



10 April 2026

Committee Chair: Councillor S Wilson

Committee Vice-Chair: Councillor M Brady

Committee Members: Aldermen - J McGrath and S Ross

Councillors – J Burbank, S Cosgrove, P Dunlop, J Gilmour, R Lynch, H Magill, T McGrann, V McWilliam, M Ní Chonghaile, A O'Lone, M Stewart

Dear Member

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Community Development Committee will be held in the **Council Chamber, Mossley Mill** on **Wednesday 15 April 2026** at **6.30pm**.

You are requested to attend.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard Baker".

Richard Baker, GM MSc
Chief Executive, Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council

PLEASE NOTE: Refreshments will be available in the Café from 5.20

For any queries, please contact Member Services:
Tel: 028 9448 1301

memberservices@antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk

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2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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**REPORT ON BUSINESS TO BE CONSIDERED AT THE
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING ON
WEDNESDAY 15 APRIL 2026**

3 ITEMS FOR DECISION

3.1 PT/CI/073 COMMUNITY AND CULTURE DIRECTORATE BUSINESS PLAN 2026/27

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to seek Members' approval for the Community and Culture Directorate Business Plan for 2026/27.

2. Background

Part 12 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 puts in place a framework to support the continuous improvement of Council services.

Specifically, the duties in the Act relate to Section 84(1), 85(2) and 85(9) whereby the Council has a statutory duty to make arrangements to:

- Secure continuous improvement.
- Secure achievement of its improvement objectives; and
- Exercise its functions so that any Departmental specified standards are met.

3. Previous Decision of Council

In January 2026, the Council approved a strategic performance framework as part of the Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan 2026/27.

4. Business Planning

Business planning plays a vital role in the Council's performance management and delivery processes. It offers a more efficient and cohesive approach to monitoring and evaluating performance while improving overall visibility.

The purpose of the Directorate Business Plans are to:

- Demonstrate how each of the Directorates are supporting and achieving Council's priorities.
- Provide a clear sense of purpose of the Directorate and the challenges it faces.
- Illustrate how it is aligning its resources to meet the challenges ahead.
- Measure performance and hold Departments to account to ensure they deliver for the Council and its residents.

The 2026/27 Business Plan for the Community and Culture Directorate is **enclosed** for Members' approval.

5. Financial Position/Implications

The budgets for delivery of the 2026/2027 Directorate Business Plan have been agreed as part of the Council's rate setting process.

6. Governance

Progress reports on the Council's Community and Culture Directorate Business Plan 2026/27 will be reported quarterly to CLT and biannually to the Community Development Committee.

7. **Recommendation**

It is recommended that the Community and Culture Business Plan 2026/27 be approved.

Prepared by: Allen Templeton, Performance Improvement Officer

Agreed by: Ronan McKenna, Head of Community Development, Simon Goldrick, Head of Arts, Culture Tourism and Events and Jeanette McIntyre, Head of Marketing Communications and PR

Approved by: Ursula Fay, Director of Community and Culture

3.2 AC/EV/025 BALLYCLARE MAY FAIR

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to seek Members' approval for the minutes of the Ballyclare May Fair Working Group meeting of 11 March 2026 as a true and accurate reflection of the meeting.

2. Background

Members are reminded that the role of the Ballyclare May Fair Working Group is to promote, develop and organise the annual Ballyclare May Fair. The specific role of the May Fair Working Group is set out as follows:

- To advise the Council on the programme for the May Fair
- To organise delivery of the May Fair
- To promote participation in the May Fair by the Ballyclare community and wider Borough community
- To explore opportunities for sponsorship and additional funding for the May Fair
- To provide advocacy for the May Fair and achieve collaboration of a range of stakeholders into the design and delivery of the May Fair
- To contribute expertise, skills and knowledge from a range of sectors to the benefit and continuous improvement of this annual event so that Ballyclare DEA achieves maximum benefit from its delivery.

The Working Group meets monthly from September to June each year and reports to the Community Development Committee. Membership consists of all Ballyclare DEA Elected Members, the Mayor and Deputy Mayor, and up to five non-elected voluntary members who are actively involved in the local community.

3. Previous Decision of the Council

The revised Working Group Terms of Reference were approved at the December 2023 Community Planning Committee. The minutes of the previous meeting were approved at the March 2026 Community Development Committee meeting.

4. Working Group Meeting

Members are advised that the Ballyclare May Fair Working Group met on 11 March 2026 in Ballyclare Town Hall. The minutes of the meeting are **enclosed**.

5. Recommendation

It is recommended that the minutes of the Ballyclare May Fair Working Group meeting of 11 March 2026 be approved as a true and accurate reflection of the meeting.

Prepared by: Joanne Hamilton-Whyte, PA to Director of Community Development

Agreed by: Simon Goldrick, Head of Arts, Culture, Tourism and Events

Approved by: Ursula Fay, Director of Community and Culture

3.3 AC/GEN/117 IRISH LANGUAGE/GAELTACHT SUMMER COURSE AND ULSTER-SCOTS CULTURAL BURSARY SCHEME 2026/27

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to seek Members' approval to award 22 Irish Language/Gaeltacht Summer Course Bursaries and 4 Ulster-Scots Cultural Bursaries.

2. Introduction/Background

The aim of the Irish Language/Gaeltacht Summer Course and Ulster-Scots Cultural Bursary Scheme is to support individuals in the Borough to participate, learn and engage with the Irish Language and Ulster-Scots Culture.

As part of the programme, 30 bursaries of £250 are available for individuals to contribute to costs associated with participating in Gaeltacht summer courses and Ulster-Scots culture initiatives relating to language and linguistics, music, drama, poetry, literature, dance and art.

3. Previous Decision of Council

The delivery of the Irish Language/Gaeltacht Summer Course and Ulster-Scots Cultural Bursary scheme with a budget of £7,500, was approved at the November 2025 Community Development Committee.

4. Irish Language/Gaeltacht Summer Course and Ulster-Scots Cultural Bursary Scheme

The Irish Language/Gaeltacht Summer Course and Ulster-Scots Cultural Bursary Scheme opened for online applications on 9 February 2026 and closed on 13 March 2026.

Applicants were required to meet the following criteria:

- Be residents of the Borough
- Have parental/guardian permission to apply if under 18
- Not to have received Council funding of this nature previously

Members are advised that 30 applications (26 Irish Language and 4 Ulster-Scots) were received with 26 of these (22 Irish Language and 4 Ulster-Scots) meeting the required criteria and threshold for funding, totalling £6,500.

An Assessment Panel made up of an Elected Member from each of the four main political parties met on 19 March and recommended that all 26 successful applications be approved for funding.

Details of the proposed successful applicants are **enclosed**.

5. Finance

The Irish Language/Gaeltacht Summer Course and Ulster-Scots Cultural Bursary Scheme budget is £7,500, and the cost of funding all 26 proposed applications would be £6,500.

6. Governance

In order to receive the bursary, successful recipients will be required to provide proof of payment for enrolment on courses (where applicable).

7. Summary

A total of 26 applications for the Irish Language/Gaeltacht Summer Course and Ulster-Scots Cultural Bursary Scheme have been assessed by an all-party Panel of Elected Members and are recommended for funding of £250 per applicant. The total cost of £6,500 is provided for within the 2026/27 Arts and Culture budget.

8. Recommendation

It is recommended that all 26 successful applications for the Irish Language/Gaeltacht Summer Course and Ulster-Scots Cultural Bursary Scheme be funded at a total cost of £6,500.

Prepared by: Anna Boyle, Funding Unit Manager

Agreed by: Simon Goldrick, Head of Arts, Culture & Events and Richard Murray, Head of Finance

Approved by: Ursula Fay, Director of Community and Culture and John Balmer, Director of Finance

3.4 ED/ED/080/VOL4 COUNCIL EVENTS PLAN

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to seek Members' approval for the proposed Council events plan for the remainder of 2026.

2. Introduction/Background

The Arts, Culture, Tourism and Events team is responsible for the delivery of the Council's events programme, which includes both directly managed events, and support for third-party events funded through the Council's Tourism Event Fund such as SuperCup NI and the Pipe Band Championships in the Borough. The programme of directly managed events includes annual highlights such as Enchanted Winter Garden and the Ballyclare May Fair, as well as one-off events such as the Tercentenary of the Old Courthouse (2026), the VE Day 80th Anniversary (2025) and Armed Forces Day (2024).

The annual events managed directly by the Arts, Culture, Tourism and Events team attract more than 185,000 attendees each year. The third-party events supported by the Council account for thousands more visitors to the Borough and the economic benefits this brings.

3. Previous Decision of Council

The Council Events Plan is brought to the Committee twice every year. Members are reminded that the previous Council Events Plan update and associated costs to the Council were approved at the Community Development Committee in October 2025.

4. Council Events October 2025 to March 2026

Highlights of the events delivered since the last Committee report in October 2025 include:

- **Halloween at the Junction (delivered by The Junction Retail and Leisure Park and supported with £15,000 of Tourism Event Fund Grant Aid):** The Junction's annual weeklong programme of Halloween family fun and artisan markets attracted more than 35,000 visitors between 25-31 October 2025.
- **Spooked Out at V36:** as in previous years, all 8,000 places for the Council's flagship Halloween event were booked out in advance. A high-quality evening of amusements, entertainment and fireworks were provided for attendees.

- **Threemilewater Pumpkin Patch at Mossley Mill:** Pumpkin Patch continues to grow each year, with 33% more visitors in 2025 than 2024 making it the biggest event to date.
- **Enchanted Winter Garden at Antrim Castle Gardens:** more than 90,000 people attended the 2025 Enchanted Winter Garden, which for the first time extended into the period between Christmas and New Year and which featured more lighting displays and attractions than ever before. The event achieved an 87% satisfaction rating among visitors surveyed against a corporate key performance indicator target of 80%.
- **St Patrick's Day:** St Patrick's Day events attracted almost 8,000 people and took place in Antrim Castle Gardens and the Theatre at the Mill, with family fun days, exhibitions, displays and a concert. The Journeys programme at the Old Courthouse also formed a four-week festival relating to shared cultural traditions.

5. Council Events April 2026 - December 2026

Details of the proposed events to be delivered throughout the remainder of 2026 are **enclosed** for Members' information. Members are asked to note the following points in particular:

- **Spring Plant Fair:** the annual plant fair will return to the Parterre Garden in Antrim Castle Gardens on 11 April 2026, and will feature an increased range of plant and horticulture vendors.
- **Ballyclare May Fair:** the annual May Fair will return in 2026 for a week-long programme of cultural events and entertainment, themed around the 250th anniversary of the USA. This will include elements such as talks relating to the historical links between Ulster and the USA, a traditional horse fair, the Mayor's Parade, a family fun day featuring American sports, and seasonal produce markets, with funding and programming support provided by the Ulster-Scots Agency.
- **Home and Garden Show Ireland:** the annual Garden Show Ireland event will, for the first time in 2026, also incorporate elements of a Home Show with renowned interior designer and style guru Suzanne Garuda joining horticulturist David Domoney as Show Ambassadors. Featuring plant sellers, artisan traders, cooking demonstrations, family entertainment, talks and workshops, Home and Garden Show Ireland will also see the launch of a major 12-month photography competition as part of the PEACEPLUS Our Historic Borough programme, which will encourage residents and visitors to capture iconic images of the Borough's natural and built heritage throughout the year. Following reduced visitor numbers caused by bad weather in each of the last two years, Home and Garden Show Ireland 2026 will be largely undercover in two giant marquees in the Antrim Castle Gardens Events Field.
- **Antrim and Newtownabbey Beer and Cider Festival:** to maximise economies of scale from the infrastructure being put in place for the Home and Garden

Show Ireland the previous weekend, the Borough's first Beer and Cider Festival will take place in Antrim Castle Gardens on 19 and 20 June. Run in association with the Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA) NI, the event will provide visitors with an opportunity to enjoy a range of craft ales, lagers, and ciders from some of the region's most exciting brewers in a relaxed atmosphere with live entertainment.

- **Brighter Nights:** delivered since 2012 on Friday evenings throughout July and August in Lilian Bland Community Park Glengormley, Brighter Nights is a summer programme of free arts and culture activity for younger people, which attracted more than 10,000 participants in 2025.
- **Party in the Park:** the ever-popular annual outdoor concert and family fun day in Antrim Castle Gardens will return on 2 August 2026, with a USA250 theme.
- **Shoreline Festival:** an annual free concert and family fun day at Jordanstown Loughshore Park immediately after the Whiteabbey Village Fair, which in 2026 will take place on Sunday 23 August.
- **Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann:** the world's largest celebration of Irish music and culture is taking place in Belfast from 2-9 August 2026 and is expected to attract 600,000 people to the city. Although the Fleadh will be confined to Belfast city and the Fleadh Fringe will only take place in Belfast and Bangor, officers are working with the Borough's main accommodation providers to help them benefit from the festival by programming music events in hotels during the Fleadh, and promoting the Borough's accommodation and easy access to Belfast to capitalise on the economic opportunity the Fleadh presents. Officers are also working with tour providers to incentivise visitors to the Fleadh to take a break from Belfast and visit Antrim and Newtownabbey.
- **Spinning Yarns:** scheduled for 29 August 2026, this annual festival of colour, creativity and craft in Mossley Mill Civic Square has grown in popularity year-on-year, with talks, demonstrations and workshops alongside craft stalls and family entertainment.
- **Old Courthouse Tercentenary:** to make the 300th birthday of the Old Courthouse this year, a weekend of historical entertainment will take place over the course of the European Heritage Open Day weekend in September, featuring tours, talks and a weekend-long 'living history' theatrical re-enactment of some of the cases heard in the courthouse over the course of its history. All events will be free of charge, with the majority of funding provided as part of the PEACEPLUS Our Historic Borough programme.
- **Enchanted Winter Garden:** the annual flagship event in Antrim Castle Gardens is scheduled to take place throughout December 2026 with even more animation and entertainment, and a ticket price freeze from 2025.

6. Finance/Governance

The proposed Council Events Plan for 2026/27 includes dates, ticket fees (where applicable) and estimated costs. Provision for these events has been made in the 2026/27 budget estimates.

7. Summary

The Council delivers a range of events year-round and across the Borough, as well as hosting and supporting a number of events delivered by external event organisers. An update on the plan is brought to the Committee twice a year. Officers will continue to keep the Events Plan under review.

8. Recommendation

It is recommended that the Council Events Plan for the remainder of 2026, including dates, ticket fees and estimated budgets, be approved.

Prepared by: Simon Goldrick, Head of Arts, Culture, Tourism and Events

Approved by: Ursula Fay, Director of Community and Culture

3.5 AC/GEN/010 BOROUGH ARTS AND CULTURAL ADVISORY PANEL

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to seek Members' approval for the minutes of the Borough Arts and Cultural Advisory Panel of 24 February 2026 and the Theatre Programmes approved at the meeting.

2. Background

Members are reminded that the role of the Arts and Cultural Advisory Panel is to provide advice, support and advocacy for the Borough's Arts and Cultural Service to enable it to deliver the Council's Corporate Plan 2024-2030. The specific role of the Panel is set out in a Constitution, which includes the following objectives:

- To advise the Council on the programming of arts and cultural activity throughout the Borough
- To provide advocacy for the arts and cultural sector
- To provide the Council with an insight into current issues affecting arts and culture throughout Northern Ireland
- To represent the arts and cultural community both locally and regionally
- To contribute expertise, skills and knowledge from specific genres for the benefit of the ongoing development of arts and culture in the Borough

The Panel is made up of one Elected Member from each Political Party and up to 12 non-elected independent members who are actively involved in the arts and culture sector. The Panel meets four times each year, and reports to the Community Development Committee.

3. Previous Decision of Council

The establishment of the Borough Arts and Cultural Panel for the Council term was approved at the Council meeting in June 2023. The minutes of the previous meeting were approved at the November 2025 Community Development Committee meeting.

4. Advisory Panel Meeting

Members are advised that the Borough Arts and Culture Advisory Panel met on 24 February 2026 in Mossley Mill. The draft minutes of this meeting and the Theatre Programmes to October 2026, which were presented at the meeting are **enclosed** for Members' information.

5. Financial Position

There are no financial implications to the Council.

6. Equality and/or Rural Screening Requirements

Members are aware that a comprehensive review of all Council working groups is being undertaken and Section 75 Equality Screening and Rural Proofing will be carried out as part of this review.

7. Governance

The specific role of the Panel is set out in a Constitution which includes the above-mentioned objectives. The Panel is made up of one Elected Member from each Political Party and up to 12 non-elected independent members who are actively involved in the arts and culture sector. The Panel meets four times each year, and reports to the Community Development Committee.

8. Summary

The Borough Arts and Cultural Advisory Panel's role is to provide advice, support and advocacy for the Borough's Arts and Cultural Services to enable it to deliver the Council's Corporate Plan 2024-2030. The Panel meets four times each year and reports to the Community Development Committee.

9. Recommendation

It is recommended that the draft minutes of the Borough Arts and Culture Advisory Panel of 24 February 2026 be approved as a true and accurate reflection of the meeting, and the theatre programmes to October 2026 also be approved.

Prepared by: Joanne Hamilton-Whyte, PA Director of Community Development

Agreed by: Simon Goldrick, Head of Arts, Culture, Tourism and Events

Approved by: Ursula Fay, Director of Community and Culture

3.6 AC/GEN/001 AC/GEN/008 and CP/CD/201 FREE USE OF COMMUNITY AND ARTS AND CULTURE FACILITIES

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to seek Members' approval for an update to the Community and Culture Pricing Policy in relation to requests for free use of facilities.

2. Introduction and Background

Both the Community and Culture services are responsible for the management and operation of venues, facilities and spaces across the Borough and a Pricing Policy outlines the fees and charges which are applied to such spaces. The pricing schedule includes both standard fees and charges as well as reduced community rates, which apply to the Community and Voluntary Sector. These fees and charges are reviewed annually.

3. Previous Decision of the Council

The policy was first approved by the Committee in September 2017, and it has been reviewed regularly since this time.

The policy was last updated in June 2025, when approval was given for all free use requests to be brought to the Community Development Committee.

4. Proposed Pricing Policy Amendment

Following discussion at the March 2026 Committee, the **enclosed** Community and Culture Pricing Policy has been amended to provide clearer guidance about circumstances where free use may be considered, by the addition of the following clause:

"Free use requests will only be brought to the Committee if an applicant is able to demonstrate clearly that:

- a) they would be unable to pay the community rate;
- b) they do not have free access to an alternative venue such as a school hall;
and
- c) the proposed event contributes to the Corporate Plan

Hire of a theatre for routine performing arts purposes not related to a specific fundraising or other 'special one off' occasion cannot be considered for free use, and standard/community hire rates will apply to all such bookings." The application form for free use requests has also been amended and is **enclosed** for Members' information.

5. Financial Position/Implication

There are no direct financial implications to this proposed Policy amendment.

6. Governance

The Community and Culture Pricing Policy outlines the fees and charges applied in relation to all facilities operated and managed by this Service. The Policy is reviewed annually, and any charges require the approval of Elected Members through the Community Development Committee. Fees and charges are also reviewed annually.

7. Summary

The Community and Culture Pricing Policy, last updated in June 2025, has been amended to provide clearer guidance about circumstances where free use may be considered.

8. Recommendation

It is recommended that the updated Community and Culture Pricing Policy be approved.

Prepared by: Simon Goldrick, Head of Arts, Culture, Tourism and Events

Approved by: Ursula Fay, Director of Community and Culture

3.7 AC/GEN/008 FREE USE OF THE THEATRE AT THE MILL

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to seek Members' approval for the free use of the Theatre at the Mill by the Newtownabbey Arts and Cultural Network (NACN) for a one-off community event for older people in May 2026.

2. Introduction/Background

The Newtownabbey Arts & Cultural Network (NACN) is a community-based charity in Newtownabbey that uses arts and culture to support young people in the area. NACN runs a wide range of programmes including:

- Creative arts: music production, drama, film, podcasting, digital media
- Youth development: mentoring, leadership, confidence-building
- Training and skills: pathways into education, employment, and creative careers
- Community projects: capturing local heritage, storytelling, and cultural identity

3. Previous Decision of Council

Approval was given at the June 2025 Committee for a revision to the Community Development Pricing Policy, which now requires all free use requests to be brought to the Committee for decision.

4. Request for Free Use

NACN have requested the free use of the Theatre at the Mill for a one-off event in May 2026 which will bring together residents from retirement homes and older people across the Borough who may experience loneliness or social isolation. Attendees will enjoy a relaxed night of live country music, conversation, and connection in a welcoming environment designed to support wellbeing and community spirit.

Beyond entertainment, the event will create a meaningful intergenerational experience, where young musicians engage directly with older residents, fostering understanding, respect, and shared community pride.

The community benefits of this event will include:

- Reduced loneliness and social isolation among older residents
- Promotion of positive mental health and wellbeing
- Creation of intergenerational connection between young people and older residents
- Provision of accessible arts and cultural experiences for the community
- Celebration of grassroots talent from within the borough

This free event aligns with the Council's Community Plan by promoting inclusion, strengthening community connections, and encouraging greater participation in arts and cultural activities across Antrim and Newtownabbey.

NACN have requested free use of the theatre rather than paying the community rate on the basis that they operate on limited grant funding and donations which are prioritised toward equipment access, youth development, and outreach. They have no available funding to hire a venue of this scale, nor are there alternative facilities within their local community that are suitably equipped to host an event of this nature for older residents.

5. Financial Position/Implication

If this request is approved, the potential lost income from a commercial booking would be £1,035. The cost to the Council of staffing this event would be £921.

6. Summary

The Newtownabbey Arts and Cultural Network have requested the free use of the Theatre at the Mill for a date in May 2026 for a free community event aimed at older people.

7. Recommendation

It is recommended that the request from the Newtownabbey Arts and Cultural Network to have free use of the Theatre at the Mill for a community event in May 2026 be approved.

Prepared by: Katherine Gardiner, Arts and Theatres Manager

Agreed by: Simon Goldrick, Head of Arts, Culture, Tourism & Events

Approved by: Ursula Fay, Director of Community and Culture

3.8 COMD/CD/009 CHRISTMAS SWITCH ON EVENTS – TASK AND FINISH WORKING GROUP

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide the minutes of the meeting held on 23 March 2026 as a true and accurate reflection of the meeting.

2. Background

Since November 2018, the Community Development Section of the Council has been delivering Christmas Lights Switch On Events in each District Electoral Area across the Borough.

The programme at each event encompasses a range of family entertainment to include: Christmas Fun Rides, Meet Santa, Street Entertainment, Festive Food Stalls, Arts and Crafts and a short programme of Christmas Readings, Carols and Music following which the Mayor accompanied by the Schools Competition Winner and Santa switch on the Christmas Tree Lights.

Local School Choirs, Traditional Music Groups, Dance Academies and other local artists participate in the programme the theme for which changes on an annual basis.

3. Previous Decision of Council

Members are reminded it was agreed at the September 2025 Council meeting that the delivery of 7 Christmas Light Switch On Events be maintained for 2025 with a review to be undertaken by a working group early in 2026 to reassess the approach for the future. It was also agreed that the live streaming of each event be discontinued.

Members are also reminded that it was subsequently agreed at the October 2025 Community Development Committee that an Elected Member Working Group would be established with one representative per political party.

The minutes of the Christmas Switch On Events – Task and Finish Working Group meeting of 21 January 2026 were approved as a true and accurate reflection of the meeting at the February Community Development Committee.

4. Elected Member Working Group

It was proposed to establish a cross party Elected Member Working Group to commence meeting in January 2026 to reassess the approach to these events for 2026 and beyond. Group Leaders were asked to nominate one member per political party with the following Members nominated:

DUP – Cllr Matthew Brady
Sinn Fein – Cllr Anne Marie Logue
Alliance – Cllr Billy Webb
UUP – Cllr Stewart Wilson

Given requests from other Members, and the local interest, the meeting invitation was extended to all Elected Members given the wide range of opinions on this programme.

The second meeting of the Christmas Switch On Events – Task and Finish Working Group was held online on Monday 23 March 2026 and the minutes of this meeting are **enclosed** for Members' information.

5. Financial Implication

Members are advised that provision to deliver the 2026 Christmas Festivity Programme on the same basis as 2025, has been included in the 2026/27 Community Development budgets.

6. Summary

Seven Christmas Lights Switch On events, one in each DEA across the Borough, took place in November 2025. A Christmas Switch-On Events – Task and Finish working Group was established in early 2026 to reassess the approach for future programmes and the minutes of the meeting held on 23 March 2026 are enclosed as a true and accurate reflection of the meeting.

7. Recommendation

It is recommended that the minutes of the Christmas Switch On Events – Task and Finish Working Group meeting of 23 March 2026 be approved as a true and accurate reflection of the meeting.

Prepared by: Ronan McKenna, Head of Community Development

Approved by: Ursula Fay, Director of Community and Culture

3.9 COMD/GR/011 GOOD RELATIONS GRANT AID PROGRAMME 2026/27

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to seek Members' approval in relation to the Good Relations Grant Funding Programme awards being recommended.

2. Background

The Good Relations Grant Programme provides financial assistance of up to £2,000 to groups within the Borough to support activities, events and programmes that align with the objectives of the Council's Good Relations Action Plan.

The Good Relations Grant Programme opened for applications on 5 January 2026 and closed on 26 February 2026.

All applications are assessed against established eligibility criteria and through a scored assessment process. Applicants are required to achieve a minimum score of 60% in order for their application to be recommended for approval.

3. Previous Decisions by Council

The Good Relations Grant Programme was approved at March 2026 Community Development Committee as part of the Council's Good Relations Action Plan 2026-27.

4. Key Issues

A total of 15 applications were received and assessed by Officers, with 9 applications achieving the minimum threshold score required for recommendation.

The project details are **enclosed** for Members' information.

There is a total budget of £8,000 identified for the 2026/27 Good Relations Grants Programme, subject to receipt of a Letter of Offer from The Executive Office (TEO). Based on the assessment scores, the five highest scoring applications are recommended for approval, at a total cost of £7,900.

The remaining four eligible applications will be placed on a reserve list, pending the availability of additional funding from TEO during 2026/27.

All proposed awards are subject to a signed disclosure from the group confirming that all appropriate supporting documentation is in place and can be provided on request or the offer of funding will be withdrawn.

5. Financial Position/Implication

Members are reminded that the total budget allocated for the 2026/27 Good Relations Grants Programme, within the Community Development budget, is

£8,000, subject to receipt of a Letter of Offer from TEO.

Applicants placed on the reserve list who achieved the required assessment threshold may be awarded funding should additional funding become available from TEO during the 2026/27 financial year.

6. Summary

It is proposed that Good Relations Grant awards of £7,900 be awarded to the successful applicants under the 2026/27 Good Relations Grants Programme, subject to receipt of a Letter of Offer from The Executive Office for the delivery of the 2026/27 Good Relations Action Plan.

The 2026/27 Good Relations Grants Programme is now closed to applications.

7. Recommendation

It is recommended that the 5 Good Relations Grant awards totalling £7,900 as outlined be approved.

Prepared by: Amy Gribbon, Good Relations Officer

Agreed by: Ronan McKenna, Head of Community Development

Approved by: Ursula Fay, Director of Community and Culture

3.10 CP/CP/240 ANTI-POVERTY STEERING GROUP

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to seek Members' approval for the draft minutes of the Anti-Poverty Steering Group meeting held on 2 April 2026 as a true and accurate reflection of the meeting.

2. Introduction/Background

The issue of poverty and its impact on the life choices of citizens has always been of concern to the Council, however the cost-of-living crisis which followed the COVID 19 pandemic sharply increased focus on the issue of poverty and how to provide practical support to address this challenge.

3. Previous Council decision

Members are reminded that it was approved at the Council Meeting in January 2024 that a cross-party steering group be established to develop a coordinated, comprehensive Anti-Poverty Strategy for the Borough.

The establishment of the Anti-Poverty Steering Group aimed to develop an Anti-Poverty Strategy creating a single guiding strategic framework that provides, but is not limited to:

- Agency for residents
- Fostering of economic empowerment
- Maximising stakeholder partnership opportunities
- Enhancing social inclusion
- Improved access to essential services for residents

The Anti-Poverty Strategy 2024-30 was approved at the November 2024 Community Development Committee.

4. Governance

The Steering Group of Elected Members and Officers have been meeting since the group was established and have focused their work on the development of an Anti-Poverty Strategy for the period 2024 to 2030 to support the Councils Corporate Strategy and Community Plan.

The group met on 2 April 2026 and a copy of the minutes are **enclosed** for Members' information.

The group will continue to meet quarterly with Officers to report progress of the Strategy at the quarterly meetings.

5. Summary

Following a Motion to the Council in January 2024 an Anti-Poverty Steering Group was established. The group has agreed an Anti-Poverty Strategy for the

Borough for 2024-2030, which will ensure a collective focus on this priority issue and support delivery of the Corporate and Community Plans.

The minutes of the Steering Group meeting held on 2 April 2026 are provided for Members' approval.

6. Recommendation

It is recommended that the draft minutes of the Anti-Poverty Steering Group meeting held on 2 April 2026 be approved as a true and accurate reflection of the meeting.

Prepared by: Conor Cuning DEA Engagement Manager

Agreed by: Ronan McKenna Head of Service Community Development

Approved by: Ursula Fay, Director of Community and Culture

3.11 CP/CP/224 THE EXECUTIVE OFFICE DRAFT FRAMEWORK FOR RACE RELATIONS AND DELIVERY PLAN 2026-2028 CONSULTATION

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to inform Members of The Executive Office draft Framework for Race Relations and Delivery Plan 2026–2028 consultation.

2. Introduction

The Executive Office has launched a public consultation on the draft Framework for Race Relations and Delivery Plan 2026–2028. The Framework is intended to build on the progress made through the Racial Equality Strategy 2015–2025 and to respond to evolving demographic changes and ongoing challenges relating to racism and racial inequality.

The draft Framework has been developed through engagement with the minority ethnic sector, community organisations and wider stakeholders. It sets out an Executive-wide approach to addressing racism and promoting racial equality, while emphasising the importance of partnership working across government departments, public bodies, communities and the voluntary sector.

3. Key Issues

The draft Framework establishes a strategic vision for race relations in Northern Ireland and outlines a roadmap for tackling racism and racial inequality across society.

The vision proposed within the draft Framework is for a society strengthened by ethnic diversity, where people can live together free from racism, racial inequality and unlawful racial discrimination, and where everyone shares a sense of belonging and enjoys their human rights.

To support this vision, the Framework identifies four key outcomes which will guide future action and policy development. These outcomes are intended to address persistent inequalities and improve race relations across Northern Ireland. The outcomes focus on:

- Eliminating racial inequality and promoting equality of opportunity across economic, social, cultural and public life.
- Addressing racism and racial hate crime and ensuring appropriate protections and responses.
- Ensuring that public services are fair, accessible and responsive to the needs of minority ethnic communities.
- Building stronger, more connected and inclusive communities where diversity is recognised and valued.

The Delivery Plan for 2026–2028 will outline specific actions and collaborative approaches required to progress these outcomes. The Framework emphasises the importance of evidence-based policy development and continued

engagement with communities and stakeholders to ensure that actions remain responsive to emerging issues.

The consultation has opened and will close on 3 June 2026. The Executive Office wishes to hear from a wide range of interested persons and organisations. The consultation documents and associated survey are available online via <https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/consultations/consultation-framework-race-relations>

Members are advised that they may wish to respond on a corporate, individual or party-political basis.

4. Summary

The Executive Office has launched a consultation on the draft Framework for Race Relations and Delivery Plan 2026–2028. The Framework and Delivery Plan represent a strategic approach to addressing racism, promoting racial equality and strengthening community cohesion across Northern Ireland.

Input is welcomed from all interested parties. The consultation closes on 3 June 2026. Full details and documentation can be accessed via The Executive Office website. Members are advised that they may wish to respond on a corporate, individual or party-political basis.

5. **Recommendation**

Members' instructions are requested.

Prepared by: Conor Cunning, DEA Engagement Manager

Agreed by: Ronan McKenna, Head of Community Development

Approved by: Ursula Fay, Director of Community and Culture

3.12 CP/CD/487 IPB PRIDE OF PLACE AWARDS 2026

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to seek Members' approval in relation to the nomination of two community/voluntary groups to the IPB Pride of Place Awards in 2026.

2. Background

Members are reminded of The Annual IPB Pride of Place Awards in association with Co-operation Ireland the aim of which is to recognise the efforts and endeavours of communities throughout Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland to make their place the best place in which to live.

3. Previous Decision of Council

Members are reminded in April 2025 the Council nominated three groups to take part in the Annual IPB Pride of Place Awards competition namely:

- Dalaradia Cultural and Historical Society (Community Tourism Initiative)
- Rathenraw Youth Scheme (Community Youth Initiative)
- The Shed, Antrim (Creative Communities)

Judging of the three entries took place in August 2025 and the awards ceremony was hosted on Friday 7 November 2025 at the Limerick Strand Hotel, Limerick.

It was agreed at the September 2025 Community Development Committee Meeting that Members and Officers attend the Awards Ceremony along with representatives of the nominated groups.

At the Awards Ceremony Rathenraw Youth Scheme was named runner up in the Community Youth Initiative Category while Dalaradia Cultural and Historical Society and The Shed, Antrim each received a Certificate of Recognition in the Community Tourism Initiative and Creative Communities categories.

4. Proposal

Nominations are now open for the 2026 competition and this year there are 13 categories in total; 5 Population categories, 7 Single Issue categories with designated themes, and 1 Non-Population category. The Council can nominate groups in up to a maximum of five categories in all and one entry only in any individual category. The categories are listed below for Members' consideration:

Population

1. 0 - 300
2. 300 - 1,000
3. 1,000 - 2,000
4. 2,000 - 5,000
5. Over 5,000

Theme

6. Creative Communities
7. Climate Action and Biodiversity
8. Community Youth Initiative
9. Inclusive Communities
10. Community Wellbeing Initiative
11. Community Tourism Initiative
12. Age Friendly Communities

Non-population

13. Urban Neighbourhoods and Housing Estates

Entry to the competition is by way of Council nomination. To nominate a group, a short application form has to be completed by the Council and submitted along with a short resume of the groups work and how it meets the entry criteria. The deadline for receipt of nominations for the 2026 competition is Friday 8 May 2026.

Following submission an assessment visit will take place during the months of August/September 2026 where nominees will demonstrate pride in their place by oral presentation, exhibition of community activities and culture as well as a tour of the area highlighting the aspects of which they are particularly proud. During this visit it is also important that the community group demonstrates real partnership with their local Council and shows that all sectors of the community are included.

Successful nominees will be announced at a Gala Dinner and Awards Ceremony to be held on Saturday 24 October 2026 in the Convention Centre, Dublin. At this event Category Winners will receive a large trophy and a cash prize of €1,000 or sterling equivalent. Runners-up will also receive a trophy and a cash prize of €500 or sterling equivalent.

Officers would propose that the following two groups be nominated for the 2026 competition:

- Impact Network NI (Community Wellbeing Initiative)
- Monkstown Boxing Club (Community Youth Initiative)

A short summary of the work of each of the two groups is included below for Members information.

Impact Network NI

Impact Network NI, based in Randalstown, is a community-focused organisation dedicated to strengthening connections and improving wellbeing across Northern Ireland. Working in partnership with residents, community groups, voluntary organisations and public sector organisations, it identifies local needs and develops practical, community-led solutions that empower people and encourage active participation. Through programmes, workshops, and collaborative initiatives, the organisation tackles social isolation, builds inclusive social networks and creates opportunities for individuals to connect, develop

confidence and contribute to their communities. Impact Network NI also supports community capacity building by providing guidance, resources and partnership opportunities for local groups and community leaders. By promoting collaboration, building trust and encouraging shared responsibility, the organisation creates inclusive, supportive communities where individuals feel empowered, engaged and proud of the place they call home.

Monkstown Boxing Club

Monkstown Boxing Club is open six days a week and provides a safe, welcoming environment where young people can build confidence, develop friendships and improve their health and wellbeing through boxing, fitness and youth programmes. Since 2012, the club has delivered the pioneering 'In Your Corner' programme, supporting young people who are disengaged from, or at risk of disengaging from, mainstream education. Through mentoring, education support, wellbeing activities, youth leadership development and employability programmes, the initiative helps young people build life skills, confidence and positive future pathways. Supporting more than 250 young people each week, the programme takes a holistic approach focused on education, wellbeing, personal development, employability and sport, helping young people overcome barriers, make positive choices and reach their full potential.

Members may wish to nominate alternative and/or additional groups. It is proposed Members should inform Officers of any additional requests for nominations no later than Friday 24 April 2026.

5. Financial Implication

The entry fee this year is £500 per group, provision for which has been made within the 2026/27 Community Development budget.

6. Summary

Members are advised that Officers have reviewed the eligibility and exclusion criteria and identified the two groups proposed for nomination as those which best meet the aims and objectives of the 2026 Awards criteria. If Members wish to nominate alternative and/or additional groups and they are requested to advise Officers of any request for such nominations by Friday 24 April 2026.

7. Recommendation

It is recommended that the two groups proposed for nomination to the 2026 IPB Pride of Place Awards be approved and that Members inform Officers of any additional requests for nominations no later than Friday 24 April 2026.

Prepared by: Jonathan Henderson, Community Services Co-ordinator

Agreed by: Ronan McKenna, Head of Community Development

Approved by: Ursula Fay, Director of Community and Culture

3.13 CP/CD/201 COMMUNITY FACILITIES – EXPRESSION OF INTEREST FOR SERVICE MANAGEMENT AGREEMENT

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to update Members on the Expression of Interest process relating to Service Management Agreements for the operation of Council owned Community Facilities.

2. Introduction/Background

The Council owns 11 Community Facilities, 8 of which are managed by the Community Development Section as follows.

- Greystone Community Centre
- Muckamore Community Centre
- Parkhall Community Centre
- Rathenraw Community Centre
- Stiles Community Centre
- Neillsbrook Community Centre
- The Dunanney Centre
- Lillian Bland Pavilion

Three community facilities are currently operated under Service Management Agreements with community organisations running the facilities in partnership with the Council. Details of the Service Management Agreements are listed for Members information.

Facility	Community Group	Contract Period
Monkstown Jubilee Centre	Monkstown Community Association	1 April 2025 to 31 March 2028
The Sovereign Complex	Rathfern Community Regeneration Group Ltd	1 April 2025 to 31 March 2028
Northern Ireland Centenary Community Centre Ballyduff	Ballyduff Community Redevelopment Group	1 April 2025 to 31 March 2028

3. Previous Decision of Council

Members are reminded that it was agreed at the Council meeting in May 2018 to initiate an Expression of Interest (EOI) process across the Borough to determine interest from community organisations in Service Management Agreements to operate Community Centres. This process was disrupted by the pandemic in early 2020 and recommenced in 2022.

Following this the Service Management Agreement with Ballyduff Community Redevelopment Group to operate The Northern Ireland Centenary Community

Centre Ballyduff for an initial 12-month period, commencing on 1 January 2024, was approved at the December 2023 Community Planning Committee.

The renewal of all 3 existing Service Management Agreements with community organisations for a further 3-year period until 31 March 2028 at a total cost of £105,000 per annum, was agreed at the December 2024 Community Development Committee.

A further Expression of Interest process to determine interest amongst other community groups for Service Management Agreements to operate Council owned community facilities was approved at the May 2025 Committee Development Committee.

Six organisations submitted Expressions of Interest to operate Council owned community facilities which were approved to enter into the 4-stage process at September 2025 committee.

4. Key issues

An Expression of Interest process opened on 18 June 2025 and closed 08 August 2025. The purpose of this stage in the process is to determine interest before assessing the capacity of organisations through development of robust business plans to potentially operate Council owned community facilities through a Service Management Agreement.

Six organisations have submitted an Expression of Interest for Members' information, in managing a Council owned Community Facility which was approved by Members.

Officers have now met with these groups to progress the approved 4-stage process, consisting of the following stages:

1. Expression of Interest (completed)
2. Training and Mentoring
3. Business Plan
4. Formal Application

This programme will be delivered as part of PEACEPLUS 'Our Shared Borough' programme, led by the Community Development team, with appropriate external expertise procured to support the process.

Council officers have since received two further Expression of Interests **enclosed** in managing a Council owned community facility from Globe After Schools Club and Queens Park Women's Group. It is proposed that this application is approved to progress into the 4-stage process.

5. Financial Position

There was no financial cost for the Expression of Interest process to determine interest in Service Management Agreements for the operation of Council owned community facilities.

The costs to progress the 4-stage plan will be funded through the PEACEPLUS 'Our Shared Borough' programme, at no cost to the Council.

The current operating costs of the 11 community facilities is in excess of £600,000 per annum.

The Service Management Agreement arrangement has been shown to be a more efficient model of community centre operation with operational costs covered by an annual grant that is less than the annual cost of the Council operated facilities. This approach also achieved increased use of the facilities and increased community development outcomes when compared to direct Council operation.

6. Summary

The Council owns 11 community facilities, three of which are currently operated under Service Management Agreements in partnership with community organisations.

Following the completion of an Expression of Interest process for community groups for Service Management Agreements for the operation of Council owned community facilities, six organisations have progressed to the 4-stage process, including training mentoring and business planning be delivered as part of PEACEPLUS 'Our Shared Borough' programme,

A further Expression of Interest from two Community organisations to enter into this process has been received. It is proposed that both of these applications are approved.

A further report will be brought back to a future Committee meeting.

7. Recommendation

It is recommended that:

- (a) the update on the Expression of Interest process relating to Service Management Agreement for the operation of Council owned Community Facilities be noted**
- (b) the additional two Expression of Interests received from Globe Afterschools Club and Queens Park Women's Group be approved.**

Prepared by: Stef Buchanan, Community Development Manager

Agreed by: Ronan McKenna, Head of Community Development

Approved by: Ursula Fay, Director of Community and Culture

3.14 CP/CD/201 COMMUNITY FACILITIES – TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF HIRE

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to seek Members' approval for updated Community Facility terms and conditions of hire.

2. Introduction/Background

There are 8 community facilities managed by the Community Development Section as follows:

- Greystone Community Centre
- Muckamore Community Centre
- Parkhall Community Centre
- Rathenraw Community Centre
- Stiles Community Centre
- Neillsbrook Community Centre
- Dunanney Centre
- Lilian Bland Pavillion

Community facilities are available for hire by individuals, groups and organisations for a diverse range of activities such childcare, birthday parties, meetings, sport and social activities.

There is a schedule of charges for hire of facilities, that includes two-tier pricing with a standard hire charge and discounted community hire charge applied to all space available for hire. For all bookings, terms and conditions of hire are applied, which outline the obligations of the Council and the hirer.

The facilities can be booked in person, over the telephone and online. Anyone making a booking is required to complete a booking form and as part of this agree to the relevant terms and conditions which apply to the particular facility being booked.

3. Previous Decision of Council

Members are reminded that updated facility terms and conditions of hire for all facilities managed and operated by the Community Development Directorate were approved at the Community Development Committee in June 2025.

4. Key issues

Members are advised that since approval of the terms and conditions of hire a number of updates have been identified in relation to:

- Breaches of terms and conditions
- Equipment and third-party providers
- Wi-Fi
- Outdoor event space bookings

Updated booking terms and conditions of hire are **enclosed** for Members' information.

5. Governance and Finance

The review of facility terms and conditions of hire provides improved clarity for customers hiring the various Council venues managed and operated by the Community Development Section and reduces any risk to the Council from potential improper use of these facilities.

There are no costs or financial implications associated with this exercise.

6. Summary

The Community Development Section manages and operates a wide range of facilities, which are available for hire by individuals and groups. All facility bookings are subject to specific terms and conditions of hire which set out Council and hirers obligations.

These terms and conditions of hire have been updated in relation to a number of issues to ensure that they remain current, robust and appropriate. Any individual or group booking any of the facilities is required to agree to the relevant facility terms and conditions.

It is proposed that revised terms and conditions of hire and updated management agreements apply from 1 June 2026.

7. Recommendation

It is recommended that the updated facility terms and conditions of hire for all community facilities managed and operated by the Community Development Section be approved and applied from 1 June 2026.

Prepared by: Paul Townsend, Community Facilities Coordinator

Agreed by: Ronan McKenna, Head of Community Development

Approved by: Ursula Fay, Director of Community and Culture

3.15 AC/GEN/037 CULTURAL GRANT AID AND BURSARY PROGRAMME

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to seek Members' approval for a Cultural Bursary award.

2. Introduction/Background

The aim of the Cultural Grant Aid and Bursary programme is to provide support to constituted groups and individuals based in the Borough to participate in, develop and promote Cultural activities and projects. Funding is available for projects which develop artistic talent and knowledge, showcase the arts and promote participation and inclusion, celebrate shared heritage, and contribute to the understanding of minority languages and cultural diversity.

Cultural groups may apply for grants for:

- Eligible costs involved in running a cultural event (with a maximum award of £1,000)
- Costs relating to the production of a cultural product e.g. a publication or an exhibition (with a maximum award of £500)
- Course fees for group members to attend an event or course or undertake training (with a maximum award of £500)

Individuals may apply for bursaries for:

- Costs relating to the production of a cultural product e.g. a publication or an exhibition (with a maximum award of £500)
- Contribution to costs associated with the attendance at cultural events, specialist training courses or study programmes relating to Arts or Heritage (with a maximum award of £500)

3. Previous Decision of Council

The Cultural Grant Aid and Bursary Programme was approved by the Community Development Committee in November 2025.

4. Application for 2026-2027 Cultural Grant Aid and Bursary Programme

One application has been received and assessed by officers under the appropriate funding category and maximum award available.

A summary of the application is set out below along with the proposed award:

Group / Individual Name	Funding Category	Funding Purpose	Proposed Amount Awarded
Name withheld as applicant is under 18 years old	Individual bursary: costs associated with attending the British Youth Music Theatre Summer programme	<p>The applicant is a resident of the Borough and is applying for support in relation to the cost of attending the British Youth Music Theatre Summer Programme in Hull.</p> <p>British Youth Music Theatre (BYMT) is a leading UK performing arts organisation that provides high-quality musical theatre training and performance opportunities for young people aged 11–21. The applicant will attend a 16-day residential programme between 25 July and 9 August 2026 alongside more than 30 others selected from across the UK.</p>	£500

5. Financial Position

The budget available for the Cultural Grant Aid and Bursaries programme in 2026-2027 is £23,000. If the above application is approved a balance of £22,500 would be left for the remainder of the year.

6. Summary

One Cultural Bursary application has been received for £500 to support a resident of the Borough for costs associated with attendance at the British Youth Music Theatre summer programme in Hull in July and August 2026.

7. Recommendation

It is recommended that the bursary award for £500 be approved.

Prepared by: Anna Boyle, Funding Unit Manager

Agreed by: John Balmer, Director of Finance and Simon Goldrick, Head of Arts, Culture, Tourism and Events

Approved by: Ursula Fay, Director of Community and Culture

4 ITEMS FOR NOTING

4.1 CP/CP/213 VISIT TO RANDALSTOWN BY HRH THE DUCHESS OF EDINBURGH

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to update Members on a Royal visit to Randalstown the focus of which was the Council's Women in Leadership Programme.

2. Introduction/Background

Following the death of Queen Elizabeth II in September 2022 the Council established a Sub Committee to develop both plans to mark the Coronation of King Charles III but also to commemorate the legacy of the late Queen.

As part of this a Women in Leadership programme was developed to empower and support women across the Borough to develop their leadership skills and reach their full potential.

Following the development and creation of the programme in 2023 Impact Network NI and Utopian Learning were appointed via a procurement exercise to deliver the programme which commenced in September 2024.

3. Visit to Randalstown by HRH The Duchess of Edinburgh

The programme has attracted the attention of the Northern Ireland Office in relation to being showcased as part of any Royal visit to the Borough.

Her Royal Highness The Duchess of Edinburgh visited Randalstown on 3 March 2026. Following the official opening of the National Autistic Centre the Duchess visited Randalstown Library primarily to engage with the participants in the Council's Women in Leadership Programme which commenced in September 2024. Members of the Council's Women's Sub Committee joined participants of the programme for the visit. The Tidy Randalstown Group also had the opportunity to meet the Duchess at the end of the visit in recognition of their contribution to Randalstown over many years.

The **enclosed** correspondence was received by the Mayor following the visit.

4. Recommendation

It is recommended that the report be noted.

Prepared and Approved by: Ursula Fay, Director of Community and Culture

4.2 CP/CP/241 UPDATE ON THE RAISE PROGRAMME

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to update Members on correspondence received in relation to delivery of the RAISE Programme.

2. Background / Introduction

Members will be aware that the Department of Education launched the RAISE (Raising Aspirations in Schools through Education) Programme as a significant initiative to address educational underachievement and reduce educational disadvantage across identified localities in Northern Ireland.

The Programme adopts a place-based, whole-community approach and aims to support the Department of Education's vision that *"every child and young person is happy, learning and succeeding"*.

Since the previous update to Members, Strategic Area Plans have now been developed and published for all 15 RAISE localities, setting out the key priorities and objectives for each area. The Programme has now progressed from the planning stage into delivery and implementation.

3. Previous Decisions of the Council

Details of the RAISE programme including correspondence from the Department of Education were reported to the Community Development Committee in June 2024 when the report was noted.

Further correspondence was reported to the Committee in September 2024 advising that relevant stakeholders, including the Council, would be invited to participate in locality engagement events to inform the development of Strategic Area Plans.

The process for the development of a Strategic Area Plan for each locality identifying the maximum budget allocations over two years was noted at the April 2025 Community Development Committee.

4. Correspondence re-RAISE programme

Members are advised that correspondence has been received from the Department of Education providing an update on the RAISE Programme and outlining next steps in its delivery a copy of which is **enclosed** for Members' information.

The correspondence advises that a second call for locality led projects is now open. Applications are invited from a range of eligible organisations, including schools, early years providers, colleges and community and voluntary organisations.

All applications must be submitted via an online platform by 12 noon on 22 April 2026 and must include a costed workplan aligned to the objectives set out within the relevant Strategic Area Plan.

Members are also advised that further stakeholder engagement was delivered, including information sessions in March 2026 to support organisations in developing proposals under the second call for Locality Led Projects.

5. Financial implication

Each RAISE locality continues to receive a base level of funding, with additional allocations based on pupil numbers within identified areas.

All project proposals submitted under Call Two must operate within the budget allocations set out for each objective within the relevant Strategic Area Plan.

Locality	Base Amount	Pupil Top Up	Total Funding
Antrim	£100,000	£321,450	£421,450
Newtownabbey	£100,000	£430,133	£530,133

6. Summary

Correspondence has been received from the Department of Education advising that a second call for locality led projects is now open.

There is a focus on engagement in schools, community organisations and other stakeholders, alongside the continued development of cross-cutting initiatives aimed at improving educational outcomes.

7. Recommendation

It is recommended that the report be noted.

Prepared by: Will McDowell, DEA Engagement Co-ordinator

Agreed by: Ronan McKenna, Head of Community Development

Approved by: Ursula Fay, Director of Community and Culture

4.3 CP/CP/224 DEPARTMENT FOR WORK AND PENSIONS – TIMMS REVIEW OF PERSONAL INDEPENDENCE PAYMENT

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to update Members of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) on the Timms Review of Personal Independence Payment (PIP),

2. Introduction/Background

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has provided an update on the Timms Review of Personal Independence Payment (PIP), which aims to ensure that PIP accurately reflects the reality of disabled people's experiences and supports their ability to live independently and participate fully in society.

On 30 October 2025, the Minister of State for Social Security and Disability, Sir Stephen Timms MP, announced that Sharon Brennan and Dr Clenton Farquharson CBE have been appointed as co-chairs of the Review.

The Review will report to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions by Autumn 2026, with an interim update expected before that date.

On 24 March 2026, DWP issued a further stakeholder update confirming the launch of a Call for Evidence to support the Review.

3. Previous Council Decision

Members are reminded that an update on the Department for Work and Pensions update on the Timms Review of Personal Independence Payment was noted at the December 2025 Community Development Committee.

4. Key Issues

Members are advised that correspondence **enclosed** has been received from the Department for Communities (DfC) regarding the Department for Work and Pensions – Timms Review of Personal Independence Payment.

DWP has established a Steering Group to guide the Review. The Steering Group will lead on co-production and strategic direction and oversee a programme of engagement and evidence gathering.

As part of this engagement process, a Call for Evidence has been launched. This is aimed at organisations and individuals who have relevant information to inform the Review, including those with lived or learned experience, knowledge and expertise.

Evidence submissions may include:

- Written responses
- Existing datasets
- Unpublished analysis or reports

The Call for Evidence opened on 19 March 2026 and will close on 28 May 2026. All submissions will be shared with the Steering Group, and DWP will produce a summary of responses to support analysis and decision-making.

This Call for Evidence forms part of a wider programme of stakeholder engagement, which will continue to be developed by the Steering Group. Further details are available <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/the-timms-review>

The Department for Communities (DfC) will continue to engage with stakeholders and share updates as the Review progresses.

5. Summary

The Department for Work and Pensions continues to progress the Timms Review of Personal Independence Payment (PIP), which aims to ensure the benefit reflects the real-life experiences of people with disabilities and supports independent living.

The review will be co-produced with people with lived experience and organisations, guided by a Steering Group.

A Call for Evidence was launched on 19 March and will close on 28 May to gather input from individuals and organisations, forming a key part of the Review's evidence base.

6. Recommendation

It is recommended that the Department for Work and Pensions update on the Timms Review of Personal Independence Payment be noted.

Prepared by: Conor Cunning, DEA Engagement Manager

Agreed by: Ronan McKenna, Head of Community Development

Approved by: Ursula Fay, Director of Community and Culture

4.4 CP/CD/484 and CP/CD/485 DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES INTERIM FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS 2026/27

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to update Members regarding the Department for Communities (DfC) 2026/27 interim funding position and to seek approval for an update on the current budget position to be communicated to those groups and organisations anticipating funding from the Department in 2026/27.

2. Background

DfC recognises the important role that the voluntary and community Sector has in delivering support and services to people and local communities.

Members are reminded that the Council manages a range of DfC funded contracts that financially support a number of voluntary and community sector organisations. These include the:

- Areas at Risk - Elevate Grant Programme
- Community Support Programme
- Neighbourhood Renewal Programme
- Social Supermarket
- Generalist and Integrated Advice

3. Previous Decision of Council

Members are reminded it was agreed at the April 2025 Community Development Committee that temporary 3-month funding support from DfC for 2025/26 was put in place up to 30th June 2025 based on 2024/25 funding levels, inclusive of the 5% uplift awarded in 2024/25.

Members are further reminded it was agreed that an update on the DfC current budget position be communicated to those groups and organisations anticipating funding from the Department in 2025/26.

4. Key Issues

Members are advised that the DfC has issued correspondence **enclosed** outlining that the overall 2026/27 budget position for the Department remains unclear with the potential for the draft allocation to DfC to be reduced.

The Minister for the DfC has indicated that the Department is currently considering budget reduction scenarios of 5% and 10% accordingly.

The Minister has indicated that temporary 3-month funding support will be put in place up to 30th June 2026 based on 2025/26 funding levels.

Members are advised this funding covers all DfC programmes operating in the Borough such as Areas at Risk - Elevate Grant Programme, the Community Support Programme, Advice Programmes and Neighbourhood Renewal.

It is proposed to make those who are anticipating funding aware of this communication from the Department.

5. Financial implications

Members are advised that the DfC have issued temporary 3-month funding support to be put in place up to 30th June 2026 based upon 2025/26 funding levels.

A further update on the 2026/27 budget will be provided once the 2026/27 Departments' Allocation has been set and allocations agreed.

6. Summary

Interim funding awards for DfC programmes to end June 2026 will be retained at 2025/26 levels. Funding will be issued for the first quarter of 2026/27 up to the end of June with confirmation of the 2026/27 budget position anticipated in the near future.

Officers will make all those groups and organisations impacted aware of the communication from the DfC.

7. Recommendation

It is recommended that the report be noted.

Prepared by: Conor Cunning, DEA Engagement Manager & Stef Buchanan, Community Development Manager

Agreed by: Ronan McKenna, Head of Community Development

Approved by: Ursula Fay, Director of Community and Culture

4.5 CP/CC/004 NEILLSBROOK COMMUNITY CENTRE - CCTV

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to update Members on the installation of CCTV at Neillsbrook Community Centre in Randalstown.

2. Introduction/Background

Members are reminded that Neillsbrook Community Centre in Randalstown has a number of outdoor spaces available for hire. This includes a grass pitch a 3G training pitch and an outdoor event space. The 3G pitch is enclosed and secured by a locked perimeter fence. Community facility staff open the pitch and operate the floodlights based upon bookings. The pitch is open for bookings Monday-Friday evenings and Saturday mornings, and booking are made by customers online.

Since May 2025, there have been several incidents of vandalism and anti-social behaviour in the vicinity of this Community Centre, including damage to the perimeter fence associated with the 3G pitch, caused by unauthorised access to the pitch.

Currently there is no CCTV at any of the legacy Antrim Community Centres, including Neillsbrook Community Centre. Estate Services are progressing a capital project in relation to the potential addition of CCTV at Council facilities currently without such provision.

3. Previous Decision of Council

At the March 2026 Community Development Committee, a Member raised the issue of persistent vandalism and anti-social behaviour at Neillsbrook Community Centre and surrounding area. Having met with other Members, Officers and Statutory Partners he requested that a report be brought to a future Community Development Committee regarding the cost of the installation of CCTV cameras on the exterior of the Community Centre to potentially deter repeat occurrences of such incidents and enable collection of evidence in the event of any such incident.

4. Financial Position/Implication

Costs of repair as a result of vandalism to the 3G pitch perimeter fencing for the past 6 months have totalled £1,894.

The costs to install a 4-way multi-sensor camera with a 4G router and associated equipment at the Centre is approximately £7,000, with an ongoing annual cloud access and storage subscription of £720 per annum.

Provision for this expenditure has been identified in the 2026/27 Community Development budget, and the ongoing annual subscription will be included in future annual budget estimates.

5. Summary

There has been ongoing vandalism and anti-social behaviour incidents at Neillsbrook Community Centre and the surrounding area. A CCTV camera will be installed on the exterior of the Neillsbrook Community Centre covering the 3G pitch at a cost of £7,000 to act as a potential deterrent for such incidents and to enable evidence gathering should repeat incidents occur.

6. **Recommendation**

It is recommended that the installation of CCTV at Neillsbrook Community Centre at a total cost of £7,000 be noted.

Prepared by: Paul Townsend, Community Facilities Coordinator

Agreed by: Ronan McKenna, Head of Community Development

Approved by: Ursula Fay, Director of Community and Culture

5 ANY OTHER RELEVANT BUSINESS

Any Other Relevant Business (AORB) may be taken at this point.