



**MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE MEETING OF THE OPERATIONS
COMMITTEE HELD AT ANTRIM CIVIC CENTRE ON
MONDAY 6 JANUARY 2025 AT 6.30 PM**

- In the Chair** : Councillor V McWilliam
- Committee Members
(In person)** : Aldermen – L Clarke, J McGrath and J Smyth
Councillors – J Burbank, R Foster, J Gilmour, AM Logue,
H Magill, A McAuley, E McLaughlin and M Ní Chonghaile
- Committee Members
(Remote)** : Alderman P Bradley
Councillor M Stewart
- Non Committee
Members
(In person)** : Councillors - B Webb and N Kelly
- Non Committee
Members
(Remote)** : Alderman M Cosgrove
Councillors - M Brady, M Cooper, P Dunlop, M Goodman,
R Lynch and L O'Hagan
- Officers Present** : Chief Executive – R Baker
Director of Parks & Leisure Operations - M McDowell
Director of Sustainability – M Lavery
Deputy Director of Finance – J Balmer
Head of Parks Operations - P Mawhinney
Head of Leisure Operations – D O'Hagan
Head of Environmental Health and Wellbeing - C Kelly
Head of Waste Operations - D Purdy
ICT Systems Support Officer – C Bell
Member Services Officer – L Irwin
Member Services Manager – AM Duffy

CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

The Chairperson welcomed everyone to the January Operations Committee meeting and reminded all present of the audio recording procedures.

1 APOLOGIES

None

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Item 4.10 – Alderman Clarke

3 PRESENTATION

3.1 FI/FIN/11 ESTIMATES UPDATE PRESENTATION

1. Purpose

A presentation was provided by the Deputy Director of Finance on the updates of the 2025/26 Estimates for the Operations Committee and Members' queries were addressed.

In response to Members' queries, it was agreed that the Deputy Director of Finance would provide Members with further detail in advance of the Rates Setting Workshop on Thursday 9 January 2025.

Proposed by Alderman Smyth
Seconded by Councillor Gilmour and agreed that

the presentation be noted.

ACTION BY: John Balmer, Deputy Director of Finance

4 ITEMS FOR DECISION

4.1 WM/WM/033 REQUEST FOR ECO-SCHOOLS SUPPORT 2025/26

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to seek approval for funding to continue the Eco-Schools Programme for the 2025/2026 academic year.

2. Background

Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful co-ordinated the Eco-Schools Programme which aimed to combine pupils' learning with action on improving the environmental performance of the school. The Eco-Schools Programme was extremely popular across the Borough with 74 schools now registered and 36 of these schools achieving the highest level, Green Flag accreditation. Ballyclare,

Ballycraigy and Fairview Primary Schools were also recognised as Ambassador Schools for the Borough.

3. Previous Decision of Council

Last year, £10,942 in financial support was agreed for the 2024/25 academic year. The funding provided a vital environmental education role for Council and included a dedicated Field Officer who supported schools through the Eco-Schools Programme and delivered workshops on waste and recycling, biodiversity and climate change.

A summary of the Eco-Schools engagement for the 2023-24 academic year was circulated which showed that as of June 2024, Antrim and Newtownabbey had the second highest percentage of Green Flags across Northern Ireland.

Council had received this year's funding request (circulated) from KNIB for the Eco-Schools Programme 2025/26 with two options available.

4. Financial Implication

The funding request for 2025/26 included two funding options:

Option 1: Support of the Programme at a cost of £10,942, which included Wheelie Big Challenge, Eco Schools and core running costs of the programme including a Field Officer in our Council area and allowed schools to access additional funding provided through Eco-Schools for projects such as Wrigley Litter Less campaign.

Option 2: Support from the Eco-Schools Programme at a cost of £2,975, which included Eco-Schools communication, training and development to all schools in the Borough.

Funding was matched by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs and therefore the local schools would be benefiting from approximately £22,000 worth of assistance with environmental issues.

Proposed by Alderman Smyth
Seconded by Councillor Magill and agreed that

funding in the amount of £10,942 for the Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful Eco-Schools Programme 2025/26 be approved.

ACTION BY: Claire Evans, Climate, Waste and Sustainability Officer

4.2 EH/EHS/LS/004 LS.AP.7 APPLICATION FOR GRANT OF AN AMUSEMENT PERMIT FOR MR HENRY CROWE - GLENGORMLEY SPORTS BOWL & SCRAPYARD GOLF 3-9, 11 GLENWELL ROAD, GLENGORMLEY, NEWTOWNABBEY, BT36 7RF

1. Purpose

The purpose of the report was to seek Members' approval for grant of an Amusement Permit for Mr Henry Crowe for 3-9, 11 Glenwell Road, Glengormley, Newtownabbey, BT36 7RF.

2. Introduction

An application had been received for the grant of an Amusement Permit

Amusement Permit	Location of Premises	Type(s)and hours of Amusement Permit	File Number	New Application or Renewal
Mr Henry Crowe	3-9, 11 Glenwell Road, Glengormley, Newtownabbey BT36 7RF	Authorising Gaming, by means of gaming machines Monday to Sunday 10:00hrs to 24:00hrs	LS.AP.7	New Application

In line with Council protocol for the hearing of Amusement Permits applications, approved in February 2017, the application must be considered at the Operations Committee meeting.

The Committee could decide the following:

- i. Grant the licence
- ii. Grant the licence with specific additional terms, conditions and restrictions
- iii. Refuse the licence
- iv. Defer an application for further consideration or to obtain further information.

If the Committee made a decision against an Officer's recommendation, then members must state their reasons for doing so. In such circumstances, a recorded vote would be taken.

3. Main Report

An application had been received for the Grant of an Amusement Permit for Mr Henry Crowe. This permit issuance was a change of operator. The application process involved public consultation in a local newspaper for a period of 28 days from the date of 12 December 2024; to date no objections had been received. Statutory consultation with Police Service of Northern Ireland sub-divisional commander was served by the applicant on 9 December 2024.

Appropriate character and financial standing of Mr Henry Crowe had been demonstrated by references submitted to Council. The premises at 3-9, 11 Glenwell Road, Glengormley, to which the Amusement Permit applied, has previously been permitted and licensed by Council for gaming use over several years. There were no concerns regarding the suitability of its location.

The operating hours for the premises are detailed below;

Monday to Sunday 10:00hrs to 24:00hrs

Following a review of the Amusement permit protocol, Council approval was now required in advance of a permit being granted.

4. Summary

Mr Henry Crowe had submitted an application for the grant of an Amusement Permit for 3-9, 11 Glenwell Road, Glengormley, BT36 7RF. As per the Council protocol for the granting of an Amusement permit, a decision by Members was required regarding the approval of the permit.

Proposed by Councillor Gilmour
Seconded by Alderman Bradley and agreed that

an Amusement Permit be granted to the applicant, Mr Henry Crowe, 3-9, 11 Glenwell Road, Glengormley, Newtownabbey, BT36 7RF

with the following conditions:

- **That all relevant licensing requirements be met**
- **That statutory consultees have no objections to approval**

ACTION BY: Kelly Squance, Environmental Health Officer

4.3 WM/RC/001 REVIEW OF HOUSEHOLD RECYCLING CENTRES OPENING HOURS

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to recommend to Members an amendment to the opening hours at the Household Recycling Centres.

2. Background

Household Recycling Centres were extensively used by residents within the Borough. There were five sites strategically positioned to optimise coverage within the Borough where residents of Antrim and Newtownabbey could recycle additional waste.

The Centres would only accept waste from residents in the Borough, with all five of the sites open six days per week and Bruslee and Newpark open on Sunday to provide 7 day provision across the Borough.

The table below shows the total number of visitors through five sites from 01 January 2024 to 30 November 2024 and an estimated annual figure.

Year	Number of visits (Predicted annual usage)
2024/25	608,226 (~665,000 visits)

3. Key Issues

While Council was keen to keep the service accessible to all residents, there were irregularities in Council's current Household Recycling Centre opening hours i.e Bruslee is open on Sunday 9am to 5pm and Newpark is open on Sunday 12noon to 5pm etc.

Each of the Centres are fitted with a vehicle counter and analysis of this data had illustrated that the opening hours could be amended with limited impact on users and would result in an improved overall service provision with enhanced management of customer service and better segregation of the waste with potential cost savings.

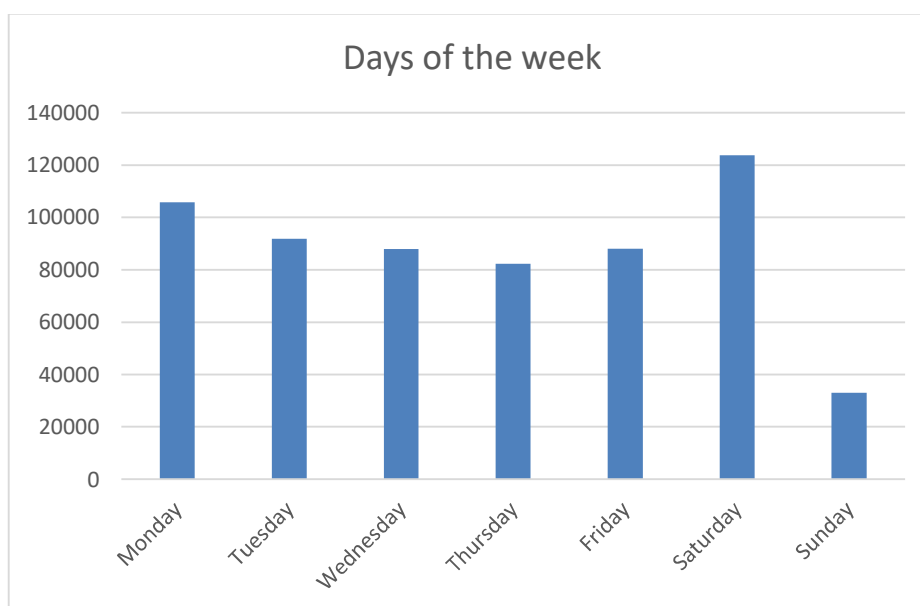
The data from vehicle counters at the Recycling Centres indicated low usage at the start and at the end of days as shown in the traffic counter data in the table below.

Hourly Usage Across 5 Sites

Hour	Approx no of vehicles per site	% of Usage
09:00 - 10:00	20	5%
10:00 – 11:00	32	8%
17:00 – 18:00	32	8%
18:00 – 19:00	18	5%
19:00 – 20:00	19	2%

In addition, the data indicated that Monday and Saturday were the busiest days of the week at the Household Recycling Centres.

Day of the Week Usage



Neighbouring Council Recycling Centre Opening Hours

Council operated its Household Recycling Centres significantly longer than other neighbouring Councils, as indicated on the table below. This created opportunities for waste tourism with ratepayers from other Council areas using Antrim and Newtownabbey sites when their own Council sites were closed.

	Antrim & Newtownabbey	Belfast	Lisburn & Castlereagh	Mid & East Antrim
Total Annual Recycling Centre Operating Hours	16,276	12,584	6,708	11,570

A number of different combinations of opening hours had been considered but following analysis of the data from the vehicle counters and consultation and feedback from staff's on-the-ground experience, it was proposed to open the Household Recycling Centres as follows throughout the year:

- Monday – Saturday 10am - 6pm (throughout the year)
- Sunday 12pm-5pm (Newpark & Bruslee only)

The benefits of the proposed opening hours would be:

- greater staff coverage on site with enhanced health and safety controls;
- reduction in overtime costs;
- improved customer service for residents;
- possible reduction in waste arisings;
- possible increase in recycling;
- greater service provision to ratepayers than neighbouring Councils.

4. Financial Implications

If the new proposed Household Recycling Centre hours were approved, Council could achieve a reduction in staffing costs of approximately £30,000 per annum. In addition, it was envisaged that there would be a reduction in overall waste collected at the Centres, with a 1% reduction equating to an annual saving of approximately £40,000.

5. Summary

The current Household Recycling Centre opening hours were significantly longer than neighbouring Councils which placed a financial pressure on Council due to operating costs and quantities of waste handled.

Following a review of the opening hours and analysis of the data from the vehicle counters at the five Household Recycling Centres, it was proposed to amend the opening hours. The proposed opening hours should result in enhanced health and safety controls, better customer service and possible revenue savings. If approved, it was proposed to introduce the new opening times from April 2025 following all necessary staff consultation.

The Director of Sustainability responded to a number of queries from Members on the contents of the report.

Proposed by Councillor Logue
Seconded by Councillor Ní Chonghaile that

the report be deferred to allow time for consultation with staff and Trade Unions and the completion of an Equality Impact Assessment.

An Amendment was then put to the meeting

Proposed by Councillor McAuley
Seconded by Councillor Burbank that

the opening hours of the Household Recycling Centres be approved as follows:

**Monday – Saturday 10am-6pm (All 5 Centres) throughout the year
Sunday 12pm-5pm (Newpark & Bruslee only)**

On the Amendment being put to the meeting and a recorded vote having been requested by Alderman Smyth, Members voted as follows:

In favour of the Proposal Members viz 7	Against the Proposal Members viz 7	Abstentions Members viz 0
Aldermen – Bradley and McGrath Councillors – Burbank, Gilmour, McAuley McWilliam and Stewart	Aldermen – Clarke and Smyth Councillors – Foster, Logue, Magill, McLaughlin and Ní Chonghaile	

The Chairperson used her casting vote in favour of the proposal.

The Amendment was then put to the meeting as the Substantive motion, with voting as follows:

In favour of the Proposal Members viz 7	Against the Proposal Members viz 7	Abstentions Members viz 0
Aldermen – Bradley and McGrath Councillors – Burbank, Gilmour, McAuley McWilliam and Stewart	Aldermen – Clarke and Smyth Councillors – Foster, Logue, Magill, McLaughlin and Ní Chonghaile	

The Chairperson used her casting vote in favour of the proposal and the Amendment was accordingly declared carried as the substantive motion.

It was therefore agreed that

the opening hours of the Household Recycling Centres be approved as follows:

**Monday – Saturday 10am-6pm (All 5 Centres) throughout the year
Sunday 12pm-5pm (Newpark & Bruslee only)**

ACTION BY: Leanne Smits, Waste Operations Manager

4.4 L/GEN/056, PK/GEN/205 FACILITY CLOSURES AND OPENING HOURS – PARKS AND LEISURE

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to seek approval for the proposed operating hours and closure schedule for the Parks and Leisure Department for the 2025/26 period.

2. Introduction/Background

Members were reminded that annually, in the last quarter of the year, proposed schedules of closure arrangements on Bank and Public Holidays for Council facilities had been brought to the relevant committees for approval. A draft schedule of bank and public holiday closures had been circulated for Members' reference.

3. Proposed Changes

For the 2025/26 period, it was proposed that the opening hours of leisure centres without golf facilities on bank and public holidays be adjusted to match their standard weekend hours, as these holidays typically had seen a usage decrease of up to 30%, particularly before 8 a.m. and after 7 p.m. Meanwhile, it was proposed that the operating hours for leisure centres with golf courses, Ballyearl and Allen Park, would remain unchanged.

4. Financial Implications

Public and bank holidays incurred significantly higher operational costs, with employee wages on these days reaching up to triple the standard rate. By consolidating operations into a single shift on these holidays, staffing costs could be reduced from approximately £105,000 to £45,000, resulting in a cost saving of £60,000. Additional savings were anticipated through reduced energy consumption, however, these had not been factored into the current estimate.

Proposed by Alderman Smyth

Seconded by Councillor Gilmour and agreed that

the proposed operating hours and closure schedule for the Parks and Leisure Department for the 2025/26 period be approved.

ACTION BY: Conor McCallion, Leisure Development Manager

4.5 **PK/BIO/012 NORTHERN IRELAND FOREST SCHOOL ASSOCIATION – FOREST SCHOOLS PROGRAMME**

1. Purpose

This purpose of the report was to inform Members about the Northern Ireland Forest School Association's activities within the borough and to seek approval for a £7,000 funding allocation for the 2025/26 financial year.

2. Introduction/Background

The Council had contributed annually to the Northern Ireland Forest Schools Programme. The Northern Ireland Forest School Association was a charity dedicated to promoting, developing, and delivering sustainable environmental education programmes. The Forest Schools Programme was an innovative

educational approach that emphasised outdoor play and learning, which encouraged and inspired individuals of all ages through positive outdoor experiences.

Last year, the Council approved a contribution of £7,000 to enable the selection of one school from each District Electoral Area (DEA) to participate in the programme.

Officers were now inviting all schools and nurseries within the Borough that had not previously participated in the programme to register their interest by completing an online form. Efforts would be made to select one school or nursery from each DEA to participate in this initiative.

3. Financial Position/Implication

Budget provision had been included in the estimated 2025/26 budget.

4. Summary

The Northern Ireland Forest School Association served as an effective mechanism for fostering environmental awareness and strengthening connections among children and young people. By providing engaging and impactful programmes, Northern Ireland Forest School Association played a pivotal role in promoting sustainability and encouraging outdoor learning. Its initiatives were not only cost-effective but also created a lasting legacy of environmental consciousness.

Proposed by Councillor McAuley
Seconded by Alderman Clarke and agreed that

a contribution of £7,000 to support the delivery of the Northern Ireland Forest Schools Programme within the Borough, enabling one Forest School per District Electoral Area be approved.

ACTION BY: Ian McCurley, Parks Development Manager

4.6 **PK/BIO/019/VOL4 CORRESPONDENCE FROM DFI – ACTIVE TRAVEL DELIVERY PLAN CONSULTATION**

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to provide an update on the Department for Infrastructure's (Dfi) Active Travel Delivery Plan. Members were invited to provide feedback to inform the response to the ongoing consultation on the Plan.

2. Background

Dfi's Active Travel Delivery Plan outlined a 10-year strategy to promote walking, wheeling, and cycling for shorter, everyday journeys across Northern Ireland. The Plan (circulated) identified priorities for Council areas across Northern

Ireland, which focused on delivering safe and accessible active travel routes. The key priorities included:

1. Connections to Schools: Improving infrastructure around schools to encourage active travel for students and parents, reducing congestion and enhancing safety.
2. Connections to Public Transport: Developing routes that integrated walking, wheeling, and cycling with public transport hubs to promote multi-modal travel and reduce car dependency.
3. Connections to Town and City Centres: Creating better access to local amenities, boosting footfall, and supporting economic vibrancy in urban centres.

3. Priority Routes

Each Council area (based on populations over 5,000) had been provided with detailed Active Travel Network Maps outlining:

- Priority Routes (0-10 years): Immediate delivery of key infrastructure.
- Future Routes (10+ years): Expansion to build a fully interconnected network.
- Enhancement of Existing Routes: Upgrades to current active travel infrastructure.

Rural areas would receive tailored improvements focusing on key links to schools, public transport, and village centres.

The identified areas and priority routes for Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council included:

Antrim Town – Three priority routes:

Castle Way to Stiles Way/B518 via Fountain Hill.

Greystone Roundabout along Greystone Road (B95) to Fountain Hill.

Hill Street along Railway Street to Stiles Way.

Ballyclare – One main priority route:

Ballyclare Western Relief Road/B95 Roundabout to the Square via Doagh Road.

Crumlin – One main priority route:

Lurgan Road to Main Street/Ballydonagh Road.

Metropolitan Newtownabbey – Two main priority routes:

Carnmoney Road North/Mossley West to Church Road/Valley Retail Park via Prince Charles Way, Church Road, and Longwood Road.

Randalstown – One main priority route:

Randalstown Viaduct to Castle Road via Shanes Street and Station Road.

Maps detailing the priority routes for each settlement had been circulated for Members' reference. These maps also showed future and existing routes for potential enhancements.

4. Consultation

Dfl had been hosting several public consultation events to provide opportunity for discussion before the consultation ended on 28 February. It was proposed that Members' feedback would be provided via email and collated within a corporate response.

Proposed by Alderman Smyth

Seconded by Councillor Gilmour and agreed that

submission of a corporate response on Dfl's Active Travel Delivery Plan, to include any feedback from Members, be approved.

ACTION BY: Paul Mawhinney, Head of Parks Operations

4.7 **WM/WM/040 NAPPY COLLECTION SCHEME**

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to seek Members' approval for Officers to write to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) in support of Ards and North Down Borough Council's proposal for DAERA to work towards the establishment of a disposable nappy collection and recycling service in Northern Ireland.

2. Introduction

Officers had received correspondence from Ards and North Down Borough Council (ANDBC) (circulated) which asked the Council to support ANDBC's request for DAERA to investigate the possible establishment of a disposable nappy collection and recycling service in Northern Ireland.

3. Key Issues

Approximately 4% of residual waste was made up of disposable nappies and other absorbent hygiene products and this could equate to as much as 4,000 tonnes per annum. At present, this waste was landfilled or recovered for energy production.

While there were no current recycling collection services for used nappies in Northern Ireland, other parts of the UK and Europe did have successful schemes in operation. These schemes could achieve 100% landfill diversion for these materials with the cellulose fibres and plastics separated for recycling. The cellulose fibres could be used for the production of fibre boards, acoustic panelling, and spill kits and the plastics sent to secondary re-processors for recycling.

As the cost and volumes of waste would be prohibitive for a single Council to develop the collection and processing infrastructure, ANDBC had written to the DAERA Minister expressing its view that there was a need for a nappy collection scheme in Northern Ireland. In addition, ANDBC had also contacted all other Northern Ireland Councils asking that they also write to the DAERA Minister requesting the same. The Council also received a similar correspondence from Michelle McIlveen MLA.

As the proposal was in line with Council's sustainability and climate change aims, it was proposed that the Chief Executive also writes to the Minister in support of ANDBC's call for DAERA to work towards the establishment of a disposable nappy collection and recycling service in Northern Ireland.

Proposed by Alderman Bradley
Seconded by Councillor Gilmour and agreed that

a request for Council to write to the DAERA Minister in support of Ards and North Down Borough Council's call for DAERA to work towards the establishment of a disposable nappy collection and recycling service in Northern Ireland be approved.

ACTION BY: Michael Laverty, Director of Sustainability

4.8 L/GEN/5, PK/GEN/180 SCHEDULE OF CHARGES AND PRICING POLICIES, PARKS AND LEISURE 2025-2026

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to seek approval for the Parks and Leisure Schedule of Charges and Pricing Policies for 2025/2026.

2. Introduction/Background

An annual review of pricing for Parks and Leisure Services (including Bereavement Services) had been completed in advance of each new financial year.

Members agreed in December 2024 to implement an inflationary increase in Leisure memberships and all other Leisure pricing within the schedule.

Members also agreed changes to Bereavement Services charges for 2025/26.

3. Pricing Changes

An inflationary rise of 2.5% had been applied across all prices with a rounding up to the nearest pound.

The full Schedule of Charges, Pricing Policies, and a summary of proposed changes had been circulated for Members' reference.

The EQIA screening document had been reviewed and did not need to be changed.

Proposed by Councillor McAuley
Seconded by Councillor Gilmour and agreed that

changes to the Schedule of Charges and Pricing Policies for Parks and Leisure 2025/2026 be approved.

ACTION BY: Conor McCallion, Leisure Development Manager

4.9 PK/GEN/220 CORRESPONDENCE FROM NORTHERN IRELAND WATER – FOR ESSENTIAL SITE INVESTIGATIONS WORKS AT SANDYKNOWES PARK

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to request approval for Northern Ireland Water to conduct initial site investigations and subsequent construction works at Sandyknowes Park as part of the Whitehouse Drainage Area Plan.

2. Introduction

Correspondence had been received (circulated) from Northern Ireland Water (NIW), formally requesting access to Sandyknowes Park to undertake essential site and ground investigation works as part of the Whitehouse Drainage Area Plan (DAP). The DAP, developed by NIW and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA), aimed to reduce the risk of sewer flooding and unsatisfactory intermittent discharges within the Whitehouse catchment, including high-risk areas such as Sandyknowes Wastewater Pumping Station. This project was expected to bring significant environmental benefits, particularly in terms of improving the water quality in the Blackwater River.

3. Initial Site Investigation

As part of the pre-construction process, access to the park was required to carry out the following ground investigations:

Trial Pits: Five trial pits, approximately 3 meters deep

Boreholes: Three boreholes, approximately 10 meters deep

NIW had provided assurances that the initial site investigations would be carried out in such a way as to minimise disturbance to the park. The total land area required for the works would be kept to a minimum, and temporary ground protection measures would be implemented to safeguard the park's surface.

4. Proposed Works

The proposed works involved the construction of three 1.8m diameter tank sewers within the grass area of the park. These tanks would address capacity issues and ensure compliance with NIEA requirements. Additional improvements included raising the level of the existing sewer, retrofitting a

screen and standby generator at the pumping station and restoring all impacted areas to their original or improved condition. A copy of the presentation and maps from NIW had been circulated for Members' reference. These maps showed the specific locations for the planned ground investigations, and also provided details on the construction of three 1.8m diameter tank sewers, which would be integrated into the Sandyknowes Wastewater Pumping Station.

5. Key Issues

NIW held statutory rights under the Water and Sewage (NI) Order 2006 to enter land for necessary works but had also sought formal Council consent to proceed with the required investigation ensuring transparency and collaboration with Council.

The wider proposed works including the construction of the tank sewers would significantly impact the park's landscape and its normal usage. Excavation and construction activities would result in disruption, including temporary closures or restricted access to certain areas of the park during the construction phase lasting 6 to 9 months. NIW had committed to minimising these inconveniences and would ensure that the public could still enjoy the park as much as possible. While the full extent of the impact was yet to be finalised, NIW was dedicated to restoring the park to its original state or better once the works had been completed, thus ensuring long-term benefits for both the local community and the environment.

In response to Members' queries, the Director of Parks and Leisure Operations assured Members that Northern Ireland Water would reinstate any damage to the park to new and undertook to look at options to further enhance recreational provision at the park at that time.

Proposed by Councillor Foster
Seconded by Alderman Bradley and agreed that

initial site investigations and subsequent construction works for completion by NIW at Sandyknowes Park as part of the Whitehouse Drainage Area Plan be approved.

ACTION BY: Paul Mawhinney, Head of Parks Operations

Having declared an interest in Item 4.10 Alderman Clarke left the Chamber.

The Supplementary report was taken at this point.

4.10 PK/GEN/217 CELEBRATING THE ANNIVERSARY OF RANDALSTOWN ROYAL BRITISH LEGION 2025

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to seek approval for the installation of a celebratory disc in recognition of Randalstown Royal British Legion's 100th anniversary in 2025.

2. Introduction/Background

Randalstown Royal British Legion would celebrate a significant milestone anniversary in 2025, its 100th anniversary. This anniversary would be not only a testament to the support which the organisation provided to serving and ex-serving personnel and their families, but also a reflection of its long-standing commitment to the Armed Forces community.

3. Previous Decision of Council

Council had previously approved the placement of celebratory discs throughout the borough in recognition of the significant achievements or milestones of local individuals, clubs, and organisations, as well as their contributions to the community.

4. Financial Implication

The installation of an anniversary celebratory disc would incur a maximum cost of £175 by utilising existing flower beds, thus minimising expenses. The proposed location was the flowerbed at Portglenone Road, opposite Randalstown Memorial Garden.

Proposed by Alderman Smyth
Seconded by Councillor Burbank and agreed that

approval be granted for the installation of the anniversary celebratory disc for Randalstown Royal British Legion.

ACTION BY: Paul Mawhinney, Head of Parks Operations

Alderman Clarke returned to the Chamber following Item 4.10.

5. ITEMS FOR NOTING

5.1 EH/PHWB/012 WINTER WOOLLIES UPDATE

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to update Members on the recent Winter Woollies Campaign.

2. Background

The Winter Woollies Campaign 2024 had provided hand-knitted and crocheted items, supplied by volunteers, to support the most vulnerable members of the community during the colder months.

3. Key Issues

Now in its third year, the Winter Woollies campaign had become more sustainable with the introduction of a Wool Drive, held from 1 July to 31 August 2024. Organised by the Environmental Health Department. The drive had diverted over 1,000 balls of wool, knitting needles, and crochet hooks from landfill. These materials were distributed to local community groups to encourage people of all ages to create warm clothing and to combat social isolation.

Winter Woollies collections were held at Mossley Mill and Antrim Civic Centre from 16 September to 14 November, gathering 1,662 items that were distributed to 22 partner organisations. Donors could include their contact details to participate in the Mayor's selection of favourite items, and many attached heartfelt messages to their creations for recipients.

On 19 November, a Winter Woollies event at Mossley Mill celebrated the campaign's success, featuring the Mayor's selection and a Q&A session where donors and partner organisations discussed its positive impact. With a 40% increase in donations and eight additional partner organisations this year, Winter Woollies 2024 had been a resounding success. A video and photo gallery showcasing the generosity of Antrim and Newtownabbey residents could be viewed; <https://antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk/residents/initiatives-for-our-community/winter-woollies/>)

Winter Woollies was promoted through knitting and crocheting groups, community organisations, Council social media, and local press, and the campaign was set to return in 2025.

4. Summary

The Winter Woollies Campaign had inspired residents to knit and crochet warm clothing for vulnerable members of the community. This year 1,662 items had been collected and distributed to 22 partner organisations.

Proposed by Alderman Clarke
Seconded by Councillor Logue and agreed that

the report be noted.

NO ACTION

5.2 EH/EHS/CP/004 TOBACCO TEST PURCHASE EXERCISE – NOVEMBER 2024

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to inform Members about the results of test purchasing activities conducted concerning the sale of age-restricted products like cigarettes and tobacco.

2. Background

Members were reminded that local authorities in Northern Ireland had a statutory duty to enforce the legislation relating to the sale of certain age-restricted products such as cigarettes and tobacco products. Under current legislation, it was illegal to sell cigarettes or tobacco or nicotine inhaling products (e-cigarettes and e-liquids) to anyone under 18.

The Public Health Agency funded the employment of Tobacco Control Officers (TCO's) who worked on behalf of District Councils in Northern Ireland to promote compliance with tobacco control legislation and to provide advice on compliance.

TCOs must conduct at least 100 advisory visits annually to retailers, including 70 test purchases, to ensure compliance with age-restricted sale legislation. In April 2024 and July 2024, advisory letters were sent to 141 retailers, and TCOs conducted 201 advisory visits from April to December 2024. Test purchase exercises had been completed in April, August, and October of this year and reported to Members in June, November, and December 2024.

3. Key Issues

In November 2024, TCOs conducted another test purchase exercise involving 15 retailers, accompanied by a young person under the age of 18. The young person attempted to purchase tobacco products or nicotine inhaling products. Fourteen premises fully complied with the law. However, one retailer displayed tobacco products to the young person when a staff member scanned a packet of cigarettes at the till before requesting identification. When the young person failed to provide ID, the sale was refused. Under The Tobacco Advertising and Promotion (Display) Regulations (NI) 2012, displaying cigarettes to anyone under 18 is an offence. The retailer was notified of the offence and was issued a written warning.

4. Summary

This was the fourth phase of planned test purchase exercises for 2024/2025 to be conducted on 70 retailers. On this occasion a written warning was issued to the owners of the retail shop that displayed tobacco products (cigarettes) to a person under the age of 18.

Proposed by Councillor Logue

Seconded by Alderman McGrath and agreed that

the report be noted.

NO ACTION

5.3 EH/PWHB/012 TAKE A SEAT INITIATIVE

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to inform Members of a new Age Friendly pilot initiative called 'Take a Seat'. The initiative would encourage businesses and community facilities to provide a seat for members of the public to sit and rest when in local towns.

2. Background

The Environmental Health Department continued to lead the Age Friendly agenda to make the Borough a better place to age. Accessible buildings and sufficient seating could greatly enhance the lives of older residents, especially those with mobility challenges. By increasing their confidence and mobility, these improvements would allow older adults greater freedom to navigate their local communities.

Collaborating with local businesses was a key aspect of making the Borough more Age Friendly. The 'Take a Seat' initiative encouraged businesses to publicly signal their willingness to offer seating to older individuals or those with reduced mobility. This provided people with the opportunity to rest for a few minutes while shopping or passing by. The initiative had already shown success in addressing social isolation and fostering community engagement in other towns and cities in UK. Notably, Council would be the first in Northern Ireland to introduce this initiative.

3. Key Issues

In November 2024, the 'Take a Seat' initiative was piloted in the Ballyclare and Crumlin town areas. Officers visited local businesses to introduce the programme and encourage their involvement. Businesses were informed that participation was free of charge, that individuals using the seats would not be obligated to make purchases, and shop participants would receive a display sticker to demonstrate their involvement. Local shops who displayed stickers would then offer people the chance to sit down and provide a warm welcome.

Following officer visits, four businesses in Crumlin and ten in Ballyclare had signed up to the initiative. The initiative would be launched in January 2025 and would be promoted through the Council website (www.antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk/take-a-seat), social media channels, the Age Friendly magazine "News For You" and local press. Interested businesses could contact Environmental Health Department at any time to register their interest.

The pilot phase would help refine the initiative and gather feedback to ensure its success as it was rolled out across the Borough in 2025.

4. Summary

The 'Take a Seat' initiative encouraged businesses to provide a seat to anyone who needed to rest while shopping or passing by. The scheme was being piloted in Ballyclare and Crumlin with plans to expand across the Borough throughout 2025.

Proposed by Alderman McGrath
Seconded by Councillor Logue and agreed that

the report be noted.

NO ACTION

5.4 **WM/WM/040 WASTE MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE ANNUAL UPDATE 2023-24**

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to advise Members of Council's waste management performance in 2023-24.

2. Background

Under the Landfill Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003, Council was required to submit waste data returns to the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA). These were completed on a quarterly basis throughout the year and were used by the NIEA to calculate Council's recycling rate and compliance with the relevant legislation.

The new legislative targets for Council under the Circular Economy Package were:

1. Recycle 65% of municipal waste by 2035.
2. Interim targets of 55% recycling rate by 2025 and 60% by 2030.
3. Maximum of 10% of municipal waste to be landfilled by 2035.

The annual waste data submission for 2023-24 had been verified and set out Council's performance for the year for both Household and Municipal waste.

3. Key Issues

A summary of the recently published results for Council for 2023/2024 together with the results from 2022/2023 were set out below. The results included the performance of all 11 Northern Ireland Local Authorities for reference.

	2022-23		2023-24		Ranking
	Tonnes	%	Tonnes	%	
Total Household Waste Arisings	75,843		79,663	Up 5%	3 rd largest tonnage
Household Waste Arisings to Recycling	45,763	60.3	47,330	59.4	1 st household recycling rate (%) in Northern Ireland
Household Waste Arisings to Recovery	11,784	15.6	14,060	17.7	7 th largest % of household waste sent to recovery
Household Waste Arisings to Landfill	18,296	24.1	18,273	22.9	5 th largest % of household waste sent to landfill

Total Local Authority Collected Municipal Waste Arisings	100,076		106,040	Up 6%	3 rd largest tonnage
Municipal Waste Arisings to Recycling	62,329	62.3	66,006	62.2	1 st % of waste recycled in Northern Ireland.
Municipal Waste Arisings to Recovery	13,218	13.2	15,679	14.8	7 th largest % of waste sent to recovery.
Municipal Waste Arisings to Landfill	23,545	23.5	23,451	22.1	6 th largest % of waste sent to landfill.

* Local Authority Collected Municipal Waste (LACMW) is ALL the waste that the Council collects i.e. commercial, street sweepings, recycling centres as well as household waste.

The table above shows the following:

- Antrim and Newtownabbey achieved the highest recycling rates for Councils in Northern Ireland.
- Overall waste arisings increased across the recycling and recovery waste streams, however there was a decrease in waste arisings being sent to Landfill. This indicated that residents were continuing to manage their waste correctly, however waste production across the Borough was rising slightly.

The data demonstrated that the residents of Antrim and Newtownabbey continued to participate in Council's recycling services and Officers would continue to explore new initiatives to improve performance.

Proposed by Councillor Logue
Seconded by Alderman McGrath and agreed that

the report be noted.

NO ACTION

5.5 PT/CI/060 PERFORMANCE AND IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2024/25 PERFORMANCE PROGRESS REPORT QUARTER 2

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to recommend to Members that the Performance and Improvement Plan 2024/25 Performance Progress Report Quarter 2 Parks, Leisure and Estate Services and Sustainability be noted.

2. Background

Members were reminded that Part 12 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 put in place a framework to support the continuous improvement of Council services.

The Council's Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan 2024/25 was approved in June 2024. This set out a range of robust performance targets, along with identified improvement objectives and a number of Statutory Performance Targets

3. Previous Decision of Council

As agreed at the August 2023 Council meeting, quarterly performance reports would be presented to the relevant committee.

4. Key Points

Second Quarter performance progress reports for Parks, Leisure & Estate Services, and Sustainability were circulated for Members' information.

Proposed by Alderman McGrath
Seconded by Alderman Clarke and agreed that

the Performance and Improvement Plan 2024/25 Performance Progress Report Quarter 2 be noted.

NO ACTION

5.6 L/LEI/00/008 NATIONAL FOOTBALL TRAINING CENTRE – UPDATE

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to provide an update on the Council's role as the sponsor body in facilitating the land transaction between the Education Authority (EA) and the Irish Football Association (IFA) for the development of a National Football Training Centre at Birch Hill Road, Antrim.

2. Background

The Department for Communities (DfC) previously requested the Council, due to its statutory powers to purchase land for recreational purposes, act as sponsor body for a land transaction between the Education Authority (EA) and the Irish Football Association (IFA) to facilitate the development of a National Football Training Centre.

The proposed Centre, located on approximately 60 acres at Birch Hill Road, Antrim, was intended to support the National Football Teams' training needs while providing wider community benefits. Council officers participated in the Department's Steering Group alongside key stakeholders to progress the project.

3. Update

Correspondence had recently been received from DfC formally advising that the IFA had officially withdrawn interest in the site at Birch Hill Road and that an alternative preferred site was now in development with a private owner. The correspondence was circulated for Members' reference.

Proposed by Councillor Foster
Seconded by Alderman Smyth and agreed that

Council formally responds to the Department for Communities (DfC) to express its disappointment regarding the conduct of the Irish Football Association (IFA) toward fellow stakeholders. The response will also seek clarification on the expenditure incurred to date, including Officer time and the appointment of consultants, and request reimbursement from the IFA of these costs. Additionally, the Council will seek assurances from the Department that public funds will not be used for the purchase of a private site.

In parallel, the Council agree to write directly to the IFA, outlining its dissatisfaction with the organisation's conduct. An invitation will be extended to the IFA's Chief Executive, Chair, and President to attend a Council meeting to provide an explanation of their actions on these matters.

ACTION BY: Matt McDowell, Director of Parks and Leisure Operations

7. **ANY OTHER RELEVANT BUSINESS**

The Chairperson confirmed that she was happy to take any other relevant business at this point and requested that where possible Members advise her in advance of the meeting of items they wished to discuss.

- 7.1** Councillor Dunlop thanked Officers for their quick response and communication in closing outdoor Council facilities earlier that day in relation to the inclement weather.

PROPOSAL TO PROCEED 'IN CONFIDENCE'

Proposed by Alderman Smyth
Seconded by Councillor Foster and agreed that

the following Committee business be taken In Confidence and the livestream and audio recording would cease.

6. ITEMS IN CONFIDENCE

6.1 IN CONFIDENCE EH/EHS/LR/007 UPDATE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF XL BULLY SAFEGUARDING MEASURES

1. Purpose

This report provided Members with an update on the safeguarding measures implemented by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) for XL Bully dogs in Northern Ireland, as well as the current status within the Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council area.

2. Background

Currently, there were over 500 XL Bully dogs licensed in Northern Ireland, with 65 currently licensed in Antrim and Newtownabbey.

To enhance public safety, the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) introduced new legal measures to mitigate the risk of attacks by XL Bully dogs on individuals, livestock, or other animals.

As previously reported to Members in June 2024, the new Regulations were being rolled out in two stages. The first stage came into effect on 5 July 2024, when XL Bully dogs were added to the list of restricted breeds under the Dangerous Dogs (Northern Ireland) Order 1991, via the Dangerous Dogs (Designated Types) Order (Northern Ireland) 2024. While the legislation did not impose an outright ban, it prohibited the breeding, selling, exchanging, gifting, or abandoning of XL Bully dogs. Additionally, these dogs must be muzzled and kept on a lead in public and housed securely to prevent escape.

The second stage of the legislation would come into effect on 31 December 2024, making it illegal to own an XL Bully dog without a valid Exemption Certificate. Owners remained responsible for controlling their dogs both at home and in public spaces. The Environmental Health Northern Ireland (EHNI) subgroup, the Northern Ireland Dogs Advisory Group (NIDAG), continued to collaborate with DAERA to implement the new legislation and oversee the Council managed Exemption Scheme.

3. Key Issues

I. XL Bully Exemption Scheme

Since 5 July 2024, XL Bully owners had been able to apply for an Exemption Certificate, which would allow them to keep their dogs beyond 1 January 2025. Applications were processed by Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council, with a fee of £92.40 per application.

As of the 24 December 2024, 62 out of the 65 licensed XL Bully dogs in the Borough have had their exemption applications submitted and processed by Environmental Health. This meant the Council had achieved the highest percentage of processed certificates compared to any other Council in Northern Ireland.

To qualify for an Exemption Certificate, the following conditions must be met:

- The dog must conform to DAERA's XL Bully Conformation Standard (owner-led assessment);
- The dog must be licensed and microchipped;
- The dog must be neutered, with proof of neutering required by 30 June 2025;
- The owner must have third-party liability insurance;
- A £92.40 application fee must be paid.

The deadline for submitting applications was 31 December 2024. Applications could not be accepted after this date under current legislation.

II. Compensation for owners who did not wish to keep their XL Bully type dog.

DAERA had introduced a compensation scheme, available from 9 August 2024 until 31 December 2024, for owners or rehoming organisations that chose not to keep their XL Bully dogs. Owners could arrange for their dogs to be euthanised and claim compensation from DAERA.

Compensation would include:

- £100 per dog.
- £100 toward veterinary euthanasia fees.

All claims must be submitted to DAERA by 28 February 2025.

III. Guidance

DAERA had issued detailed guidance to help owners identify XL Bully dogs using a prescribed "Conformation Standard" and to understand the new legal requirements. A separate guidance document for Council Enforcement Officers ensured consistent enforcement across Northern Ireland.

IV. Communications

An XL Bully Communications Steering Group, established in July 2024, continued to provide weekly support to all Councils. Coordinated by NILGA, the group followed a media and social media plan to inform dog owners about the exemption process and deadlines. The Council had made a number of social

media posts, press releases, and billboards in three locations within the Borough, in an attempt to educate dog owners of the legal requirements.

In the lead-up to 31 December, Enforcement Officers had engaged with all known XL Bully type dog owners to ensure awareness of the legislative requirements. This had included in-person visits, multiple written communications, and weekly text message reminders encouraging owners to apply for an exemption certificate.

V. Enforcement

From 1 January 2025, it would be illegal to own an XL Bully dog without an Exemption Certificate. Owners who failed to apply for a certificate before the deadline of 31 December 2024 would face enforcement action, including potentially seizing their dog.

Dog owners with an Exemption Certificate must comply with the prescribed measures. Non-compliance would result in enforcement action in line with DAERA guidance and the Council's Enforcement Policy. Penalties for breaching the legislation included fines of up to £5,000 and/or six months' imprisonment.

4. Financial Position/Implications

Implementing the new legislative controls would result in ongoing costs for Councils. Discussions with DAERA, facilitated through SOLACE NI and NIDAG, were exploring cost-effective ways to deliver the service and secure funding for these additional responsibilities.

To date, DAERA had secured £100,000 from the Department of Finance to support Councils with exemption processing, IT upgrades, staff training, and protective equipment. However, any future kennel and legal costs would need to be met by the Council within existing budgets.

5. Summary

The new legislation aimed to protect the public from potential risks associated with XL Bully dogs in Northern Ireland. Environmental Health would oversee the processing of exemption applications until 31 December 2024 and would enforce compliance with the regulations from 1 January 2025 onward, taking appropriate enforcement actions as needed.

In response to a Member's query, the Head of Environmental Health and Wellbeing undertook to show different types of muzzles for dogs in promotional materials and social media.

Proposed by Councillor Magill
Seconded by Councillor Gilmour and agreed that

the report be noted.

ACTION BY: Colin Kelly, Head of Environmental Health

Councillor Ní Chonghaile left the meeting at Item 6.2.

6.2 IN CONFIDENCE WM/arc21/4/VOL11 arc21 JOINT COMMITTEE PAPERS

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to update Members on the December arc21 Joint Committee meeting.

2. Introduction

The arc21 Joint Committee met on a monthly basis and each month the papers were reviewed by the Operations Committee.

3. Previous Decisions of Council

All previous papers had been noted.

4. Main Report

The papers for the arc21 Joint Committee Meeting were circulated for:

- December 2024

Members were reminded that these documents were confidential and may be legally privileged or otherwise protected from disclosure so therefore Members should not disclose this information to any third party and the information must be kept secure.

5. Summary

The main issues from the December 2024 meeting were:

[REDACTED]

Proposed by Councillor Foster

Seconded by Councillor McAuley and agreed that

the report be noted.

NO ACTION

PROPOSAL TO PROCEED OUT OF 'IN CONFIDENCE'

Proposed by Councillor Foster
Seconded by Alderman Clarke and agreed that

the remainder of Committee business be taken in Open Session.

The Chairperson advised that audio-recording would recommence at this point.

There being no further Committee business, the Chairperson thanked everyone for their attendance and the meeting concluded at 8.25pm.

MAYOR

Council Minutes have been redacted in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 2018, the General Data Protection Regulation, and legal advice.