



4 February 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 **Monday 9 February 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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**REPORT ON BUSINESS TO BE CONSIDERED AT THE
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING ON
MONDAY 9 FEBRUARY 2026**

3 PRESENTATION

3.1 CP/GEN/045 COMMUNITY ADVICE ANTRIM AND NEWTOWNABBEY

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to advise Members of the attendance at Committee of Community Advice Antrim and Newtownabbey.

2. Introduction/Background

Representatives will provide a presentation to the Committee, a copy of which is **enclosed** for Members' information.

3. Recommendation

It is recommended that the presentation be noted.

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

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

4 ITEMS FOR DECISION

4.1 CP/PCSP/143 CONSULTATION ON SPEED LIMIT REVIEW 2026

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to seek Members' instructions in relation to the Department for Infrastructure's (DfI) public consultation on the Speed Limit Review.

2. Background

The Department for Infrastructure (DfI) is undertaking a consultation to seek views on speed limits drawing on research and practice from across UK, Europe and the Republic of Ireland.

The review aims to identify opportunities to improve road safety outcomes and to support delivery of the Road Safety Strategy to 2030.

3. Key Issues

Members are advised that correspondence, a copy of which is **enclosed** has been received from DfI advising of a consultation on speed limits and seeking views on proposals to improve road safety, supporting delivery of the Road Safety Strategy to 2030.

The DfI wishes to hear from a wide range of interested persons and organisations. The consultation documents and associated survey are available online via the Department's website.

The consultation period opened on 14 January 2026 and will close on 22 April 2026. Responses received outside of this timeframe will not be considered by the Department.

Members are advised that they may wish to respond on a corporate, individual or party-political basis. Members are also advised that the Policing Community Safety Partnership (PCSP) is making a response to the consultation.

4. Summary

Following an evidence-based review aimed at improving road safety and supporting the Road Safety Strategy to 2030 the DfI has launched a public consultation on Speed Limits. Input is welcomed from all interested parties. The consultation closes on 22 April 2026. Full details and documentation can be accessed via the Department's website.

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

Members' instructions are requested.

Prepared by: Amy Lynch, Community Programmes Manager

Agreed by: Ronan McKenna, Head of Community Development

Approved by: Ursula Fay, Director of Community and Culture

4.2 CP/CP/113 BARNARDO'S - THE THRIVE PROJECT

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide Members with the THRiVE 2025/2026 Q3 Performance Report.

2. Introduction

The THRiVE Project is a collaboration of local parents, schools, community and voluntary organisations and statutory agencies working together to help children and young people in Macedon and Threemilewater DEAs to achieve their full potential and have the best start in life.

3. Previous Decision of Council

Members are reminded it was agreed at the March 2025 Community Development Committee, to provide £25,000 financial assistance for the 2025/26 Service Level Agreement between the Council and the Education Authority on behalf of the THRiVE Project with a quarterly performance report brought to future meetings of the Committee.

Members are also reminded that the provision of an additional £3,000 financial assistance for the 2025/26 Service Level Agreement between the Council and the Education Authority on behalf of the THRiVE Project and the 2025/26 Quarter 1 Performance Report, based upon performance measures in the Service Level Agreement, were approved at the September 2025 Community Development Committee.

4. Financial Position

A budget of £28,000 is included in the 2025/26 Community Development budgets.

5. Governance

It was approved at the June 2025 Community Development Committee that the Head of Community Development replace the Elected Members nominated to serve on the THRiVE Project Board from both the Macedon DEA and the Threemilewater DEAs with immediate effect.

Officers continue to work with the THRiVE Project and Community Planning partners to manage the performance of the Project. Quarterly performance reports will continue to be reported to the Community Development Committee.

Members are reminded that a presentation on the THRiVE Project was made to the October 2024 Community Development Committee.

6. Summary

The Quarter 3 Report is enclosed for Members' information and is based upon performance measures in the Service Level Agreement. Officers have been advised that Quarter 3 targets have been met.

7. Recommendation

It is recommended that the THRiVE Project Quarter 3 2025-26 performance report be approved.

Prepared by: Will McDowell, DEA Engagement Coordinator

Agreed by: Ronan McKenna, Head of Community Development

Approved by: Ursula Fay, Director of Community and Culture

4.3 CP/PP/006 PEACEPLUS PARTNERSHIP MINUTES

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide Members with the minutes from the PEACEPLUS Partnership Annual General Meeting and Full Partnership Meeting held on 20 January 2026 as a true and accurate reflection of the meeting.

2. Introduction/Background

Members are reminded that the PEACEPLUS Partnership operates as a Working Group of Council.

As such, the minutes of the following PEACEPLUS Partnership meetings,

- Annual General Meeting minutes 20 January 2026
- Full Partnership Meeting minutes 20 January 2026

are **enclosed** for Members' consideration.

3. Previous Decision of Council

Members are reminded that the minutes of the PEACEPLUS Full Partnership Meeting on 14 October 2025 were approved as a true and accurate reflection of the meeting at the November 2025 Council meeting.

Members are reminded that the draft PEACEPLUS Co-designed Local Community Action Plan, and the outcome of the Section 75 Equality Screening and Rural Proofing carried out for the Plan were approved at the March 2024 Community Development Committee.

4. Governance

The PEACEPLUS Partnership oversaw the design and implementation of a co-designed process used to inform the development of an over-arching PEACEPLUS Local Community Action Plan.

Members are reminded that it was agreed at the February 2022 Community Planning Committee that the Membership of the PEACEPLUS Partnership was as follows:

- 12 Elected Members nominated by D'Hondt and representative of each DEA;
- 4 Statutory Partners from Education Authority, Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Police Service of Northern Ireland and Northern Health and Social Care Trust to be nominated by the Statutory Partners;
- 7 Social Partners with one from each DEA appointed by public advertisement and selection process.

The PEACEPLUS Partnership, is governed by a constitution and a Partnership Agreement.

5. Summary

The PEACEPLUS Partnership operates as a Working Group of Council. The draft minutes from the AGM and Full Partnership meeting held on 20 January 2026 are provided for Members' approval.

6. Recommendation

It is recommended that the minutes of the PEACEPLUS Annual General Meeting and Full Partnership Meeting held on 20 January 2026, as detailed, be approved as true and accurate reflections of the meetings.

Prepared by: June Foster, PEACE Programme, Executive Officer

Agreed by: Ronan McKenna, Head of Community Development

Approved by: Ursula Fay, Director of Community and Culture

4.4 COMD/CD/009 REVIEW OF CHRISTMAS SWITCH ON EVENTS 2025

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to update Members in relation to the establishment of the Christmas Switch On Events – Task and Finish Working Group and to provide the minutes of the meeting held on 21 January 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.

4. 2025 Switch Ons

The programme for 2025 followed a keeping children safe online theme of "Santa Goes Digital."

All 7 events were delivered over the period Thursday 20 November – Saturday 29 November 2025 as detailed in the table below

DEA	Date & Time
Airport Crumlin Leisure Centre	Thursday 20 November 2025, 6.00pm - 7.30pm
Dunsilly Randalstown - John Street Car Park	Friday 21 November 2025, 6.00pm - 7.30pm

Antrim Railway Street Car Park	Saturday 22 November 2025, 4.30pm - 6.00pm
Threemilewater Jordanstown Road/Devenish Drive	Wednesday 26 November 2025, 6.00pm - 7.30pm
Glengormley Urban Lilian Bland Park	Thursday 27 November 2025, 6.00pm - 7.30pm
Macedon V36, Valley Leisure Centre	Friday 28 November 2025, 6.00pm - 7.30pm
Ballyclare The Square Car Park	Saturday 29 November 2025, 4.30pm - 6.00pm

All events were advertised and promoted through an electronic and direct marketing campaign to encourage residents' participation.

Detailed analysis of the costs and attendances at the events is **enclosed** for Members' information.

5. 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 first meeting of the Christmas Switch On Events – Task and Finish Working Group was held on Wednesday 21 January 2026 and the minutes of this meeting are **enclosed** for Members' information.

6. 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.

7. Summary

Seven Christmas Lights Switch On events, one in each DEA across the Borough, took place from Thursday 20 to Saturday 29 November 2025. The programme theme "Santa Goes Digital" supported keeping children safe online.

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 are enclosed as a true and accurate reflection of the meeting.

8. Recommendation

It is recommended that the minutes of the Christmas Switch On Events – Task and Finish Working Group meeting of 21 January 2026 be approved as a true and accurate reflection of the meeting.

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

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

4.5 CP/CD/004 PARKHALL COMMUNITY CENTRE – STEEPLE DEFENDERS FLUTE BAND ALCOHOL REQUEST

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to seek Members' approval for a Flute Band to apply for an alcohol licence to sell and consume alcohol in Parkhall Community Centre at a fundraising event on Saturday 11 April 2026.

2. Introduction/Background

Members are advised that Steeple Defenders Flute Band have made a request to hire Parkhall Community Centre on Saturday 11th April 2026 1pm-8pm. This will be for their annual fundraising and celebration event.

The band has requested permission to apply for a licence to sell alcohol at it's event. The consumption and sale of alcohol is permitted with agreement by Council if the relevant licence is obtained by the event organiser.

3. Previous Decision of Council

The Steeple Defenders Flute Band was granted permission at the March 2025 Community Development Committee to apply for an alcohol licence to sell alcohol in Parkhall Community Centre for an event on Saturday 12 April 2025.

Members are advised a number of previous similar requests to the Council seeking permission to serve and sell alcohol at functions in community facilities have been approved.

Members are reminded that additional charges were introduced to the 2025/26 Community Facilities Schedule of Charges including 'out of hours' bookings fees. These were reviewed following testing of this approach to address unintended issues of affordability for some booking requests and new charges were approved at the June 2025 Community Development Committee.

2. Financial Position/Implications

There are no financial implications for the Council from approval of this request.

3. Summary

A request has been received from Steeple Defenders Flute Band to apply for an alcohol licence to sell and consume alcohol in Parkhall Community Centre on Saturday 11 April 2026.

4. Recommendation

It is recommended that the request from Steeple Defenders Flute Band to apply for an alcohol licence to sell and consumer alcohol in Parkhall Community Centre on Saturday 11 April 2026 be approved.

Prepared by: Paul Townsend, Community Facilities Coordinator

Agreed by: Ronan McKenna, Head of Community Development

Approved by: Ursula Fay, Director of Community and Culture

4.6 CP/CP/237 WOMEN'S SUB COMMITTEE

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to seek Members' approval for the draft minutes of the Women's Sub Committee meeting held on 27 January 2026 as a true and accurate reflection of the meeting.

2. Introduction/Background

Members are reminded that a motion to establish a stand alone 'Women's Sub Committee' made up of female representatives of the Council to discuss and promote women's issues, build the skills and confidence of local women and to encourage women to become more involved in local politics was approved at the August 2023 Council meeting.

3. Previous Council Decision

The Terms of Reference for the Women's Sub Committee were approved at the November 2023 Community Planning Committee and provide the framework for the meetings. The minutes of the previous meeting were approved at the December 2025 Community Development Committee meeting.

4. Working Group Meeting

Members are advised that the Women's Sub Committee met on 27 January 2026; the minutes of the meeting are **enclosed**.

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 Women's Sub Committee is set out in the Terms of Reference which were approved at the November 2023 Community Planning Committee.

8. Summary

The Women's Sub Committee is made up of female representatives of the Council to discuss and promote women's issues, build the skills and confidence of local women and to encourage women to become more involved in local politics.

9. Recommendation

It is recommended that the draft minutes of the Women's Sub Committee Meeting held on 27 January 2026 be approved as a true and accurate reflection of the meeting.

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

Approved by: Ursula Fay, Director of Community and Culture

4.7 CP/GR/193 SOMME VISIT 2026

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to update Members in relation to the establishment of a Task and Finish Working Group to develop arrangements for the annual visit to the Somme in 2026 and to provide the minutes of the meeting held on 15 January 2026 as a true and accurate reflection of the meeting.

2. Introduction/Background

Members are reminded that a delegation from the Council once again participated in a visit to the Somme Region from 30 June-2 July 2025, to mark the 1 July anniversary of the Battle of the Somme.

The visit to France included educational visits to key sites where local regiments fought, and individuals from the Borough lost their lives.

The Elected Members in attendance were The Mayor Cllr Kirkpatrick, The Deputy Mayor Cllr Gilmour, Alderman Smyth, Cllr Cushinan, Cllr McWilliam, Cllr Ward and Cllr Webb. The visit was facilitated by experienced historian and former Elected Member Fraser Agnew, supported by two officers.

3. Previous Decisions of Council

Members are reminded that it was agreed at Community Planning Committee in September 2023 that the Somme Visit be delivered annually as part of the Council's Good Relations Programme.

It was also agreed that the Council delegation to the Somme visit in future years would operate as follows:

The Mayor, Deputy Mayor and one Elected Member from each of the Political Parties and one Independent Elected Member would attend the Somme accompanied by appropriate Officers.

Any other Elected Member who wished to attend could do so at their own expense.

A proposed itinerary for the Somme visit in 2025 and 2026 was reported to the October 2024 Community Development Committee with arrangements for 2025 approved.

In response to Members feedback a meeting with Members was held in November 2025 to consider the arrangements for 2026. It was then agreed at Community Development Committee in December 2025 to establish a Task and Finish Working Group to develop arrangements for the 2026 visit to the Somme.

4. Somme Visit 2026

2026 marks the 110th anniversary of The Battle of the Somme so the visit in summer of 2026 has added significance.

Following a review of the 2025 visit, it was proposed to establish an Elected Member task and finish working group with those who plan to attend in 2026 with a focus on agreeing the proposed itinerary and other practical arrangements. It is also proposed that any Member with interest and/or experience of this annual visit can attend the task and finish working group. The first meeting of the Task and Finish Working Group was held on Thursday 15 January 2026 and the minutes of this meeting are **enclosed** for Members' consideration.

5. Financial Position/Implication

An allocation of up to £15,000 is included in the Community Development budget estimates for 2026/27.

6. Summary

A Task and Finish Working Group was established in early 2026 to plan the itinerary and arrangements for the 2026 visit to the Somme.

7. Recommendation

It is recommended that the minutes of the Task and Finish Working Group held on 15 January 2026 be approved as a true and accurate reflection of the meeting.

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

Approved by: Ursula Fay, Director of Community and Culture

4.8 COMD/GR/009 GOOD RELATIONS GRANT AID PROGRAMME 2025-2026

1. Purpose

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

2. Background

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

The Good Relations Grant Programme opened for applications on 1 April 2025 and closed on 31 December 2025.

All Good Relations Grants are assessed against eligibility criteria and a scored assessment process. Applicants are required to score a minimum of 60% for an application to be recommended for approval.

3. Previous Decisions by Council

The Good Relations Grant Programme was approved at May 2025 Community Development Committee as part of the Council's revised Good Relations Action Plan 2025-26.

4. Key Issues

An application received in late 2025 has been assessed by officers and achieved the required score to be successful.

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

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 for the 2025/26 Good Relations Grant Programme within the 2025/26 Community Development budget is £5,000.

6. Summary

It is proposed that the Good Relations funding award for £1,000 to the successful applicant as outlined, be approved.

The 2025/26 Good Relations Grants are now closed.

7. Recommendation

It is recommended that the Good Relations Grant application as outlined for £1,000 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

4.9 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 14 January 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 December 2025 Community Development Committee meeting.

4. Working Group Meeting

Members are advised that the Ballyclare May Fair Working Group met on 14 January 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 14 January 2026 be approved as a true and accurate reflection of the meeting.

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

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

Approved by: Ursula Fay, Director of Community and Culture

4.10 AC/EV/003 CRAFT NI PROPOSAL FOR GARDEN SHOW IRELAND 2026

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to seek Members' approval to appoint Craft NI to deliver the artisan craft elements of Garden Show Ireland 2026, which is scheduled to take place from 12-14 June 2026 at Antrim Castle Gardens.

2. Introduction/Background

Garden Show Ireland is one of Northern Ireland's leading garden festivals, and has been held in Antrim Castle Gardens each year since 2014 with the exception of 2020 and 2021 when Covid prevented the event from taking place. In 2025, despite extremely poor weather, Garden Show Ireland attracted more than 10,000 visitors.

The event is a three-day celebration of flowers, food and fun for the whole family, incorporating talks and demonstrations given by horticulturists including the Show Ambassador David Domoney, show gardens and displays, music and entertainment, food-to-go, and traders selling plants, horticultural equipment and furniture, and artisan crafts, food and drinks.

For the past three years, Craft NI has been appointed to manage the artisan craft stalls at the event. Craft NI is the sector-led body for the promotion and development of the design-led contemporary craft industry in Northern Ireland. Craft NI supports and promotes the craft industry as an integral, entrepreneurial, and vibrant part of the region's economic and cultural infrastructure. Its key partners include regional government and agencies, local government, cultural organisations, universities and colleges, private businesses, and industry. In 2025, Craft NI sourced and managed 18 artisan craft traders for Garden Show Ireland.

3. Previous Decision of Council

The appointment of Craft NI to manage artisan craft traders at Garden Show Ireland 2025 was approved at the February 2025 Community Development Committee.

4. Key Issues

Following discussions with officers, Craft NI has confirmed its interest in once again sourcing and managing 18 high-quality craft makers for Garden Show Ireland 2026. These craft makers will sell their products to the public and provide live craft demonstrations.

Under the terms of the proposal:

- Craft NI will charge each craft maker £250 to participate.
- 50% of the fee will be retained by Craft NI as a management fee.
- 50% of the fee will be paid to the Council (this amounted to £2,250 in 2025).

- Craft NI has committed to ensuring that local craft makers based within the Borough are encouraged and supported to participate, with a target of 40% of traders coming from within the Borough.

5. Financial Position/Implication

If approved, it is anticipated that the gross income from Craft NI will be approximately £2,250. This anticipated income is included in the draft budget for Garden Show Ireland 2026 and is reflected in the draft 2026/27 budget estimates.

6. Summary

The artisan craft element of Garden Show Ireland has been managed successfully by Craft NI since 2023, and this generated £2,250 of income for the event in 2025. Craft NI has provisionally agreed to source and manage 18 artisan craft traders for the 2026 event on the same terms as 2025. The continued partnership with Craft NI will ensure that Garden Show Ireland 2026 benefits from a high-quality craft sector presence, contributing to the event's overall success. Craft NI's expertise in the sector, along with their ability to attract and manage skilled craft makers, makes them a valuable partner for this event.

7. Recommendation

It is recommended that the proposal to appoint Craft NI to deliver the artisan craft element of Garden Show Ireland 2026 be approved.

Prepared by: Chris Lynn, Culture and Events Co-Ordinator

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

Approved by: Ursula Fay, Director of Community and Culture

4.11 AC/GEN/085 COMMUNITY FESTIVAL FUND GRANT AID

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to seek Members' approval for 12 Community Festival Fund grants for 2026 to 2028.

2. Background

As part of the Council's Community Development Grant Aid Programme, community and voluntary organisations can apply for Community Festival grant funding to support the delivery of community events.

A community festival is defined as a series of events with a common theme, delivered within a defined time period. It is developed from within a community and should celebrate and positively promote what the community represents. Community festivals are about participation, involvement, inclusion and the creation of a sense of identity, and are important in contributing to the social well-being of a community. The fund is available to properly constituted community, voluntary and charitable groups based in the Borough.

3. Previous Decision of Council

Members are reminded that a presentation on the Community Development Grant Aid Programme was made to the Community Development Committee in February 2025, and the proposed changes to the Grant Aid programme approved. A key change to Community Festival Funding was that Groups can now seek funding for either one or two years, with 80% of the annual budget being given to multi-year applications. Calls are made annually for single year applications, while multi-year applications open at the end of every two-year cycle.

4. 2026 - 2028 Community Festival Fund Proposals

A call for Community Festival Fund grant applications for 2026-27 and 2027-28 opened on 1 October 2025 and closed on 5 December 2025. A total of 15 two-year funding applications for 2026-28 were received, with 12 applications, totalling £79,760 achieving the required pass threshold, details of which are **enclosed**. No applications were received for single year grants.

5. Financial Position

A budget of £107,870 is included in the draft 2026/27 Culture budget for Community Festival grant funding. In addition, a contribution of £27,700 is anticipated from the Department for Communities' (DfC) Community Festival Programme but is yet to be confirmed. If this contribution is realised the total budget available for the Community Festival Fund category of the Community Development Grant Aid programme in 2026/27 will be £135,570.

The 12 grant applications recommended for approval total £39,880 for

2026/2027. In addition, funding commitments totalling £8,750 are already in place for 2026/27 from previously approved multi-year funding agreements. If the 12 applications are approved, the total funding commitment for 2026/27 would be £48,630 with a remaining budget of £86,940 for 2026/27 including the DfC contribution.

6. Summary

Following a call for applications in October 2025 15 applications were received for two-year Community Festival grant funding for 2026-28 and assessed by a panel of officers. The required threshold for funding was achieved by 12 applicants seeking a total of £39,880 in 2026/27. When added to the previously approved multi-year commitment of £8,750, the total commitment for Community Festival funding in 2026/27 is £48,630, with a remaining budget of £86,940.

7. Recommendation

It is recommended that:

- (a) the 12 successful Community Festival applications for funding totalling £39,880 for 26/27 and 27/28 be approved; and**
- (b) a second call for applications be opened on 2 March 2026 and closed on 30 April 2026.**

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

Approved by: Ursula Fay, Director of Community and Culture

4.12 COMD/MCPR/002 MARKETING, COMMUNICATIONS AND PR PERFORMANCE REPORT

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide Members with detailed performance data relating to the Marketing, Communications and PR service delivery, and to seek approval to bring this information in a quarterly report to the Committee going forward.

2. Introduction

The Council's Marketing, Communications and PR Section of the Community and Culture Directorate manages external communications, marketing, public relations, graphic design services, and the Council's websites.

3. Previous Decision of Council

Members are reminded that a Media Protocol was approved by the Community Development Committee in October 2025 with a Communications Strategy subsequently approved by the Committee in January 2026.

4. Performance Measurement

The Communications Strategy commits to the continuous evaluation of the Council's communications to assess impact and inform the development of service delivery within an evolving communications landscape.

As stated within Section 14 of the Communications Strategy, success will be measured through:

- Evaluation of all major campaigns to establish the return on investment
- Monitoring and measuring social media presence
- Monitoring and measuring of media coverage, using advertising or similar metric to estimate the value of such media coverage
- Maintaining a higher-than-average social media follower growth and engagement rate across the corporate accounts
- Increasing the number of visitors to all of our web platforms
- Measuring satisfaction with Council services including websites and resident's magazine through an annual survey
- Measuring corporate brand awareness as part of this annual survey
- Tracking of the number of design projects completed annually by the in-house design team

A report on the first five measures for the period April to December 2025 is enclosed for Members' information. It is proposed that this report is brought to the Committee on a quarterly basis, with metrics that are captured through the annual survey included within one of the quarterly reports. Members are advised that the performance data contained within this report, as a minimum, is collected and analysed monthly to inform the ongoing

development of strategy plans, and communications approaches on an ongoing and agile basis.

Social Media

Within the Online Nation report published in December 2025 by Ofcom it was identified that UK adults spend an average of four and a half hours online a day – up by 10 minutes from the previous year and that 95% of the UK 16+ population have access to the internet at home.

Based upon 2025 data social media usage in Northern Ireland is widespread with over 80% of the population active on social media platforms and 99% of adults in Northern Ireland using services run by Meta such as Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp.

Council operates a number of social media channels and targets and tailor's communications to specific audiences across these platforms.

The **enclosed** report provides detailed analysis of Social Media performance for the period April 2025 to December 2025 for the Council's main corporate channels. Highlights are summarised below:

Metric	Number	Notes
Number of Followers	68,590	Across all Corporate Council platforms
Number of Posts	2,777	Facebook, Instagram, X, TikTok, LinkedIn
Impressions	17,776,355	Opportunities to View
Audience Growth Rate	7.6%	Average Government Rate: 0.08%
Engagement Rate	4.8%	Average Government Rate: 1.6%
Key Campaign Report - Enchanted Winter Garden	4.6M reach	Meta, TikTok, Google

Members are advised that the Marketing Communications and PR Team also manage 15 additional social media accounts such as dedicated Enchanted Winter Garden Facebook and Instagram accounts and across all channels there are 132,906 followers in total.

Social media continues to be a highly effective means of communication and the digital nature of this form of communications provides real time data about the performance of each post as presented in the report enclosure.

Media Relations

Media relationship management is the strategic practice of building and maintaining relationships with journalists, bloggers, and influencers to secure positive, unpaid media coverage across a range of channels including television, radio, print, and online media. The Communications team engages in media relations both proactively and reactively.

This is a key part of the Council's public relations (PR) function, focusing specifically on the media as a channel to reach broader audiences through trusted sources.

The **enclosed** report provides detailed analysis of Media performance for the period April 2025 to December 2025 with highlights summarised below:

Metric	Number/value	Breakdown / Notes
Total Press Releases Issued	138	Average 17+ per month
Total Mentions	4.5K	Online: 2.5K · Print: 1.9K · Radio: 147 · TV: 31
Total Reach	1.1 billion	
Total Advertising Value	£24,453,256.36	
Sentiment	Predominantly neutral-positive	62% Positive · 27% Neutral · 11% Negative

Media reach and value measures have been provided by a professional media analysis company, which applies robust methodologies to assess coverage across all channels and time periods. This determines both potential reach and estimated value, based on the cost of equivalent paid advertising.

5. Finance and Governance

In the main the delivery of the social media and media functions are resourced within the Communications Team. Revenue budgets are utilised for specific campaigns to amplify both social media and media coverage through paid advertisement and to ensure messaging is reaching the target audience.

Given the value of the metrics presented and the critical role effective communication plays in relation to the profile of the Council and engagement with residents it is proposed to bring this Communications Report to the Committee quarterly covering the performance metrics outlined in the Communications Strategy at the following intervals:

- March – Report on the previous October to December
- June – Report on the previous January to March period

- September – Report on the previous April to June period
- December – Report on the previous July to September period

The performance measures that are collected on an annual basis will be included within the report to the June Committee.

6. Summary

Effective communication is fundamental to building trust, engagement, and civic pride across the Borough. The Communications Strategy includes robust performance measures that are monitored on an ongoing basis to shape and inform the Council's approach to communications in an ever-changing landscape. A performance report covering the period April 2025 to December 2025 outlines key results in relation to social media and media activity. Going forward, quarterly performance reports will be presented to the Committee in line with the proposed schedule, with annual performance measures included in a report to the June Committee.

7. Recommendation

It is recommended that the update on Marketing, Communications and PR performance be noted and a quarterly report to the Committee as per the proposed schedule be approved.

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

4.13 CP/GEN/052 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT GRANT AID RECOMMENDATIONS 2026/2027 AND 2027/2028

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to seek Members' approval in relation to proposed financial awards under the Community Facilities, Programmes and Activities Grant Aid Programme for 2026/2027 and 2026/2028.

2. Background

The Community Facilities, Programmes and Activities Grant Aid Programme provides financial assistance to groups within the Borough towards the costs of running their Community Facilities and delivering their Programmes and Activities over a maximum 2-year period.

Programmes funded must have Community Development as a primary objective and must develop a strong, healthy and vibrant community, encourage maximum participation and improve the lives of people living within the Borough.

To support applications to this programme, Officers delivered two grant workshops and offered one-to-one support to all interested groups upon request.

3. Previous Decision of Council

Members are reminded that a presentation on the Community Development Grant Aid Programme was given to the Community Development Committee in February 2025, where the proposed changes to the programme were approved.

A key change to the Community Facilities, Programmes and Activities Grant Aid Programme was that groups can now seek funding for either one year or two years, with 80% of the annual budget profiled for two-year applications. Calls are made annually for single year applications, while multi-year applications open at the end of every two-year cycle.

4. Call for Applications 2026/2027 and 2026/2028

A call for Community Facilities, Programmes and Activities grant applications for 2026/2027 and 2027/2028 opened on 1 October 2025 and closed on 5 December 2025.

A total of 81 two-year funding applications were received for 2026/2028 with 73 applications totalling £451,462.66 for year one and £451,696 for year two achieving the required pass threshold. In addition, 11 applications for one year funding in 2026/2027 were received with 9 applications totalling £35,370 meeting the required pass threshold.

In total 92 applications were received for both multi-year and single year funding, with 82 applications totalling £486,832.66 in 2026/2027 achieving the required pass threshold. Of these 73 applications were approved for multi-year funding with £451,696 approved for 2027/2028 (details of which are enclosed for Members' information).

5. Financial Implication

A budget of £628,000 is included in the draft 2026/2027 Community Development budget for Community Facilities, Programmes and Activities funding. A contribution totalling £50,428, similar to the amount awarded in 2025/2026, is anticipated from the Department for Communities (DfC) under its Community Support Programme for 2026/2027 but is yet to be confirmed.

The total amount of financial assistance in 2026/2027 requested by the 82 applications that met the required pass threshold is £486,832.66. In addition, previous funding commitments totalling £47,920 are committed for 2026/2027 to support year 3 funding awards previously approved. If the 82 applicants are approved, the total funding commitment for 2026/2027 would be £534,752.66 and for 2027/2028 would be £451,696. With a remaining budget of £93,247.34 for 2026/27 and £176,304 for 2027/2028.

It is therefore recommended that all successful applications be approved for funding and a second call for applications be opened. Members are reminded that funding is subject to satisfactory annual monitoring and evaluation. As in previous years, Officers will arrange to meet with any unsuccessful groups to provide feedback on their applications and to signpost to other relevant funders.

6. Summary

A total of 92 applications for the Community Facilities, Programmes and Activities Grant Aid programme were received and assessed by a panel of Officers with 82 applications totalling £486,832.66 achieving the required pass threshold for funding in 2026/2027.

Of the 82 successful applications, 73 have been awarded funding of £451,696 for 2027/2028.

In the 2026/2027 budget estimates there is an allocation of £628,000 for Community Facilities, Programmes and Activities Grants designated under this grant call.

It is proposed that all successful applications be approved for funding in 2026/2027 and 2027/2028 where applicable.

7. Recommendation

It is recommended that

(a) the 82 successful Community Facilities, Programmes and Activities

applications requesting financial assistance totalling £486,832.66 for 2026/2027 be approved;

(b) the 73 successful Community Facilities, Programmes and Activities applications requesting financial assistance totalling £451,696 for 2027/2028 be approved;

(c) a second call for applications be opened.

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

4.14 CP/GR/171 THE EXECUTIVE OFFICE ASYLUM FUNDING 2025/2026

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to seek Members' approval regarding the offer of Asylum Funding from The Executive Office for 2025/2026.

2. Introduction/Background

Members are reminded that The Executive Office (TEO), on behalf of the Home Office, introduced the Full Dispersal and Refugee Integration funded programmes in 2023 to support asylum seekers and refugees to integrate within communities across Northern Ireland.

The purpose of this funding was to support the development of local capacity and infrastructure to meet the needs of asylum seekers and to promote integration within the Council area. The funding offer followed the submission of the Council's Action Plan to TEO, outlining proposed actions to support asylum seekers residing within the Borough.

Since the introduction of the programme, the Council's Good Relations team has delivered a range of initiatives supporting individuals seeking asylum and those with refugee status who have been placed within the Borough, in line with the objectives of the TEO funding framework.

3. Previous Decision of Council

Members are reminded that a Memorandum of Understanding issued by The Executive Office for Asylum Full Dispersal funding, totalling £88,478, was approved by the Community Planning Committee in April 2023.

Members are also reminded that a funding allocation of £50,000 was approved at the September 2024 Community Development Committee to support the continued delivery of the Asylum and Refugee Integration Programme.

4. Asylum and Refugee Integration Funding 2025/26

Members are advised that TEO have invited Councils once again to submit funding proposals to provide support for the integration of refugees within their Council areas.

TEO has confirmed an allocation of £68,693 for 2025–26 for the Council, comprising a £15,000 baseline for Council coordinated Community Hubs and £53,693 prorated funding based on the proportion of supported asylum seekers in the Borough (Home Office statistics, September 2025).

The funding is aimed to support the delivery of Integration and Support Hubs, aligned to TEO's Hub Framework, enabling asylum seekers, refugees, minority ethnic groups and other newcomers to access essential services and integrate into local communities.

A draft proposal has been submitted to TEO in line with their January 2026 submission deadline and a copy is **enclosed** for Members' approval.

5. Financial Position/Implication

Members are advised that the Council has received an offer of £68,693 from TEO to support the delivery of the Asylum and Refugee Integration Programme during the 2025/26 financial year. Councils may use end of year flexibility to continue delivery into the next financial year.

There is no additional cost to the Council for the delivery of this Programme.

6. Summary

The Council has received an offer for funding of £68,693 from TEO for the costs associated with the Asylum Funding Programme for 2025/26.

A draft proposal has been developed and submitted to reflect the offer of funding from TEO.

Councils may use end of year flexibility to continue delivery into the next financial year.

7. Recommendation

It is recommended that The Executive Office Funding Letter of Offer of £68,693 for the delivery of the 2025/26 Asylum Funding be accepted and the proposal 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

4.15 CP/CP/243 ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS – SHARED ISLAND EVENT

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to seek Members' approval for attendance at the Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA) and Association for Irish Local Government (AILG) Ending Violence Against Women & Girls Event in the Slieve Russell Hotel, Co. Cavan on Tuesday 24th and Wednesday 25th March 2026.

2. Introduction and Background

NILGA have been working with the Executive Office (TEO) in relation to the Programme for Government priority of Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG).

NILGA are seeking to develop the leadership role of Elected Members in EVAWG and would like to bring Members with experience of tackling this issue together to discuss challenges and opportunities with their counterparts in Association for Irish Local Government (AILG).

Following a successful application to the Shared Island Civic Society Fund, NILGA & AILG are hosting a cross-border event on developing their leadership and influence in relation to EVAWG.

3. Correspondence from the NILGA

Correspondence **enclosed** has been received from NILGA requesting that two Elected Members are nominated to attend the EVAWG event.

The event is taking place on Tuesday 24 and Wednesday 25 March 2026 in the Slieve Russell Hotel, Co. Cavan.

It is proposed that two Members of the Women's Sub Committee are nominated to attend the Event.

4. Financial Position/Implication

Members are advised that overnight accommodation is available at a cost of €130pp. There is no cost for attendance at the event.

Provision exists within the 2025/26 Community Development budgets to cover the costs of two Members attending this event.

5. Summary

The Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA) and Association for Irish Local Government (AILG) are hosting a cross-border event on developing their leadership and influence in relation to EVAWG.

It is proposed that two Members of the Women's Sub Committee are nominated to attend the EVAWG event in the Slieve Russell Hotel, Co. Cavan on Tuesday 24 and Wednesday 25 March 2026.

6. Recommendation

It is recommended that two Members from the Women's Sub Committee are nominated to attend the EVAWG cross border event on Tuesday 24 and Wednesday 25 March 2026, in Cavan.

Agreed by: Ronan McKenna, Head of Community Development

Approved by: Ursula Fay, Director of Community and Culture

5 ITEMS FOR NOTING

5.1 FI/FIN/4 BUDGET REPORT – Period 9 April 2025 to December 2025

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the financial performance of the Community and Culture Directorate for Period 9 April 2025 to December 2025.

2. Introduction/Background

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

3. Summary

As at period 9:

The Community and Culture Directorate has a favourable variance of £252k, or 4.6%, against the budgeted financial performance for the period.

A report on the financial performance, employee costs, highest areas of expenditure and income, and the financial performance by Head of Service is **enclosed** for Members' information.

The overall financial position of the Council will be presented to the Policy & Governance Committee.

4. Recommendation

It is recommended that the report be noted.

Prepared by: Richard Murray, Head of Finance

Approved by: Ursula Fay, Director of Community and Culture

5.2 COMD/GR/001 SEACHTAIN NA GAELIGE (IRISH LANGUAGE WEEK) 2026

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to update Members about plans for Seachtain na Gaeilge (Irish Language Week) 2026.

2. Introduction/Background

Seachtain na Gaeilge is an annual international festival coordinated by Conradh na Gaeilge, celebrating the Irish language and culture. The festival promotes awareness of the Irish language through a diverse programme of cultural, educational and community-based activities delivered by statutory, voluntary and community organisations, and takes place annually from 1 -17 March.

The Council plans to take part in this year's event are included in the Good Relations Cultural Awareness Programme alongside similar plans to deliver events showcasing the Ulster Scots Language during the Ulster Scots Leid Week.

In previous years, the Council has participated in Seachtain na Gaeilge by offering a range of cultural and language-based activities, such as story and rhyme workshops, Irish language taster sessions, conversation circles incorporating traditional music, arts-based cultural celebration activities, and sessions exploring Irish place names and commonly used words.

It is anticipated a broader programme will be developed for this year's festival, to incorporate increased language learning opportunities and engagement with children and young people.

3. Previous Decision of Council

The Council's Good Relations Programme 2025/26 Action Plan, including a commitment to participate in the 2026 Seachtain na Gaeilge, was approved at the May 2025 Community Development Committee.

4. Seachtain na Gaeilge (Irish Language Week) 2026

It is proposed that the Council's Good Relations Team will deliver a programme of activities across the Borough, which will include:

- Children's storytelling and rhyme workshops, in partnership with schools and Libraries NI
- School-based events designed to bring children and young people together through music, culture, art, and shared celebration
- Irish language taster sessions and short courses for participants of all ages
- Schools' engagement initiatives, including the development of resources to enable pupils in Irish-medium education across the Borough to take an active role in promoting and celebrating language awareness.

- Officers are engaging with community groups, schools, and relevant partners to finalise programme content.

5. Financial Position/Implication

A budget of up to £5,000 is available for Seachtain na Gaeilge 2026 having been allocated in the approved Good Relations Action Plan.

Officers explored other potential funding sources for the programme through Foras na Gaeilge, Conradh na Gaeilge and Ciste Spreagtha; however, the Council is not eligible to apply for these schemes.

6. Summary

The 2026 Seachtain na Gaeilge will take place from 1–17 March. As in previous years, the Good Relations Team will work with a range of stakeholders to develop and deliver a programme of activities that celebrates and promotes the Irish language, as approved in the Council's 2025-26 Good Relations Action Plan.

7. Recommendation

It is recommended that the report be noted.

Prepared by: Amy Gribbon, Good Relations Officer

Agreed by: Ronan McKenna, Head of Community Development

Approved by: Ursula Fay, Director of Community and Culture

6 ANY OTHER RELEVANT BUSINESS

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