MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE HELD IN THE CHAMBER, MOSSLEY MILL ON MONDAY 14 SEPTEMBER 2026 AT 6.30 PM

In the Chair	:	Councillor H Magill
Committee Members (In person)	:	Alderman J McGrath Councillors – M Brady, M Cooper, P Dunlop, J Gilmour, R Lynch, V McWilliam, M Ní Chonghaile, A O'Lone, M Stewart and S Wilson
Committee Members (Remote)	:	Councillor J Burbank
Non-Committee Member (In Person)	:	Alderman S Ross
Non-Committee Member (Remote)	:	Alderman L Clarke Councillors - S Cosgrove, M Goodman and L O'Hagan
Officers Present	:	Director of Community and Culture – U Fay Head of Community Development – R McKenna Head of Arts, Culture, Tourism and Events – S Goldrick Head of Marketing, Communications and PR - J McIntyre ICT Project Officer – C Bell Member Services Officer – C McGrandle

CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

The Chairperson welcomed Members to the September meeting of the Community Development Committee and reminded all present of the audio recording procedures.

1 APOLOGIES

Councillors - L Kirkpatrick and T McGrann

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Item 4.8 – Councillor M Cooper
Item 4.12 – Councillors - P Dunlop, H Magill and M Stewart
Item 4.19 – Councillors – M Brady and M Cooper

3 INTRODUCTION OF NEW STAFF

The Chairperson introduced three new members of staff to the Committee:

Grainne Griffith – Community Development Project Officer (EVAWG)
Karen Ireland – Communications and PR Officer
Conor Stewart – PEACEPLUS Finance and Monitoring Officer

4 ITEMS FOR DECISION

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

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to provide Members with the THRiVE 2026/2027 Q1 Performance Report and advise that performance targets for the period had been met.

2. Introduction

The THRiVE Project was 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 were reminded that it was agreed at the March 2026 Community Development Committee, to provide £28,000 of financial assistance for the 2026/27 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.

4. Financial Position

A budget of £28,000 was included in the 2026/27 Community Development budgets.

5. Governance

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

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

6. Summary

The Quarter 1 Report was circulated for Members' information and was based upon performance measures in the Service Level Agreement. Officers had been advised that Quarter 1 targets had been met.

Proposed by Councillor Gilmour
Seconded by Councillor Brady and agreed that

the THRiVE Project Quarter 1 2026-27 performance report be approved.

ACTION BY: Will McDowell, DEA Engagement Coordinator

4.2 CP/CD/444 ANTRIM AND NEWTOWNABBEY SENIORS FORUM

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to provide Members with an update on the Antrim and Newtownabbey Seniors Forum Quarter 1 2026-27 performance report.

2. Introduction/Background

Antrim and Newtownabbey Seniors Forum aimed to relieve poverty, advance education and promote the preservation and protection of health among seniors (50+) in the Borough and its environs. They provided facilities and programmes in the interests of social welfare for the education, recreation and leisure time for senior citizens. Officers had continued to work with the Forum and Community Planning partners (NIHE, PHA, NHSCT) to manage the service level agreement.

3. Previous Decision of Council

Members were reminded that at the March 2026 Community Development Committee it was agreed to provide funding of £15,000 through a service level agreement for the 2026/27 financial year to the Antrim and Newtownabbey Seniors Forum. Officers had continued to work with the Forum and Community Planning partners (NIHE, PHA and NHSCT) to manage the service level agreement and performance of this Group.

Members were also reminded it was agreed at the July 2022 Council Meeting that a quarterly performance report be provided to the Community Planning Committee, from September 2022 onwards.

The 2025/26 Quarter 4 Performance Report was approved at the March 2026 Community Development Committee and was based upon performance measures in the Service Level Agreement.

4. Financial Position/Implication

Members were advised provision of £15,000 in financial support for the Antrim and Newtownabbey Seniors Forum had been provided for in the 2026/27 Community Development budget. Other Community Planning partners had also confirmed their financial commitment to continue to support this group as outlined below.

Community Planning Partner	**Financial contribution to Antrim and Newtownabbey Seniors Forum 2026/27**
Northern Health & Social Care Trust	£15,000
Public Health Agency	£15,000
Northern Ireland Housing Executive	£15,000

A Service Level Agreement between Council and Antrim and Newtownabbey Seniors' Forum for 2026/27 had been developed.

5. Governance

Officers continued to work with the Forum and Community Planning partners to manage the Service Level Agreement and performance of this Group. A quarter one performance report was circulated for Members information.

6. Summary

The Antrim and Newtownabbey Seniors' Forum 2026-27 Quarter 1 Report was based upon performance measures in the Service Level Agreement. Members were advised that the Quarter 1 targets had been met.

Proposed by Councillor Stewart
Seconded by Councillor Wilson and agreed that

the Antrim and Newtownabbey Seniors' Forum Quarter 1 2026-27 performance report be approved.

ACTION BY: Conor Cunning, DEA Engagement Manager

4.3 CP/CP/240 ANTI-POVERTY STEERING GROUP

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to seek Members' approval to sign the Partnership Agreement between Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council and the National Children's Bureau (NCB) in relation to the Local Voices, National Change Project, funded by The National Lottery Community Fund.

2. Introduction/Background

Members were asked to recall that, at the October 2025 meeting of the Community Development Committee, approval was provided for the Council to be a named partner in the NCB's funding application for the Local Voices, National Change project, with any formal partnership agreement to be brought back to a future meeting for approval.

The funding application had subsequently been successful, and the formal Partnership Agreement had now been provided by NCB for approval and signature. Partnership agreement was circulated for Members' information.

The issue of poverty and its impact on the life choices of citizens had always been of concern to the Council. The cost-of-living crisis which followed the COVID-19 pandemic further increased focus on the issue of poverty and the need for effective partnership approaches to address this challenge.

The Council's Anti-Poverty Strategy 2024–2030 provided a strategic framework for addressing poverty across the Borough and supported the Council's Corporate Strategy and Community Plan. The Strategy seeks, amongst other things, to maximise stakeholder partnership opportunities, enhance social inclusion and improve access to essential services for residents.

The NCB was a charitable organisation which worked to improve the lives of children and young people. NCB had secured funding from The National Lottery Community Fund for the Local Voices, National Change (LVNC) Project, a five-year programme commencing on 1 July 2026 and running until 30 June 2031.

The project would expand and diversify the involvement of children and young people with lived experience of poverty in local and national decision-making. It aimed to ensure that the experiences of children and young people were understood and reflected in anti-poverty policy and its implementation.

The project would operate across six Local Authorities/Councils in England and Northern Ireland. NCB anticipated working with between 240 and 400 children and young people each year, scaling up over the lifetime of the project, with approximately 1,000 children and young people expected to participate over the five years.

3. Previous Council decisions

Members were reminded that, following a Motion to Council in January 2024, an Anti-Poverty Steering Group was established to develop a coordinated and comprehensive Anti-Poverty Strategy for the Borough. The Anti-Poverty Strategy 2024–2030 was subsequently approved by the Community Development Committee in November 2024.

At the October 2025 meeting of the Community Development Committee, Members were advised that NCB was seeking the Council's support to be a named partner in its five-year funding proposal to The National Lottery Community Fund for the Local Voices, National Change Project.

The Committee approved an agreement in principle for the Council to become a partner in the project, on the basis that there would be no financial contribution required from the Council and that any formal partnership agreement would be brought back to a future meeting for approval.

4. National Children's Bureau Local Voices, National Change Project

The Local Voices, National Change Project aimed to give children and young people with lived experience of poverty a meaningful opportunity to influence decision-making and contribute to the development of anti-poverty policy at local and national level.

Through the project, participating children and young people would be supported to develop confidence and skills including critical thinking, political literacy, public speaking and teamwork. They would have opportunities to engage directly with local and national decision-makers and to demonstrate how their experiences could contribute to positive change.

The Partnership Agreement confirmed that NCB was the lead organisation for the project and was responsible to The National Lottery Community Fund for the use of the grant. The Council would participate as a named partner and would support the delivery of the project within the Borough.

The Agreement was not a funding agreement, and NCB would not make payments to the Council. The Council would therefore not be required to make a financial contribution to the project. The Agreement stated that each party was responsible for meeting the costs associated with its own staff and responsibilities.

As a named partner, the Council would be expected to:

- Identify appropriate geographic areas within the Borough for the project to operate.
- Secure and maintain relationships with approximately 4–5 local services annually which supported children and young people meeting the project's recruitment criteria.

- Support relationships with a range of local services, such as youth clubs, social care providers, specialist youth services and alternative provision schools.
- Act as a local point of contact between NCB and participating local services.
- Support the continued engagement of local services throughout the five-year project.

By year three of the project, the participating services were expected collectively to engage a cohort of approximately 80–100 young people per year.

The young people involved would be those who had significant experience of living in poverty or were from communities strongly affected by poverty, were under-represented in national policy debates and were willing to share their views and focus on developing solutions.

The Council would actively support the delivery of an annual Town Hall event, including:

- Providing a suitable, accessible and high-profile venue, such as Council premises or an equivalent venue.
- Working with NCB to identify and invite relevant local decision-makers, including Council representatives, local business leaders and Community Planning partners.
- Supporting opportunities for decision-makers to hear directly from participating children and young people and respond to their presentations, wherever possible with tangible actions.

A senior Council lead at Director level or equivalent would be expected to participate in two virtual leads meetings each year with the project leads and other participating Local Authorities. These meetings would provide opportunities to discuss progress, share learning and support peer-to-peer learning across the participating areas.

The Council would also actively seek opportunities to integrate the project within its wider strategic and participation arrangements. This would include exploring opportunities for participating young people to engage with existing Council co-production and youth participation structures and would support the dissemination of project findings.

The Council would work with NCB to communicate how young people's views had influenced local approaches, including through the Council's Anti-Poverty Strategy and wider youth-related strategies and initiatives.

Participation in the project would provide the Council with a sustained mechanism for engaging with children and young people who had lived experience of poverty and who may otherwise be under-represented in policy discussions.

The Partnership Agreement identified a number of benefits for the Council, including:

- Access to a structured and sustained approach to engaging a rarely heard demographic.
- Opportunities to inform the Council's anti-poverty and youth strategies through direct engagement with young people.
- Strengthened relationships with voluntary and community sector organisations and local services.
- Opportunities for the Council and local partners to contribute to and influence national policy discussions.
- Peer learning opportunities with other participating Local Authorities across England and Northern Ireland.

There would also be direct benefits for participating children and young people, including the development of confidence and skills, opportunities to engage with decision-makers and opportunities to see where their experiences and views have influenced change. Participants would be remunerated for their involvement.

NCB would meet the direct costs associated with the programme for participating local services and is able to make a nominal contribution to those services each year.

5. Governance

NCB would act as the lead organisation and would have overall responsibility for the management and delivery of the project and for compliance with the terms of the National Lottery Community Fund grant.

The Council, as a partner, would be required to comply with the Partnership Agreement and relevant requirements arising from the funder's Grant Agreement insofar as they apply to the Council's participation in the project.

The Partnership Agreement requires both parties to work together in good faith and to meet regularly to discuss project progress and performance. Annual addenda would set out the specific deliverables, activities, meetings and monitoring requirements for each year of the project.

The Council would also be required to comply with relevant legislation and policies, including safeguarding, whistleblowing, data protection, diversity, equity and inclusion and relevant standards for working with children and young people.

The Agreement also contains provisions relating to confidentiality, intellectual property, publicity and branding, termination, dispute resolution and data protection.

In relation to data protection, the Agreement identifies NCB as the Data Controller and the Council as a Data Processor in respect of personal data processed under the Agreement.

The Agreement commenced on 1 July 2026 and expires on 30 June 2031, unless terminated earlier in accordance with its terms.

6. Summary

The National Children's Bureau had successfully secured funding from The National Lottery Community Fund for the five-year Local Voices, National Change Project.

The Council previously agreed in principle to become a named partner in the project, subject to consideration and approval of a formal partnership agreement.

The formal Partnership Agreement had now been received and sets out the respective roles and responsibilities of NCB and the Council for the duration of the project.

The Council would not be required to make a financial contribution to the project. Its principal role would be to facilitate connections with local services and young people, support an annual Town Hall event, provide senior leadership engagement and explore opportunities to incorporate the voices and experiences of participating young people within existing Council policy and participation structures.

The project provides an opportunity to strengthen the Council's existing anti-poverty work by creating a structured mechanism through which children and young people with lived experience of poverty could contribute directly to local decision-making and influence wider policy.

It is proposed that the Partnership Agreement with the National Children's Bureau is approved and the appropriate Council signatory executes the Agreement on behalf of the Council.

Proposed by Alderman McGrath
Seconded by Councillor Lynch and agreed that

(a) the National Children's Bureau success in securing funding from The National Lottery Community Fund for the five-year Local Voices, National Change Project be noted;

(b) a formal Partnership Agreement between the Council and the National Children's Bureau in relation to the Local Voices, National Change Project, for the period 1 July 2026 to 30 June 2031 be approved.

ACTION BY: Conor Cunning, DEA Engagement Manager

4.4 CP/CP/240 TRANSLINK REQUEST TO SUPPORT THEIR STUFF A BUS CAMPAIGN

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to seek Members approval for participation in

the Translink 2026 'Stuff a Bus' Campaign.

2. Background

Translink were a recognised Community Planning partner. The Translink Stuff a Bus campaign was delivered in partnership with Fareshare NI and media partners Belfast Live and U105.

Research showed that one in six people across Northern Ireland faced hunger, with increasing pressures from the ongoing cost-of-living crisis significantly affecting families and individuals.

Now entering its tenth year, the award-winning Stuff a Bus initiative provided vital support, ensuring no one in Northern Ireland faced hunger at Christmas.

The campaign had options for participation, including:

- Food donations
- Staff-led monetary contributions
- Financial support alongside existing charity commitments

In 2025 donations collected enabled FareShare NI to provide the equivalent of over 40,000 meals to people in need across Northern Ireland, demonstrating the significant impact of the initiative.

3. Previous decision of Council

Members were reminded that the request from Translink to participate in their 2025 Stuff a Bus campaign was approved at the October 2025 Community Development Committee.

4. Stuff a Bus 2026

Members were advised that correspondence circulated had been received from Translink inviting the Council to participate and partner the 2026 Stuff a Bus campaign.

Translink had requested that the Council participate in the 2026 campaign by providing food collection points in key areas for donations during November and December 2026. Members would be updated once the campaign dates have been confirmed.

FareShare NI would supply donation stations directly to each location and handle all logistics simplifying the process.

All donations collected would directly support local food banks, community groups, schools, and frontline charities throughout Northern Ireland via FareShare NI. The initiative aligns to the 'Food Support' pillar of the Council's Anti-Poverty Strategy, and the promotion of a holistic approach to food support across the Borough.

Media partnerships with U105 and Belfast Live offered opportunities for positive brand exposure through multiplatform promotions, media releases, social media features, and live broadcasts.

5. Financial implications

There was no financial cost for the Council to participate in the 2026 Stuff a Bus campaign and FareShare NI would be responsible for logistical operation of food donation baskets and ensure these were collected at appropriate times.

6. Governance

It was proposed that the Stuff a Bus 2026 food donation baskets were placed at the reception areas in the following locations with responsibility for these retained by FareShare NI:

- Mossley Mill
- Antrim Civic Centre
- Ballyclare Town Hall

Officers had liaised with the Mayor's Office and confirmed this arrangement did not conflict with the Mayor's official charities.

7. Summary

Translink had requested that the Council participated in the annual Stuff a Bus campaign in partnership with FareShare NI and media partners Belfast Live and U105 by providing food collection points at Council venues.

The campaign would run during November and December 2026 with the logistical management of the proposed locations for the food donation points managed by FareShare NI.

Proposed by Councillor McWilliam
Seconded by Councillor Gilmour and agreed that

request from Translink to participate in their Stuff a Bus 2026 Campaign be approved.

ACTION BY: Will McDowell, DEA Engagement Coordinator

Alderman Clarke joined the meeting remotely at this point.

4.5 CP/GR/200 DISTRICT COUNCIL GOOD RELATIONS PROGRAMME 2026/2027

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to update Members on the offer of District Council Good Relations Programme funding from The Executive Office and seek Members approval in relation to the revised Good Relations Action Plan

2026/27.

2. Introduction/Background

Members were reminded since 1998, all Northern Ireland public bodies had a legal duty to promote good relations between people from different community, religious and racial backgrounds. In 2013, the Northern Ireland Executive furthered their commitment to good relations with the release of Together Building A United Community (T-BUC) strategy to improve community relations and continue the journey towards a more united and shared society.

The Council's Good Relations Programme aimed to improve day to day relationships by reducing all forms of prejudice, promoting equality and encouraging a society in which different cultures and traditions were understood, respected and accepted.

The Good Relations Action Plan reflected the aims and objectives of the central T-BUC strategy. It outlined how government, stakeholders, community and individuals would work together to achieve change against the following key priorities:

1. Our Children and Young People;
2. Our Shared Community;
3. Our Safe Community; and
4. Our Cultural Expression

3. Previous Decision of Council

Members were reminded that The Executive Office (TEO) District Council Good Relations Programme funding 2025/26 of £205,262 was approved at the March 2026 Community Development Committee.

Members were reminded that the draft Good Relations Action Plan 2026/27 was approved at the March Community Development Committee subject to anticipated funding of £128,250 requested from TEO, equating to 75% of the Good Relations overall Action Plan budget.

4. Key Issues

Members were advised that correspondence (circulated) had been received from TEO offering financial assistance totalling £97,429.23 towards The District Council Good Relations Programme for the period 1 April 2026 – 31 March 2027.
The 2026/27 funding offer was a decrease of £107,832 (52.6%) on the 2025/26 allocation, and £30,820.77 (24%) less than the £128,250.00 that was requested.

To reflect the less than anticipated funding allocation from TEO a revised annual Good Relations Action Plan was circulated for Members approval.

5. Financial Implication

The Executive Office required match funding of a minimum of 25% from local Councils towards the overall Good Relations budget. The required 25% contribution, £32,476.41, was included within the approved 2026/27 Council estimates for the delivery of the plan.

The TEO offer of £97,429.23 and Councils contribution of £32,476.41 equates to £129,905.64 for the delivery of the Good Relations Action Plan 2026/27 and the plan had been amended accordingly.

6. Summary

The Council had received an offer for funding of £97,429.23 from TEO for the costs associated with the District Council Good Relations Programme for 2026/27. This was a £30,820.77 (24%) reduction on funding requested from TEO.

The 2026/27 Good Relations Action Plan had been revised to reflect the reduced offer of funding from TEO.

Proposed by Councillor McWilliam
Seconded by Councillor Lynch and agreed that

the offer of District Council Good Relations Programme funding from The Executive Office of £97,429.23 and the revised Good Relations Action Plan 2026/27 be approved.

ACTION BY: Ani Kanakaki, Good Relations Officer

4.6 CP/CP/074 MULTI AGENCY SUPPORT HUB

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to seek Members approval to accept £3,600 of funding support from the Department of Justice towards administration of the Multi Agency Support Hub.

2. Introduction/Background

Members were reminded of the ongoing work of the Multi-Agency Support Hub (MASH) that was established within the Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough in July 2017. The Hub was a multi- agency partnership of statutory agencies all working together and sharing information and resources in order to improve the lives of the most vulnerable individuals within our Borough.

The Antrim and Newtownabbey MASH, was led by the Council and included representation from a range of key statutory organisations including;

- Policing and Community Safety Partnership
- Police Service of Northern Ireland

- Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service
- Northern Ireland Housing Executive
- Youth Justice Agency
- Northern Health and Social Care Trust
- Northern Ireland Ambulance Service
- Northern Ireland Probation Board

Since its inception the MASH had received 236 referrals. The MASH currently had 15 live cases, where service users were receiving continual support.

The Department of Justice had provided an annual financial contribution towards administration costs associated with the MASH since 2017, which the Council had accepted.

3. Previous Decision of Council

Members were reminded that the provision of funding from the Department of Justice of up to £3,600 for the 2025-26 financial year was approved at the April 2025 Community Development Committee meeting.

4. Financial Implication

Following the launch of the Support Hub, the Department for Justice provided an annual financial contribution of up to a maximum of £3,600 per annum, towards administration costs of the Hub this was initially for 3 years until 2021, which had been extended at the same funding rate in the ensuing periods.
Correspondence circulated had been received from the Department of Justice confirming funding of up to £3,600 would be provided for the 2026-27 financial year.

5. Governance

The Support Hub was administered and managed by Council Officers with representation from a range of key statutory organisations and oversight from a Regional Steering Group. The Director of Community Development sits on this Steering Group on behalf of SOLACE.

6. Summary

Established in 2017, The Multi-Agency Support Hub (MASH) is a partnership of statutory agencies which aimed to improve the lives of vulnerable individuals in the Borough. An offer of financial assistance of up to £3,600 from the Department of Justice had been received for the administration of the MASH. The funding would support the Hub's ongoing administration.

Proposed by Councillor Gilmour
Seconded by Councillor Cooper and agreed that

the financial assistance up to £3,600 from the Department of Justice towards administration of the Multi Agency Support Hub, be accepted.

ACTION BY: Ciara Jemphrey, PCSP Coordinator

4.7 COMD/CD/002 PEACEPLUS – WEAVE INITIATIVE – ESTABLISHMENT OF A BOROUGH-WIDE COMMUNITY FORUM

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to update Members on the establishment of a Borough-wide Community Forum under the PEACEPLUS funded WEAVE initiative and to seek approval for the associated Terms of Reference.

2. Introduction/Background

The WEAVE Initiative (We Educate, We Empower, We Engage) formed part of the PEACEPLUS Local Community Action Plan, under Strand 2: Thriving and Peaceful Communities, Programme 4: Our Shared Borough.

Supported by an investment of £445,658.09 through the PEACEPLUS Programme, the Initiative was designed to build community capacity, strengthen collaborative working and provide strategic support for sustainable development across the sector. It was structured around nine key threads as follows:

- **Thread 1: We Connect**: **A Digital Governance Resource & Support Hub** - a one-stop shop that provided community groups with the support they needed to manage efficiently in a rapidly evolving world.

- **Thread 2: A Grant Finder Platform** - providing transparency, support and efficiency in identifying and accessing funding opportunities.

- **Thread 3: A Community and Voluntary Quality Assurance Programme** - raising standards and building trust across our sector.

- **Thread 4: The Development of 7 DEA Local Community Development Plans** - ensuring progress was rooted in local priorities and tailored to meet local needs.

- **Thread 5: The Business of Running a Successful Community Facility** - supporting sustainable infrastructure for long-term sustainability.

- **Thread 6: Ignite and Inspire** - supporting participants on the Bonfire Management Programme with skills, capacity building and leadership development.

- **Thread 7: A Suite of Community Capacity Building Programmes** – identified through local need which would focus on training, engagement and developing local leadership.

- **Thread 8: The Establishment of A Borough-Wide Community Forum** – to connect, strengthen and support local groups while enabling a collective voice for the community.

- **Thread 9: The Development of A Community Support Plan** – to provide a strategic, long-term framework for inclusive growth.

3. Previous Decision of the Council

Members were reminded that it was reported to the February 2025 Community Development Committee that Council had received a Letter of Offer from the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) offering €5,103,757 (approx. £4.4m) towards delivery of the Antrim and Newtownabbey Co-designed PEACEPLUS Local Community Action Plan.

Members were also reminded that an update on PEACEPLUS Programme 4: 'Our Shared Borough' was approved at the June 2026 Community Development Committee.

4. Borough-Wide Community Forum

The need to establish a Borough-Wide Community Forum was identified during the community consultation and development of the PEACEPLUS Local Community Action Plan. As part of the development process, the concept of the Forum was progressed and formally launched at the Old Courthouse, Antrim, on Thursday, 4 June 2026.

The launch session was facilitated by Lara Goodall Consulting and brought together 40 representatives from community organisations across the Borough. During the workshop, participants considered the purpose, structure and governance of the proposed forum, with discussions informing the development of a draft Terms of Reference, a copy of which was circulated for Members approval.

The election process for representatives to the new Forum would be completed in early October 2026. The inaugural meeting of the Borough-Wide Community Forum would be held in the Council Chamber, Mossley Mill, on Thursday, 29 October 2026 and would be Chaired by the Mayor.

Once established, the Community Forum would provide a structured platform for community and voluntary organisations to share information, identify common challenges, strengthen partnership working and influence the development of community initiatives across the Borough. It would also support greater collaboration between communities and Council, helping to address social needs and assisting future planning and service delivery.

5. Finance

The budget to deliver the 9 Threads under the WEAVE Initiative, Programme 4: 'Our Shared Borough' element of the Action Plan is €512,506.80 (£445,658.09) and was based on real-life costs for staff, office and administration, external expertise and services, travel and accommodation and equipment.

6. Summary

The need to establish a Borough-Wide Community Forum was identified through the PEACEPLUS Local Community Action Plan. The Forum was launched in June 2026, and a draft Terms of Reference had been developed.

The election process for Forum representatives would be completed in early October with the inaugural meeting taking place on Thursday, 29 October 2026 in the Council Chamber, Mossley Mill, chaired by the Mayor.

Proposed by Councillor Wilson
Seconded by Alderman McGrath and agreed that

the update on the Borough wide Community Forum be noted and the draft Terms of Reference be approved.

ACTION BY: Jonathan Henderson, Community Services Co-ordinator

Councillor Cosgrove joined the meeting remotely at this point.

4.8 COMD/CD/013 CHRISTMAS FESTIVITY PROGRAMME 2026

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to seek Members approval for the delivery of the 2026 Christmas Festivity Programme and Spirit of Christmas Awards.

2. Background

Since November 2018, the Council had been delivering Christmas Lights Switch On Events in each District Electoral Area (DEA) across the Borough.

The programme at each event encompassed a range of family entertainment to include: Children's Pantomime, Live Festive Music, Christmas Fun Rides, 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 artistes participated in the ninety-minute programme the theme for which changed on an annual basis.

3. Previous Decision of Council

Members were reminded that the minutes of the Christmas Switch On Events Task and Finish Working Group meeting of 23 March 2026 were approved as a true and accurate reflection of the meeting at the April Community Development Committee. The Working Group proposed continuation of with

the existing approach of delivering seven Christmas Light Switch On events across the Borough in 2026.

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

Members were 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.

Members were also reminded that the 2025 "Santa Goes Digital" themed Christmas Switch On Programme was approved by the Community Development Committee in October 2025.

4. Proposal for 2026

The theme for this year would be **"**Follow the Star to Antrim and Newtownabbey this Christmas**."** The theme celebrated inclusion, community and belonging, recognising that everyone had something unique to contribute.

A school's competition would be held to complement the theme, inviting pupils to design and colour a star for the top of their Christmas tree. The winner in each DEA would receive a £50 shopping voucher, with the overall winning design, (selected from the 7 DEA winners) developed into a star for the grand winner to display at home.

It was proposed that all 7 events would be delivered over the period Thursday 19 November – Saturday 28 November 2026 as detailed in the table below

DEA	**Date & Time**
Airport Crumlin Leisure Centre	Thursday 19 November 2026, 6.00pm - 7.30pm
Dunsilly Randalstown John Street Car Park	Friday 20 November 2026, 6.00pm - 7.30pm
Antrim Railway Street Car Park	Saturday 21 November 2026**,** 4.30pm - 6.00pm
Threemilewater Jordanstown Road/Devenish Drive	Wednesday 25 November 2026, 6.00pm - 7.30pm
Glengormley Urban Lilian Bland Park	Thursday 26 November 2026, 6.00pm - 7.30pm
Macedon V36, Valley Leisure Centre	Friday 27 November 2026, 6.00pm - 7.30pm

Ballyclare The Square Car Park	Saturday 28 November 2026, 4.30pm - 6.00pm

- Times would facilitate traffic management arrangements and ensure young families could enjoy the full experience of the events.
- A Christmas Tree would be located in each of the seven DEAs.
- The switching on of the Christmas Lights would once again take place at the mid-point of the programme as opposed to the end to facilitate those attending with very young children.
- A programme of family fun entertainment to include: A Children's Pantomime, Live Festive Music, Carols, Switching on of the Christmas Tree Lights, Fun Fair Rides, Festive Food Stalls, Arts and Crafts Activities, a Festive photo opportunity with Santa inside his Magical Snow Globe and Street Entertainment would be delivered in each DEA.
- Traditionally, the Threemilewater Christmas Lights Switch On Event had alternated between Mossley Mill and the junction of Jordanstown Road and Devenish Drive in Monkstown. Attendance figures over the past four years showed that the Monkstown location was significantly more popular, attracting 700 attendees in 2023 and 1,000 in 2025, compared with 300 attendees at Mossley Mill in both 2022 and 2024.
- Monkstown Community Association and Randalstown Arches had both expressed a willingness to support the planning and delivery of the Threemilewater and Dunsilly DEA Switch On Events this year to build capacity for a potential community led delivery for future Switch On Events.
- Officers would once again encourage local businesses to open during the events however there had been limited take up of this opportunity in the past.

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

5. <u>The Spirit of Christmas Awards</u>

In addition, Members were also reminded of the "Spirit of Christmas Awards" which were launched in October 2021.

This year it was proposed that a similar competition was delivered with awards being presented under the following 7 categories:

- **Light Up Award -** The wider community working together to create the most outstanding Christmas display or the best lit street, village or town in the Borough.
- **Rocking Around the Christmas Tree Award -** Best programme of festive entertainment within a business or community setting.
- **The Reason for the Season Award -** The most festive school, church or community facility.
- **The Making an Entrance Award -** The best dressed entrance feature or shop front.
- **Traditional Christmas Award -** Recognising acts of goodwill during the festive season.

- **Shining Star Award –** Celebrating an individual or group who shines through kindness, compassion and bringing others together at this special time of the year.
- **Mayors Award -** Most outstanding Christmas Display or Event in the Borough - Chosen by the Mayor

Nominations for this year's competition would open on Monday 16 November and close on Monday 7 December at 4pm. Awards would be presented at a Christmas themed Celebration Event to be held in the Oriel Gallery, Antrim Castle Gardens on Wednesday 16 December 2026.

6. Financial Implication

Members were advised that provision of £101,000 for the 2026 Christmas Festivity Programme, and the Spirit of Christmas Awards had been included in the 2026/27 Community Development budgets.

7. Summary

Seven Christmas Light Switch On events, one in each DEA in the Borough would take place from Thursday 19 to Saturday 28 November. The programme theme "Follow the Star to Antrim and Newtownabbey this Christmas" celebrated inclusion, recognising that everyone had something unique to contribute.

Nominations for the "Spirit of Christmas Awards" competition would open on Monday 16 November and close on Monday 7 December.

In response to Members' requests, the Director of Community and Culture confirmed that the traditional Christmas message was retained within this year's Christmas Festivity Programme.

Proposed by Councillor Wilson
Seconded by Councillor Dunlop and agreed that

the delivery of the 2026 Christmas Festivity Programme including 7 Christmas Light Switch On Events and the proposals for the "Spirit of Christmas Awards" be approved.

ACTION BY: Jonathan Henderson, Community Services Co-ordinator

4.9 CP/CD/486 BONFIRE MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to update Members on the delivery of the Bonfire Management Programme in 2026.

2. Introduction and Background

The Council operated a Bonfire Management Programme (BMP) which seeks to achieve the following objectives in relation to bonfire sites and associated family fun events.

- To work with and support local communities to bring about improvements in bonfire management, particularly in terms of inclusivity, safety and an increased family atmosphere.

- To further reduce the adverse health and environmental impacts including the illegal disposal of waste.

The programme in the longer term aimed to:

- Reduce the use of flags, images and effigies.
- Promote wider cultural links throughout the Borough.
- Tackle sectarianism, racism, homophobia and other forms of prejudice.

3. Previous Decision of Council

The 2026 Bonfire Management Programme including aspects of governance and funding with an estimated budget of £171,000 was approved at the March 2026 Community Development Committee.

An update on delivery of the Bonfire Management Programme in 2025 was reported to the September 2025 Committee and at the September Council meeting it was agreed that due to final inspections having been carried out, no sanctions be applied to the four sites where flag burning incidents occurred or the Neillsbrook site where asbestos was found. It was also agreed that the current Bonfire Management Programme remained in place for 2026.

4. Bonfire Management Programme 2026

Bonfires

A total of 21 sites signed up to the 2026 programme with Ballyduff and Ballycraigy sites withdrawing from the programme. Of these 21 sites, 3 did not hold any fire, 6 had a beacon and 12 had a traditional bonfire.

Interagency site inspections of the 12 traditional bonfire sites were carried out by officers alongside statutory partners from the agreed collection date of 16 May until 10 July 2026. Inspection records were circulated for Members information.

Of the 18 sites where either a traditional bonfire or beacon was located Members were advised that the following take place on Council owned land:

Doagh (Anderson Playpark/MUGA) – bonfire

Erskine and Rashee (Erskine Playpark) – beacon
Rathcoole (Peoples Park) – bonfire
Rathcoole (Dunanney Centre) - bonfire
Rathfern (Carnmoney Hillside) - bonfire
Randalstown (Neillsbrook Community Centre) - bonfire

Given the absence of legislation in relation to bonfires the Councils insurers had advised that the Councils insurance cover did not extend to any incidents or issues relating to bonfires and bonfires taking place on Council owned land were therefore presently an uninsured risk to the Council.

PSNI and NIFRS Reports

Following the bonfire period both the PSNI and NIFRS reported issues to the Council which were as follows:

The PSNI reported a variety of issues relating to the erection/display of racist/sectarian materials and flag burning as follows:

- Rathcoole - Doonbeg
- Rathcoole – Dunanney Centre
- Randalstown – Neilsbrook Community Centre
- Rathfern – Carnmoney Hillside
- Monkstown – Abbeytown Square

Within the current programme the Terms and Conditions state in relation to such incidents that:

Groups should refrain from erecting/displaying racist, sectarian or paramilitary paraphernalia such as flags, emblems, effigies on or in the vicinity of the Bonfire Site, or on or in the vicinity of any activities associated with the Programme.

In terms of non-compliance the programme terms as above, the following clauses applied:

- Each Group would undertake to ensure that the associated Bonfire Sites complied with the Terms and Conditions of this Programme. Bonfire Sites that had breached any of the Terms and Conditions would be given 3 days to address that issue. If the Group addressed the issue, then no further action from the Council would be taken.

- Failure to comply with the Terms and Conditions may result in a reduction in funding applied either within the current year or the following year as appropriate. The level of reduction would be determined by the Council on a case-by-case basis.

The NIFRS reported being called out to 4 incidents in the Borough, the most serious of which being at Rathcoole – Doonbeg where they were required to hose residential properties at risk of fire due to the proximity of a large bonfire.

Family Fun Events

Each site participating in the Bonfire Management Programme was supported by the Council through the organisation by officers in collaboration with group representatives of family fun events to the value of £3,500 per event. These events were held on 10/11 July in the vicinity of the bonfire site and typically included inflatables, sports activities, face painting, games and hospitality. The Deputy Mayor attended a number of the events in 2026 with a total of 21 delivered. The groups had not received any funding directly from the Council and officers procure all goods and services on their behalf from a list of approved suppliers.

Within the current BMP if approved any sanction applied as a result of bonfire breaches of the terms and conditions as already highlighted would be applied to the funding allocated to family fun events in the following year. However, the community organisers of the family fun events were not necessarily associated with building of the bonfire and in all cases had little or no control over members of the local community responsible for breaching programme terms relating to the bonfire.

It seemed to be inherently unfair for the family fun events to potentially have their funding reduced as a result of the actions of others outside of their control as was set out in the current programme.

5. Financial Position

It was reported to the Committee in March that provision of £171,000 had been made for the 2026 programme. Members were advised that the Council subsequently received £60,000 from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive reducing the programme cost to the Council to £111,000.

6. Governance

A total of 5 sites were identified by the PSNI as having 'hate crime' flag burning or other offensive displays. The programme stated that 'Failure to comply with the Terms and Conditions may result in a reduction in funding applied in the current year or the following year as appropriate. The level of reduction to be determined by the Council on a case-by-case basis.'

The current Bonfire Management Programme had been in operation since 2016 without any change. Funding reductions were proposed in 2025 as a result of 'hate crime' issues at 4 bonfire sites and in relation to toxic waste at 1 site. However, at the September Council Meeting it was agreed not to apply any sanctions and to deliver an unchanged programme in 2026.

7. Summary

In 2026, 2 sites withdrew from the Bonfire Management Programme. Of the 21 sites remaining there were incidents reported at 5 sites. Considering the delivery of the programme in recent years it appeared that whilst it had achieved significant progress toward delivery of its objectives from its

inception to date, this progress had halted and the programme was no longer delivering against its stated aims and objectives.

There was an opportunity to now review the programme with the aim of reducing any risks to the Council, whilst alleviating resource pressures on the Community Development team and also building capacity within the community.

It was therefore proposed that officers commenced a comprehensive review of the Bonfire Management Programme with the aim of separating the support for the community and cultural elements, from the bonfire activity. A report outlining proposals for 2027 would be brought to a future meeting of the Committee.

Proposed by Councillor Dunlop
Seconded by Councillor Brady and agreed that

the update on the delivery of the Bonfire Management Programme in 2026 be noted, with a review of the Programme to be carried out and recommendations to be brought back to a future meeting of the Committee.

ACTION BY: Ronan McKenna, Head of Community Development

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

1. <u>Purpose</u>

The purpose of this report was to seek Members' approval in relation to the attendance including associated costs at the IPB Pride of Place Annual Gala Dinner and Awards Ceremony to be held in the Convention Centre Dublin on Saturday 24 October 2026.

2. <u>Background</u>

Council participated annually in The IPB Pride of Place Awards delivered in association with Co-operation Ireland. The aim of the awards was 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. <u>Previous Decision of Council</u>

Members were reminded that in April 2026 the Council nominated two groups to take part in the Annual IPB Pride of Place Awards 2026 competition namely:

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

4. Proposal

Judging of the two entries took place in August 2026 and correspondence had been received from Co-operation Ireland informing us that the annual Gala Dinner and Awards Ceremony would take place on Saturday 24 October 2026 in the Convention Centre Dublin.

Eight complimentary tickets would be made available for this event with guidance that they were to be distributed as follows: Two tickets per nominated group with the remaining four tickets being allocated to Members and Officers. A separate invitation would be issued to the Chief Executive.

Similar to previous years it was proposed that the Mayor, Mayoress, Chair of the Community Development Committee, or their nominated representatives, accompanied by a Council Officer attend the Gala Dinner and Awards Ceremony along with the four group representatives on Saturday 24 October 2026.

5. Financial Implication

As the venue for the event was approximately two hours from the Borough and with the awards ceremony running until midnight it was proposed that Council provided financial assistance to cover the cost of one night's bed and breakfast accommodation for those that wished to stay.

Hotel accommodation costs in Dublin had been researched and the total cost for accommodation for the 8 attendees was estimated at approximately £2,500. In addition, it was also proposed to provide financial assistance of up to a maximum of £100 per group to cover the costs of travel and subsistence, provision for which had been included in the Community Development Budget.

6. Summary

The IPB Pride of Place Annual Gala Dinner and Awards Ceremony in association with Co-operation Ireland would take place on Saturday 24 October 2026 in the Convention Centre, Dublin.

The Council nominated two groups to take part in this year's Annual IPB Pride of Place Awards competition: Impact Network NI and Monkstown Boxing Club.

It was proposed that the Mayor, Mayoress, Chair of the Community Development Committee, or their nominated representatives, accompanied by a Council Officer attended the Awards Ceremony along with the group representatives at an estimated cost of £2,700 to cover accommodation, travel and subsistence.

Proposed by Councillor McWilliam
Seconded by Councillor Lynch and agreed that

the Mayor, Mayoress, Chair of the Community Development Committee, or their nominated representatives, accompanied by a Council Officer attend the IPB Pride of Place Annual Gala Dinner and Awards Ceremony in Dublin on Saturday 24 October 2026 at an estimated cost of £2,700.

ACTION BY: Jonathan Henderson, Community Services Co-ordinator

4.11 CP/CD/476 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT GRANT AID PROGRAMME - SMALL GRANTS FUNDING RECOMMENDATIONS 2026-27

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to seek Members' approval in relation to the Community Development Small Grants Funding Programme awards being recommended.

2. Background

The Small Grants Programme provided financial assistance to groups within the Borough of up to £1,000 towards seeding costs, public and employer's liability insurance, small items of equipment or an activity.

3. Previous Decision of Council

The Small Grants Programme was approved by the Council in October 2014 as part of the Council's Community Development Grant Aid Programme. Members were advised that groups who applied for a small grant were not permitted to apply for the wider Community Facilities, Programmes and Activities Grant Programme within the same financial year.

Small Grants were assessed on the basis of Pass/Fail against eligibility criteria and not subjected to a scored assessment process. All proposed awards were subject to a signed disclosure from the group confirming that all appropriate supporting documentation was in place and could be provided on request, or the offer of funding would be withdrawn.

4. Financial Implication

The total budget for the 2026-27 Community Development Small Grant Aid Programme was £20,000.

During previous funding rounds a total of £14,923.29 was awarded.

During the months of May, June, July and August 8 applications were received and assessed by Officers, with 7 applications totalling £6,485.15 recommended for approval, details of which were circulated for Members' information.

If the seven applications were approved this would result in the budget being overspent by £1,408.44. To manage the overspend within the current call period and support delivery of the scheme for the remainder of 2026–27,

any overspend would be offset by an underspend within the wider Community Development Grant budget.

5. Summary

It was proposed to award seven Small Grants to the successful applicants as outlined.

The Community Development Small Grants would remain open as a rolling programme with applications being reported to the Community Development Committee on a quarterly basis.

In response to a Member's request that groups who may struggle with the funding application process due to capacity, receive the assistance they require, the Director of Community and Culture confirmed such support was available.

In response to Members' concerns in relation to the operation of the Council's Grant Funding Unit, including a request for a review, the Director of Community and Culture confirmed that Members had been involved in all decision making relating to the new approach, two grant funding corporate workshops for Members had been delivered for further input and decisions in relation to all community and culture grants still came to the Committee for approval.

In response to a specific Member's query, the Director of Community and Culture confirmed that the introduction of the Grant Funding Unit had allowed Officers within Community Development to focus on other areas of community development and highlighted 'Weave', the PEACEPLUS Programme as one such example.

Proposed by Councillor Cooper
Seconded by Councillor Dunlop and agreed that

the seven Small Grant applications requesting a total of £6,485.15 be approved.

ACTION BY: Kerry Brady, Grants and Funding Officer

It was further agreed that a formal review of the Grant Funding Unit be undertaken in order to improve service delivery.

A Member's request that the inclusion of data relating to any longstanding community groups who had previously received grant funding, but no longer do since the introduction of the Grant Funding Unit, be provided as part of the review, was noted.

Proposed by Councillor McWilliam
Seconded by Councillor Cooper and agreed that

a formal review of the Grant Funding Unit be undertaken.

ACTION BY: John Balmer, Director of Finance and Ursula Fay, Director of Community and Culture

4.12 CMOD/CD/007 SENIORS' CHRISTMAS FESTIVITY GRANT RECOMMENDATIONS 2026

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to seek Members approval in relation to the Seniors Christmas Festivity Grant funding recommendations for 2026.

2. Background

As part of its Community Development Grant Aid Programme the Council operated a Seniors Christmas Festivity Grant to support local senior's activities taking place in the Borough over the Christmas period. This may include the provision of Christmas Dinners, Tea Dances or other Christmas Celebration Events.

Applications from community organisations, churches and friends of fold organisations were eligible. The grant call opened for applications on 1 July and closed on 14 August 2026.

3. Previous Decisions of Council

Members were reminded that it was approved at the October 2019 Community Planning and Regeneration Committee, that the annual opportunity for Senior Citizens Groups in Antrim to apply for funding to run Christmas events be extended to fund legacy Newtownabbey Senior Citizens Groups.

Modifications to the Grant guidance notes for 2026 were approved at the November 2025 Community Development Committee meeting.

4. Financial Implication

Members were reminded that the total budget available for the Seniors Christmas Festivity Grant for 2026-27 was £55,000.

A total of 99 applications were received and assessed by a panel of officers, with 99 applications totalling £49,455 recommended for approval, subject to the receipt of all relevant supporting documentation.

A detailed summary of the applications was circulated for Members' consideration.

5. Section 75 Equality Screening

Members were advised that a Section 75 Equality Screening exercise, Rural Proofing and Data Processing Impact Assessment had been carried out in relation to the Grant Funding Policy.

6. Summary

The Seniors Christmas Festivity Grant opened for applications on 1 July 2026 and was due to close on 12 August 2026 but was extended to 14 August 2026. It was proposed to award 99 applications at a cost of £49,455, provision for which existed within the Community Development budget for 2026-27.

Proposed by Councillor Brady
Seconded by Councillor Lynch and agreed that

the 99 Seniors Festivity Grants requesting a total of £49,455 be approved.

ACTION BY: Kerry Brady, Grants and Funding Officer

4.13 AC/GEN/018 LIGHT UP CIVIC BUILDINGS POLICY

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to seek Members' approval for the Light Up Civic Buildings Policy following review.

2. Background and Introduction

The Council had a policy in relation to the lighting up of civic buildings on special occasions, significant dates and in response to requests from a range of organisations to support causes and campaigns. The Policy was developed by an all-party Working Group of Elected Members established in 2019, who played an ongoing role in relation to the operation of the Policy.

3. Previous Decisions of Council

In July 2019, the Council agreed to form an all-party Working Group to develop a policy of lighting the main Council civic buildings. The Light Up Civic Buildings Policy developed by the working group was approved by the Council in 2020.

It was agreed that a review of the Policy would be brought to the June 2021 Community Planning Committee when a revised Policy was approved and it was also agreed to carry out further reviews annually.

At the September 2025 meeting of the Community Development Committee an updated Light Up Civic Buildings Policy was approved with a further review to be carried out in June 2026.

4. Annual Policy Review

The annual review of the Policy by the Working Group was carried out in July 2026 and it was agreed that no changes to the Policy were needed.

Details of all of the light ups carried out in the previous year, April 2025 to March 2026, were circulated for Members' information, as well as the reviewed Policy.

5. Finance

The light up of civic buildings was carried out at minimal cost and a review of energy costs associated with this activity identified that this activity had a negligible impact.

6. Equality and/or Rural Screening Requirements

In accordance with the Council's Equality Scheme, this policy had been screened for the need to carry out a full equality impact assessment (EQIA). A full EQIA was not recommended.

7. Governance

At the start of the Council term in 2023, membership of the all-party Light Up Civic Buildings Working Group was updated for the full term as follows:

- DUP Alderman Stephen Ross
- Sinn Fein Councillor Rosie Kinnear
- Alliance Alderman Lewis Boyle
- UUP Councillor Leah Kirkpatrick

This Working Group continued to have oversight of the Policy and carryout the role as identified in Section 4.5 of the Policy. A further review of the Policy would be carried out in June 2027 or earlier if required given that Antrim Civic Centre was currently covered by this Policy.

8. Summary

The Council had a Light Up Civic Buildings all-party Working Group established in 2019 and a Light Up Civic Buildings Policy, which was first approved in 2020. The Policy is reviewed on an annual basis and any updates brought to Committee for approval. Following review of the Policy in July 2026 an unchanged Policy is recommended for approval with a further review to be carried out in June 2027 or earlier if required.

Proposed by Councillor Cooper
Seconded by Councillor Dunlop and agreed that

the Light Up Civic Buildings Policy be approved with a further review to be carried out in June 2027 or earlier if required.

ACTION BY: Joanne Hamilton-Whyte, PA to Director of Community and Culture

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

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to seek Members' approval for the minutes of the Borough Arts and Cultural Advisory Panel of 11 June 2026 and the Theatre Programmes approved at the meeting.

2. Background

Members were reminded that the role of the Arts and Cultural Advisory Panel was 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 was set out in a Constitution, which included 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 was made up of one Elected Member from each Political Party and up to 12 non-elected independent members who were actively involved in the arts and culture sector. The Panel meet four times each year, and report 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 April 2026 Community Development Committee meeting.

4. Advisory Panel Meeting

Members were advised that the Borough Arts and Culture Advisory Panel meeting on 11 June 2026 was online. The draft minutes of this meeting and the Theatre Programmes from October - December 2026, which were presented at the meeting, were circulated for Members' information.

5. Financial Position

There were no financial implications to the Council.

6. Equality and/or Rural Screening Requirements

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

7. Governance

The specific role of the Panel was set out in a Constitution which included the above-mentioned objectives. The Panel was made up of one Elected Member from each Political Party and up to 12 non-elected independent members who were 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 was 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.

Proposed by Councillor Lynch
Seconded by Councillor McWilliam and agreed that

the draft minutes of the Borough Arts and Culture Advisory Panel of 11 June 2026 be approved as a true and accurate reflection of the meeting, and the theatre programmes October - December 2026 also be approved.

ACTION BY: Joanne Hamilton-Whyte, PA Director of Community Development

4.15 AC/THB/008 BALLYCLARE TOWN HALL

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to seek Members' approval for Ballyclare Protestant Boys Flute Band to sell alcohol in Ballyclare Town Hall on Saturday 27 February 2027 at their indoor concert, subject to them applying for and being granted an alcohol licence.

2. Introduction/Background

Ballyclare Protestant Boys Flute Band had made an application to hire Ballyclare Town Hall on Saturday 27 February 2027 for an indoor concert. In addition, they had requested permission to sell alcohol at this event, subject to them applying for and being granted an alcohol licence. This band was a community-based marching flute band located in Ballyclare. They host annual local parades and are well known for organising major cultural

events in the town, including large-scale gatherings featuring bands from across the region.

3. Previous Decision of Council

Members were advised that a number of previous requests to the Council seeking permission to serve and sell alcohol at Ballyclare Town Hall had been approved. Most recently this had included a request by Ballyclare Memorial Flute Band for an event in October 2025, which was approved by the Committee in September 2025.

4. Key Issues (or the relevant titles for the main body of the report)

The current terms and conditions of hire for the Town Hall state the following in relation to alcohol:

- Alcohol was not permitted on the premises without prior consent from the Council.

In addition, if a group wish to sell alcohol and apply for an alcohol licence, then they must first seek the Council's permission.

5. Financial Position/Implication

There were no financial implications for the Council of this proposal.

6. Summary

The Ballyclare Protestant Boys Flute Band would like to sell alcohol in Ballyclare Town Hall on Saturday 27th February 2027 at their event, subject to receiving an alcohol licence. Council permission was required for them to do this.

Proposed by Councillor Dunlop
Seconded by Councillor Brady and agreed that

the request from Ballyclare Protestant Boys Flute Band to sell alcohol in Ballyclare Town Hall on Saturday 27 February 2027 at their indoor concert event subject to the granting of an alcohol licence, be approved.

ACTION BY: Jenna Collier, Theatre Bookings and Events Manager

Councillor Cooper left the Chamber during Item 4.16.

4.16 ED/TOU/035 VISIT BELFAST PARTNERSHIP RENEWAL

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to seek Members' approval for the renewal of the partnership agreement with Visit Belfast for a further 12 months at the same rate as in 2025/26.

2. Introduction/Background

Visit Belfast was the official destination marketing organisation for Belfast and Northern Ireland more generally, with a core purpose to create and service visitors for Belfast and Northern Ireland in order to generate economic benefit and inclusive growth.

In addition to managing the Visit Belfast Welcome Centre on Donegall Square, Visit Belfast also operates a purpose-built Visitor Information Centre at Belfast International Airport, providing tourist information to visitors arriving into Northern Ireland. The airport is the main gateway to Northern Ireland with 6.6 million passengers passing through in 2025/26.

Since 2015, the Council had maintained a partnership with Visit Belfast, allowing it access to a wide range of marketing networks and media to promote the Borough. The cost of this partnership had decreased from an initial £20,000 per annum in 2015 to £8,500 in 2023, 2024 and 2025.

3. Previous Decision of Council

In September 2025 the Community Development Committee approved a 12-month fee of £8,500 for the Visit Belfast partnership, including a significantly enhanced benefits package.

4. Benefits of the Partnership

The benefits package offered to Council included:

- The exclusive use of the front-facing digital screen and the promotion of at least six destinations in the Borough at Belfast International Airport Visitor Information Centre. In 2025/26 this had featured flagship events, guided tours at Antrim Castle Gardens, Council-operated golf facilities and key accommodation and hospitality providers.
- Pop-up banners at both Belfast International Airport and the Welcome Centre in Belfast to promote flagship events. Banners were used in 2025/26 to promote Enchanted Winter Garden, Garden Show Ireland and the Christmas productions at Theatre at the Mill.
- A large graphic panel and a pillar wrap at the Belfast International Airport Visitor Information Centre promoting tourist destinations in the Borough. This currently features Antrim Castle Gardens, the Coronation Garden, Antrim Loughshore Park and Theatre at the Mill.
- A display in the Welcome Centre's main 'Christmas' window (directly facing the Belfast Christmas Market) promoting Enchanted Winter Garden.
- Priority literature racking and distribution of Antrim and Newtownabbey Visitor Guides and other printed material at both the Welcome Centre and Belfast International Airport.
- Visit Belfast staff trained on priority events, attractions, experiences and accommodation in the Borough to effectively respond to visitor enquiries.
- The promotion of the Borough as a destination on a new digital touch screen in Belfast Grand Central Station.

- The promotion, on Visit Belfast's social media channels, of a range of Council attractions and events including the new PEACEPLUS Heritage Trails from 2027.

In addition, Visit Belfast had agreed to facilitate meetings between the Council, Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann, Belfast City Council, Ards and North Down Borough Council and Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council to explore the possibility of holding Fleadh Fringe events in the Borough in 2027.

5. Financial Position/Implication

The proposed partnership fee of £8,500 had been included in the 2026/27 Tourism budget.

6. Summary

The Council had a partnership agreement with Visit Belfast since 2015, focused on the promotion of its events, visitor experiences, destinations and accommodation providers at the Belfast International Airport Visitor Information Centre and at the Welcome Centre in Belfast.

Visit Belfast's proposal for the next 12 months would provide an attractive package of promotional opportunities for the same fee as in 2025/26.

In response to a Member's query regarding advertising at Belfast International Airport, The Head of Arts, Culture, Tourism and Events clarified that Council's tourism brand was primarily allocated to the Visit Belfast stand, as this was considered to represent the best value for money.

The Head of Arts, Culture, Tourism and Events also confirmed that he would approach Belfast International Airport to discuss the potential of further tourism advertising.

In response to a Member's query in relation to the visiting cruise liners, the Head of Arts, Culture, Tourism confirmed that Council had been in discussions with Visit Belfast in relation to providing packages of smaller local attractions which may appeal to international tourists visiting Northern Ireland.

Proposed by Councillor Lynch
Seconded by Councillor Cooper and agreed that

the proposal to renew the partnership with Visit Belfast for a further 12 months be approved.

ACTION BY: Marie-Clare McGeachy, Tourism Officer

Councillor Burbank left the meeting remotely at this point.

4.17 AC/GEN/083 DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES' HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT POLICY PUBLIC CONSULTATION

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to seek Members' instructions in relation to the Department for Communities' public consultation on its Historic Environment Policy.

2. Introduction

The Department for Communities (DfC) was undertaking a consultation seeking views on its draft vision statement and proposed policy aims, which would form the basis of a new policy for the support and management of Northern Ireland's historic environment.

3. Key Issues

Members were advised that the circulated correspondence had been received from DfC advising of a consultation on its Historic Environment Policy and seeking views on its draft vision statement and proposed policy aims, which would form the basis of a new policy for the support and management of Northern Ireland's historic environment.

The work to develop this policy formed part of the Heritage, Culture and Creativity (HCC) Programme which was also developing policies for museums, public libraries and the arts. The HCC was established by the Minister for Communities in July 2024 and seeks to 'address actions to conserve, protect and promote our cultural heritage and historic environment; and to encourage, support and develop the curiosity, active engagement and creativity it helped to inspire'.

The programme follows the Culture Arts and Heritage Taskforce's 'A Way Forward', 'Art of Recovery' and 'Investing in Creative Delivery' reports, and the department had used the work of the Taskforce as a key basis for its policy development.

The consultation period opened on 14 August 2026 and would close on 23 October 2026.

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

4. Summary

The Department for Communities (DfC) had launched a public consultation seeking views on its draft vision statement and proposed policy aims, which would form the basis of a new policy for the support and management of Northern Ireland's historic environment.

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

Proposed by Councillor Lynch
Seconded by Alderman McGrath and agreed that

Members' respond on an individual or party-political basis.

ACTION BY: Simon Goldrick, Head of Arts, Culture, Tourism and Events

Councillor Cooper returned to the Chamber at Item 4.18.

4.18 AC/MU/005 RENEWAL OF LEASE OF THE WHITE HOUSE

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to seek Members' approval for a further one-year renewal of the lease agreement with the Dalaradia Group for the White House.

2. Introduction/Background

The Dalaradia Group was a men's community group based in Newtownabbey who wished to make a positive commitment to conflict transformation. The Group had leased the White House in Whiteabbey from the Council since 2021, delivering historical interpretation, visitor services, training and meeting facilities.

Dating from 1569, the White House was originally a plantation bawn, or fortified house. The building had witnessed many important scenes from local history, from the sailing ships carrying King William's armies and Titanic sailing on her maiden voyage, to the Luftwaffe bombers using Belfast Lough as their gateway into the city.

The White House had been restored from a crumbling ruin into a beautiful, multipurpose building. It now hosted two exciting interactive exhibitions: 'A Tale of Three Kings' recounts the Williamite and Jacobite Wars from a European perspective, while 'Relive the History' tells the exciting story of the building's past, right up to the present day.

3. Previous Decision of Council

Members were reminded that a proposal from the Dalaradia Group to rent the White House at £2,400 per annum for an initial twelve-month period was approved by the Council in April 2021, and this was further extended in September 2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025.

4. 2025-2026 Performance

Over the past year (July 2025 – June 2026) the White House had seen a slight decrease in visitor numbers of 198 when compared to the previous year. The

Dalaradia Group had continued to facilitate public access to the White House 3 days per week from May to September and 2 days per week from October to April, with visits by appointment also available on any day.

Usage statistics are as follows:

	2024-2025	**2025-2026**
Number of walk-ins on open days	480	408
Attendees at Dalaradia Group activities	360	360
Attendances at events/tours/meetings	2,400	2,274
Total recorded footfall	**3,240**	**3,042**
Number of events, tours and meetings	96	75

5. Proposed Lease Agreement

Members were advised that the current lease arrangements were as follows:

(a) The Dalaradia Group pay a monthly rent of £200 gross plus running costs associated with utilities, while the Council retain responsibility for maintenance and repair of the building which costs £3,631 in 2025/26
(b) The Group mainly occupies the upper floor of the building, using the meeting facility to deliver a range of training services including TNI World Host Programme and other job vocational training to support return to employment and provide meeting space for other local groups
(c) The Group operated the White House as a visitor attraction, providing guiding and visitor services and hosting temporary exhibitions throughout the year

6. Financial Position

The existing lease agreement with the Dalaradia Group generated income for the Council of £2,400 per annum. In addition, the agreement saved the Council approximately £1,200 in utility costs and £4,800 in staff costs annually.

7. Summary

The Dalaradia Group had indicated that they would like to renew the lease of the White House for a further year on the same terms as previously agreed.

Proposed by Councillor Brady
Seconded by Councillor Lynch and agreed that

a renewal of the lease agreement with the Dalaradia Group to rent The White House at £2,400 per annum for a further 12-month period be approved, with the Group facilitating public access to the venue as per current arrangements

ACTION BY: Philip Magennis, Culture and Events Co-ordinator

4.19 AC/GEN/082 LAE DANCE ACADEMY

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to seek Members' approval to offer LAE Dance Academy £2,500 to support 15 young local dancers who had been selected to perform at Walt Disney World in Florida in July 2027.

2. Introduction/Background

The Newtownabbey-based LAE Dance Academy was established to provide children and young people with the opportunity to participate in dance regardless of their background or circumstances. From the outset, the academy had sought to create a safe, welcoming and supportive environment where young people could develop not only as dancers, but as confident and resilient individuals. The group was cross community attracting children and young people from across the Borough.

The academy believed that dance had the power to positively impact young people's physical, emotional and social wellbeing. Through regular training, performances and shared experiences, participants developed discipline, commitment, self-confidence and teamwork skills that benefited them throughout their lives.

Many of the Academy's dancers came from areas where access to extracurricular activities could be limited due to financial barriers. The academy worked hard to ensure that every child had the opportunity to participate, develop their talents and feel a sense of belonging. Over the years, the academy had become much more than a dance school: it provided a strong support network for dancers and their families, creating lasting friendships and a sense of community.

3. Key Issues

As part of a 12-month development project, 15 young dancers aged between 7 and 17 had been selected to participate in an international dance performance at Walt Disney World in Florida in July 2027, which was a very significant achievement and honour for a group from Northern Ireland. These dancers were all from Antrim and Newtownabbey, and many of them came from communities and families experiencing increasing financial pressures.

LAE Dance Academy had approached the Council seeking financial support for these dancers to ensure that participation in the event was based on commitment, talent and dedication rather than a family's ability to meet the full cost of participation. Any support provided by the Council would contribute to the travel and accommodation costs of the dancers and would supplement the ongoing fundraising work that the Academy was undertaking for this event.

The Council's Culture Grant Aid and Bursary Programme existed to support local groups with similar requests, but the maximum amount that a group could apply for through this programme was £1,000. Given the large number of young dancers participating in this performance and the high cost of travel to the US, it was recommended that £2,500 be offered, with the funding coming directly from the Arts and Culture budget rather than the Grant Aid budget.

4. Financial Position/Implication

If approved, this contribution of £2,500 would be provided from the existing Arts and Culture 2026/27 budget.

5. Summary

LAE Dance Academy, based in Newtownabbey, had requested financial support to help 15 of their dancers travel to Florida to participate in an international dance performance at Walt Disney World. Rather than support them through the Cultural Grant Aid programme, it was recommended that £2,500 be offered from the Arts and Culture budget.

In response to a Member's suggestion that LAE Dance Academy be offered the opportunity to participate in the Christmas Festivities Programme 2026, the Chairperson confirmed that Officers would take this forward.

Proposed by Councillor Lynch
Seconded by Councillor Gilmour and agreed that

the proposal to offer financial support of £2,500 to LAE Dance Academy to help 15 of their young dancers participate in an international dance performance at Walt Disney World in July 2027 be approved.

ACTION BY: Simon Goldrick, Head of Arts, Culture, Tourism and Events

Councillor Wilson left the Chamber during Item 5.1.

5 ITEMS FOR NOTING

5.1 FI/FIN/4 BUDGET REPORT – PERIOD 4 – APRIL 2026 TO JULY 2026

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to provide an update to Members on the financial performance of the Community and Culture Directorate for Period 4 – April 2026 to July 2026.

2. Introduction/Background

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

3. Summary

As at period 4:

The Community and Culture Directorate had a favourable variance of £106k, or 3.1%, 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 was circulated for Members' information.

The overall financial position of the Council would be presented to the Policy and Governance Committee.

Proposed by Councillor Lynch
Seconded by Alderman McGrath and agreed that

that the report be noted.

NO ACTION

5.2 CP/GEN/019 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SECTION - PARTNERSHIP MINUTES

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to update Members on the various minutes of the Partnership Meetings led by the Community Development Section which have been held in recent months.

2. Introduction/Background

Members were advised that the quarterly update Partnership Minutes as listed below could be viewed in the electronic folder called "*Partnership Minutes for Members' Information"* on Ipads.

Community Development		
File Ref	**Date of Meeting**	**Name of Partnership**
D/Gen/91	18.02.2026	Community Advice Antrim and Newtownabbey
D/DP/67	19.05.2026	Rathcoole Neighbourhood Renewal Partnership
D/CSP/48	25.03.2026	Antrim and Newtownabbey Policing and Community Safety Partnership (PCSP)
D/DP/67	20.05.2026	Grange Neighbourhood Renewal Partnership

Proposed by Councillor McWilliam
Seconded by Councillor Gilmour and agreed that

the update on Partnership Minutes be noted.

NO ACTION

5.3 CP/PCSP/088 PCSP LETTER OF OFFER AND FUNDING AGREEMENT 2026-2027

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to update Members on the 2026/27 offer of Policing and Community Safety Partnership funding from the Joint Committee.

2. Introduction/Background

Members were reminded that Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSP) were created regionally across NI in 2012. The Joint Committee (Department of Justice and Northern Ireland Policing Board) provided annual funding in relation to the operation of the PCSP to the Council, subject to the approval of a Local Action Plan.

3. Previous Decision of Council

The Joint Committee had provided annual funding in respect of the operation of the PCSP and delivery of the approved Action Plan since the creation of PCSPs in 2012. This had historically been accepted on an annual basis by Council.

Members were reminded that it was reported to the Community Development Committee in June 2025 that funding of £303,540 for 2025/26 from the Joint Committee and funding of £12,500 from the Northern Ireland Policing Board to fund Members expenses had been offered to the Council.

4. Letter of Offer

Members were advised that correspondence (circulated) had been received from the Joint Committee confirming that the Council was being offered PCSP funding of £303,540 for 2026/27.

An additional £12,500 from the Northern Ireland Policing Board had been awarded to fund Members expenses and meeting allowances.
Members were advised that this offer of funding had been accepted by the Departments deadline of 28 July 2026

5. Financial Implications

Members would be aware that the Council was providing a contribution of £95,229 towards delivery of the 2026/27 PCSP Action Plan and that provision for this had been made within the 2026/27 Community Development budget.

Members may also wish to note that applications were submitted to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive towards delivery of PCSP Action Plan priority projects, namely: Community Safety Wardens Scheme and 4 Tier Security Scheme to support delivery costs and additional funding of £35,300 had been secured.

6. Governance

Antrim and Newtownabbey PCSP, was a statutory body established under the Justice Act (NI) 2011. A Joint Committee comprising representatives from the Northern Ireland Policing Board and the Department of Justice oversees the work of the PCSP, which contained a membership locally of 10 Elected Members, 9 Independent Members and representatives from 7 designated statutory bodies.

The PCSP Officers provided a secretariat function to the Partnership, ensuring Action Plan delivery in accordance with relevant Council policies and procedures and effective financial management.

7. Summary

The Council had received an offer for funding of £303,540 from the Joint Committee for the costs associated with the PCSP for the period of 01 April 2026 to 31 March 2027. In addition, The Northern Ireland Policing Board would provide funding in relation to Members meeting expenses, to a maximum of £12,500 making the total funding received £316,040.00.

In response to a Member's query in relation to funding received, the Head of Community Development confirmed that there had been an increase this year due to inflation and that he would provide further detail in relation to years 2025/26.

Proposed by Alderman McGrath
Seconded by Councillor Gilmour and agreed that

the offer of Policing and Community Safety Partnership funding of £316,040 from the Joint Committee be noted.

ACTION BY: Ciara Jemphrey, PCSP Coordinator and Ronan McKenna, Head of Community Development

5.4 CP/CP/074 NORTHERN IRELAND HOUSING EXECUTIVE COMMUNITY SAFETY LETTER OF OFFER 2026/27

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to update Members on the 2026/27 offer of Community Safety funding from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

2. Introduction/Background

Members were reminded that Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSP) were created regionally across NI in 2012. The Joint Committee (Department of Justice and Northern Ireland Policing Board) provided annual funding in relation to the operation of the PCSP to the Council, subject to the approval of a Local Action Plan.

The PCSP seek to work in collaboration with community planning partners to secure additional funding for the delivery of the annual Local Action Plan.

Applications were submitted to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive towards delivery of PCSP Action Plan priority projects, namely: Community Safety Wardens Scheme and 4 Tier Security Scheme to support delivery.

3. Letter of Offer

Members were advised that correspondence (circulated) had been received from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) confirming that the Council was being offered Community Safety funding totalling £35,300 for the delivery of the Community Safety Wardens (£25,000) and the 4 Tier Security (£10,300) Schemes for the 2026/27 financial year.

Members were advised that this offer of funding had been accepted by the NIHE's deadline of 23 July 2026.

4. Financial Implications

Members would be aware that the Council was providing a contribution of £95,229 towards delivery of the 2026/27 PCSP Action Plan and that provision for this had been made within the 2026/27 Community Development budget. Members were advised that the Joint Committee had confirmed that the Council was being offered PCSP funding of £316,040 for 2026/27.

5. Governance

The PCSP Officers provided a secretariat function to the Partnership, ensuring Action Plan delivery in accordance with relevant Council policies and procedures and effective financial management.

PCSP Officers would continue to manage this funding, as per the conditions of the award, set out in the Letter of Offer.

6. Summary

The Council had received an offer for funding of £35,300 from the NIHE for costs associated with PCSP Community Safety programmes for the 2026/27 financial year.

Proposed by Councillor Gilmour
Seconded by Councillor Ní Chonghaile and agreed that

the offer of Policing and Community Safety Partnership funding of £35,300 from the Northern Irelands Housing Executive for 2026/27 be noted.

NO ACTION

Councillor Wilson returned to the Chamber at Item 5.5.

5.5 CP/CP/243 ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS (EVAWG) – LOCAL CHANGE FUND 2026/2027

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to update Members that Council in relation to 2026/27 Local Change funding from The Executive Office (TEO) for ongoing work in relation to Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG).

2. Background

Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG) was one of the Programme for Government priorities and The Executive Office (TEO) had been mandated to coordinate a cross sectoral response that was intersectional and delivered across the whole of government and society in Northern Ireland.

The EVAWG Strategic Framework was developed by TEO with a public consultation exercise on the Strategic Framework and Acton Plan carried out between July and October 2023.

On 5 September 2024 The Executive agreed its draft Programme for Government (PfG) for 2024 to 2027 with Ending Violence Against Women and Girls one of the nine priorities of the PfG.

The EVAWG Strategic Framework 2024 – 2031 was then launched by the First Minister and Deputy First Minister on 16 September following a Ministerial Statement to the Assembly.

3. Previous Decision of Council

Members were reminded that it was agreed at the November 2024 Community Development Committee that the request from TEO to work in partnership in relation to the delivery of the Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Strategic Framework and Action Plan be approved.

Members were also reminded at the December 2025 Committee the submission of an EVAWG Action Plan to TEO outlining the Councils proposals for delivery of EVAWG activity from April 2026 to March 2028.

4. Key Issues

Members were advised that correspondence (circulated) had been received from TEO offering financial assistance totalling £202,000 to deliver

under the Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Local Change Fund for the period 1 April 2026 – 31 March 2027.

As per conditions of the letter of offer £106,000 had been allocated to Momentum funding and £96,000 allocated to the Local Change Fund Community Grant Programme.

Members were advised that this offer of funding had been accepted by TEO's deadline of 1 September 2026.

5. Financial Implication

The funding allocation did not require any match funding from Council resources for the delivery of this project.

6. Summary

The Council had received a letter of funding of £202,000 from TEO for the costs associated with the EVAWG Local Change Fund for 2026/27. No additional match funding was required.

The funding allocation would support activities that were aligned to the EVAWG Action Plan.

Proposed by Councillor Gilmour
Seconded by Councillor Ní Chonghaile and agreed that

the offer of Ending Violence Against Women and Girls funding from the Executive Office of £202,000 for the delivery of the 2026/27 Action Plan be noted.

NO ACTION

Councillor Gilmour left and returned to the Chamber during Item 5.6.

5.6 CP/CD/435 SOCIAL SUPERMARKET AND COMMUNITY ADVICE CLINICS

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to update Members on the delivery of Community Advice Antrim and Newtownabbey's outreach advice clinics and the delivery of the Social Supermarket vouchers scheme in the Borough

2. Introduction/Background

Social Supermarkets were community driven shops which supported those living in food poverty. They supply low-cost food sourced from the charity FareShare NI and donations from local businesses. The aim of a Social Supermarket model was to offer a longer term and sustainable response to food insecurity by seeking to address the root causes of poverty rather than simply providing food.

3. Previous Decision of Council

Members were reminded that it was agreed at the June 2026 Community Development Committee to continue the delivery of the Social Supermarket Programme in partnership with Community Advice Antrim and Newtownabbey (CAAN) through a Service Level Agreement, including funding of £136,678.40 for 2026/2027.

Members also requested information on the advice clinics in the Borough and asked officers to explore the potential for additional retail outlets to be considered for the provision of food vouchers with a report to be brought back to a future Committee.

4. Key Issues

Outreach Advice Clinics

Members were advised that through the Generalist Advice Contract CAAN delivered the following weekly in-person outreach advice clinics by appointment:

- Toome – Monday mornings
- Randalstown – Monday afternoons
- Glengormley – Tuesday afternoons
- Crumlin – Thursday afternoons
- Ballyclare – Thursday afternoons

CAAN had provided details of its core outreach provision and advised that, in addition to these scheduled clinics, it delivered a range of outreach sessions through other funded projects in community settings including foodbanks, hospitals and mental health units. The organisation also worked collaboratively with community groups and statutory partners to deliver additional pop-up advice sessions if required.

CAAN had advised that accessibility remained a key priority, with 93% of respondents to its annual client satisfaction survey reporting that they found the service easy to access.

Social Supermarket Voucher Scheme

Members were also advised that CAAN worked with retailers to deliver the Social Supermarket voucher scheme. The retailers were:

- SPAR
- Lidl
- Iceland
- Tesco

Food vouchers were available for use across the Borough, allowing clients to choose the retailer which best met their individual needs in terms of location, accessibility, food choice, value for money, privacy and dignity.

CAAN advised that when the Social Supermarket Scheme commenced in 2022, vouchers were only redeemable at SPAR stores. Following ongoing feedback from service users, the scheme was expanded to include Lidl, Iceland and Tesco, providing greater flexibility and choice for participants.

CAAN considered that the current range of participating retailers provided good geographical coverage and choice across the Borough. The organisation would continue to review retailer participation in response to client feedback and operational requirements.

5. Governance

CAAN had been engaged to deliver this service through procurement of the Generalist Advice Contract, which included provision for contract variations.

Members were reminded that all funding awards were subject to satisfactory monitoring and evaluation.

6. Summary

CAAN had been very successful and provided significant support to families and individuals across the Borough during a time of need. Information regarding the delivery of CAAN outreach advice clinics and the retailers participating in the Social Supermarket voucher scheme had been provided for Members Information.

CAAN delivered five weekly core outreach clinics across the Borough, supplemented by additional outreach sessions. The Social Supermarket voucher scheme currently provided clients with access to four major retailers across the Borough.

In response to a Member's query about vouchers having been exhausted on occasions previously, causing embarrassment to recipients, the Head of Community Development advised that he would contact CAAN to get an understanding of the issue.

He also confirmed that Members had in the past been able to avail of vouchers in emergency circumstances at both Civic Centres and agreed that he would revisit this and, if not currently in place, would ensure that it was reinstated, taking into account seven day week access.

Proposed by Alderman McGrath
Seconded by Councillor Brady and agreed that

the update on the delivery of Community Advice Antrim and Newtownabbey's outreach advice clinics and the delivery of the Social Supermarket vouchers scheme be noted.

ACTION BY: Will McDowell, DEA Engagement Coordinator

Councillor O'Hagan left the meeting remotely at this point.

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

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to inform Members of the latest update from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) regarding progress on the Timms Review of Personal Independence Payment (PIP).

2. Introduction/Background

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) had provided a further update on the Timms Review of Personal Independence Payment (PIP), which aimed to ensure that PIP accurately reflected the experiences of disabled people 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 the appointment of Sharon Brennan and Dr Clenton Farquharson CBE as co-chairs of the Review.

On 19 March 2026, DWP launched the Timms Review Call for Evidence, inviting disabled people, individuals with long-term health conditions, organisations across the UK, and those with relevant expertise or interest to submit views and evidence. The Call for Evidence was open until 28 May 2026.

The Review was expected to report to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions in Autumn 2026.

3. Key Issues

On 9 July 2026, the Steering Group published its Interim Report, a copy of which was circulated for Members information. The report provided a summary of the work undertaken to date, the evidence gathered through the Call for Evidence and wider engagement activities, and the emerging themes that would inform the Review's final recommendations.

The Interim Report provided a public update on the progress of the Timms Review and confirmed that, based on the evidence gathered so far, the Steering Group believed that while Personal Independence Payment (PIP) was widely valued by recipients, the current system was "not fit for purpose" and required significant reform.

The Steering Group remained committed to a co-production approach, working alongside disabled people, Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs), representative bodies and other stakeholders to develop recommendations that better support independent living and reflect the realities of living with a disability or long-term health condition.

The Interim Report summarised the findings from the Call for Evidence, which received contributions from more than 38,000 individuals and organisations, significantly strengthening the Review's evidence base and highlighting both the value of PIP and the challenges experienced by claimants.

The report also outlined the Steering Group's emerging themes, described the work undertaken through engagement activities to date and identified areas where further evidence was required before final recommendations were made to the Secretary of State.

Further engagement and evidence gathering would take place during Summer 2026. This included a large representative survey of working-age people with disabilities and long-term health conditions, undertaken by the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen). The survey would examine issues including:

- Independent living and the role of PIP.
- Take-up of PIP and wider Government support.
- Equity of access.
- Support available for people with fluctuating conditions; and
- Disabled people's views on future reform.

Findings from this research would be considered by the Steering Group in September 2026, with the survey results expected to be published in Autumn 2026. The Department for Communities would continue to engage with stakeholders and provide updates as the Review progresses

Full details update and accessible versions of materials (including BSL, Easy Read and audio formats) were available via The Timms Review - Interim Report July 2026

4. Summary

The Department for Work and Pensions had published the Interim Report for the Timms Review of Personal Independence Payment (PIP), setting out progress to date and the emerging findings from the Review.

The report concluded that while PIP was widely valued by disabled people and those with long-term health conditions, significant reform was required to ensure that it better met people's needs now and in the future.

The Review would continue through a programme of co-production, engagement and research during Summer 2026, with further evidence informing final recommendations to the Secretary of State in Autumn 2026. The Department for Communities would continue to monitor developments and maintain engagement with stakeholders throughout the Review process.

Proposed by Alderman McGrath
Seconded by Councillor Lynch and agreed that

Members note the latest update on the Timms Review of Personal Independence Payment (PIP), including the publication of the Steering Group's Interim Report and the planned programme of further engagement and evidence gathering.

NO ACTION

5.8 CP/CF/001 COMMUNITY FACILITIES – COMMUNITY SUMMER SCHEMES 2026

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to update Members regarding the free use of Council Community Facilities for Summer Schemes organised by Community Groups.

2. Introduction and Background

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

3. Previous Decision of Council

Members were reminded that it was approved at the June Community Development Committee that Rathenraw Youth Scheme be given permission to use Rathenraw Community Centre free of charge, as a keyholder, for their two-week Summer Scheme from 20 July – 31 July 2026 and that other Community Groups using Council facilities to deliver summer schemes on the same basis, would have their costs reimbursed, with a report on the outcome to be brought back to the September Committee for noting.

Members were also reminded that approval was given at the June 2025 Committee for a revision to the Community Development Pricing Policy, which now required all free use requests to be brought to the Committee for decision.

4. 2026 Summer Schemes in Community Facilities

Officers had undertaken a review of all Summer Schemes, booked by other Community Groups using Council facilities to deliver summer schemes on the same basis. There were three summer Schemes booked in Community Facilities during July and August:

Summer Scheme	Booking Details	Eligible for Reimbursement
You to Me Play SEN Summer Scheme	Muckamore CC 20/21/22 July 9.30-1pm 10/11/12 Aug 9.30-1pm Neillsbrook CC 3-6 Aug 9.30-1pm	No Reason: Not a key holder, and booking supported by centre staff and other associated costs.
Newtownabbey Family Connections – Barnardo's	Dunanney Centre Monday 27 July – Tuesday 11 August (10am-1pm) – they have booked all Monday and Tuesdays within this period.	No Reason: Booking supported by centre staff and other associated costs.
NHSCT – Summer Scheme	Greystone CC Monday 10 Aug – Friday 14 August – 9-5pm each day	No Reason: Statutory Agency. Not a key holder, booking supported by centre staff and other associated costs.

Officers had concluded that none of the other Summer Schemes delivered in Community Facilities were on the same basis as Rathenraw Youth Scheme, and therefore, costs would not be reimbursed.

5. Summary

Rathenraw Youth Scheme were given permission to use Rathenraw Community Centre free of charge, as a keyholder, for their two-week Summer Scheme

Officers had undertaken a review of all Summer Schemes, booked by Community Groups using Council facilities. Three other Summer Schemes were booked in Community Facilities during July and August, but none were deemed eligible for a reimbursement as they did not operate on the same basis as Rathenraw.

Proposed by Alderman McGrath
Seconded by Councillor Lynch and agreed that

the report be noted.

NO ACTION

Alderman Ross left and returned to the Chamber during Item 5.9.
Councillor Lynch left the meeting at this point.

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

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to provide Members with detailed performance data relating to the Marketing, Communications and PR service delivery.

2. Introduction

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

3. Previous Decision of Council

Members were reminded that the Communications Strategy was approved at the January 2026 Community Development Committee.

Members were further reminded that it was agreed by the Committee in February to receive quarterly performance reports in line with the schedule below:

- 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

4. Performance Measurement

A Marketing, Communications and PR report for April 2026 to June 2026 was circulated for Members' information. This performance report provided detailed analysis of marketing communications and PR performance for this period. The Communications Strategy committed to the continuous evaluation of the Council's communications to assess impact and inform the development of service delivery within an evolving communications landscape.

Social Media

Social media engagement was particularly high in Northern Ireland with over 80% of the population actively using social platforms and 99% of adults accessing services provided by Meta, including Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp. The Council managed a range of social media channels and tailors its communications to specific audiences on each platform.

The social media section of the report provided detailed analysis of Social Media performance for the period April to June 2026 for the Councils main corporate channels. Highlights were summarised below:

Metric	Number	Notes
Number of Followers	71,261	Across all **Corporate** Council platforms
Number of Posts	602	Facebook, Instagram, X, TikTok, LinkedIn
Impressions	5,066,094	Opportunities to View

Members were advised that the Marketing Communications and PR Team also managed 15 additional social media accounts such as dedicated Enchanted Winter Garden Facebook and Instagram accounts, and across all channels and there were 166,122 followers in total.

Social media continued 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.

Website Update

Council currently operated several websites:

- Corporate: Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council
- Tourism: Visit Antrim and Newtownabbey
- Theatre: Theatre at The Milll, Courtyard Theatre, The Old Courthouse
- Events: Enchanted Winter Garden, Garden Show Ireland, Spinning Yarns

The corporate website was a central site which provided centralised information and links to all other Council-used platforms (e.g. Legend, Spektrix, Goss, FlexiGrant etc.) to enable digital customer transactions.

In terms of the corporate website there were 337,982 Page Views: 337,982 during this quarter and top pages visited:

Bin Checker: 38k
Homepage 29k
Events Page 13k
Valley: 10k
Council Service updates: 11K

Graphic Design

The Graphic Design team formed an integral part of the MCPR team, delivering a comprehensive design service, creating high-quality digital and

print marketing and communications materials for all sections across the Council.

Graphic Design performance for the period April 2026 to June 2026 was summarised below:

Metric	Number/value	Breakdown / Notes
Total projects completed	114	Average 38 per month
Top 5 Service Areas	Arts & Culture Events Organisational Development Leisure Community	15.6% 15.6% 15.6% 14.9% 11.3%
Major Projects	Garden Show Ireland We See You Event Golden Threads Brighter Nights EVAWG Report Card	

Media Relations

The MCPR team engaged in media relations both proactively and reactively. This was 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 media section provided detailed analysis of Media performance for the period April 2026 to June 2026 with highlights summarised below:

Metric	Number/value	Breakdown / Notes
Total Press Releases Issued	59	Average 19+ per month
Total Mentions	1.4K	Online: 736 · Print: 690 · Radio: 14 · TV: 1
Total Reach	433.4M	

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

5. Finance and Governance

The delivery of the external communication function was resourced within the Marketing Communications and PR Section of the Directorate. Revenue budgets were utilised for specific campaigns to amplify both social media and media coverage through paid advertisement.

6. Summary

A Marketing Communications and PR performance report for April-June 2026 highlighted key outcomes for the Section across social media and traditional media activity. Quarterly performance reports would continue to be submitted to the Committee as scheduled with an annual report also being presented to the Committee in June 2027.

The Head of Marketing Communications and PR addressed Members' queries in relation to Council's website and social media platforms and provided clarification in relation to the processes Council used when promoting events throughout the Borough.

A Member suggested that a list of upcoming events within each DEA be circulated to Community Groups for display on local notice boards as this would help ensure residents who did not use social media were made aware of forthcoming events.

Proposed by Alderman McGrath
Seconded by Councillor Cooper and agreed that

the Marketing, Communications and PR performance report for April – June 2026 be noted.

ACTION BY: Jeanette McIntyre, Head of Marketing, Communications and PR

6 ANY OTHER RELEVANT BUSINESS

6.1 The Director of Community and Culture confirmed that Council were working to ensure that the ongoing problems with the water features at Antrim Castle Gardens be addressed as a matter of urgency.

ACTION BY: Ursula Fay, Director of Community and Culture

6.2 Councillor Ní Chonghaile extended her thanks and gratitude to the Director of Community and Culture and her team for the organisation of the Mayor's Inaugural Dinner on 5 September 2026.

NO ACTION

6.3 The Director of Community and Culture responded to Members' queries in relation to plans for International Men's Day and provided information in relation to the Domestic and Sexual Abuse Community Toolkit. She further confirmed the range of support services for men and women included within

the toolkit, which would be re-issued to Members and asked Members to highlight any support services they wished to add to this resource.

ACTION BY: Ursula Fay, Director of Community and Culture

PROPOSAL TO PROCEED 'IN CONFIDENCE'

Proposed by Councillor Brady
Seconded by Councillor Dunlop and agreed that

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

7 ITEM IN CONFIDENCE

7.1 IN CONFIDENCE CP/CD/289 COMMUNITY FACILITIES – TENANCY RENEWAL

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to seek Members' approval on a tenancy agreement renewal at the Dunanney Centre.

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

Members were reminded that there were a number of rentable offices in the Community Facility Buildings.

3. Previous Decision of Council

The Schedule of Charges for hiring Community facilities and tenancy agreements was approved at the January 2025 Community Development Committee. An average inflationary increase to the schedule of charges was approved and a rental rate of £[redacted] per square metre per annum was applied to all Community Facility Tenancy agreements from 1 April 2025.

It was approved at the June 2025 Policy and Governance Committee that an annual inflationary uplift, based on appropriate indices, should be automatically applied. Inflationary increases would be based on the change in Consumer Price Index (CPI) from the previous calendar year.

4. Financial Position/Implication

An inflationary uplift of 3.5%, based on the change in Consumer Price Index (CPI) from the previous calendar year had been applied to Community Facilities schedule of charges from the beginning of the financial year. A rental rate of £[redacted] per square metre per annum was now applied from 1 April 2026.

The tenancy agreement for the organisation below was due for renewal and they had requested that this was renewed as follows:

Organisation	**Rooms Requested for Rental Renewal**	**Tenancy Start Date and Term**	**Rental Income £[redacted] sqm (p/a) from 1 April 2026**
Rathcoole Crew	Dunanney Centre (Room 28)	From 1st Nov 2026 for 1 year	£[redacted]

A template tenancy agreement was circulated for Members' information.

5. Summary

There were a number of rentable offices in the Community Facility Buildings which were leased to various organisations under tenancy agreements. All tenancy agreements included rental costs, service charges and utilities.

Renewal of the tenancy agreement at Dunanney Centre would achieve annual rental income of £[redacted] per annum.

Proposed by Councillor Brady
Seconded by Councillor Cooper and agreed that

the renewal of the tenancy agreement with Rathcoole Crew, including keyholder option for Dunanney Centre, from 1st November 2026 for 1 year at an annual cost of £[redacted] be approved.

ACTION BY: Paul Townsend, Community Facilities Coordinator

PROPOSAL TO PROCEED OUT OF 'IN CONFIDENCE'

Proposed by Councillor Brady
Seconded by Councillor Cooper and agreed that

the remainder of Committee business be taken in Open Session.

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

There being no further Committee business, the Chairperson thanked everyone for their attendance and the meeting concluded at 8.10pm.

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MAYOR

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