



**MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE MEETING OF THE
OPERATIONS COMMITTEE HELD IN ANTRIM CIVIC CENTRE ON
TUESDAY 7 MAY 2024 AT 6.30 PM**

- In the Chair** : Councillor V McWilliam
- Committee Members** : Aldermen – L Clarke and J Smyth
Councillors – R Foster, AM Logue, H Magill,
A McAuley, E McLaughlin, M Ní Chonghaile,
L O'Hagan and M Stewart
- Officers Present** : Director of Parks & Leisure Operations - M McDowell
Director of Sustainability – M Lavery
Head of Leisure – D O'Hagan
Head of Parks – P Mawhinney
Head of Environmental Health and Wellbeing – C Kelly
Head of Property Services - D Blair
Accessibility and Inclusion Officer – E Boyd
ICT Systems Support Officer – C Bell
Member Services Officer – E Skillen

CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

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

1 APOLOGIES

Alderman P Bradley
Councillors - J Burbank, J Gilmour and L Smyth.

The Chairperson on behalf of Members extended condolences to Councillor Smyth on the passing of her Grandmother.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

3. PRESENTATION

3.1 PK/PG005/VOL2 MAE MURRAY FOUNDATION

The Chairperson welcomed Kyleigh Lough, Chief Executive of the Mae Murray Foundation who provided a short presentation (circulated) and updated Members on the Adapt My Play Guide and Toolkit which was being reported in item 4.1.

Members' questions were addressed after which the Chairperson thanked Ms Lough for her presentation and she left the meeting.

Proposed by Councillor Foster
Seconded by Councillor Logue and agreed that

the presentation be noted.

NO ACTION

4 ITEMS FOR DECISION

4.1 PK/PG005/VOL2 ADAPT MY PLAY GUIDE AND TOOLKIT

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to seek approval for the Council to adopt the "Adapt my Play" guide and toolkit, aimed at facilitating the development of inclusive play parks within the Borough.

2. Introduction/Background

Council continuously endeavoured to enhance its play parks, particularly by incorporating accessible equipment to promote inclusivity for all users whenever feasible. Recently, £17,500 was allocated from the Department for

Communities' Access and Inclusion funding for the installation of more accessible equipment in select play parks across the Borough.

Council had approved the Play Park Audit in January 2024, which provided a comprehensive overview of the condition of the Borough's 36 play parks, ranking them in terms of priority for maintenance and refurbishment. The development of a works programme stemming from this audit was currently underway and would be presented for Council approval in due course.

3. Proposal

The "Adapt my Play" guide and toolkit, jointly developed by Playboard Northern Ireland and the Mae Murray Foundation, provided useful support to local authorities and play providers in developing inclusive play parks. A copy of this guide and toolkit was circulated for Member's reference. By adopting this resource, Council would be equipped to effectively execute the recommendations outlined in the Play Park Audit and to incorporate inclusive elements into any future park developments. This adoption would ensure that play parks within the Borough continued to be progressively more inclusive and accessible to all.

In response to a Member's question, the Director of Parks and Leisure advised that an interim report on progress on actions for the recent Playpark Audit would be tabled at the June Operations Committee.

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

the "Adapt my Play" guide and toolkit to support the development of inclusive play parks within the Borough be approved.

ACTION BY: Paul Mawhinney, Head of Parks Operations

4.2 **PK/REG/022 UPDATED CEMETERIES RULES & REGULATIONS**

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to seek approval for the proposed amendments to Council's Cemetery Rules and Regulations.

2. Background

Members were advised that Council's Cemetery Rules and Regulations were last approved in 2020. Since that date, Council had assumed formal operational responsibility for Church Lane Cemetery, Doagh and maintenance responsibility for Ballylinney Cemetery and Monkstown Cemetery. Furthermore, in 2023, Council approved the pricing schedule for the Council's crematorium, which included a provision that burials for children up to the age of seventeen would not incur a fee.

3. Proposed Amendments

An updated version of Council's Cemetery Rules and Regulations was circulated for Members' reference with highlighted amendments, which included:

- Inclusion of the statutory regulations to which Council, as a burial authority, was bound.
- Inclusion of additional cemeteries for which Council had assumed operational responsibility.
- Updated information on child burial fees.
- Operational and maintenance considerations.

The above amendments would improve clarity and provide general information for residents and funeral directors alike.

Proposed by Councillor Foster

Seconded by Councillor McAuley and agreed that

the proposed amendments to Council's Cemetery Rules and Regulations be approved.

ACTION BY: Emma Thompson, Bereavement Services Manager

4.3 PK/REG/016 APPLICATION FOR THE RENEWAL OF PREMISES FOR CIVIL MARRIAGES/CIVIL PARTNERSHIP CEREMONIES

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to seek approval for the renewal of Antrim Castle Gardens and Clotworthy House as an approved venue in which Civil Marriage/Civil Partnership ceremonies could be conducted.

2. Background

Under the terms of the Marriage (NI) Order 2003 and the Civil Partnership Act (2004), Council had the responsibility to approve appropriate applications for Place Approvals for Civil Marriage and Civil Partnerships, which lasted for 3 years. The process required that a Notice of Interest be displayed for a three-week period in a prominent place at the venue to allow for any public objection.

3. Current Position

A renewal application for a Place Approval had been received from Antrim Castle Gardens and Clotworthy House, Antrim. The venue was previously approved by the Council in May 2021, with specified areas for the venue for approval as follows:

Antrim Castle Gardens: Oriel Gallery, Massereene Room, Parterre.

No public objections had been received relating to the venue.

Proposed by Councillor McAuley
Seconded by Councillor Logue and agreed that

Antrim Castle Gardens and Clotworthy House be re-approved to hold Civil Marriages under the terms of the Marriage (NI) Order 2003 and Civil Partnerships under the Civil Partnership Act (2004)

ACTION BY: Paula Redpath, Registrar

4.4 PK/GEN/035/VOL4 PARKS AND OPEN SPACES SUB GROUP MINUTES

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to seek approval for the most recent Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Group meeting held on 9 April 2024.

2. Summary

At the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Group meeting on 9 April 2024, Members considered a detailed report which provided a range of updates from the Parks Service. The minutes of the meeting were circulated for Members' consideration.

Proposed by Alderman Clarke
Seconded by Alderman Smyth and agreed that

the minutes of the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Group meeting held on 9 April 2024 be approved.

ACTION BY: Paul Mawhinney, Head of Parks Operations

4.5 EH/PHWB/014 BREASTFEEDING WELCOME HERE SCHEME

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to recommend to Members that all Council premises were signed up to the regional Public Health Agency Breastfeeding Welcome Here Scheme.

2. Introduction

The 'Breastfeeding Welcome Here Scheme' promotes breastfeeding-friendly environments for mothers when they're out and about, recognising its vital health benefits for both mother and baby. With Northern Ireland having low breastfeeding rates, the scheme aimed to address the lack of support, especially for breastfeeding in public.

Breastfeeding Welcome Here Scheme provides reassurance to mothers that they are welcome to breastfeed at the premises. The Council, if it chooses to

become a member of the Breastfeeding Welcome Here Scheme, would be given recognition through ongoing promotion and raising awareness and it would be listed on the www.breastfedbabies.org website.

Membership of the scheme would entail:

- Acceptance of breastfeeding in all public areas of the premises;
- Ensuring mothers are not asked to move or stop breastfeeding;
- Staff awareness and support for breastfeeding mothers;
- Displaying a Breastfeeding Welcome Here window sticker and certificate.

To join, the Council would sign an agreement committing to the scheme's criteria. The Public Health Agency (PHA) would then provide certificates and stickers, listing the Council as a member on the Breastfed Babies website.

Short awareness training sessions would be provided, prioritising frontline staff, with plans to extend training to all staff and elected members in the near future.

The aim was for all Council operated premises to join the scheme by August, coinciding with World Breastfeeding Week (1 – 7 August), with joint publicity efforts between the Council and the PHA.

In the coming months, a forthcoming policy would be brought before the Council, proposing the adoption of the Breastfeeding Welcome Here Scheme in Council owned premises managed by entities other than the Council. During this time, Officers would actively engage with these entities to encourage voluntary enrolment.

In response to a Member's question the Director of Sustainability advised that consideration would be given to providing support packs for mothers returning to work.

Proposed by Councillor O'Hagan
Seconded by Councillor Logue and agreed that

all Council operated premises sign up to the regional Public Health Agency Breastfeeding Welcome Here Scheme.

ACTION BY: Alison Briggs, Deputy Head of Environmental Health and Wellbeing

5 ITEMS FOR NOTING

5.1 EH/PHWB/002 HOME ACCIDENT PREVENTION 2023-24

1. Purpose

This purpose of this report was to update Members on the activities conducted by the Home Safety Officer throughout the financial year 2023/24.

2. Background

Members were reminded that the Council's Home Safety Officer focused on offering free home safety inspections to residents aged over 65, vulnerable adults, and eligible families with children under 5. These inspections included the provision of tailored home safety equipment.

Additionally, the Officer coordinated the distribution of such equipment to families with young children who had undergone inspections by Health Visitors. Funding for these initiatives was provided by the Public Health Agency (PHA), which set annual targets for the number of safety checks for over 65s and equipment deliveries for under 5s.

3. Key Issues

During the previous financial year, the PHA set a target of 156 home safety checks for over 65s and 218 deliveries of home safety equipment to children under 5. Between 1st April 2023 and 31st March 2024, the Home Safety Officer exceeded these targets by completing 185 safety checks for over 65s and delivering 221 sets of safety equipment to children under 5. Additionally, 17 safety checks were conducted for vulnerable adults, and 8 for children under 5. The PHA commended Council for achieving the targets and the innovative initiatives developed by the Home Safety Officer.

During the home safety checks, assessments were made regarding the need for further support. In the previous year, 51% of households receiving checks were referred to various services such as the Police and Community Safety Partnership, Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service, and for assisted bin collections. Over the year, a total of 1,004 pieces of equipment were provided to residents following over 65 home safety checks, and 1,446 pieces of equipment were given to eligible families with children under 5.

Furthermore, the Home Safety Officer offered advice through various channels. This included conducting 30 home safety talks, participating in 13 information events, and organising 2 electrical blanket exchange events. Additionally, 7 home safety articles were published in 'Borough Life' and 'News for You', the Council's age-friendly magazine, and 7 social media articles were posted. The Officer also created social media videos on electrical blanket safety, drowning prevention, and firework safety, collectively gathering over 8,850 views collectively.

The Home Safety website was regularly updated with informational videos and featured an "Ask the Home Safety Officer" section for residents seeking advice or guidance on home safety.

The website can be viewed at;

<https://antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk/residents/residents-community-information/community-advice/home-accident-prevention/under-5s/>

On a recent survey conducted on 10% of households who received a Home Safety assessment in 23/24 it was found that;

- 60% rated the visit/consultation as Good, 40% as Excellent.
- 55% had used all the equipment provided and 45% had used some items.
- 100% stated that they found the equipment useful.
- 100% stated that it made a change to their lives and felt it made their home safer.
- 100% of those who were eligible for an onward referral, found that referral beneficial.

The work of the Home Safety Officer would continue in the year 2024/25 and Environmental Health would continue to work with PHA to ensure their set targets are met.

4. Financial Position/Implication

The Public Health Agency allocated £33,289 as a contribution to the work carried out by the Home Safety Officer.

5. Summary

In the previous financial year, the Home Safety Officer conducted 185 home safety checks, delivered 221 sets of home safety equipment for children under 5, distributed 2,450 pieces of home safety equipment, and provided advice at 45 events. Home safety information was disseminated through various mediums including Council magazines, social media, and the Council website.

Proposed by Councillor Foster

Seconded by Alderman Smyth and agreed that

the report be noted.

NO ACTION

5.2 **EH/PHWB/009 OIL STAMP SAVINGS SCHEME**

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to provide Members with an overview of Oil Stamp Savings Scheme for the financial year 2023/24.

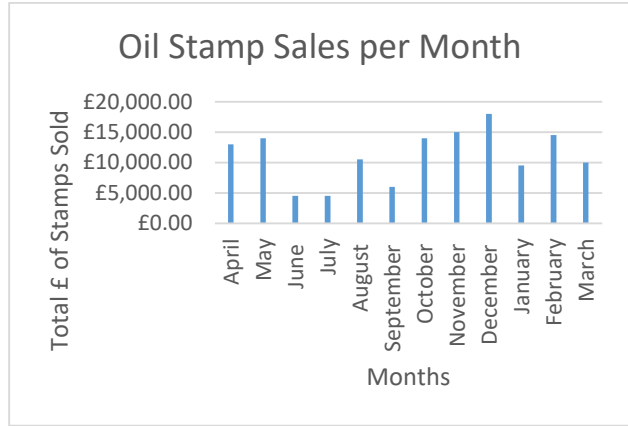
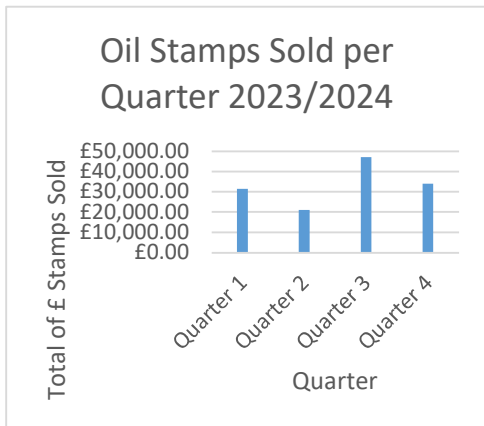
2. Introduction

Members were reminded that the Environmental Health Section operated the Antrim and Newtownabbey Oil Stamp Savings Scheme.

The Oil Stamp Savings Scheme allowed householders to buy £5 oil stamps from local retailers and Council premises helping them to budget and spread the cost of central heating oil. The scheme operated by the household obtaining a

savings card from one of the participating outlets. The householder would purchase a £5 oil stamp and place on the savings cards. Each card holds 40 stamps which was equivalent to £200. The card could then be used for payment or part payment for oil from participating oil suppliers.

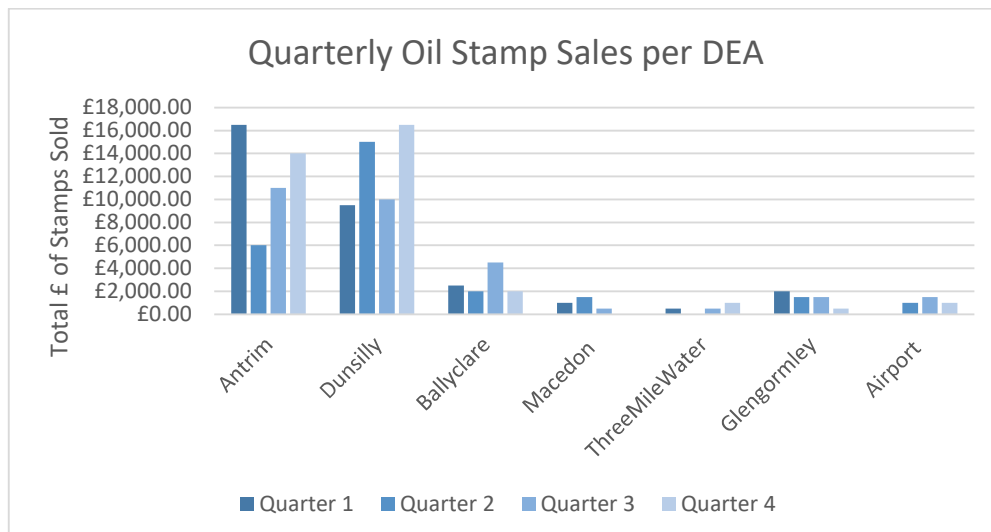
In the past financial year, from 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024, oil stamps amounting to £133,500 were sold across the Borough. Notably, £47,000 of oil stamps were sold in the third quarter (October 2023 - December 2023.) with December 2023 registering the highest monthly sales at £18,000.



There were 32 retailers selling oil stamps across the Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough, with 56 oil suppliers having signed up for the scheme and they would accept oil stamps as full or part payment. A full list of oil stamp retailers and suppliers could be found at;

<https://antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk/oil-stamp-suppliers/>

The Dunsilly District Electoral Area (DEA) sold the most oil stamps in the financial year, with a value of £51,000 oil stamps sold. This was primarily attributed to the lack of gas infrastructure across that DEA resulting in a predominant reliance on home heating oil among households.



The Oil Stamp Saving Scheme was promoted throughout the year and in February 2024 an animated video was created to explain and promote the scheme on the Council's social media channels and on the Council website. The video to date has been viewed over 100,000 times and could be found at the following link: <https://antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk/oilstamps/>

The Oil Stamp Saving Scheme runs at minimal costs, with retailers selling stamps at no cost benefit to themselves. The cost of printing an annual supply of oil stamps was approximately £3,000 and the animated video was at a cost of £250.

3. Summary

The Oil Stamp Savings Scheme was a practical initiative that could assist householders to budget for the cost of home heating oil particularly with current cost of living difficulties which households are facing. The Oil Stamp Saving Scheme continued to be a popular scheme across the Borough.

Proposed by Alderman Clarke
Seconded by Councillor Ní Chonghaile and agreed

that the report be noted.

NO ACTION

5.3 L/LEI/004/VOL2 SUMMER SCHEMES 2024

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to provide an update on the details of the Council's Summer Scheme Programme for 2024.

2. Background

Members would be aware that Council delivered a range of Summer Schemes and Sports Camps across multiple locations throughout the Borough during the schools' summer break for children aged 6 – 12 years old. A screening process was also available for those children with additional individual care needs (medical or disability) to ensure that any required adjustments were met where possible when attending the schemes.

For several years, Council had worked in partnership with the Mae Murray Foundation to deliver an Inclusive Summer Scheme, which provided specialised one-to-one care for up to 25 children each day. This year's scheme would be delivered across two locations and featured a range of activities such as sensory play, inclusive wheelchair games, inclusive biking, and arts and crafts.

Additionally, the Council supported external summer programmes either through the Community Planning Department's Programmes and Activities Grant, which this year funded 17 groups at an estimated total of £34,000, or

through Accessibility and Inclusion funding, which provided a maximum contribution of £5000 from a total fund of £25,000 available to Special Educational Needs Schools located within the Borough.

3. Proposed 2024 Council Programme

Booking would be available from May 21st with relevant information widely shared in advance via Council's various communication platforms. The proposed 2024 Summer Scheme Programme would be as follows:

Scheme	Dates 2024	Times
Six Mile Leisure Centre (Ballyclare)	22 July-23 Aug	10am-3pm
Valley Leisure Centre	22 July-23 Aug	10am-3pm
Ballyearl Arts and Leisure Centre (Arts and Crafts)	22 July-23 Aug	10am-3pm
Merville House	22 July-16 Aug	10am-1pm
Lilian Bland	22 July-23 Aug	10am-3pm
Thompson Primary School	22-26 July	10am-3pm
Kilbride Church/St Brides	29 July – 2 Aug	10am – 3pm
Ballynure Methodist	5 – 9 Aug & 12 – 16 Aug	10am – 3pm
Hydepark Church	19 – 22 Aug	10am – 3pm
Crumlin Leisure Centre	20 – 22 Aug	10am – 3pm
Antrim Forum Sport & Physical Activity week	23 - 25 July & 30 – 1 Aug	10am – 3pm
Castle Gardens Outdoor Sport & Physical Activity Camp	6 - 8 August	10am – 3pm
Inclusive Summer Schemes Antrim Forum Crumlin LC	1 – 5 July 5 – 9 August	11am - 2pm
Sports Specific Camps (Athletics, Dance, Tennis & Football) Various centres	July & August	10am – 1pm

In response to a question from a Member the Director of Parks and Leisure agreed to bring back a report on the budget for Summer Schemes 2024/25.

Proposed by Councillor McAuley
Seconded by Alderman Smyth and agreed that

the report be noted.

ACTION BY: Matt McDowell, Director of Parks and Leisure

5.4 FI/FIN/4 BUDGET REPORT Q4 OPERATIONS

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to provide Members with financial performance information at quarter four (January 2024 – March 2024) for Operations.

2. Introduction

As was agreed at the August Council meeting, quarterly budget reports would be presented to the relevant Committee or Working Group. All financial reports would be available to all Members.

3. Summary

The budget report for Period 12 did not include adjustments required to arrive at the final financial position of the Council for the 2023/24 financial year. These adjustments included final accruals of expenditure incurred and grants and debts invoiced after 31 March 2024, contributions to or from reserves, and prepayments of expenditure and income.

Budget reports for Sustainability and Parks and Leisure Operations for Quarter 4 – January 2024 to March 2024 were circulated for Members' information. At present the Parks and Leisure budget was in an adverse position of £1,294,659 (9.9%) due to the following reasons:

- Overspend in repairs and maintenance costs at Leisure Centres and other operational facilities;
- Overspend in Parks grounds maintenance cost;
- Overspend in Fleet in particular on moveable plant and equipment costs;
- Delay in opening of Crematorium and resulting impact on budgeted income.

The Sustainability budget was also in an adverse position of £1,464,363 (6.7%) and this was due to:

- Higher than estimated annual inflationary increases on waste contracts;
- Increase in waste arisings, in particular green waste, above predicted levels;
- Removal of funding for the Animal Welfare Service from DAERA;
- Higher than predicted repairs and maintenance costs at the Recycling Centres;
- Delay in the harmonisation of waste collection services.

In response to a Member's query the Director of Parks and Leisure advised that the final unaudited set of accounts would be presented to the Audit and Risk Committee by the end of June.

Proposed by Councillor Foster

Seconded by Alderman Smyth and agreed that

the report be noted.

NO ACTION

7. ANY OTHER RELEVANT BUSINESS

VEHICLE HIRE CRITERIA AND POLICIES

In response to a Member's question the Director of Sustainability confirmed that a report would be provided to Members regarding the current status of hire vehicles in the fleet.

ACTION BY: Michael Laverty, Director of Sustainability

WATER QUALITY CHECKS

In response to a Member's query the Director of Parks and Leisure advised that Council was not responsible for checking water quality at Belfast Lough and the area is not a designated bathing water and therefore not checked by the Department. In addition, the possibility for providing shower facilities at the slipway in the area was previously explored following a request by a local resident and was not progressed due to land ownership and the work being cost prohibitive.

NO ACTION

PROPOSAL TO PROCEED 'IN CONFIDENCE'

Proposed by Alderman Smyth
Seconded by Councillor McAuley and agreed

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

6. ITEMS IN CONFIDENCE

Alderman Smyth left the meeting during Item 6.1.

6.1 **IN CONFIDENCE** WM/ARC21/4/VOL11 ARC21 JOINT COMMITTEE PAPERS

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to update members on the most recent arc21 Joint Committee meeting.

2. Introduction

The Arc21 Joint Committee meet on a monthly basis and each month the Operations Committee reviews the papers.

3. Previous Decisions of Council

All previous papers had been noted.

4. Main Report

The papers for the arc21 Joint Committee Meeting were circulated for:

- 25 April 2024

Members were reminded that these documents were confidential and may be legally privileged or otherwise protected from disclosure so therefore Members should not disclose this information to any third party and the information must be kept secure.

5. Summary

[REDACTED]

Proposed by Councillor Foster
Seconded by Councillor McAuley and agreed that

the report be noted.

NO ACTION

6.2 **IN CONFIDENCE** PK/REG/013, PK/GEN/197 CEMETERY BURIAL CAPACITY UPDATE

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to provide an update on the burial capacity within Council's cemeteries.

2. Background

Quarterly updates were provided to the Operations Committee relating to the current burial capacity within Council owned cemeteries. At the previous update in January 2024, the burial capacity was estimated at 12 years. However this calculation used the three-year average of plots sold per year which included Carnmoney Cemetery. Carnmoney reached capacity over three years ago, and therefore, to ensure accuracy, it was not included in future calculations.

3. Current Position

The capacity as of 30th April 2024, for Council's Cemeteries and Gardens of Remembrance were detailed as follows:

Cemetery	No. of plots remaining	Current Average no. of plots sold PER YEAR (based on 3yr average)	Estimated remaining burial capacity (years)
Carnmoney	0	0	0
Ballyclare	568	100	5.7
Rashee	359	10	35.9
Sixmile	2097	80	26.2
Crumlin	410	15	27.3
TOTAL	3434	205	16.8

Garden of Remembrance Plots (for burial of ashes only)	No. of plots remaining	Average no. of plots sold (based on 3 year average)	Estimated remaining burial capacity (years)
Carnmoney	76	55	1.3
Ballyclare	128	2	64
Mallusk	15	0	15

Members were advised that issues had been reported in sections of Crumlin and Rashee which would reduce the capacity in these cemeteries. Officers had commenced a mapping review of the remaining capacity in all Council cemeteries (except Carnmoney) with a comprehensive update to be brought to a future Committee when complete.

Following questions from Members, the Director of Parks and Leisure confirmed that he would review the work previously completed on increasing burial capacity in the Urban Newtownabbey area and include in a future report to Committee.

Proposed by Councillor Foster
Seconded by Councillor McAuley and agreed that
the report be noted.

ACTION BY: Matt McDowell, Director of Parks and Leisure

Proposed by Councillor Foster
Seconded by Councillor McAuley and agreed

that the remainder of Committee business be taken in Open Session.

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

There being no further Committee business the Chairperson, on behalf of herself and Councillor Burbank, thanked the Committee for their support and attendance during their term as Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson and the meeting concluded at 8.07pm.

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.