

THE CORPORATE PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT PROCESS (AUGUST 2019) ANTRIM AND NEWTOWNABBEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

PART 12 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT (NORTHERN IRELAND) 2014

Q – *What is the Performance Improvement Duty of the Local Government Act 2014?*

Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council are committed to continuous improvement.

Part 12 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 puts in place a new framework to support continuous improvement in the delivery of Council services. Under Section 84 of the Act, Councils have a general duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement. Councils are required to gather information to assess improvements in their services and to issue a report annually on their performance against indicators which they have set for themselves in a Corporate Improvement Plan (published annually) or statutory indicators that have been set by various Departments. The statutory indicators include:

- Economic Development – The Department for the Economy, DFE.
- Planning Performance – The Department for Communities, DFC.
- Waste Management – The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, DAERA.

Link to the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 (below):

http://www.legislation.gov.uk/niu/2014/8/pdfs/niu_20140008_en.pdf

Q – *What is Improvement?*

As defined in the Act:

“An activity that enhances the sustainable quality of life and environment for ratepayers and communities”.

Section 85 states that for each financial year, the Council must set itself improvement objectives and have arrangements in place to achieve those objectives.

Q - *What Areas Must Improvements Cover?*

Section 86 of the Act stipulates that each improvement objective identified must bring about an improvement in at least one of the following areas:

- Strategic effectiveness.
- Service quality.
- Service accessibility.
- Fairness.
- Sustainability.
- Efficiency.
- Innovation.

Q – How Do Council's Determine Improvement Objectives?

Improvement objectives correspond directly with the Council's priorities for improvement. Councils determine their own priorities for improvement based on a thorough evidence-based understanding of the communities they serve and a critical analysis of evidence within the following sources:

- The Draft Community Plan.
- The Council's corporate priorities.
- Outcomes of any performance assessment exercises.
- Audit, regulatory and inspection reports.
- Performance Data / Benchmarking.
- Priorities identified through analysis of performance data.
- Evidence gained from consulting on improvement objectives in the previous year.
- The Programme for Government (PfG).

Q – How Many Improvement Objectives Can a Council Set?

As many as they wish. However, all improvement objectives must be:

1. Legitimate.
2. Clear.
3. Robust.
4. Deliverable – linked to Council's business plans and budgets.
5. Demonstrable – Success through objective evidence.

Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council must agree improvement objectives formally.

Q – Where Can I See the Council's Improvement Objectives?

The Council's Corporate Improvement Plan for 2019-20 can be viewed at:

<https://antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk/corporateplan/>

Q – Do the Council Consult On / Publish Its Improvement Process?

Yes.

Consultation

Section 87 of the Act requires the Council to consult with the following groups before setting its improvement objectives:

1. Citizens / ratepayers and stakeholders.
2. Local businesses / potential businesses.
3. Statutory / community planning partners.
4. Other

Publication

Councils are required to publish performance improvement objectives in an Improvement Plan as soon as possible after the start of the financial year to which it relates (or 30th June at the latest).

Q – What Must the Corporate Improvement Plan include?

A Corporate Improvement Plan must include the following:

1. Why the objectives were chosen.
2. The outcomes expected to be achieved.
3. A statement about the process followed in consulting on the improvement objectives.
4. How we collect performance data and monitor delivery.
5. Information on how new stakeholders may propose new improvement objectives during the year.

Q – Do the Council Committees Have a Role to Play?

Yes, the Council and local communities play a key role in determining and monitoring the overall performance of the organisation. The Audit Committee, Policy and Governance Committee and the Council are required to regularly report on:

- The process of selecting improvement objectives.
- Monitoring progress of improvement objectives.
- The promotion of innovation delivery.
- Delivery of the Council's discharge of the general duty to improve.

Q – Do the Council Record and Report on Progress?

Section 90 of the Act requires the Council to collect information which will allow it to assess performance improvement i.e.

1. Performance indicators (including statutory indicators: Economic Development, Planning and Waste Management).
2. Qualitative Information.
3. Other sources of evidence.

Section 91 of the Act requires the Council to use this information to:

1. Assess performance against the previous year's performance.
2. Compare performance with the performance of other Councils and public bodies (from 2017 onwards).
3. Publish an Annual Report before 30th September of each financial year on the Council's corporate website.

Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council's Annual Report for 2017-18 can be viewed at <https://antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk/performance/>

The Annual Report for 2018-19 will be published before 30th September 2019.

Q – What Is the Role of the Local Government Auditor?

The Local Government Auditor undertakes an annual improvement assessment to determine if the Council is likely to comply with the requirements of the Act. The various assessments include:

A Forward Looking Assessment – July/August

A comprehensive review of the Council's Corporate Improvement Plan.

Retrospective Assessment – September / October

A review to determine if the Council has discharged its duties in accordance with Departmental guidance.

Audit and Assessment Report – 30th November

A report which determines if a Council has complied with the statutory duty to improve.

Q – What Happens if a Council Fails to Comply with the Requirements of the Act?

If a Council fails to comply with any of the requirements in relation to Part 12, the Auditor can direct a Council to take the following action:

1. Prepare or amend an improvement plan;
2. Enter into specific arrangements with another Council;

And / or:

1. Carry out a review of its exercise of specified functions;
2. Set specific improvement objectives.

Any NI Department may direct the Council to take any action which they deem necessary to secure compliance with their requirements under Part 12 of the Act.

Q – Ongoing Consultation

The Council will continue to consult with communities and relevant stakeholders throughout the year providing an opportunity to identify new areas for improvement.

The Council is committed to improving our services and it is important that we listen to what the our colleagues have to say. We welcome your comments

or suggestions at any time of the year.

If you have any comments, would like any further information, or to request a copy of this plan please contact:

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