

**Corporate Plan 2024-2028**

**Update Report**

**April to September 2025**

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## Welcome

As Interim Chief Executive, I am pleased to share with you our April to September 2025 update on the delivery of our Corporate Plan 2024-2028.

Over the past six months, we've continued to build on the strong foundations set in the first year of the plan. I'm proud of the progress we've made together, as a council, as partners, and as a community, to deliver real improvements across the borough.

While there is still much to do, it's encouraging to see how our collective efforts are already making a difference in people's daily lives. This update showcases the positive steps we've taken, the impact of our work so far, and our ongoing commitment to creating a better borough for everyone.

Thank you for your continued support and collaboration. I look forward to what we can achieve together in the months ahead as we maintain our momentum and keep delivering for our residents.

Valerie Watts  
Interim Chief Executive

## Our Vision is:

"Mid and East Antrim will be a strong, vibrant, safe and inclusive community, where people work together to improve the quality of life for all."

## Key Achievements

The upcoming points provide a snapshot of just a few of our activities throughout the period from April to September. These have helped to enhance community bonds, drive economic growth, and enrich the overall quality of life for everyone living, working, visiting and doing business in our borough.

- Gracehill was celebrated as Northern Ireland's first UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- 'Around the Town Music Festival' drew over 1,600 attendees across 22 sold-out events.
- 8 new 'Chatty Benches' installed across the borough.
- Refurbished 3G pitches opened in Greenisland and Sunnylands.
- Over 24,000 people engaged with the Community Arts and Heritage Programme.
- £11,000 awarded to local community groups by Council and Live Here Love Here.
- The 'Theatre in the Park' brought Pride and Prejudice to life for 800 ticket holders in Carrickfergus and Ballymena.
- Clough Cemetery upgrade added 276 new plots.
- 250 pupils took part in the Council's 'Dragons' Den'-style Enterprise Challenge in collaboration with Young Enterprise NI.
- Carrickfergus Marina earned the prestigious Five Gold Anchor Award.
- The 'Friends Goodwill Music Festival' attracted more than 600 visitors.
- 3 new Visitor Information notice boards installed in Ballymena and Carrickfergus.
- Bardic Drive Play Park reopened after major refurbishment.
- 19 newly qualified Tour Guides strengthened the borough's tourism sector.
- Standardised opening hours introduced across all Household Recycling Centres.
- VE Day events united over 2,900 attendees from across the borough.

## Our Plan

In striving to achieve our vision, we are delivering our Corporate Plan under the 4 key pillars of People, Place, Planet and Performance.

In the following sections, we explore each pillar in detail, outlining our ambitions, the strategies we are using to achieve them, the tangible outcomes our citizens, communities and businesses can expect to see, and our progress on delivering those outcomes.

## Performance Summary

To track our success in delivering our strategic objectives, we use a series of key performance indicators, referred to as measures.

For this reporting year, we identified 87 measures. Our performance against achieving these is summarised below:

- 90% have been achieved or are on track (78 of 87 measures)
- 5% are delayed but progressing (4 of 87 measures)
- 3% have not been achieved (3 of 87 measures)
- 2% are not yet available (2 of 87 measures)

Detailed performance updates, by pillar, are provided throughout the remainder of this report.

## People

### Our ambition:

By 2028, Mid and East Antrim will be a safe, inclusive, and welcoming borough, where diversity and cultural differences are celebrated, and communities live in peace. Our people will have equity of opportunity and support to achieve their full potential, in both a professional and personal capacity. Individuals and communities will be empowered to be independent and self-sustaining, enabling us to concentrate our efforts on those who need it most.

### To achieve this, we will:

- Work in partnership with employers and stakeholders to support those seeking employment, provide upskilling support, improve access to the labour market for those with disabilities, and promote skills pathways.
- Promote the benefits of offering apprenticeships and work experience opportunities to enhance skills development and bridge the gap between education and employment.
- Support and deliver opportunities for our citizens to improve their physical, mental, and emotional health.
- Explore ways to help vulnerable and marginalised individuals feel welcomed and supported in their local communities, removing feelings of isolation or exclusion.
- Lead by example to improve equality, accessibility, and inclusion across the borough by embedding it into everything we do.
- Work alongside partners to encourage good relations, enhance community pride, and reinforce a strong sense of belonging in our communities.
- Strengthen community safety, and boost public confidence, by forging collaborative partnerships that focus on proactive and comprehensive crime prevention.

Under this theme, we have 27 measures. Of these:

- 93% have been achieved or are on track. (25 of 27 measures)
- 7% are delayed but progressing. (2 of 27 measures)

## What you'll see

<b>Outcome 1</b>	Support those seeking employment and those looking to upskill via a range of employment and skills academies.
Measure 1	200 participants taking part in academies and skills programmes by 31 March 2026.
Status: Achieved	243 participants engaged during the reporting period.
Measure 2	100 participants gaining employment by 31 March 2026.
Status: On track	70 participants gained during the reporting period.
Measure 3	150 qualifications gained by 31 March 2026.
Status: Achieved	235 qualifications achieved during the reporting period.

<b>Outcome 2</b>	Promote skills and career pathways with employers and academia.
Measure 1	750 participants engaged in skills, employability, and careers outreach by 31 March 2026.
Status: On track	179 participants engaged during the reporting period. Engagement figures during the first half of the year reflect the smaller scale of events conducted during this period. As the year progresses, larger initiatives are scheduled, which are expected to result in increased participation.
Measure 2	600 youths engaged in MEA Science School by 31 March 2026.
Status: On track	238 youths engaged during the reporting period.
Measure 3	20 companies/stakeholders engaged in MEA Science School by 31 March 2026.
Status: On track	12 companies/stakeholders engaged during the reporting period.
Measure 4	500 youth engaged in Hospitality & Tourism careers by 31 March 2026.
Status: On track	386 youth engaged during the reporting period.
Measure 5	10 companies/stakeholders partnering in Hospitality & Tourism careers activity by 31 March 2026.
Status: Achieved	10 companies/stakeholders engaged during the reporting period.

<b>Outcome 3</b>	<b>Promote apprenticeships and work experience opportunities with schools and employers.</b>
Measure 1	150 participants engaged in NI Apprenticeship Week by 31 March 2026.
Status: On track	NI Apprenticeships Week is on track for delivery in February 2026.
Measure 2	20 work placements provided by schools and employers by 31 March 2026.
Status: On track	18 placements provided during the reporting period.

<b>Outcome 4</b>	<b>Offer internal work placements across the Council.</b>
Measure 1	15 work experience or placements by 31 March 2026.
Status: Delayed but progressing	3 placements provided during the reporting period, with additional placements being scheduled for the latter half of the year.

<b>Outcome 5</b>	<b>Deliver the MEActive programme.</b>
Measure 1	10,400 participants in the MEActive programme by 31 March 2026.
Status: On track	4,948 participants during the reporting period.
Measure 2	1,430 sessions delivered by 31 March 2026.
Status: On track	745 sessions delivered during the reporting period.

<b>Outcome 6</b>	<b>Encourage our citizens to spend more time outdoors and exploring nature.</b>
Measure 1	20 outdoor recreation events delivered by 31 March 2026.
Status: Achieved	38 events delivered during the reporting period, engaging 1,190 participants.

<b>Outcome 7</b>	<b>Deliver a series of events through the Community Arts and Heritage Programme.</b>
Measure 1	50,000 engagements with the Community Arts and Heritage Programme by 31 March 2026.
Status: On track	24,118 engagements delivered during the reporting period.

<b>Outcome 8</b>	<b>Progress initiatives that support the most vulnerable people across the borough.</b>
Measure 1	Deliver 85% of the PHA target for over-65 home safety checks by 31 March 2026.
Status: Achieved	150 checks completed during the reporting period, which equates to 127% of the PHA target.
Measure 2	Deliver 85% of the PHA target for energy efficiency support by 31 March 2026.
Status: Achieved	96 completed during the reporting period, which equates to 96% of the PHA target.
Measure 3	Support the Age Friendly Alliance to deliver Year 2 action plan by 31 March 2026.
Status: On track	The Age Friendly Alliance continues to meet quarterly. Of 21 Year 2 actions: 10 have been delivered, 10 are on target and 1 is delayed but progressing.
Measure 4	Deliver Positive Ageing Month by 31 October 2025.
Status: Achieved	Positive Ageing Month was successfully delivered during October. Events included guided walks, exhibitions, workshops, late-life hobby workshops, and pop-up play sessions.
Measure 5	Re-establish Poverty Action Group meetings and support initiatives by 31 March 2026.
Status: Delayed but progressing	Due to recent staffing transitions, the Poverty Action Group has been temporarily paused. It is expected to resume operations ahead of March 2026.

<b>Outcome 9</b>	<b>Improve accessibility and inclusion at Council's museums and theatres.</b>
Measure 1	Complete technology upgrades to audiovisual and interactive storytelling equipment in Mid-Antrim Museum and Carrickfergus Museum by 31 March 2026.
Status: On track	Following the completion of scoping, the process is now awaiting equipment delivery and installation.
Measure 2	Conduct accessibility audits and implement improvements at 3 locations by 31 March 2026.
Status: On track	Audits have been completed at Arthur Cottage and The Gobbins, with improvement works currently in progress. The audit for Andrew Jackson Cottage is scheduled to take place before the end of the calendar year.

<b>Outcome 10</b>	<b>Advance equality, diversity and inclusion initiatives across the Borough.</b>
Measure 1	Monitor and report on Year 3 progress of the 2023-2027 Equality Action Plan.
Status: On track	<p>The Council continues to make strong progress on delivering actions within its Equality Action Plan. An EDI Network meeting was held in October to review progress, and an update was provided to the Inclusion &amp; Equality Sub-Committee in November.</p> <p>Several actions are now fully embedded or are on track for completion, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Issuing regular communications to consultees to promote Council initiatives and training opportunities.</li> <li>• Council's Assisted and Additional Capacity Policy has been fully approved and is now operational.</li> <li>• Improved age-friendly support through regular e-zines, active Age Friendly Alliance task groups, and the launch of a best-practice promotional video.</li> <li>• To deliver on our commitments under the Mental Health Charter, Council's induction training is being updated with a new Equality and Diversity video.</li> <li>• Engagement with special educational needs schools through the development of a new Placement Insights programme for post-16 pupils.</li> <li>• Accessibility improvements for tourism, including plans for British Sign Language (BSL) and dementia-friendly tours at The Gobbins.</li> <li>• Delivery of the MEAqua Little Stars pan-disability swimming programme.</li> </ul>
Measure 2	Monitor and report on Year 3 progress of the 2023-2027 Disability Action Plan.
Status: On track	<p>The Council continues to make strong progress on delivering actions within its Disability Action Plan. An EDI Network meeting was held in October to review progress, and an update was provided to the Inclusion &amp; Equality Sub-Committee in November.</p> <p>Inclusive programmes and activities continue across the borough, including:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PAN Disability swim lessons, MEActive physical activity sessions, and junior and adult disability clubs at all 3 leisure centres.</li> <li>• Accessibility initiatives at town centre events.</li> <li>• Seasonal bike hire for people with disabilities.</li> <li>• It is now standard practice for major Council events to include sensory support and “relaxed” sessions.</li> <li>• Engagement with young people and employers through Graduate Connections, Start-Out 19-24, Work Connections, Insight Youth, and the Placement Insights programme for post-16 pupils, supporting skills development, work experience, and employment opportunities.</li> <li>• Autism awareness and inclusive training for staff and the community, alongside promotion of JAM (Just a Minute) cards and support for autistic families.</li> <li>• Tourism and cultural accessibility improvements, including the Access for All booking scheme, enhancements at visitor attractions such as The Gobbins and Arthur Cottage, and accessible theatre performances.</li> <li>• Continued implementation of mental health support commitments, accessibility audits, and policies to promote inclusive recruitment, placements, and engagement for people with disabilities.</li> </ul>
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<b>Outcome 11</b>	
<b>Measure 1</b>	Deliver the 2025/26 MEABC Good Relations Action Plan.
Status: On track	<p>The Common Good Programme, in partnership with the Policing and Community Safety Partnership (PCSP) and YMCA, continues successfully.</p> <p>Despite recent challenges, the Integrate Programme remains active in building capacity within the Roma community.</p> <p>Good Relations Week 2025, delivered under the theme ‘Connect’, highlighted the interdependence of People, Planet, and Prosperity in the pursuit of Peace. Coordinated regionally by the Community Relations Council and supported by The Executive Office, the programme featured a diverse range of events including workshops, lectures, exhibitions, and digital content.</p>

	The Celebrating Culture Safely programme's funded activities concluded with 10 beacons lit across the borough, while the Cultural Celebrations Working Group continues its multi-agency work to promote safe and respectful cultural practices.
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Outcome 12	
Measure 1	Deliver the 2025/26 MEABC PCSP Action Plan.
Status: On track	<p>The Council continues to make strong progress in delivering the PCSP Action Plan 2025/26.</p> <p>5 private meetings and 1 public meeting have been held, new members appointed, and an annual report completed. Communications activity has increased, with 90 social media posts reaching over 17,200 people and a 2.25% rise in followers.</p> <p>Across key programmes, delivery remains strong: 55 clients supported through the Domestic Abuse programme and 230 older people engaged, with 98-100% reporting feeling safer. The Youth at Risk initiative has delivered 160 activities engaging 684 young people, with 31% showing attitudinal change, while the Drug and Alcohol programme supported 63 participants, all reporting improved awareness. Community Safety Wardens carried out 393 patrols and engaged 177 residents, and the Four-Tier Security Scheme assisted 31 victims, all feeling safer as a result.</p> <p>The Multiagency Support Hub has met 6 times, supporting 9 individuals, and local response projects have achieved 98% satisfaction and 52% improved attitudes toward anti-social behaviour.</p> <p>Road safety education has reached schools across the borough, and community engagement continues to strengthen through 25 Neighbourhood Watch schemes covering over 2,000 households.</p>
Measure 2	Deliver the Ending Violence Against Women and Girls programme of initiatives by 31 March 2026.
Status: On track	<p>The Council continues to make strong progress in delivering its Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG) Programme, aimed at preventing abuse, promoting equality, and creating safer communities for women and girls.</p> <p>The EVAWG Change Fund has awarded £100,000 to 5 local organisations for projects focused on preventing violence against</p>

women and girls. These are being delivered across schools, community, sporting and youth organisations, covering topics such as healthy relationships, consent, digital safety, and challenging harmful norms, alongside front-line and therapeutic support.

Training initiatives are also helping ensure a greater understanding of violence against women and girls and how to prevent it. The 'Power to Change' and 'Be the Change' programmes are being rolled out across Council leisure centres, with staff trained to recognise, challenge, and respond to abuse or harassment. Expansion to the private leisure sector is planned.

Additional training will be delivered this year to Community Groups on why these conversations matter, and to the Health Trust on coercive control and mental health. The Northern Domestic and Sexual Violence Partnership website will also be updated with an online toolkit and signposting resources.

Internally, the Council remains on track to maintain Platinum-level accreditation for the Workplace Charter on Domestic Violence by March 2026.

During September and October, 58 staff completed training covering domestic abuse awareness, creating safe workplaces, and supporting employees. Training will next be extended to Elected Members, reinforcing leadership commitment. The Council's re-accreditation assessment is scheduled for November.

## Place

### Our ambition:

By 2028, Mid and East Antrim will be widely recognised as an ideal place to live, visit, work and do business. We will have vibrant, clean, and harmonious shared spaces, designed to showcase our natural, and built, heritage and assets. Our tourism offering will be filled with diversity and richness of culture, history, and heritage, attracting visitors on a global scale. Businesses, new and existing, will have the required support to grow and prosper, leading to an economically innovative and sustainable borough, offering stable employment, inclusive growth and an ideal place to invest.

### To achieve this, we will:

- Support the development of a sustainable, dynamic, and prosperous local economy that helps businesses to grow, and promote the borough as an ideal place to do business for both new and existing companies.
- Help drive sustainable economic growth by promoting the borough as a leading visitor and cultural destination, utilising our natural, and built, heritage and assets.
- Support our towns and villages to help regenerate and stimulate economic activity, while protecting and conserving our natural and historic landscape.
- Enhance and expand our amenities, parks, open spaces, and built heritage, making sure they meet the needs of all, while encouraging their respectful and mindful use.
- Conduct Council business in a way that encourages economic prosperity within the borough.

Under this theme, we have 30 measures. Of these:

- 90% have been achieved or are on track (27 of 30 measures)
- 3.3% are delayed but progressing (1 of 30 measures)
- 3.3% were not achieved (1 of 30 measures)
- 3.3% does not yet have available data (1 of 30 measures)

## What you'll see

<b>Outcome 1</b>	<b>Deliver the Go Succeed service.</b>
Measure 1	240 participants supported via Engage and Foundation by 31 March 2026.
Status: On track	204 participants supported during the reporting period.
Measure 2	97 businesses supported to Grow and Scale by 31 March 2026.
Status: On track	56 businesses supported during the reporting period.
Measure 3	165 jobs promoted/created by 31 March 2026. (Engage, Foundation & Enterprise Pathways and Growth/Scale)
Status: On track	88.5 jobs promoted during the reporting period. 60 via Engage and Foundation and 28.5 via Growth and Scaling. This figure is subject to verification.

<b>Outcome 2</b>	<b>Develop and deliver new business growth programmes.</b>
Measure 1	3 new tailored programmes delivered by 31 March 2026.
Status: Achieved	4 programmes of support developed during the reporting period. These include Green to Grow, Digital Edge, INI Supply Chain series, and Digital Transformation Flexible Fund Workshops.
Measure 2	150 businesses supported by 31 March 2026.
Status: On track	67 businesses supported during the reporting period.

<b>Outcome 3</b>	<b>Promote entrepreneurship, creative thinking and innovation to encourage more residents of all ages to consider enterprise as a future career pathway.</b>
Measure 1	825 participants engaging in enterprise outreach activities by 31 March 2026.
Status: On track	440 participants engaged during the reporting period.
Measure 2	25 economically inactive participants engaged in pre-enterprise activity by 31 March 2026.
Status: On track	17 participants engaged during the reporting period.
Measure 3	5 economically inactive participants starting a business by 31 March 2026.
Status: Data not available yet	Data is not yet available and will be provided in our next update.

<b>Outcome 4</b>	<b>Deliver a year-round programme of vibrant public events.</b>
Measure 1	Attract 33,000 attendees to events by 31 March 2026.
Status: On track	10,850 attendees recorded during the reporting period, across events including Broadway Beats, Evening Concert, Sunday Funday, Summer Serenades, Carrick Coastal Vibes, Irish Guards, and more.

<b>Outcome 5</b>	<b>Sustain a high level of attendance in the Council's commercial Arts and Culture programme.</b>
Measure 1	Attract 15,000 attendees to the Braid Theatre Programme by 31 March 2026.
Status: On track	8,247 attendees during the reporting period.

<b>Outcome 6</b>	<b>Drive footfall to Strategic Visitor Attractions.</b>
Measure 1	60,000 visitors to be welcomed annually (56,000 to Carrickfergus Castle and 4,000 to Ancestral Cottages/US Rangers Museum) by 31 March 2026.
Status: On track	53,848 visitors recorded during the reporting period. (50,538 at Carrickfergus Castle and 3,310 at Ancestral Cottages/US Rangers Museum).

<b>Outcome 7</b>	<b>Progress the Revitalise Town Centre Programme.</b>
Measure 1	Deliver the Shopfront Improvement Scheme by 31 March 2027.
Status: On track	Funding has been secured and an open call for applications was launched on 13 October.
Measure 2	Festive lighting upgrades installed in Ballymena, Carrickfergus and Larne by 31 November 2025.
Status: On track	On track for delivery.
Measure 3	Deliver the Christmas lighting trail in Shaftsbury Park, Carrickfergus, in December 2025.
Status: On track	On track for delivery in December.
Measure 4	Deliver 3 street art projects (Ballymena - landmark features, Carrickfergus - Youth Engagement Programme, and Larne - Street Art Jam) by 31 March 2026.

Status: On track	The Larne project was delivered in August. Carrickfergus is scheduled for delivery mid-February 2026, and Larne by 31 March 2026.
Measure 5	Install a Pop-up Park in Larne by 31 March 2026.
Status: On track	An architect has been appointed. The community consultation is underway and is due to close at the end of November.
Measure 6	Complete Dunluce Street clean-up (renew hoardings, paint facades etc.) by 31 March 2026.
Status: On track	Funding has been secured, and the procurement documents are currently being drafted for contractors. Subject to funder approval, this will go to tender in the coming months.

<b>Outcome 8</b>	<b>Develop a strategy to address Town Centre dereliction and vacancy to enable programme start in 2026/27.</b>
Measure 1	Programme designed and application for funding submitted to DfC by 31 March 2026.
Status: On track	The business survey has been completed, the results analysed, and the findings report drafted. Engagement with DfC on programme design has begun.

<b>Outcome 9</b>	<b>Deliver Public Realm Improvements</b>
Measure 1	Progress actions to complete public realm works at Ballymena Civic Spaces by 31 March 2026.
Status: On track	The procurement for a design team has been completed and contract awarded.
Measure 2	Progress actions to complete public realm works at Braid River Walkway by 31 March 2026.
Status: On track	The procurement for a design team has been completed and contract awarded to prepare a feasibility study and concept designs.
Measure 3	Complete design for Phase 2 of Point Street Public Realm Scheme Larne by 31 March 2026.
Status: Delayed but progressing	This project is facing delays which could impact the completion date; however, discussions are ongoing with DfC and DfI regarding scheme design and it is hoped that a design team will be in place by early 2026.

<b>Outcome 10</b>	<b>Deliver Town Centre events to increase footfall and attract visitors to the borough.</b>
Measure 1	15 events or activities held within Ballymena, Carrickfergus, and Larne town centres by 31 March 2026.
Status: Achieved	21 events were delivered during the reporting period, including Artisan Markets, Cirque de Carrickfergus, Broadway Summer Carnival, Feel Good Friday sessions, Ballymena Summer Carnival, Food Safety training, and Ballymena Fall Fashion Show. High participation and strong footfall were reported across all 3 towns.

<b>Outcome 11</b>	<b>Progress the Cullybackey to Galgorm Greenway project.</b>
Measure 1	Contractors appointed and on-site by 31 March 2026.
Status: On track	The Business Case has been completed, and approval is expected by year-end.

<b>Outcome 12</b>	<b>Progress Carnfunnock Country Park project.</b>
Measure 1	Contractors appointed and on-site by 31 March 2026.
Status: On track	Clearance of the site has commenced.

<b>Outcome 13</b>	<b>Deliver the Play Park Investment Framework.</b>
Measure 1	3 play park refurbishments delivered by 31 March 2026.
Status: Achieved	3 playparks have been refurbished. These include Fisherwick in Ballymena, Oakfield in Carrickfergus, and Bardic Drive in Larne.

<b>Outcome 14</b>	<b>Efficient payment processes and reduce bad debt.</b>
Measure 1	A minimum of 60% of payments made within 10 working days.
Status: Achieved	During the reporting period 62% of payments were made within 10 working days.
Measure 2	A minimum of 80% of payments made within 30 calendar days.
Status: Achieved	During the reporting period 94% of payments were made within 30 calendar days.

<b>Outcome 15</b>	<b>Achieve statutory Planning Service targets.</b>
Measure 1	Major planning applications processed within an average of 30 weeks by 31 March 2026.
Status: Not achieved	<p>This indicator is based on the median time taken to process a major planning application to a 'decision' or 'withdrawal'. The latest verified data is for the period April to June 2025, when an average processing time of 115.8 weeks was recorded.</p> <p>During this period, no applications were decided, and 1 application was withdrawn, leading to an irregular result. This particularly complex application was first submitted in 2022, and before withdrawal, was significantly delayed due to external factors.</p> <p>Data up to September 2025 represents a more accurate and positive picture of processing time performance. This result will be published in our next update, following verification.</p>
Measure 2	Local planning applications processed within an average of 15 weeks by 31 March 2026.
Status: Achieved	<p>The latest available data is for the period April to June 2025, when a median processing time of 7 weeks was recorded.</p> <p>During this time, 143 applications were decided and 9 were withdrawn. 80.3% of cases were processed within 15 weeks, against a Northern Ireland council average of 42.9%. Data up to September 2025 will be published in our next update, when verified.</p>
Measure 3	At least 70% of enforcement cases concluded within 39 weeks by 31 March 2026.
Status: Achieved	The latest available data is for the period April to June 2025, when 46 cases concluded. During this time, 71.7% concluded within 39 weeks, against a Northern Ireland Council average of 73.2%. Data up to September 2025 will be published in our next update, when verified.

## Planet

### Our ambition:

By 2028, Mid and East Antrim will be at the forefront of balancing progression with sustainability. We will be an emerging NI hub for innovation, environmental and cleantech skills training, and green economic growth. Our commitment to achieving net-zero emissions by 2050 will have set a standard for excellence across the region. Our dedication to safeguarding our natural and built heritage and preserving the environment through climate change mitigation and adaptation, will ensure a thriving and resilient future for generations to come.

### To achieve this, we will:

- Empower, educate, and work in partnership with our citizens, communities, and businesses, to progress the borough towards net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.
- Support local communities to create an environmentally resilient and sustainable borough that is equipped to deal with emergency situations, including climate adaptation.
- Protect our natural environment, enhance biodiversity, and retain or increase Council's current levels of carbon capture.
- Lead by example and reduce the impact of our own operations to progress our organisation towards net-zero emissions by 2040, by embedding sustainability and climate adaptation into all decision-making.
- Deliver an effective and efficient waste service that supports citizens, communities, and businesses to reduce waste and promote a more circular economy.

Under this theme, we have 16 measures. Of these:

- 94% have been achieved or are on track (15 of 16 measures)
- 6% does not yet have available data (1 of 16 measures)

## What you'll see

<b>Outcome 1</b>	Support local businesses to be more sustainable through MEANZ and other Cleantech projects and initiatives.
<b>Measure 1</b>	10 businesses engaged in net zero activities by 31 March 2026.
<b>Status:</b> Achieved	12 businesses engaged during the reporting period.

<b>Outcome 2</b>	Deliver programmes to support local communities and reduce the amount of materials going to landfill.
<b>Measure 1</b>	Deliver 5 circular economy initiatives by 31 March 2026 (MEA School Uniform Scheme, MEA Christmas Toy Container, Community Fridges, Community RePaint Scheme, and the Spectacle Re-use Scheme).
<b>Status:</b> On track	<p>Delivery of all 5 initiatives is progressing well.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MEA School Uniform Scheme: Successfully delivered during Summer 2025.</li> <li>Community Fridges: Ongoing delivery between Climate and Parks teams; volunteer-led.</li> <li>Community RePaint Scheme: Operating through the 3 main Household Recycling Centres.</li> <li>Spectacle Re-use Scheme: Apr-Sep 2025 collected 4 x 240L bins of reading glasses.</li> <li>MEA Christmas Toy Scheme: Delivery scheduled for 27 Oct-12 Dec 2025.</li> </ul>

<b>Outcome 3</b>	Ensure continuous improvement in emergency preparedness and community resilience.
<b>Measure 1</b>	Review and test the Council's Emergency Plan, incorporating recent severe weather learnings by 31 March 2026.
<b>Status:</b> On track	Debriefs from Storms Eowyn and Darragh have been completed, with recommendations presented to Council's Senior Management Team. A testing and training timetable has been drafted, and procurement is underway to engage external support for the plan, review and test exercise.
<b>Measure 2</b>	Deliver 4 local workshops to build community resilience by 31 March 2026.
<b>Status:</b> On track	The process of procuring an external contractor to design and deliver community workshops has been initiated.

<b>Outcome 4</b>	Increased protection and expansion of the borough's tree population through the delivery of strategic greening initiatives.
Measure 1	Develop 3 tree nurseries and/or community gardens by 31 March 2026.
Status: Achieved	3 nurseries developed. These include Ecos in Ballymena (in collaboration with Friends of Ecos), Jubilee Farm in Larne and Groundbreakers Doury Road in Ballymena.
Measure 2	Implement a comprehensive Tree Strategy by 31 March 2026.
Status: On track	The draft strategy has been developed and is scheduled for public consultation before the end of the calendar year.

<b>Outcome 5</b>	We will reduce our environmental impact and improve sustainability by achieving environmental targets and accreditations.
Measure 1	Secure continued accreditation to ISO14001 by 30 September 2025.
Status: Achieved	Accreditation secured and audit passed with no non-conformances or observations.
Measure 2	At least Gold Level in the Business in the Community NI (BITCNI) Environmental Benchmarking Survey (EBS).
Status: Data not available yet	The outcome of the Survey will not be known until the latter part of the year.

<b>Outcome 6</b>	Operate more sustainably through reduced carbon emissions, lower energy consumption, and increased use of renewable energy.
Measure 1	3 LED lighting upgrade projects implemented in Council buildings by 31 March 2026.
Status: Achieved	4 LED lighting upgrades completed. These include Ballymena Showgrounds, Carrickfergus Civic Centre, Larne Leisure Centre and Carrickfergus Leisure Centre pool area. There are more projects planned for the latter half of the year.
Measure 2	3 Solar PV arrays installed at suitable Council facilities by 31 March 2026.
Status: On track	Procurement is underway to deliver People's Park. Installations are scheduled before the end of the financial year. Waveney Road has been installed, and Tully Waste Transfer Station is due for completion by December 2025.

Measure 3	3 battery energy storage systems installed to complement new PV installations by 31 March 2026.
Status: Achieved	Battery energy storage system upgrades completed for Springwell Street Carpark (Ballymena), Sullatober Household Recycling Centre, and Portglenone Marina.
Measure 4	12 EV charging stations installed by 31 March 2026, providing a total of 24 EV charge points across the borough.
Status: On track	Installation is scheduled with Charge Point Operator, with completion expected by 31 March 2026.

Outcome 7	<b>Implementation of the fully co-mingled dry recycling collection service to support improved recycling rates and operational efficiency.</b>
Measure 1	New dry recycling collection service launched by 1 November 2026.
Status: On track	<p>The public consultation has been completed and assessed, and is overwhelmingly in favour of the collection arrangements proposed.</p> <p>The financial information presented to Elected Members has been independently checked and proven to be accurate.</p> <p>An assessment has been independently undertaken, which confirmed that the co-mingled collection arrangements planned are the most Technically, Environmentally, Economic and Practical (TEEP) way for the Council to achieve statutory recycling rates.</p>

Outcome 8	<b>Compliance with all statutory recycling and landfill targets.</b>
Measure 1	Ensure at least 50% of household waste collected is sent for recycling by 31 March 2026.
Status: On track	Latest available data is for the period April to June 2025, when 57.4% was recorded. Data up September 2025 will be published in our next update.
Measure 2	Ensure no more than 16,387 tonnes of biodegradable municipal waste is sent to landfill by 31 March 2026.
Status: On track	A new contract for processing waste means waste is no longer sent directly to landfill. Latest available data is for the period April to June 2025, when 259 tonnes were recorded. For comparison, 3,861 tonnes were recorded in the same period last year. Data up to September 2025 will be published in our next update.

Measure 3	Ensure collected municipal waste arisings does not exceed 79,500 tonnes by 31 March 2026.
Status: On track	Latest available data is for the period April to June 2025, when 20,042 tonnes were recorded. Data up to September 2025 will be published in our next update.

## Performance

### Our ambition:

By 2028, we will operate as a single entity, fully embracing the vision of the Reorganisation of Public Administration (RPA 2015). We will be a sustainable, customer focused organisation and employer of choice, attracting and retaining the right people, with the right skills, to deliver our vision for the borough. We will provide value for money services by building solid foundations, learning from our mistakes, and instilling sound governance arrangements.

### To achieve this, we will:

- Redesign the organisation to work more effectively and efficiently, ensuring financial competence and resilience, delivering social value, and offering good value for money services in a sustainable manner.
- Develop our key support services to help us achieve our goals, underpinning and enabling us to operate effectively and meet our core, statutory and regulatory obligations.
- Continue to work alongside our partners to progress the delivery of the Community Plan and other Council strategies, sharing knowledge, skills, and best practice, to create synergy and influence decision-making to achieve the best outcomes for the borough at an affordable cost.
- Empower and equip our staff, through comprehensive skill development initiatives, fostering a culture of continuous learning, innovation, and growth, ultimately enhancing individual and organisational capabilities.
- Prioritise employee health and wellbeing, encompassing physical, mental, and emotional health, creating an environment where everyone feels valued, motivated and confident, enabling them to thrive personally and professionally.
- Invest in our Elected Members, providing them with the required skills and knowledge to effectively govern.
- Include stakeholders in our decision-making processes through consultation, communication, and engagement, in order to increase satisfaction levels.

Under this theme, we have 14 measures. Of these:

- 79% have been achieved or are on track. (11 of 14 measures)
- 7% are delayed but progressing. (1 of 14 measures)
- 14% were not achieved. (2 of 14 measures)

## What you'll see

<b>Outcome 1</b>	Ensure high-quality, efficient, and sustainable service delivery through smart use of technology and strong financial stewardship.
<b>Measure 1</b>	Utilise Council technologies to improve service delivery.
<b>Status:</b> On track	<p>We continue to make strong progress on a range of digital improvement programmes designed to enhance operations, streamline services, and strengthen data management.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Document Management - A new digital document system has been successfully set up and is now being tested to ensure it meets the needs of staff and services across the Council.</li> <li>• Inventory Management - Staff from across departments have completed training and system testing. The upgraded system will make it easier to manage stock, purchasing, and reporting, supporting more efficient service delivery.</li> <li>• Procurement - Final testing has been completed, and the Council will soon begin introducing new tools to make procurement more transparent, efficient, and accessible for suppliers.</li> <li>• Accounts Payable - Work is underway to trial new digital tools that will improve how suppliers interact with the Council, helping to speed up payments and reduce paperwork.</li> <li>• HR &amp; Payroll - The Council's new HR and payroll system is being configured and tested. Once implemented, it will modernise workforce management, improve accuracy, and enhance the employee experience.</li> <li>• Access Management - Training has been completed on a new system for managing user access and permissions. This will help strengthen data security and ensure staff have the right level of access for their roles.</li> </ul>
<b>Measure 2</b>	Ensure robust budget arrangements and sound financial management.
<b>Status:</b> On track	The Council continues to deliver robust budgetary control and sound financial management practices. Regular management accounts are produced to monitor expenditure against approved budgets, providing clear visibility of financial performance and supporting informed decision-making.

	<p>Monthly review meetings with senior managers ensure variances are addressed promptly and that appropriate corrective actions are implemented where required.</p> <p>Preparation for the forthcoming budget cycle is underway, supported by updated budget templates and enhanced training for budget holders. Recent training sessions have strengthened financial capability across the organisation, with further development opportunities planned to reinforce accountability and alignment with the Council's financial objectives.</p>
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<b>Outcome 2</b>	<b>Ensure statutory compliance and transparency of the Council.</b>
Measure 1	100% of information requests under FOI and/or EIR to be processed within the statutory timeframe of 20 working days.
Status: Not achieved	During the reporting period 97% of requests were processed within the statutory timeframe. Delays in responding to information requests are primarily due to the complexity of certain cases and the significant resources they require. Work is ongoing to improve response times and ensure that requests are prioritised appropriately. Despite these challenges, performance continues to meet the Information Commissioner's Office regulatory expectation of 95%.
Measure 2	100% of subject access requests processed within the statutory timeframe of one calendar month.
Status: Not achieved	During the reporting period 95% of requests were processed within the statutory timeframe. Delays in responding to information requests are primarily due to the complexity of certain cases and the significant resources they require. Work is ongoing to improve response times and ensure that requests are prioritised appropriately. Despite these challenges, performance continues to meet the Information Commissioner's Office regulatory expectation of 95%.
Measure 3	0% of Information Commissioner's Officer (ICO) Decision Notices overturning Council's FIR/EIR decisions.
Status: On track	None of Council's decisions were overturned by the ICO during the reporting period.

<b>Outcome 3</b>	<b>Work in partnership with various community, business and tourism stakeholders to progress various initiatives and support programmes.</b>
<b>Measure 1</b>	Embed the Council's new Strategic Partnership function, with work plans developed, by 31 March 2026.
<b>Status:</b> <b>On track</b>	Initial research and mapping exercises have taken place. These have included meetings with other Councils, NILGA and internal departmental meetings. A report is being put together to collate findings and look at potential ways to take the work forward.

<b>Outcome 4</b>	<b>Build organisational capability through targeted learning and development.</b>
<b>Measure 1</b>	1.5 days to be spent on employee learning and development by 31 March 2026.
<b>Status:</b> <b>On track</b>	During the reporting period 0.80 days were provided.
<b>Measure 2</b>	100 training courses to be delivered to staff by 31 March 2026.
<b>Status:</b> <b>Achieved</b>	During the reporting period 199 courses were delivered.

<b>Outcome 5</b>	<b>Support the health, wellbeing, and resilience of the staff.</b>
<b>Measure 1</b>	2 health and wellbeing initiatives delivered for staff by 31 March 2026.
<b>Status:</b> <b>Achieved</b>	Several campaigns have been circulated to staff, including Men's Health Week, Northern Ireland Alcohol Awareness Week, and ongoing promotion of the Employee Assistance Programme.  Regular employee communications continue to promote wellbeing, covering topics such as World Suicide Prevention Day, mental health awareness, and support for employees and families during exam results.  Plans for further staff health and wellbeing initiatives are being developed for delivery during the current year, alongside an Inclusion and Wellbeing Action Plan.
<b>Measure 2</b>	Absence levels do not exceed 15 days per annum per FTE.
<b>Status:</b> <b>On track</b>	During the reporting period 6.63 days per FTE were recorded.

<b>Outcome 6</b>		<b>Learning and Development for Elected Members</b>
Measure 1		15 hours of training per annum to be offered to Elected Members by 31 March 2026.
Status: Delayed but progressing		During the reporting period 3.75 hours of training were delivered. Resource constraints in the early part of the year made progress challenging; however, staffing levels have now stabilised, and significant progress has since been made towards achieving the annual target. The Councillor Development Sub-Committee has conducted review and planning meetings, completed a comprehensive Training Needs Analysis, and is now developing a structured training programme to ensure delivery of the remaining hours within the financial year.
Measure 2		Work towards the NILGA Councillor Development Charter with the aim of securing it by 31 March 2027.
Status: On track		Progress has been made, and work is ongoing. Meetings of the Elected Member Development Charter Sub-Committee have taken place from October onwards.

<b>Outcome 7</b>		<b>Strengthen the Council's Customer Service function.</b>
Measure 1		Finalise and seek approval of the Customer & Digital Strategy by 31 March 2026.
Status: On track		Work is progressing well toward finalising the Customer & Digital Strategy. An initial framework has been developed and is now being actively built upon to shape a comprehensive and forward-looking strategy.

<b>Outcome 8</b>		<b>Strengthen Council-wide Consultation and Engagement.</b>
Measure 1		Finalise and seek approval of the new Consultation & Engagement Strategy by 31 March 2026.
Status: On track		Work is underway to develop the Consultation & Engagement Strategy. We have successfully appointed an Inclusion & Equality Manager and a Consultation & Engagement Officer, who are both leading on the development of this strategy.

## Get Involved

It is really important that Mid and East Antrim citizens' voices are heard, and that they have the opportunity to play their part in shaping local democracy.

We want your input, views and feedback as we continue our transformation, and as we work to deliver the very best public services, including waste collections, recycling, leisure services, business support, parks, funding, economic development, health and wellbeing, and much more.

We are committed to championing openness and transparency, and invite members of the public who live, work or study in the borough to put their questions directly to Elected Members and officers.

To submit a question to the Council, please complete the short form at:

[www.midandeastantrim.gov.uk/publicquestions](http://www.midandeastantrim.gov.uk/publicquestions)

Suggestions and comments on areas where we can enhance our services can also be submitted directly to the Performance and Improvement Team at any time throughout the year, via any of the following methods:

By email: [performance@midandeastantrim.gov.uk](mailto:performance@midandeastantrim.gov.uk)

By telephone: 0300 1245 000

By post:  
Policy & Performance Team  
Mid and East Antrim Borough Council  
1-29 Bridge Street  
Ballymena  
BT43 5EJ

## **Closing Remarks**

As we reflect on the past six months, I am incredibly proud of the collective achievements of everyone involved in delivering our Corporate Plan.

Each milestone brings us closer to realising our vision of improving the quality of life for all who live, work, and visit Mid and East Antrim. The dedication and commitment shown by our teams have been exemplary, and the positive impact on our borough is clear to see.

Looking ahead, we remain focused on furthering this journey. We hope you will continue to work with us as we pursue the ambitious objectives set out in our Corporate Plan.

Together, we can ensure that Mid and East Antrim remains a vibrant and thriving place for everyone.

Thank you for your ongoing support.

Valerie Watts  
Interim Chief Executive

**For further information contact us at:**

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Visit our website: [www.midandeastantrim.gov.uk](http://www.midandeastantrim.gov.uk)

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