

Appendix One - Proposed - Corporate Performance Improvement Objectives: 2023-24 and 2024-25

Corporate Improvement Objective	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.	
Senior Responsible Officer:	Community Plan Theme & Outcome	Project (Action)
Mark Mc Adoo: Assistant Director of Environmental Services.	Theme 2: Infrastructure Outcome: We increasingly value our environment and enhance it for our children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a rolling programme of projects and actions to work towards and contribute to a more sustainable Council and District.

Why we are doing it?

On a local level, Northern Ireland has passed its first Climate Bill, after it was voted through at the Stormont Assembly on 9th March 2022. The Bill commits Northern Ireland to a net zero greenhouse gas emissions target by 2050. The bill establishes a legal framework including five year plans for emission cuts. The Bill would also create the role of a Climate Commissioner to oversee progress against targets¹.

On a global scale, climate change has been recognised internationally as the most important environmental challenge that we currently face. It is a large scale, long-term shift in the Earth's weather patterns and average temperatures. The IPCC's 2021 Climate Change Report regarding the physical science basis, states that, "Climate change is already affecting every inhabited region across the globe with human influence contributing to many observed changes in weather and climate extremes"². Scientific consensus recognises human activity³ as a major cause of recent unprecedented warming and climate projections show that past, current and future gas emissions will influence the climate for decades. The intergovernmental panel on climate change (IPCC) predicts increases in extreme weather events over the twenty first century and attributes this to a result of greenhouse emissions and rising surface temperatures.

The latest U.K Climate Change projections (UKC P18)⁴ predict that Northern Ireland will experience warmer, wetter winters and hotter drier summers by the 2050's, with extreme weather events becoming more frequent⁵. We recognise the key role and contribution that the Council has in supporting and promoting local actions and local people, businesses and partners in the move to a low carbon future.

Taking action to protect the environment for future generations is a priority for Mid Ulster and is recognised in the Districts Community Plan and Corporate Plan. We care about the environment and understand our legal duty to protect it. We seek to minimize the environmental impacts of our own Council activities and work with other partners and stakeholders to protect and enhance our local environment. Subject to procurement regulations, we can also choose to buy local produce which not only supports our local economy, it also reduces carbon emissions from freight transport and travel. Climate change is a collective issue and we can all make changes to our lifestyles to reduce the impact on the environment.

1. <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nia/2022/31/contents/enacted>

2. <https://climate.nasa.gov/scientific-consensus/>

3. <https://www.worldclimatesummit.org/>

4. <https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/research/approach/collaboration/ukcp/download-data>

5. <https://www.theccc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/UK-CCRA-2017-Northern-Ireland-National-Summary.pdf>

6. <https://public.wmo.int/en/media/news/cop27-outcomes-emphasize-early-warnings-observations>

Corporate Improvement Objective	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.	
Senior Responsible Officer:	Community Plan Theme & Outcome	Project (Action)
Claire Mc Nally: Assistant Director of Finance, Legal, Governance & Transformation.	Theme 1: Economic Growth Outcome: We prosper in a stronger and more competitive economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of framework/roadmap to optimise how the Council uses digital design/technology to work efficiently, collaborate, make informed decisions, adapt and innovate our service provision.

Why we are doing it?

‘Tech’ change had accelerated during the pandemic, the rate of digital transformation has increased exponentially in part due to the speed of adapting to unexpected challenges. Organisations, their customers and stakeholders expect digital experiences to be more immersive, inclusive, secure, and simple to use than ever before. Technology change has always been about people, and in 2024, that will be truer than ever in the era of hybrid work. The Council is aware that technology will be about the new ways in which we work, connect, create, and support one another—and how technology enables this. There is now an enhanced need to transform how organisations engage with customers through digital platforms. This increasing use of digital channels is here to stay. Citizens now have higher expectations of online council services and want a digital customer experience similar to that provided by retailers, banks and utility providers.

We want to harness the potential of digital design, data and technology to work efficiently, transform the relationship between residents and the Council, and make Mid Ulster a leading destination for sustainable growth, opportunity and quality of life. To embrace such opportunities we are developing a roadmap to define how our future use of technology and human resources will be optimised to enable the efficient delivery of our business and community priorities to the businesses and citizens of Mid Ulster.

Technology is only an enabler, transformation involves changing how we work, how we organise ourselves and how we serve our citizens. We will have real opportunities to radically rethink, and redesign our services, as we are move towards being a more agile and flexible organisation, with staff able to work from any location as we make more efficient use of physical space and mobile technology. We can and will learn lessons from innovative digital practice utilised as a response to the Pandemic. More of our high volume, low contacts that we deal with, should be completed at our customer’s convenience, enabling Council staff to focus on more complex and sensitive enquiries that benefit from the human touch. All of this can help us manage the rising cost and demand pressures the Council is facing.

Whist we want everyone to become digital citizens, we recognise that not all residents have the means or skills to take up digital. The council aims to grow and develop its digital inclusion work to provide skills and confidence in this area for staff, and our customers will always be able to speak to a person when they need to, and the person they speak to will be able to provide improved customer service. We will not leave anyone behind, however, we must continue to maximise technology to drive better services and lower delivery costs. As a Council, we already offer online access in a number of areas; however we need to push further, faster with our digital approaches, data and technology, to ensure the district thrives through the fourth industrial revolution. The Council in order to make the right choices post-pandemic will need to think differently and crucially put citizens, data, insight, and technology at the heart of change.

Corporate Improvement Objective	3) To create cleaner neighbourhoods, where everyone takes responsibility for their waste and the environment.	
Senior Responsible Officer:	Community Plan Theme & Outcome	Project (Action)
Kieran Gordon: Assistant Director of Health, Leisure & Wellbeing.	Theme 2: Infrastructure Outcome: We increasingly value our environment and enhance it for our children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To develop and deliver programmes/activities in conjunction with our partners & communities to ensure clean neighbourhoods.

Why we are doing it?

The World Health Organisation, (WHO), outlines, the various ways the natural environment can positively affect human health and well-being, as natural areas offer opportunities for physical activity, social contacts and stress reduction ¹. We all use public spaces every time we leave home. These include the footpaths and streets we walk or drive along each day, the parks our children play in and the outdoor areas we go to exercise or relax in. Many of our daily decisions and activities are influenced by our perceptions of the quality and cleanliness of the public areas we encounter. The importance of clean, green and blue (our rivers, canals, loughs etc.) spaces, parks, cannot be underestimated. Many benefits derive from a pleasant environment. Post pandemic we now realise how important it is for us to have easy access to open space for recreation and exercise. The importance of safe, accessible and well-connected green and blue spaces for improving quality of life has never been more pertinent, and for those without gardens the value of these spaces is amplified.

Good quality parks and attractive open space contribute economic benefits to towns and villages. As Mid Ulster competes with others to attract growth, tourism and inward investment a clean, green and pleasant environment plays an important role in marketing the District as a place to live in, move to and visit. Businesses are drawn to places with good quality environment as this in turn attracts customers, employees and services into the local area. In addition well maintained towns and villages has a positive impact on commercial and domestic property values.

Regionally and locally increases in obesity, are linked to more sedentary lifestyles including lower levels of outdoor activity. Patterns of exercise in adults are set early in life, so obesity and inactivity in childhood can led to poor health in later years. Good quality public open space is required to encourage healthier lifestyles by providing opportunities for walking, cycling and other outdoor pursuits, as well as being beneficial to mental well-being. Clean and well maintained play areas, parks and open space provide important beneficial opportunities for children to learn and develop (their social and emotional development) and stay healthy. Apart from access, the quality of green space is crucial too. Quality of facilities – including toilets and cafes; regular maintenance; organised activities can help ensure a green space supports the wellbeing of its citizens equally

Clean neighbourhoods engender social pride, add vibrancy, and reduce crime and anti-social behaviour, all of which are essential to the development of strong prosperous neighbourhoods. Anti-social behaviour can be seen through dog fouling, littering, abandoning vehicles, graffiti, and fly tipping etc. We are very much aware that many of our clean and green services are demand led, whilst much of this demand is inevitable, it is also clear some of it is avoidable. We want to be clear about our service promises, standards, and the response times we aim to achieve to ensure our communities understand what levels of service they can expect. On its own the Council cannot deliver a cleaner and greener environment for residents. We want to work collaboratively, with residents, communities, visitors and businesses and through active citizenship we hope to see reduced demands on our services and more residents taking greater pride in and ownership of their local environment. This is more necessary then ever as overall public sector expenditure reduces at an unprecedented rate, combined with the economic fallout from the pandemic and the current inflation in the economy.

1. <https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/green-spaces-invaluable-resources-deliveringsustainable-urban-health>

Corporate Improvement Objective	4. We will contribute to the ongoing regeneration of our district by delivering a capital investment programme, enhancing facilities and opportunities for local people	
Senior Responsible Officer:	Community Plan Theme & Outcome	Project (Action)
Raymond Lowry – Head of Technical Services	Theme 4: Economic Growth Outcome: We prosper in a stronger and more competitive economy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development and delivery of a place shaping capital economic regeneration programme across the District.
<p>Why we are doing it?</p> <p>The additional challenges facing Mid Ulster’s most vulnerable communities due to the longer term impacts, arising from the Pandemic and the current economic instability caused by inflation, increased interest rates, means there has never been a more important time to strengthen the economic, social, and physical wellbeing of our places, lasting effects will be felt for many years to come. We must look to a period of recovery post pandemic and to the economic recovery out of inflation. The Council’s capital programme of local projects will maintain our ongoing support for vibrant, accessible village/ town centres, open spaces and communities.</p> <p>Regeneration is a long-term process and is delivered through a wide range of projects, programmes, partnerships, infrastructure initiatives. Since the late 1990s, policymakers have recognised the wider social factors that affect the success of regeneration schemes, but this is even more vital in the current economic climate. Infrastructure is a valuable and efficient economic stimulus. Every £1 of investment in infrastructure generates a potential further £2.70¹ due to economic multiplier effects. Making the most of existing social capital and providing opportunities for local people to be involved in regeneration is a vital part of making the best use of limited resources.</p> <p>As a Council we support locally developed place based regeneration projects, we continue to invest in Mid Ulster, as well as providing essential services paid by your rates. Our Capital investment programme is our commitment to addressing the economic downturn and making the District a better place to live, work and invest. The programme includes major schemes to boost the economy, create jobs and improve the quality of life for our citizens.</p> <p>Quality of place matters in economic, social, cultural and emotional terms. A sense of place helps establish strong social infrastructure which supports people to improve their prospects and maximize their potential. We are taking a “Whole District” approach creating places that are attractive, well-designed and well managed. Our approach focuses on tailored solutions for settlements within the District and also business locations. We recognise our major assets as those that have the potential to deliver the greatest impact. Building on and investing in these assets alongside complementary interventions will release the District’s potential for growth and connect areas of growth with deprived places in need of generation. By following a planned phased approach across the District we will be able to deliver greater impact for each locality, using the resources available to best effect.</p> <p>¹Further detail can be found here: https://www.ice.org.uk/getattachment/news-and-insight/policy/infrastructure-as-a-stimulus/post-crisis-infrastructure-investment-insight-paper-covid-19.pdf.aspx#_ga=2.179966759.2015985077.1591167730-1129742483.1567513176</p>		