



**MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE MEETING OF THE OPERATIONS COMMITTEE
HELD IN ROUND TOWER CHAMBER, ANTRIM CIVIC CENTRE
ON TUESDAY 5 MAY 2026 AT 6.30 PM**

- In the Chair** : Alderman J Smyth
- Committee Members (In person)** : Aldermen – P Bradley and L Clarke
Councillors – J Archibald-Brown, R Foster, J Gilmour, N Kelly, A McAuley, E McLaughlin, V McWilliam, L O’Hagan and M Stewart
- Committee Members (Remote)** : Councillor – AM Logue
- Non-Committee Members (In person)** : Councillors – M Cooper, R Lynch, B Webb, S Wilson
- Presenters in Attendance** : Anne McAuley, Friends of Antrim Castle Gardens
Steve Humphrey, Friends of Antrim Castle Gardens
- Officers Present** : Chief Executive – R Baker
Director of Environmental Services & Sustainability – M Lavery
Head of Parks Operations - P Mawhinney
Head of Leisure Operations – D O’Hagan
Head of Environmental Health & Wellbeing – C Kelly
Head of Estate Services – D Blair
ICT Project Officer – C Bell
Member Services Officer – S Fisher
Member Services Officer – E Skillen

CHAIRPERSON’S REMARKS

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

On behalf of the Committee, he expressed his sincere condolences to Alderman Bradley, on the passing of her mother.

1 APOLOGIES

Alderman L Boyle

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

3 PRESENTATION

3.1 PK/GEN/224 PRESENTATION BY ANTRIM CASTLE GARDENS FRIENDS GROUP PRESENTATION

1. Purpose

The purpose of this presentation was to provide Members with an update on the Antrim Castle Gardens Friends Group.

2. Introduction

The Chair welcomed Anne McAuley and Steve Humphrey from the Friends of Antrim Castle Gardens who delivered a presentation outlining the Group, its aims and the work they carry out throughout the year. The representatives responded to questions from Members, the Chair thanked them for their presentation following and they left the meeting.

Proposed by Councillor Kelly
Seconded by Councillor Foster and agreed that

the presentation be noted.

NO ACTION

4 ITEMS FOR DECISION

4.1 PK/GEN/022 NORTHERN IRELAND AMENITY COUNCIL – BEST KEPT AWARDS – ANNUAL FUNDING

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to seek approval for Council's annual affiliation fees to the Northern Ireland Amenity Council in respect of the Best Kept Awards programme.

2. Background

The Northern Ireland Amenity Council administers the Best Kept Awards programme, which was in its 69th year of operation and continued to represent a long-standing and highly respected initiative across the province.

The programme promoted environmental stewardship, civic pride, and community-led improvement by encouraging towns and villages to participate in a structured and friendly competition that recognised excellence in local presentation and sustainability.

This year programme would continue to operate in line with its established format, with awards presented across a range of categories including Best Kept City, Large Town, Medium Town, Small Town, and Village classifications. Additional awards would recognise overall achievement and the most improved entrants.

The programme would also retain the 'Community Hero' award, which had been won by a local community representative from the borough in two of the past three years. Judging would take place during the summer months, with category winners advancing to represent the region in Ireland's Best Kept Town competition. The awards ceremony would be held on 14 October 2026 at the Strule Arts Centre, Omagh.

3. Previous Decision of Council

Correspondence had been received from the Northern Ireland Amenity Council (circulated for Members' information), outlining a request for Council's annual affiliation fee contribution. The correspondence also provided a detailed breakdown of the category costs associated with submissions for the current year's programme.

As in the previous years, Council approved the affiliation fee of £3,000. It was noted that the category costs remained unchanged for this year, with no increase applied to the entry fees.

<u>Category</u>	<u>Population</u>	<u>Entry Fee</u>
City	Cities that have 'City' status irrespective of population	£30.00
Large Town	15,000-60,000 residents	£30.00
Medium Town	8001 – 15,000 residents	£30.00
Small Town	4,001 – 8,000 residents	£25.00
Large Village	1,001 – 4,000 residents	£20.00
Small Village	100-1,000 residents	£15.00

Provision had been included within the approved budget for the current financial year to fully cover both the annual affiliation fee and the associated entry fees.

Proposed by Councillor Gilmour
Seconded by Alderman Clarke and agreed that

approval be granted for the payment of the annual affiliation fees to the Northern Ireland Amenity Council in respect of participation in the Best Kept Awards programme.

ACTION BY: Paul Mawhinney, Head of Parks Operations

4.2 PK/BIO/044 WATER TESTING AT LOUGH NEAGH – REA'S WOOD

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to inform Members that the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) had awarded funding to four suppliers to progress to Phase 2 of the Small Business Research Initiative (SBRI), aimed at tackling the growth of Blue-Green Algae in Lough Neagh and other affected waterbodies.

2. Background

In recent years, Lough Neagh had faced growing environmental pressure. During the summer of 2023, the lough experienced an unusually severe bloom of blue-green algae, which caused widespread public concern and attracted significant scientific and media attention. The size and length of this bloom was considered exceptional.

Experts identified several contributing factors, including higher water temperatures, long periods of calm weather, and the build-up of excess nutrients especially phosphorus, in the lakebed over many years. Together, these conditions allowed the algae to grow rapidly, affecting water quality, wildlife, recreation, and public health.

In response to these increasing environmental risks, joint funding was provided by DAERA and the Department for the Economy through the Small Business Research Initiative (SBRI) Challenge Fund. This funding supported the development and testing of new, innovative solutions to help manage and reduce blue-green algae in Lough Neagh and other affected water bodies.

Through this initiative, funding was allocated to support the design, development, and testing of new and innovative approaches aimed at managing, reducing, and mitigating the impacts of blue-green algae within Lough Neagh. A particular focus was placed on proof-of-concept projects that demonstrated the potential for scalable, effective, and environmentally responsible interventions.

Following a competitive selection process, four suppliers were appointed under the SBRI Challenge Fund. Each supplier had proposed a distinct concept, utilising different technologies and methodologies to tackle the issue of blue-green algae. The selected concepts were summarised as follows:

Company	Idea name	Technology/process/innovation
QUB	AquaPhage	Sustainable Management of Cyanobacterial Blooms using Bacteriophages
WHOLESHOOL SOFTWARE LTD & BIILD.AI	MyLoughNeagh	LG Sonic's Solar Powered Bubble-Buoy Air Screen with Biild's stakeholder communication platform for targeted Ultrasonic treatment of Blue-Green Algae
VARICON AQUA SOLUTIONS LIMITED	Breaking the Bloom Cycle: A Clean Future for Lough Neagh	Aquatic vehicle modifying both experimental and existing filtration technologies. Use of satellite tech/ML and AI to detect and predict. Biomass utilisation study
CLEAR WATER SYSTEMS LTD	Clear Water Systems Ltd - Phase 2 - Unmanned Surface Vessel (USV)	Autonomous USV platform with SlipStream Processor for in situ cyanobacteria disruption and toxin reduction, enabling targeted, mobile mitigation across affected water bodies.

3. Key Implications for the site

Varicon Aqua Solutions Limited had formally approached Council Officers to request permission for the use of Antrim Lough Shore to facilitate a programme of investigative works. The purpose of these works was to assess the feasibility and effectiveness of blue-green algae harvesting techniques within Lough Neagh. Following a preliminary site assessment, the company had identified Reas Wood as a particularly suitable location for the deployment of its equipment during the summer months, due to the area's well-documented history of significant and recurring algal bloom activity.

The proposed installation would consist of a floating containment boom, extending up to approximately 50 metres in length, designed to concentrate algal material. A skimming unit would be positioned at the apex of the boom to collect the algae. In addition, a 10-foot enclosed box trailer would be stationed onshore in close proximity to the deployment area (circulated). This trailer would house the primary processing equipment.

Algae-rich water would be drawn from the lough via the skimming system and pumped to the trailer-mounted processing unit. Within this unit, the algal matter would be separated from the water. The treated water would then be discharged back into the lough in accordance with environmental standards.

The collected algal biomass would be retained for appropriate handling and disposal off-site.

The company proposed to operate within a three-month period, from late June through to early September, coinciding with peak bloom conditions. Access to the shoreline and adjacent waterbody would be required for the initial installation, subsequent decommissioning, and any maintenance activities necessary throughout the operational period.

The equipment would be continuously monitored during operation by two trained personnel to ensure safe and efficient functioning. Individual deployment periods at the site would not exceed two weeks at any one time within the overall operational window. Any waste material generated during the process would be removed from the site on a weekly basis and managed in compliance with relevant waste management regulations. Power to operate the equipment would be supplied by a generator located on-site.

Proposed by Councillor McLaughlin
Seconded by Councillor Foster and agreed that

approval be granted for Varicon Aqua Solutions Limited to utilise a small, defined section of Council-owned land at Reas Wood for the duration of the summer period to complete their investigation works and that an update would be brought back to Committee in due course.

ACTION BY: Paul Mawhinney, Head of Parks Operations

4.3 PK/GEN/030 BRITAIN IN BLOOM AWARDS

1. Purpose

Members were reminded that, following the success of Randalstown, Antrim and Ballynure in the 2025 Ulster in Bloom Awards, Council agreed to support their nomination to the respective categories of the 2026 RHS Britain in Bloom Competition. Randalstown had been entered in the Small Town category, Antrim in the Large Town category, and Ballynure in the Small Village category.

Judging was scheduled to take place during July and August. An invitation had been received for the Britain in Bloom Awards Ceremony, which would be held at Rochdale Town Hall on Tuesday 20 October 2026. Council had traditionally met the cost of travel and accommodation associated with attendance at this event.

It was proposed that the Chair of the Operations Committee, or their nominee, together with one Council officer and two community representatives from each participating group, attend the awards ceremony.

2. Introduction/Background

Historically, Council had typically received only a single nomination to progress to the Britain in Bloom UK Finals. This unprecedented level of recognition

reflected the exceptional performance, dedication, and strong community commitment demonstrated by each of these areas. Their achievements positioned them as highly credible and deserving representatives at national level, further highlighting the continued success of the Council's environmental and horticultural initiatives.

Britain in Bloom was one of the United Kingdom's most respected and long-established horticultural programmes, celebrating community pride, environmental responsibility, and high-quality planting across towns, villages, and cities. Established in 1963 and now delivered by the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS), the initiative encouraged collaboration between local groups, councils, and volunteers to enhance their surroundings through sustainable planting schemes, the improvement of public spaces, and projects that promote biodiversity and long-term environmental stewardship. Entries were assessed against three core criteria: horticultural excellence, environmental responsibility, and meaningful community engagement, ensuring that success reflected both quality and positive community impact.

Entry to the prestigious Britain in Bloom UK Finals was highly competitive. To be considered at national level, participants must first have secured success within their regional category, with only the highest-performing groups progressing. This rigorous process ensured that those representing each region at the finals consistently demonstrated excellence in meeting the RHS's exacting standards.

3. Financial costs to attend Award Ceremony

As in previous years, Council had covered the costs associated with travel and accommodation for the awards ceremony. Due to the proposed numbers attending this year event, it was proposed that the attendees travel out and back on the same day. The estimated cost for same day return flights was £77.00 per person, resulting in a total flight cost of £616.00.

Additional costs would be incurred to cover ground transportation from the airport to the venue in Rochdale. Provisional pricing for a return transfer was £100.00, which included the use of an 8-seat minibus.

Proposed by Councillor Foster
Seconded by Councillor McWilliam and agreed that

the Item be deferred, with a report to be brought to full Council to enable consideration of additional costs, including provision for an overnight stay and the inclusion of the Mayor or their nominee, as part of the delegation.

ACTION BY: Nadine Campbell, Parks Development Manager

4.4 **EH/EHS/LR/010 ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH ENFORCEMENT POLICY**

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to seek Members approval for the revised Environmental Health Enforcement Policy.

2. Background

Members were reminded that the enforcement activity carried out by the Environmental Health team was delivered in accordance with an Environmental Health Enforcement Policy.

The Policy set out the principles and approach adopted in applying the legislation falling under the remit of Environmental Health to ensure effective, consistent and open enforcement.

3. Key Issues

The Policy set out the principles and approach adopted in applying the legislation falling under the remit of Environmental Health to ensure effective, consistent and open enforcement.

As set out in the Policy, it was agreed that a review would take place every two years to ensure that it satisfied current legal requirements and customer expectations. This review had been completed and a revised version included for Members information (circulated).

The Enforcement Policy had been reviewed and updated to ensure it remained aligned with current legislation, best practice, and the Council's strategic priorities. The key changes were summarised below

- A stronger emphasis on proportionate, consistent, and risk-based enforcement;
- Inclusion of climate and environmental considerations, artificial intelligence, supporting sustainability and wider Council objectives;
- Greater recognition of vulnerability and equality, including consideration of financial hardship and capacity to comply;
- Clearer guidance on decision-making and the use of professional judgement;
- Increased focus on achieving compliance through advice, support, and early intervention;
- Improved alignment with corporate priorities and overall readability of the document.

4. Equality and Rural Screening Requirements

The revised policy had undergone Section 75 and Rural Needs Impact Assessment.

5. Summary

This report outlined the key updates to the Council's Enforcement Policy following a scheduled review. The revisions ensured the Policy reflected current legislation, best practice and the Council's strategic priorities.

The updated Policy strengthened the emphasis on proportionate and risk-based enforcement, while introducing enhanced consideration of climate and

environmental impacts. It also reinforced the need to take account of vulnerability, equality, and individuals' capacity to comply when making enforcement decisions.

Overall, the changes provided clear guidance for Officers, promoted a more consistent and supportive approach to achieving compliance and aligning enforcement activity with the Council's wider objectives.

Proposed by Councillor Kelly
Seconded by Councillor McAuley and agreed that

the revised Environmental Health Enforcement Policy be approved.

ACTION BY: Colin Kelly, Head of Environment Health and Wellbeing

4.5 EH/EHS/EP/003 CONSULTATION ON GUIDANCE FOR THE ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT OF NOISE FROM DOG KENNELS

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to seek Members' approval to issue a Council response to an Association of Noise Consultants (ANC)/Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH)/Institute of Acoustics (IOA) consultation on draft guidance for the Assessment & Management of Noise from Dog Kennels.

2. Background

A new draft guidance on the assessment and management of noise from dog kennels had been developed by the Association of Noise Consultants (ANC), in collaboration with the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH) and the Institute of Acoustics (IOA). The guidance aimed to address noise impacts on nearby sensitive receptors.

The consultation was available at the following link:

[ANC/CIEH/IOA Assessment & Management of Noise from Dog Kennels guidance consultation Survey](#)

The draft guidance could be assessed at the following link;

<https://www.association-of-noise-consultants.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/ANC-ProPG-Dog-Kennels-Guide.pdf>

Developed by the ANC Noise from Dog Kennels Working Group, the guidance addressed the lack of consistent approaches in this area. While kennel and dog daycare facilities provided an important service, poorly designed or sited operations could cause significant noise impacts and a potential statutory nuisance. The aim of the guidance was to provide a clear and consistent framework for assessing and managing kennel noise, where none had previously existed.

3. Key Issues

The consultation documentation provided detailed guidance on the assessment and management of noise from dog kennels affecting noise-sensitive receptors (NSRs). These included residential properties, schools, hospitals, places of worship, and other premises where noise may impact occupants.

It defined the types of facilities covered and set out ten key aims. The guidance also included source data, measurement procedures, prediction methods and an assessment framework, alongside advice on context, uncertainty and the design and management of kennel facilities.

Feedback was invited from all potential users including local councils, with responses to be reviewed by the ANC, Noise from Dog Kennels Working Group to determine whether revisions were required.

It was proposed that Council would submit a response, a copy of which was circulated for Members' information.

4. Summary

The ANC, with contributions from CIEH and IOA representatives, had published a consultation with associated draft guidance on the assessment and management of noise from dog kennels.

The introduction of this guidance was expected to promote a more consistent and standardised approach among consultants assessing noise from dog kennel facilities. It would also support greater uniformity across Council areas in the review of such assessments and assist in the effective investigation of related noise issues.

Proposed by Councillor Kelly
Seconded by Councillor Foster and agreed that

the draft consultation response be approved.

ACTION BY: Karen McCorvie, Environmental Health Manager

4.6 EH/EHS/LR/001 APPLICATION FOR THE GRANT OF AN OCCASIONAL OUTDOOR ENTERTAINMENT LICENCE – BREAKER BREAKER TRUCK SHOW, 48A MOIRA ROAD, CRUMLIN, BT29 4JL

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to seek Members approval for an Occasional Outdoor Entertainment Licence, held by Leanne Lyons for the Breaker Breaker Truck Show, 48a Moira Road, Crumlin, BT29 4JL.

2. Introduction

An application had been received for the grant of an Occasional Outdoor Entertainment Licence for the following location

Licensee	Location of Premises	Type(s)and hours of entertainment	File Number	New Application or Renewal
Leanne Lyons	Nutt's Corner Market 48a Moira Road Crumlin BT29 4JL	Dancing, Singing, Music, Other entertainment of like kind. Occasional Outdoor Entertainment Licence Saturday 4 July 2026 10.00hrs – 15.00hrs Number of persons – no greater than 2000	EL190	New Application

In line with the Council Protocol for the hearing of Entertainment Licence applications, approved in December 2016, the application must have been considered at the Operations Committee meeting.

Council could decide the following:

- a) Grant the licence;
- b) Grant the licence with specific additional terms, conditions and restrictions;
- c) Refuse the licence;
- d) Defer an application for further consideration or to obtain further information.

If Council made a decision against an Officer's recommendation, then Members must have stated their reasons for doing so. In such circumstances, a recorded vote would be taken.

Main Report

An application had been received for the grant of an Occasional Outdoor Entertainment Licence for the above-named location. In accordance with the Entertainment Licence Policy, Members approval was required before the licence could be granted.

Members were asked to note this event had been held annually at the same location since 2019, taking a break in the year 2025. This was a charitable family friendly event raising funds and awareness for men's mental health.

The management of traffic, and in particular vehicles entering and exiting the site had been considered by the event organisers. Details of how this was managed was contained in an operational plan and acknowledged in the event risk assessment compiled by the event organiser.

It should be noted that Council had received no objections from the PSNI with regards to this event.

The event had successfully operated without incident since its introduction.

3. Summary

An application for an Occasional Outdoor Entertainment Licence had been received from Leanne Lyons in relation to the Breaker Breaker Truck Show at Nutt's Corner, Crumlin. In accordance with Council protocol for the hearing of Entertainment Licence applications, a decision by Members was needed on the granting of the licence.

Proposed by Councillor Foster

Seconded by Alderman Clarke and agreed that

an Occasional Outdoor Entertainment Licence be granted to the applicant, Leanne Lyons for the Breaker Breaker Truck Show, Nutt's Corner, Crumlin with the following conditions

- a) that all relevant licensing requirements are met**
- b) that statutory and public consultees have no objections to the approval**

ACTION BY: Jen McGrugan, Environmental Health Officer

4.7 **EH/EHS/009 HOUSES IN MULTIPLE OCCUPATION**

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to seek approval to renew updated Service Level Agreements for the continued delivery of the HMO licensing function under the regional model administered by Belfast City Council.

2. Background

The Houses in Multiple Occupation Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 (the Act) commenced on 1 April 2019. From that date Belfast City Council had operated the Northern Ireland HMO Unit (NIHMO). Previously Council agreed a Service Level Agreement with Belfast City Council and Northern Ireland Councils. This agreement was due for renewal.

3. Previous Decision of Council

Previously in 2019, Council considered the transfer of responsibility for the regulation of Houses in Multiple Occupation under the Houses in Multiple Occupation Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 and agreed in principle to adopt the new licensing framework. This included supporting the establishment of a Lead Council model, endorsing the development of the necessary service level agreements, guidance documents, governance structures, and acknowledging the proposed approach to decision-making, including the use

of delegated authority for routine applications and referral to full Council in specified circumstances.

4. Key Issues

The Act was administered by Belfast City Council, and it was now necessary to revise the existing Service Level Agreements.

Service level agreements (circulated) had been prepared with respect to: -

1. Legal Services specifically for HMO Licensing matters and to include the provision of legal advice and attendance where necessary at Council meetings;
2. The provision of ICT hardware, software and ICT support to ensure the effective delivery of the HMO service; and
3. The roles, responsibilities and obligations of Regional Lead, Sub Regional Leads and cluster Councils in the delivery of the HMO Licensing scheme.

There were no changes to the Legal Services or Roles and Responsibilities agreements.

The changes to the ICT agreement had been highlighted in yellow. These changes included;

- Clarifying the financial implications of withdrawing from the SLA.
- Withdrawal did not remove a Council's existing contractual obligations to the system supplier.
- Costs for ongoing software licences, maintenance, and support remained payable where services continued to be used.
- These costs supported the continued operation of the regional HMO ICT solution.
- Financial obligations were governed by existing contracts and established financial governance arrangements.
- Service continuity and compliance with supplier agreements were maintained even if a council exited the SLA.

The Role of Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council in the Decision-Making Process

Members were aware Council determined applications in relation to a variety of matters, such as Entertainment Licences and Amusement Permits, where objections had been received.

- a) New and Renewal applications for HMO Licences would be dealt with under the Council's Scheme of Delegation.
- b) Applications would be brought before full Council in the following circumstances: -
 - Where an application was to be refused;

- Where adverse representations were received (grant, renewal or transfer);
 - Where variation of a licence was required;
 - Where a licence was to be revoked
 - In the determination of a fit and proper person.
- c) The following matters would also be brought before Council: -
- The approval of guidance documents;
 - The setting of licence fees; and
- d) Where in the public interest, the Head of Environmental Health and Wellbeing, in consultation with the Director of Environment Services & Sustainability and Borough Lawyer would consider if there were particular circumstances, which made it necessary to suspend a licence immediately, this matter would be dealt with under the Council's Scheme of Delegation.

5. Financial Implication

The HMO licensing function operated on a cost neutral basis only. This meant that Councils may recover reasonable costs associated with the administration and of the scheme.

In the absence of the proposed Service Level Agreement, Council would be required to deliver the HMO licensing function. However, given the limited number of HMOs within the Borough, it would not be possible to achieve a cost-neutral position in doing so.

Based on the current number of licensed HMOs (15 properties), estimated annual licence income of approximately £4,500 would be insufficient to meet the operational costs of delivering the function, including staffing, training and other activities. This would result in a net cost to Council and would not align with the cost recovery framework set out in the legislation.

Approval of the Service Level Agreement provided for participation in the regional delivery model administered by Belfast City Council.

6. Summary

This report set out Council's role in the regional HMO licensing framework administered by Belfast City Council and sought approval for renewed Service Level Agreements covering legal, ICT, and governance arrangements.

It confirmed no substantive changes to the Legal Services or Roles and Responsibilities agreements, with only minor amendments to the ICT SLA clarifying ongoing financial obligations if council withdrew.

The Head of Environmental Health and Wellbeing responded to Members' queries regarding the operation of the HMO scheme and the scheme of delegation.

Proposed by Councillor Foster
 Seconded by Councillor Gilmour and agreed that

the following documents be approved: -

- a) The Service Level Agreement for Legal Services for District Council's Houses in Multiple Occupation Service via the Cluster Lead Councils (Belfast City Council, Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council and Derry City and Strabane District Council).
- b) The Service Level Agreement regarding the provision of ICT Support to Implement, Administer, and Fulfil the HMO Licensing Requirements set out in the Houses in Multiple Occupation Act (Northern Ireland) 2016
- c) The Service Level Agreement regarding the Roles, Responsibilities and Obligations of the Signatory Councils to Implement, Administer, and Fulfil the HMO Licensing Requirements set out in the Houses in Multiple Occupation Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 and that in addition to writing to the Department as agreed at Full Council, the Council also writes to Belfast City Council regarding improved neighbour notification.

ACTION BY: Colin Kelly, Head of Environmental Health & Wellbeing

5 ITEMS FOR NOTING

5.1 L/LEI/SD/018 HEALTH INTERVENTION ACTION PLAN – UPDATE

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to provide a Quarter 4 update on Council's Health Intervention Action Plan for 2025-26

2. Introduction/Background

Members were advised that Council approved the Health Intervention Action Plan (2022-27) in November 2022, (circulated). The plan was designed to increase regular and sustainable participation in exercise across all age groups, with the wider aim of tackling wider health issues in vulnerable and inactive groups.

3. Results in Quarter 4 2025/26

Officers were responsible for developing and coordinating a variety of Council-led programmes, working closely with relevant partner organisations to ensure the Action Plan was delivered effectively. Expanding upon the progress made up to Quarter 3, the delivery in Quarter 4 had resulted in a final annual total of 29,346 participants across Council-supported health intervention programmes. This figure was roughly 10% above the agreed annual target, with a detailed breakdown provided below.

Programmes	25/26 Annual Target	25/26 Total Completers
Core Programming		
Physical Activity Referral Scheme (PARS)	170	162

Move More Cancer Rehabilitation and Rehabilitation Programme	100	87
Age Friendly (Live Long, Fall's Prevention, Walking Netball, Walking Football, Aqua Fit and Simply Strolling)	22,000	23,813
Exercise for Mental Health Programme	2000	2104
Pulmonary Maintenance Programme	600	372
Cardiac Rehabilitation and Maintenance Programmes	1200	1275
Programmes for People with a Disability	500	521
Additional Programming		
Veterans	30	25
Active Pregnancy	100	265
Neurological	N/A	48
Nordic Walking	N/A	260
Health Fairs	N/A	414

4. Funding

In February 2026, the Public Health Agency (PHA) confirmed an additional £22,195.95 in funding to acknowledge the over-delivery of Level 4 completers within Cancer, Pulmonary and Cardiac programmes.

The table below provided a breakdown of external funding confirmed for 2025-26 to support delivery of Health Intervention Action Plan programmes. This funding allocation was intended to facilitate the continued implementation and expansion of key initiatives such as Physical Activity Referral Schemes and Level 4 delivery, ensuring that the resources were available to meet programme targets and address community health needs.

Programme	Funded by	Total
Physical Activity Referral Schemes (PARS)	PHA	£31,461
Level 4 delivery- additional funding for over performance	PHA	£22,195.95
Walking Football Programme	NHSCT	£1,800
Walking Netball Programme	NHSCT	£1200
Falls Prevention Steady and Strong Programme – due Q3	NHSCT	£2,000
Move More (Cancer Rehabilitation Programme)	Macmillan	£5,000
Healthy Kids Programme	NHLP	£8000
Swimming & Golf Cancer Rehab	NHLP	£4000
Parkinsons Move More	Parkinsons UK	£1000
Total		£76,656.95

5. 2026-27 Health Programming

Targets were now in place for each centre in 2026-27 with the overall targets outlined below:

Programmes	26/27 Annual Target
Core Programming	
Physical Activity Referral Scheme (PARS)	170
Move More Cancer Rehabilitation and Rehabilitation Programme	90
Age Friendly (Live Long, Fall's Prevention, Walking Netball, Aqua Fit and Nordic Walking)	23,000
Exercise for Mental Health Programme	2000
Pulmonary Maintenance Programme	450
Cardiac Rehabilitation and Maintenance Programmes	1200
Programmes for People with a Disability	700
Veterans	25
Active Pregnancy- (Post Natal)	200
Substance Use	20
Additional Programmes	
Neurological	60
Weight management	20
Menopause	20

Officers had been engaging with relevant health authorities and other substance use charities regarding the most appropriate way to engage people going through addiction. There were complex considerations for tackling this issue but Officers had begun the planning of a pilot programme in partnership with charities who support mental health and addiction.

As Council came to the end of the 2022-2027 action plan, Officers were conducting a full and comprehensive review as Council developed the new Health Intervention Action Plan for 2027-2032.

Proposed by Alderman Bradley

Seconded by Councillor McWilliam and agreed that

the report be noted.

NO ACTION

5.2 **L/LEI/501 QUEST ACCREDITATION**

1. **Purpose**

The purpose of this report was to provide Members with an update on the Council's Quest accreditation position for 2025/26.

2. Introduction/Background

Members were reminded that Quest was a UK-wide quality assurance scheme for leisure facilities designed to assess how effectively organisations deliver leisure operations. All Council leisure centres initially achieved Quest accreditation in 2019 and retained this accreditation following reassessment in 2021.

In 2023, centres entered the more extensive Quest Plus assessment.

3. Summary of 2025/26 Outcome

In 2025/26, all Council leisure centres successfully completed Quest Plus and achieved accreditation with an overall score of Very Good. This outcome provided independent assurance on service quality and identified opportunities for continued improvement through an agreed action plan.

4. Assessment Process (Quest)

Quest operated as a continuous improvement programme, combining an external assessment with clear evidence requirements and a structured improvement plan. From 1 January 2026, the Quest for Facilities assessment comprised a mystery visit and a one-day on-site assessment, typically completed on a 12-month cycle.

The mystery visit would provide an independent snapshot of the customer journey and day-to-day delivery and would cover three core modules: Operational Standards, Customer Experience, Programming and Inclusion.

The one-day assessment reviewed how each facility was managed and improved in practice, covering six core modules:

- Continuous Improvement
- Empowering the Team
- Driving Participation
- Customer Delivery and Insights
- Operational and Environmental Management
- Compliance Declaration

Each module and the overall assessment was awarded a banding (Unsatisfactory, Satisfactory, Good, Very Good or Excellent), with findings used to identify strengths and prioritise actions for improvement.

5. Next Steps / Continuous Improvement

- Review assessor feedback and agree an improvement action plan for each facility, with owners and target timescales.
- Maintain evidence throughout the year to demonstrate compliance, customer insight, environmental management and continuous improvement activity.

- Monitor progress through routine management meetings and report any significant issues, risks or improvement themes through the normal governance routes ahead of the next assessment cycle.

Proposed by Councillor Kelly

Seconded by Councillor Gilmour and agreed that

the report be noted.

NO ACTION

5.3 EH/GEN/010 APPLICATION OF SEFA DURING FLOODING EVENT ON 27 JANUARY 2026

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to update Members on the operation and outcomes of the Department for Communities' Scheme of Emergency Financial Assistance (SEFA) after the flooding that occurred on 27 January 2026.

2. Background

Members were reminded that on Tuesday 27 January 2026, the Borough experienced a significant and prolonged period of rainfall, with over one month's average rainfall recorded in a short timeframe in certain areas. This resulted in localised surface water flooding affecting residential streets, private dwellings, and some commercial premises.

The intensity and duration of the rainfall exceeded the capacity of some local drainage infrastructure, leading to disruption, property damage and distress for affected residents.

Scheme of Emergency Financial Assistance (SEFA)

The Department for Communities (DfC) operated the Scheme of Emergency Financial Assistance (SEFA) to provide limited financial support to households who experienced severe inconvenience, distress, or disruption as a result of exceptional weather events such as flooding.

The scheme provided a £1,000 one-off payment to eligible householders. Members noted that this payment was not a compensation scheme for property damage and was subject to strict eligibility criteria. These criteria must be satisfied in order for Council to reclaim associated costs from the Department for Communities (DfC). Payments were made directly to eligible householders only, and landlords were not eligible to receive payments under the scheme and that assistance under this scheme was not available to businesses.

SEFA did not replace insurance, and was intended to provide a small, discretionary payment to assist with immediate practical needs in the aftermath of an emergency event.

This may have included support for the replacement of essential household items, cleaning costs, or short-term disruption.

Eligibility was determined through an assessment process undertaken by Councils in line with DfC guidance, which considered factors such as the extent of flooding impact, level of household disruption, and vulnerability of affected residents.

Flooding events were no longer confined to traditional winter storm periods, with significant rainfall and surface water flooding increasingly occurring during the summer months as well as winter, reflecting changing and more unpredictable weather patterns.

3. Key Issues

In the days following the flooding event, Environmental Health Officers undertook field assessments to identify affected properties and evaluated eligibility for SEFA support. Officers worked in line with Departmental guidance to ensure a consistent and fair approach to assessment and allocation of assistance.

As a result of these assessments, a total of 30 households were deemed eligible for assistance, with 30 individual grants issued totalling £30,000.

The Council's Cleansing Section also played a key operational role during the response and recovery phase. This included the removal of flood-damaged materials, assistance with clearance of affected areas, and support to residents and businesses undertaking initial clean-up operations.

Member and Public Information

To support Members in responding to queries from residents, Environmental Health had produced an information podcast outlining the circumstances in which flood damage to homes may fall within SEFA criteria. This resource was available via Flux at:

Members Information / Emergency Information and Contacts / Scheme of Emergency Financial Assistance Podcast – Sept 23

Members were encouraged to refer residents to this resource where appropriate to ensure consistent and accurate information was provided.

For further advice or clarification, Members may contact the Environmental Health Section at:

- Email: envhealth@antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk
- Telephone: 028 9034 0160

Further public information was also available at:

<https://antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk/residents/residents-community-information/community-advice/extreme-weather/flooding/>

4. Financial Position

A total of £30,000 had been issued to 30 households under the SEFA scheme administered through the Council's Environmental Health service.

In accordance with the arrangements set out by the Department for Communities, all eligible expenditure was now fully recoverable from DfC, following verification and submission of all appropriate supporting documentation.

There was therefore no net financial cost to the Council arising from the administration of this scheme, aside from Officer time and associated operational response activity.

5. Summary

The flooding event on 27 January 2026 resulted in significant localised disruption across parts of the Borough due to exceptionally high rainfall levels.

Through the Scheme of Emergency Financial Assistance, a total of 30 households had been supported with emergency payments totalling £30,000.

The Head of Environmental Health and Wellbeing responded to Members' queries regarding the implementation of the scheme and agreed to make a representation to the Department to request an extension to the 7-day deadline for SEFA applications.

Proposed by Councillor Kelly
Seconded by Councillor Foster and agreed that

the report be noted.

ACTION BY: Colin Kelly, Head of Environmental Health and Wellbeing

5.4 WM/WM/040 "FROM WASTE TO WORTH" WASTE PREVENTION PROGRAMME 2026 CONSULTATION

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to update Members on the recently launched "From Waste to Worth" Waste Prevention Programme 2026 consultation by Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA).

2. Background

Members were advised that DAERA opened a consultation on the "From Waste to Worth" Waste Prevention Programme 2026 consultation which aimed to reduce the generation of waste at its source, thereby conserving resources, minimising environmental impact, and supporting a transition to a circular economy.

The draft Programme concentrated on the following objectives:

1. Reduce Resource Use - encouraged efficient use of materials in manufacturing, packaging, and service delivery;
2. Promote Reuse and Repair - support systems and networks that extended the life of products (e.g. reuse centres, repair cafés);
3. Influence Consumer Behaviour - raised awareness and educate the public on sustainable choices and waste reduction;
4. Support Circular Economy Principles - encouraged product design that enabled reuse, repair, remanufacturing, recycling, and minimal waste;
5. Engage Businesses and Public Sector - promoted waste audits, sustainable procurement, and prevention strategies in organisations;
6. Monitor and Report Progress - tracked waste generation trends and evaluated the effectiveness of prevention measures;
7. Reduce Environmental Impact - lowered greenhouse gas emissions and pollution associated with waste production and disposal.

There were 21 Actions set out in the Waste Prevention Programme and they included:

- Implementation of the Deposit Return Scheme from October 2027;
- Support WRAP in conducting an Absorbent Hygiene Products Collection study into the separation of AHP waste;
- Consideration of bans or levies on certain problematic product materials to tackle the problem of littering;
- Develop a waste prevention education programme with Councils;
- Provide support for targeted projects focused on food waste prevention;
- Establish an annual Reuse and Repair Week to promote waste prevention across Northern Ireland.

There were a total of 24 questions covering the targets and actions and how these would be delivered. The full consultation documents could be found at:

https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2026-04/From%20Waste%20to%20Worth%20-%20Northern%20Ireland%20Waste%20Prevention%20Programme_0.PDF.

3. Summary

The consultation period closed on 10 July 2026, and Officers would aim to prepare a draft response on behalf of Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council and present to June Committee for approval.

Proposed by Councillor McAuley

Seconded by Councillor McLaughlin and agreed that

the report be noted.

NO ACTION

5.5 FI/FIN/4 BUDGET REPORT – PERIOD 12 APRIL 2025 TO MARCH 2026

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to provide an update on the financial performance for the Directorates reporting to the Operations Committee for Period 12 April 2025 to March 2026.

2. Introduction/Background

As agreed, quarterly budget reports would be presented to the relevant Committee. All financial reports would be available to all Members.

The budget report for Period 12 did not include adjustments required to arrive at the final financial position of the Council for the 2025/26 financial year. These adjustments included final accruals of expenditure incurred and grants and debts invoiced after 31 March 2026, contributions to or from reserves, and prepayments of expenditure and income.

The final financial position for the year would be presented to the Audit and Risk Committee in June 2026.

3. Summary

A report on the financial performance, employee costs, highest areas of expenditure and income, and the financial performance by Head of Service were included and circulated for Members' information.

As at period 12:

- Estates and Recreation Directorate had a favourable variance of £582k (4.9%) against the budgeted financial performance for the period;
- Environmental Services & Sustainability Directorate had a favourable variance of £2.2M (9.1%) against the budgeted financial performance for the period.

During the year, £3.0M, of grant income had been received as part of the DEFRA Extended Producers Responsibility for Packaging (DEPR). This was £1.7M higher than Officers budgeted for in 2025/26.

The Corporate Leadership Team and senior Finance staff were reviewing the use of this grant funding however it was likely that this would be allocated towards the Council cost of the Waste Harmonisation Scheme and reduce the favourable variance within Environmental Services & Sustainability to approximately £500k (2%).

The overall financial position of the Council would be given in a presentation to the Policy & Governance Committee.

Proposed by Councillor Foster
Seconded by Councillor Kelly and agreed that

the report be noted.

NO ACTION

5.6 EH/GEN/011 UPDATE ON LITTER AND FLY TIPPING ENFORCEMENT ACTIVITY

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to update Members on enforcement activity undertaken by the Environmental Health during the last 12 months and to outline current and future actions to tackle littering, dog fouling and fly tipping within the Borough.

2. Background

Council maintained a proactive multi-disciplinary approach to environmental offences, working closely with a range of services to protect the quality of the Borough's public spaces. This included operational delivery by Waste Management (street cleansing and waste removal), enforcement led by Environmental Health, public engagement through Marketing and Communications and a collaborative response with the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) under the Council's adopted fly tipping protocol.

A suite of prevention and deterrent measures operate across the Borough. These included routine street cleansing, provision of litter and dog waste bins, targeted enforcement patrols, signage, community clean-ups, placement of mobile CCTV where appropriate, supportive education in schools and community groups, and ongoing social media engagement. The Council also actively supported regional initiatives such as *Live Here Love Here* and *Eco Schools*, which promote environmental responsibility more broadly.

While littering and fly tipping remain issues of concern in many parts of Northern Ireland, Council's approach aimed to deter offences, encourage positive behaviour and support community pride.

3. Key Issues

Over the past year, Environmental Health Enforcement Officers had undertaken proactive patrols, responded to public complaints, and conducted investigations relating to littering, dog fouling, and fly tipping across the Borough. During 2025/2026, the service received 39 complaints of littering, 213 complaints relating to dog fouling, and 411 complaints relating to fly tipping.

Officers completed a total of 2,910 proactive patrols, focusing primarily on litter and dog fouling in known hotspot areas identified through intelligence, previous complaints, and local reports.

These patrols remained the most effective method for detecting offences in real time and provide opportunities for Officers to engage directly with the public. Patrol activity was strategically targeted to areas where offences were most prevalent.

To reinforce enforcement and raise awareness, 360 additional warning signs were erected in priority locations. Numerous flyers were also issued to properties in areas experiencing persistent problems, both to serve as warnings and to encourage reporting of offenders. While most larger-scale fly tipping incidents were reported directly by the public, smaller-scale littering often occurs without formal reports and was addressed during routine patrols.

While Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) were an enforcement tool, opportunities to issue them can be limited, as littering offences often occur quickly and without an authorised officer present. Enforcement action was subsequently only taken when sufficient evidence existed, including witness statements from members of the public if required.

Between January 2025 and March 2026, a total of five Fixed Penalty Notices had been issued for offences related to larger scale fly tipping. One Fixed Penalty Notice related to an Article 4 offence i.e. unauthorised or harmful deposit, treatment or disposal of controlled waste, with the remaining four being issued for Article 5 "Duty of Care" offences.

In each case, the fixed penalty payments received were subject to an early repayment reduction, with the total income amounting to £1100.

In addition to the above, a combined total of 10 Fixed Penalties were issued for more minor littering offences and for dog fouling (8 for litter, 2 for dog fouling). The total income generated from these fixed penalties was £1050. Members were reminded of the current FPN levels, previously agreed by Council:

- Littering and Dog Fouling: £200 (£150 for early payment)
- Fly tipping Article 4 (Illegally depositing waste): £400 (£300 for early payment)
- Fly tipping Article 5 (Duty of Care): £300 (£200 for early payment)

These levels were proposed specifically to provide a maximum yet proportionate deterrent, while supporting consistent enforcement standards across the Borough.

Enforcement Resources

The Enforcement Team comprised of six Enforcement Officers dedicated to environmental enforcement. Officers carried out a dual role, enforcing dog control legislation alongside littering and fly tipping offences. Other duties included abandoned vehicles, education and assisting animal welfare officers. In addition, one Environmental Health Officer was tasked with responsibility for the investigation of larger scale fly tipping offences.

Enforcement of littering offences generally required either direct observation or supporting evidence from witnesses, which can limit the number of FPNs issued. Nevertheless, Officers continue to prioritise proactive patrols to maximise opportunities for intervention and engagement.

This year, a significant portion of Enforcement Officer time had been committed to implementing new XL Bully legislation, which had involved complex investigations, operational planning for dog seizures, and preparation of court files. Since the introduction of the XL Bully legislation, Officers had executed 9 warrants, seized 9 banned breed dogs, and carried out detailed breed assessments of 12 dogs.

The team investigated 181 dog attack reports, a 39% increase compared with pre-COVID 2018/2019 figures. These investigations were resource-intensive, requiring site visits, evidence gathering, witness statements, and liaison with owners and victims. Officers also committed significant time to following up reports of alleged illegal puppy breeding, in line with recent DAERA initiatives.

Exploring Additional Enforcement Options

In recognition of the ongoing challenges posed by littering and environmental offences, Environmental Health had been exploring alternative enforcement models, including the potential use of private enforcement support. Across the UK, some local authorities had successfully used external partners to enhance enforcement capacity, particularly in areas with limited internal resources. These arrangements support visible enforcement and compliance while maintaining professional standards.

Private enforcement had been deployed on a trial basis in a small number of Northern Ireland councils, with some degree of success. Officers were currently investigating potential delivery models, costs, governance safeguards and would report back to a future meeting.

Environmental Health was also considering a new dedicated Litter and Fly Tipping Strategy, which would set out a more structured, long-term framework for prevention, enforcement, education and partnership working in relation to environmental crime across the Borough.

Tackling Dog Fouling

New Dog Control Orders came into effect in January 2026. Work was underway with Parks and Marketing and Communications Teams to install signage across relevant areas and raise public awareness via the Council website, social media campaigns, and local press. Dog Control areas aimed to improve responsible dog ownership and reduce environmental impacts from dog fouling.

The “Dog Watch” campaign, launched in 2025 to target persistent dog fouling in residential areas, was trialled in the Doagh area. Officers hoped to roll out this campaign further following engagement with local community groups and voluntary organisations.

Over the past 12 months, over 1 million dog waste bags have been distributed to dog owners through Council buildings, community centres, and leisure facilities. Complaints about dog fouling have steadily reduced over the past decade, from 360 in 2019/20 to 203 in 2025/26, reflecting the impact of officer patrols, direct engagement with dog walkers, and promotion of responsible dog ownership.

Education Campaigns and Community Engagement

Engaged communities were essential in tackling littering, fly tipping, and dog fouling, often acting as the “eyes and ears” for Enforcement Officers. Over the past 12 months, Officers had actively participated in community clean-ups and litter pick events with voluntary organisations, including *Big Spring Clean* and *World Clean Up Day* at Reas Wood, Glas na Bradan Glen, Lillian Bland Park, Crumlin Glen, and Antrim Lough Shore.

Officers regularly engaged with Neighbourhood Watch groups, Residents' Associations, church groups, and other community organisations, delivering talks on littering, fly tipping, responsible dog ownership, and reporting offences. Collaboration with local stakeholders, such as The Junction during their “Barket” events, had been particularly effective in raising awareness among dog owners and promoting reporting.

The team also worked with organisations such as the Belfast Hills Partnership and Woodland Trust to identify hotspots and tackle persistent offences, using mobile CCTV where appropriate. Enforcement efforts were further strengthened through close partnership with *Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful* via the Northern Ireland Environmental Quality Forum. Annual joint campaigns target cigarette litter, coffee cups, drink bottles, and dog fouling, supported by billboards at key locations. Media and social media campaigns throughout the year highlighted environmental impacts, new powers, and increased fines for offences.

While Fixed Penalty Notices remained an important deterrent, the reduction in complaints reflected the impact of proactive patrols and community engagement. Officers recognised the need for long-term behavioural change through education, and a dedicated role focusing on campaigns and civic responsibility could enhance this work in future.

Education and awareness would remain central to the Council's approach over the coming year, supported by the development of a more data and evidence driven enforcement strategy to better target resources and maximise impact. Initiatives would include media coverage on littering and fly-tipping offences, targeted resident campaigns, selective billboard advertising, educational engagement in schools and community groups, social media promotion, continued collaboration with *Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful*, and Dog Watch and Responsible Dog Ownership campaigns.

Together, these measures would complement enforcement activity, reinforcing positive behaviour, supporting behavioural change, and encouraging shared community responsibility for the Borough's environment.

4. Summary

Over the past 12 months, Council had maintained a proactive approach to tackling littering, dog fouling, and fly tipping through targeted patrols, investigations, warning signage, and community engagement. While these offences remained a challenge, the combination of visible enforcement, education, and public awareness continued to encourage responsible behaviour across the Borough.

Enforcement resources had been effectively deployed, including implementation of new Dog Control Orders and XL Bully legislation, alongside responses to an increase in complex cases such as dog attacks.

Looking ahead, Environmental Health would strengthen their enforcement and education approach and is currently exploring additional options, including the potential use of private enforcement, with a future report to outline proposals for Member consideration.

Through these coordinated efforts, Council remained committed to reducing offences and improving the local environment for residents.

The Head of Environmental Health and Wellbeing and Director of Environmental Services & Sustainability responded to Members' queries regarding resources, areas awaiting signage, mobile CCTV, and fly-tipping hotspots.

Proposed by Councillor Archibald-Brown
Seconded by Councillor McAuley and agreed that

the report be noted and that a workshop be set up to discuss current litter and fly tipping prevention activities.

ACTION BY: Michael Laverty, Director of Environmental Services & Sustainability

Councillor McLaughlin left the meeting during any Any Other Relevant Business

6 ANY OTHER RELEVANT BUSINESS

- 6.1 A Member expressed concerns regarding the continued closure of the John Street playpark in Randalstown due to a Health and Safety risk arising from falling tiles from a neighbouring property. The Member requested an update for residents, including Council engagement with the building owner, timeline for repairs, exploration of enforcement options, and consideration of whether any temporary risk-managed access could be facilitated. It was also requested that this information be shared with Members.

The Head of Estate Services agreed to provide a public update and advised that at present there was no timeline for the re-opening and that on-going engagement with the building owner was taking place to seek a resolution.

ACTION BY: David Blair, Head of Estate Services

- 6.2 A Member raised concerns regarding the unsuitable replacement of the basket element for a piece of play equipment.

The Head of Estate Services advised that their understanding was that the basket replacement would be on a like-for-like basis and were also disappointed and confirmed that they were now looking for the unit to be completely replaced.

In response to a question from a Member, the Head of Estate Services confirmed that a full audit was being carried out at all playpark sites and that meetings were being held with the new contractor to remediate any issues and that a new tender would be issued shortly for works to be completed later this year to ensure that continuous improvement of the Borough's playparks.

ACTION BY: David Blair, Head of Estate Services

- 6.3 A Member requested an update on the progress of lighting to be provided to the Eel sculpture just outside Toome.

The Head of Estate Services advised that there was ongoing contact with NIE and an adjacent landowner and that due to lack of access this would now have to be revisited with NIE and potentially a business case developed. He also confirmed that a number of other options including solar power and battery packs were also being explored and detailed the background of the power source to this sculpture.

ACTION BY: David Blair, Head of Estate Services

- 6.4 A Member commended Council on the supply of a granite flowerbed in Station Road, Randalstown and requested that these more sustainable structures be installed in other areas of the Borough to replace those in poor repair.

The Head of Parks Operations confirmed that a replacement programme of raised beds across the Borough would be rolled out over the next 2-3 years.

ACTION BY: Paul Mawhinney Head of Parks Operations.

- 6.5 As this was the last Operations Committee meeting before the Annual Meeting, the outgoing Chair thanked his Deputy Chair, the Committee Members and the Officers for their support during his year as Chair. On behalf of their Groups, the DUP, UUP, Alliance and Sinn Fein thanked both the Chair and Deputy Chair and commended their dedication. The Deputy Chair also thanked the Members and Officers for their help and support and paid tribute to the Chair.

NO ACTION

PROPOSAL TO PROCEED 'IN CONFIDENCE'

Proposed by Councillor Foster

Seconded by Councillor McWilliam and agreed

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

7 ITEMS IN CONFIDENCE

7.1 **IN CONFIDENCE** PK/GEN/197 BEREAVEMENT SERVICES QUARTERLY UPDATE

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to provide an update on the burial capacity within Council's cemeteries and to present an analysis of cremation usage performance.

2. Introduction/Background

Members would be aware that quarterly updates were routinely presented to the Operations Committee outlining the current burial capacity across Council-owned cemeteries. In addition to this, supplementary information had been included in the report relating to the performance of the Crematorium, with particular focus on cremation activity and overall levels of usage.

3. Current Position

The capacity as of 31 March 2026 for Council's Cemeteries and Gardens of Remembrance was detailed as follows:

Cemetery	Previous Report up to 31 December 2025	No. of plots remaining Up to 31 MARCH 2026	Current Average no. of plots sold PER YEAR (based on 3yr average)	Estimated remaining burial capacity (years)
Ballyclare	469	450	100	4.5
Rashee*	335	243	15	16
Sixmile	2026	2013	80	25
Crumlin	664	659	25	25
TOTAL	3486	3365	220	15

Garden of Remembrance Plots (for burial of ashes only)	Previous Report up to 31 December 2025	No. of plots remaining Up to 31 MARCH 2026	Average no. of plots sold (based on 3 year average)	Estimated remaining burial capacity (years)
Carnmoney	42	20	55	0.5
Ballyclare	113	112	5	5
Mallusk	15	15	0	0
TOTAL	170	147	60	2.5

In relation to Rashee Cemetery, Members were advised that archaeological survey works at the site had now been fully completed by specialist consultants from Queen's University Belfast. These investigations had produced clear preliminary findings confirming the presence of a substantial souterrain within the surveyed area.

The identified area had been mapped (circulated) and incorporated into the PlotBox system to support accurate assessment and future planning. Based on the information currently available, it was estimated that the presence of the souterrain may result in the loss of approximately 120 burial plots, however, this figure remained provisional.

Formal confirmation and guidance were now awaited from the Historic Environment Division (HED) regarding the potential requirement for a protected buffer zone around the souterrain. The extent of any such designation would determine the final number of plots affected. Members would be kept fully informed as further information became available from HED.

4. Key implications for the site

To ensure the continued provision of burial services at the site, officers would proceed with the installation of plinths in areas located outside the identified souterrain zone. This approach was intended to maintain operational capacity within the cemetery while safeguarding the integrity of the archaeologically sensitive area.

The proposed installation of plinths would allow for the continuation of interments in a controlled and appropriate manner, ensuring that burial services could be delivered without interruption during this period of uncertainty. All works would be carefully planned and implemented in line with relevant guidance and best practice taking into account both operational requirements and the need to protect the underlying heritage features.

5. Crematorium Performance

The current cremation rates for Council's Crematorium, recorded up to and including 31 March 2026, were set out below. The data provided an overview of cremation activity for the first quarter, including a breakdown of usage by residents and non-residents.

Month	Overall	Residents	Non-Residents
January	157	49	108
February	129	39	90
March	125	36	89
Total	411	124	287

Based on current usage levels, residents accounted for approximately 30.17% of all cremations undertaken at the Crematorium, while non-residents represented the remaining 69.83% of overall cremation activity.

6. Update on New Valley Cemetery

Site survey works to establish the viability of this site for burial provision was currently being undertaken by specialist consultants with completion anticipated by the end of summer 2026.

This would then inform the development of an Outline Business Case for the provision of a new cemetery at this site. If the site was suitable, the project could progress to address future capacity requirements and ensure the continued delivery of burial services across the Borough.

The Outline Business Case would consider a range of factors, including demand projections, financial implications and delivery options. This would be presented to Council for consideration and approval.

A Member raised concerns that as burial capacity in the Borough and burial provision was a statutory obligation of the Council, he requested that the Outline Business Case for the new Valley Cemetery be expediated as a matter of urgency.

The Head of Parks Operations confirmed that the Garden of Remembrance in Antrim would be completed in two phases during the next financial year bringing in an additional 320 plots. He further advised that the feasibility study on burial options would be brought back to Committee as soon as possible.

Proposed by Councillor Foster

Seconded by Councillor Kelly and agreed that

the report be noted.

ACTION BY: Paul Mawhinney Head of Parks Operations.

7.2 **IN CONFIDENCE** PBS/PS/026 **DEVELOPMENT OF AN URBAN SKATEPARK AT ANTRIM FORUM**

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to seek Members' approval to place Programme 2, Project 1 – Urban Skate Park at Antrim Forum on the Council's Capital Programme and to commence Stage 2 of the Council's 4-stage Capital Project Management Process.

The report was supported by a PEACEPLUS Business Case, (circulated) which set out the strategic justification, options appraisal and preferred option for the development of an Urban Skate Park at Antrim Forum. The preferred option was Option 5 – Granite Style Skate Plaza with Lighting and Fencing, which delivered the strongest alignment with PEACEPLUS Programme 2 objectives, Council strategic priorities and consultation feedback.

Subject to Members' approval, Stage 2 would involve progression to full Business Case, planning and procurement, project governance arrangements and confirmation of funding and affordability parameters.

2. Introduction/Background

Members were advised that the Council's PEACEPLUS Local Community Action Plan included Programme 2 – Our Active Borough, under which Project 1 identified the development of an Urban Skate Park at Antrim Forum as a priority intervention under Theme 1: Local Community Regeneration and Transformation.

Programme 2 focused on the delivery of secure, inclusive, safe and shared spaces that promoted physical activity, wellbeing and positive social engagement. Project 1 specifically targets the provision of modern urban sports infrastructure to address gaps in provision for older children, young people and adults, supporting informal sport such as skateboarding, BMX, scootering and inline skating.

The proposed site was the existing PEACE Play Park at Antrim Forum. A recent inspection and audit had confirmed that the equipment had reached 'end of life' and the facility was no longer safe or fit for purpose. Given the proximity of alternative destination play provision (including Antrim Loughshore), redevelopment as an Urban Skate Park would deliver a distinct and complementary leisure facility and broaden the recreational offer at the Forum.

Redeveloping the Antrim Forum site as an Urban Skate Park would therefore deliver a distinct and complementary leisure facility, broaden the recreational offer at the Forum and respond directly to demonstrated demand for urban sports provision, building on the success of Skate 100 at V36 Valley Park.

The project would adopt the design and engagement approach used for the PEACE IV "Skate 100" project at V36 Valley Park. A project steering group would be established (including representation from a Young Person's Reference Group) to support ongoing consultation with stakeholders during design and implementation, alongside an activity development plan and launch programme to promote sustained use.

3. Key Issues

A detailed options appraisal had been undertaken as part of the Business Case and was circulated. Five options were considered, ranging from the status quo through to a fully serviced skate park facility.

Following assessment of strategic alignment, projected usage, community benefit, deliverability, cost and risk, the Business Case identifies Option 5 – Granite Style Skate Plaza with Lighting and Fencing was the preferred option. Option 5 provides:

- A modern, high-quality skate plaza design with the highest capacity and participation potential
- Floodlighting to enable year-round and evening use, maximising return on investment
- Secure fencing to support effective site management and address

- concerns regarding out-of-hours access and antisocial behaviour
- Strong alignment with PEACEPLUS Programme 2 objectives, Council strategic priorities and consultation feedback
- A facility that complements and acts as a "sister park" to Skate 100 at V36, extending equitable urban sports provision across the Borough

While Option 5 represented the highest capital investment, it delivered the most comprehensive solution and the greatest long-term community benefit.

4. Financial Implications

The project would be primarily funded through PEACEPLUS, with the final capital cost and funding package set out in the enclosed Business Case. Any required Council contribution would be considered as part of the Capital Programme process. Ongoing operational and maintenance costs would be assessed as the design was developed and, where possible, managed within existing revenue budgets.

5. Next Steps

Subject to Members' approval:

- The project would be placed on the Council's Capital Programme and governance arrangements (including a project steering group and Young Person's Reference Group representation) would be confirmed
- The Business Case (circulated) would be used to progress the project to Stage 2 of the Capital Project Management Process.

The Head of Leisure Operations responded to Members' questions regarding the structure and operation of the proposed facility. Members also requested that consideration be given to inviting a local resident to be part of the steering committee and that the option for the provision for board hire, perhaps with a social enterprise, be explored.

Proposed by Councillor Archibald-Brown

Seconded by Alderman Clarke and agreed that

- a) **the inclusion of Programme 2, Project 1 – Urban Skate Park at Antrim Forum on the Council's Capital Programme, to enable progression through the Council's Capital Project Management Process;**
- b) **commencement of Stage 2 of the Capital Project Management Process, supported by the enclosed PEACEPLUS Business Case;**
- c) **Option 5 – Granite Style Skate Plaza with Lighting and Fencing as the preferred option to be taken forward for further development at Stage 2; and**
- d) **Note the funding and affordability parameters, including:**
 - **Total estimated capital cost of approximately £[REDACTED];**
 - **PEACEPLUS capital funding of £[REDACTED], supplemented by £[REDACTED] redirected PEACEPLUS capital funding;**
 - **A residual Council capital contribution to be considered as part of the Capital Programme process;**

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[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 Councillor McAuley 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 8.37 pm.

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.