course of our audit we have access to personal data to support our audit testing. We have established processes to hold this data securely within encrypted files and to destroy it where relevant at the conclusion of our audit. We can confirm that we have discharged those responsibilities communicated to you in accordance with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018.

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## 2. Audit Scope

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Part 12 of the Act provides all councils with a general duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of their functions. It sets out:

- a number of council responsibilities under a performance framework; and
- key responsibilities for the LGA.

The Department for Communities (the Department) has published '*Guidance for Local Government Performance Improvement 2016*' (the Guidance) which the Act requires councils and the LGA to follow. Further guidance to clarify the requirements of the general duty to improve was issued by the Department during 2019.

The improvement audit and assessment work is planned and conducted in accordance with the LGA's Code of Audit Practice for Local Government Bodies in Northern Ireland and the Statement of Responsibilities.

### *The improvement audit*

Each year the LGA has to report whether each council has discharged its duties in relation to improvement planning, the publication of improvement information and the extent to which each council has acted in accordance with the Department's Guidance. The procedures conducted in undertaking this work are referred to as an "improvement audit". During the course of this work the LGA may make statutory recommendations under section 95 of the Act.

Due to the impact of COVID-19, legislation was amended so that councils were not required to produce a Performance Improvement Plan for 2020-21, and thus there was no requirement to set self-imposed objectives for that year. As a result of this councils did not have to perform a self-assessment of self-imposed objectives in their 2020-21 self-assessment report, nonetheless the report was still required to note outturn performance on the statutory indicators and how the general duty to improve was taken forward during the year.

### *The improvement assessment*

The LGA also has to assess annually whether a council is likely to comply with the requirements of Part 12 of the Act, including consideration of the arrangements to secure continuous improvement in that year. This is called the 'improvement assessment'. She also has the discretion to assess and report whether a council is likely to comply with these arrangements in future years.

### *The annual improvement report on the Council*

The Act requires the LGA to summarise all of her work (in relation to her responsibilities under the Act) at the Council, in an 'annual improvement report'. This will be published on the NIAO website by March 2022, making it publicly available.

### *Special inspections*

The LGA may also, in some circumstances, carry out special inspections which will be reported to the Council and the Department, and which she may publish.



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### 3. Audit Findings

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This section outlines key observations in the form of proposals for improvement, arising from following thematic areas of the Council's audit and assessment:

- General duty to improve;
- Governance arrangements;
- Improvement objectives;
- Consultation;
- Improvement plan;
- Arrangements to improve;
- Collection, use and publication of performance information; and
- Demonstrating a track record of improvement.

These are not formal recommendations, which are more significant matters which require action to be taken by the Council in order to comply with the Act or Guidance. Proposals for improvement include matters which, if accepted, will assist the Council in meeting its performance improvement responsibilities. The LGA may follow up how key proposals have been addressed in subsequent years. We recommend however that the Council's Audit Committee track progress on all proposals for improvement.

Our procedures were limited to those considered necessary for the effective performance of the audit and assessment. Therefore, the LGA's observations should not be regarded as a comprehensive statement of all weaknesses which exist, or all improvements which could be made.

Detailed observations for the thematic areas can be found at Annex B.

Thematic area	Issue	Proposal for improvement
Collection, use and publication of performance information	The detailed observations section of this report highlights an example of incorrect performance improvement information being published.	<p>Appropriate validation procedures should be put in place for all information reported.</p> <p>The Council continues to use Microsoft Excel for all performance improvement data recording, from identification to measurement and monitoring. This is however, a very labour-intensive method of collating performance information, and is more susceptible to human error in terms of its robustness and accuracy.</p> <p>An electronic performance management system would be a more efficient way of capturing the growing central repository of</p>

Thematic area	Issue	Proposal for improvement
		<p>performance information. It would also provide a platform to demonstrate the alignment and interdependencies across the Business Planning and Performance Management Framework, create capacity for further analysis of the information and focus on key improvement areas across the organisation.</p> <p>Pending the implementation of any such system, data input to or extracted from excel (or other sources) should be checked for accuracy prior to publication.</p>

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## *4. Annexes*

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## Annex A – Audit and Assessment Certificate

### **Audit and assessment of Mid Ulster District Council's performance improvement arrangements**

#### **Certificate of Compliance**

I certify that I have audited Mid Ulster District Council's (the Council) assessment of its performance for 2020-21 and its improvement plan for 2021-22 in accordance with section 93 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 (the Act) and the Code of Audit Practice for local government bodies.

I also certify that I have performed an improvement assessment for 2021-22 at the Council in accordance with Section 94 of the Act and the Code of Audit Practice.

This is a report to comply with the requirement of section 95(2) of the Act.

#### **Respective responsibilities of the Council and the Local Government Auditor**

Under the Act, the Council has a general duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions and to set improvement objectives for each financial year. The Council is required to gather information to assess improvements in its services and to issue a report annually on its performance against indicators and standards which it has set itself or which have been set for it by Government departments.

The Act requires the Council to publish a self-assessment before 30 September in the financial year following that to which the information relates, or by any other such date as the Department for Communities (the Department) may specify by order. The Act also requires that the Council has regard to any guidance issued by the Department in publishing its assessment.

As the Council's auditor, I am required by the Act to determine and report each year on whether:

- The Council has discharged its duties in relation to improvement planning, published the required improvement information and the extent to which the Council has acted in accordance with the Department's guidance in relation to those duties; and
- The Council is likely to comply with the requirements of Part 12 of the Act.

#### **Scope of the audit and assessment**

For the audit I am not required to form a view on the completeness or accuracy of information or whether the improvement plan published by the Council can be achieved. My audits of the Council's improvement plan and assessment of performance, therefore, comprised a review of the Council's publications to ascertain whether they included elements prescribed in legislation. I also assessed whether the arrangements for publishing the documents complied with the requirements of the legislation, and that the Council had regard to statutory guidance in preparing and publishing them.

For the improvement assessment I am required to form a view on whether the Council is likely to comply with the requirements of Part 12 of the Act, informed by:

- A forward looking assessment of the Council's likelihood to comply with its duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement; and

- A retrospective assessment of whether the Council has achieved its planned improvements to inform a view as to its track record of improvement.

My assessment of the Council's improvement responsibilities and arrangements, therefore, comprised a review of certain improvement arrangements within the Council, along with information gathered from my improvement audit.

The work I have carried out in order to report and make recommendations in accordance with sections 93 to 95 of the Act cannot solely be relied upon to identify all weaknesses or opportunities for improvement.

### **Audit opinion**

#### **Improvement planning and publication of improvement information**

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

#### **Improvement assessment**

In light of the impact of COVID-19 on Council services I have been unable to assess whether the Council has discharged its duties under Part 12 of the Act and has acted in accordance with the Department for Communities' guidance sufficiently during 2021-22.

I have not conducted an assessment to determine whether the Council is likely to comply with the requirements of Part 12 of the Act in subsequent years. I will keep the need for this under review as arrangements become more fully established.

### **Other matters**

I have no recommendations to make under section 95(2) of the Local Government (Northern Ireland) Act 2014.

I am not minded to carry out a special inspection under section 95(2) of the Act.

COLETTE KANE  
Local Government Auditor  
Northern Ireland Audit Office  
1 Bradford Court  
Galwally  
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BT8 6RB

25 February 2022

## Annex B – Detailed observations

Thematic area	Observations
General duty to improve	<p>The Council's arrangements to secure continuous improvement (including community planning, corporate planning, Service Plans and its Performance Improvement Framework and processes within) incorporate the seven aspects of improvement into its assessments of functions and services. The Council held workshops with Senior Management and Heads of Service to identify current and future issues for Mid Ulster Citizens that the Council should focus on. The Council engaged with the public through its community planning consultation process to strengthen its understanding of community needs and what its citizens and stakeholders want. Key improvement areas designated by the Council within its Performance Improvement Plan include Infrastructure and Economic Growth which are aligned to its Community Plan outcomes.</p> <p>The Council has a Corporate Management and Improvement Policy, last reviewed in December 2019, which aims to explain the framework to managers, employees, members, partners and the public to demonstrate the Council's commitment to continuous improvement. The Council had also developed "A Guide to Developing Engaging and Performing in Mid Ulster District Council – Managing Performance Toolkit (DEP)." This is based around Deming's PDCA cycle and is a continuous quality improvement model. This aids the implementation of the Council's 8 step approach to managing performance and is in line with the guidance definition of 'improvement framework'.</p> <p>Quarterly performance reports are prepared for the Chief Executive, Senior Management Team, and Policy and Resources Committee.</p>
Governance arrangements	<p>The Council's governance arrangements support effective decision making and oversight, relating to its responsibility for continuous improvement in its functions and it continues to develop these.</p> <p>Responsibility for delivering performance improvement objectives rests with established project teams under the direction of a Senior Responsible Officer appointed by the Chief Executive's Directorate. The team looks after the corporate planning and service delivery and improvement planning processes alongside performance management and improvement.</p>

Thematic area	Observations
	<p>The Council has assigned responsibility for scrutiny of its performance improvement framework to the Policy and Resources Committee. The Audit Committee oversight role has developed to include quarterly monitoring of the activity of the Policy and Resources Committee, specifically in respect of the scrutiny of the Council's Performance Improvement Plans and Reports, and this is a standing item on the agenda for reporting. The Policy and Resources Committee Terms of Reference have been updated to reflect performance improvement responsibilities.</p> <p>A proposal for improvement raised in the 2016-17 performance improvement audit and assessment suggested that the Council consider using the internal audit function to provide assurance on the integrity and operation of the Council's performance framework and identify areas for improvement. The Council should also consider using internal audit to obtain independent validation of data collected for published self-imposed KPIs and standards. This was scheduled by Internal Audit for 2020-21, however this was not undertaken as a result of the pressures owing to COVID-19. This remains a point of good practice.</p>
Improvement objectives	<p>For 2021-22 performance improvement year, a new set of objectives was created. The Council has clearly detailed the rationale for selecting each of the four new objectives within the Performance Improvement Plan. To optimise clarity and transparency, it would be helpful going forward for the Council to provide a brief explanation to communicate to citizens why previous objectives have not been rolled forward.</p> <p>The improvement objectives set all meet at least one of the seven criteria required by legislation and relate to the functions and services identified for improvement set out in the 10-year Community Plan and the Council's Corporate Plan (2020-2024) themes and outcomes. The objectives were selected on the basis of a range of factors, including an analysis of available statutory, corporate and service performance measures, information from performance reports, as well as engagement with elected Members, the Senior Management Team, Heads of Service and consultation with citizens.</p> <p>For each improvement objective, the Council sets out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why have we chosen this Improvement Objective?</li> <li>• Actions – What are we going to do? (Including Activities and Outcomes)</li> <li>• How will we know?</li> <li>• Visible improvements residents, businesses or visitors expect to see</li> <li>• Partnerships – Who do we need to work with?</li> <li>• Link to District Community Plan Themes and Outcomes</li> </ul>

Thematic area	Observations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Link to Corporate Plan Theme</li> <li>• Performance Improvement Aspects which this improvement objective aims to deliver against</li> </ul> <p>The outcomes of each objective are clearly documented within the performance improvement plan and each of the objectives are robust, deliverable, and demonstrable. Specific measurements and targets have been included for each activity which will allow the Council to determine if they have been achieved and therefore contribute to the overall performance of the objective.</p>
Consultation	<p>An internal process involving Heads of Service and Senior Management identified emerging objectives and improvement projects for 2021-22 which would contribute to achieving the Council's objectives. The proposed objectives were approved by the Policy &amp; Resources Committee prior to consultation. The Council carried out consultation on its improvement objectives with ratepayers, local business representatives, community, voluntary groups, and staff.</p> <p>The Council undertook a consultation exercise from 11 March 2021 until 22 April 2021 (6 weeks) on the Council's draft corporate improvement objectives. In order to help raise the profile and transparency of the performance improvement framework, a number of communication channels were used including advertising in local newspapers, on the Council website, through multiple social media platforms and internal staff meetings. The Council received 55 responses. The questions within the consultation survey directly related to each improvement objective.</p> <p>The Consultation process was conducted in line with the Council's consultation policy.</p>
Improvement plan	<p>The Council published its Performance Improvement Plan in July 2021 covering 2021-22 and 2022-23. It is available in electronic format on the Council's website and other formats upon request. Going forward, to enhance citizen engagement, the Council may wish to consider posting the finalised performance improvement plan, or links to it, on social media or other communication platforms.</p> <p>The Council has published both the Corporate Performance Improvement Plan 2021-22 and the Annual Assessment 2020-21 in an unprotected word format which can be easily amended by a user. We appreciate that reports have been published in a Word Document format for accessibility purposes, however the Council should consider how to ensure, going forward, that reports are published in an accessible format whilst still ensuring that the content is protected and restricted for editing.</p>



Thematic area	Observations															
	<p>The improvement objectives outlined in the Plan are based around themes set out in the Council’s Corporate Plan 2021-22 and the 10-year District Community Plan. It identifies a number of areas which the Council will focus on in the two years ahead, with the aim of delivering improvements to benefit residents and service users.</p> <p>A summary of the Council’s consultation process, together with information on how citizens and stakeholders may propose new objectives during the year are included, in addition to the governance arrangements in place for the Performance Improvement Plan. The results from the consultation however have been inaccurately reported in the Council’s Performance Improvement Plan for 2021-22. Along with other performance data, it is important that consultation results are validated prior to publication.</p> <table><tr><th>Improvement Objective</th><th>Results reported in PIP – Agreement Rate</th><th>Actual Results – Agreement Rate</th></tr><tr><td>IO 1</td><td>98%</td><td>91%</td></tr><tr><td>IO 2</td><td>98%</td><td>82%</td></tr><tr><td>IO 3</td><td>94%</td><td>94%</td></tr><tr><td>IO 4</td><td>94%</td><td>89%</td></tr></table> <p>The Plan clearly sets out the basis on which each objective was selected, together with related projects and key actions to contribute to the achievement of the higher-level objectives, the visible improvements residents, businesses, or visitors can expect, and how success will be measured. It also reflects how citizens and other stakeholders within the Council will be better off as a direct result of the improvement process.</p> <p>The planned benefits promote the transparency and meaningfulness of the Council’s commitment to continuously improve its functions.</p> <p>The Plan includes a separate section on the statutory imposed performance indicators and standards and provides sufficient information on its arrangements to exercise its functions so that any applicable statutory performance standards are met.</p>	Improvement Objective	Results reported in PIP – Agreement Rate	Actual Results – Agreement Rate	IO 1	98%	91%	IO 2	98%	82%	IO 3	94%	94%	IO 4	94%	89%
Improvement Objective	Results reported in PIP – Agreement Rate	Actual Results – Agreement Rate														
IO 1	98%	91%														
IO 2	98%	82%														
IO 3	94%	94%														
IO 4	94%	89%														
Arrangements to improve	The Council is required to establish arrangements to deliver on its improvement objectives, statutory indicators and its general duty to improve each year.															

Thematic area	Observations
	<p>The projects underlying improvement objectives are supported by delivery plans and budgets for use by operational teams. These are being project managed and have lines of accountability, including risk management, to senior management and Members.</p> <p>In addition, Members and Officers at full council and committee meetings with a strategy / policy and oversight focus receive regular updated from senior management on how these established arrangements to improve are progressing.</p>
Collection, use and publication of performance information	<p>In September 2021, the Council published the 'Annual Self-Assessment Report 2020-21' which includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• its performance in discharging the general duty to secure continuous improvement in 2020-21;</li> <li>• results of its 2020-21 statutory performance standards compared with the same standards in the prior year; and</li> <li>• results of its 2020-21 self-imposed performance standards and indicators relating to its General Duty to Improve, and where applicable comparisons with the same standards in the prior year.</li> </ul> <p>As a result of the pandemic the Department for Communities confirmed in June 2020 that it did not expect Councils to publish a performance plan for the 2020-21 financial year. There was no requirement of an assessment of performance against improvement objectives in the Council's Annual Self-Assessment Report for 2020-21.</p> <p>The report gives an overview and self-assessment of the performance of the Council during the previous financial year in accordance with its legislative requirements. The Council have also included a section which summarises the main impact of COVID-19 on each of the Councils services &amp; facilities.</p> <p>The key purpose of the report is to show citizens and other stakeholders how the Council is discharging its duty under legislation to secure continuous improvement. It enables the Council to communicate progress against its improvement objectives and to highlight what visible improvements it has made to its functions and services.</p> <p>The Council have recognised in the Annual Self-Assessment the impact of the pandemic on many services means that the performance of statutory indicators in 2020-21 are not as comparable to previous years, however analysis over time has been added where possible. In future years, year-on-year trend analysis should continue. Detailed narrative has been included for those indicators impacted by COVID-19.</p>

Thematic area	Observations
	<p>The report includes a comparison of its performance statutory indicators against the other ten councils. The issue of benchmarking with other councils is part of the work plan for the Performance Improvement Working Group and it is expected that progress on this issue will continue to be made to allow a broader range of functions to be compared. However, we note that delays to this process were faced as a result of COVID-19.</p> <p>The Council achieved four out of seven statutory performance standards. For each statutory indicator 'not achieved' the Council has included an action plan. The action plan for statutory indicator P2 (Average processing time for Local planning applications from date valid to decision or withdraw within an average of 15 weeks) is not specific in how this will be improved going forward ("Moving forward it is proposed to monitor performance via Team leads and Head of Service"). Action plans need to be specific and sufficiently detailed if they are to assist the Council in rectifying performance moving forward.</p> <p>The Council uses Microsoft Excel Templates to track performance of statutory and self-imposed indicators on a quarterly basis. This, however, is a very labour intensive method of collecting performance information, and is susceptible to human error in terms of the robustness and accuracy of content. There have been examples identified in the 2020-21 Annual Self-Assessment where incorrect information has been published. For example, the quarterly results for statutory indicator P1 (Time to process major planning applications from date valid to decision or withdrawn) have been incorrectly reported for Q2 and Q3 as 74.2 weeks and 86.4 weeks respectively. The data validated by the Department of Infrastructure reported 34.2 weeks for Q2 and 74.1 weeks for Q3.</p> <p>As noted in the proposals for improvement, an electronic performance management system would be a more efficient way of capturing the growing central repository of performance information.</p> <p>The report also includes a section on the Council's achievement of its self-imposed performance measures based on the corporate plan priorities and commitments during the year.</p>
Demonstrating a track record of improvement	<p>For each of the statutory indicators, the Council have reported five years of results which have been presented in a combination of line graphs and bar charts to effectively communicate the improvements over time. The Council has also presented other councils' results for the comparison against the current year. An analysis paragraph has been included for each indicator and the Council has included narrative where indicators have been impacted by COVID-19.</p>

Thematic area	Observations
	<p>The majority of statutory indicators have seen a slight decline in performance from 2019-20 however the Council continued to meet four out of seven targets. Indicator ED 1 (The number of jobs promoted through business start-up) was significantly impacted by the pandemic and this has been detailed in the analysis.</p> <p>Of the self-imposed indicators and standards, two have seen improvement from the previous year and one remained in line with the prior year which is positive taking into consideration the impact of the pandemic.</p> <p>The Council has established four new improvement objectives for 2021-22 and 2022-23 which will assist the Council in demonstrating a record of improvement across the two years and future years.</p> <p>Although there was some evidence of a track record of improvement, in light of the impact of COVID-19 on Council services we have been unable to place reliance on this trend information, in forming an assessment of whether the Council has discharged its duties under Part 12 of the Act and has acted in accordance with the Department for Communities' guidance sufficiently during 2021-22.</p>