



# Performance Self-Assessment Report 2019/2020



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# 1.0 Introduction

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Part 12 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 (The Act) put in place a framework to support continuous improvement in the delivery of council services within the context of strategic objectives and issues that are important to those who receive those services.

## The Act specifies that Council must make arrangements for the publication of:

a) Its assessment of its performance during a financial year:

- In discharging its duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement.
- In meeting its improvement objectives which are applicable to that year.
- By reference to the statutory performance indicators and self-imposed indicators which are applicable to that year.

b) Its assessment of its performance in exercising its functions during a financial year as compared with:

- Its performance in previous financial years.
- So far as is reasonably practicable, the performance during that and previous financial years of other councils.

The purpose of this Self-Assessment Report is to provide an overview of Mid and East Antrim Borough Council's assessment of its performance for the year 2019/20.



# 2.0 Arrangements to Secure Continuous Improvement

## 2.1 Performance Management Framework

Mid and East Antrim Borough Council introduced a Performance Management Framework during 2017/18 to drive performance management and continuous improvement within the organisation.

The Framework diagram was revised during the development of Council’s new Corporate Plan for 2019-2023 and is provided in Diagram 1 below.

The diagram illustrates that performance is measured and managed at all levels within the organisation. The framework links directly to the corporate planning processes in place within Mid and East Antrim Borough Council. It demonstrates how strategic objectives within the Community Plan and Corporate Plan are cascaded through annual business plans and ultimately to every employee’s work objectives.

Council’s Performance Planning Cycle is outlined in the table in Appendix 1 which describes the timelines for managing performance throughout the year.

The ongoing review and reporting schedule for the various plans is discussed within the Performance Management Framework document. A copy of the Framework is available on request.






Diagram 1: Mid and East Antrim Borough Council - Performance Management Framework

 Plan	 Purpose
Community Plan	The Community Plan was launched on 1 April 2017 and sets a 15-year vision for Mid and East Antrim Borough. The Community Plan is led by Council in partnership with the public, voluntary and private sectors.
Corporate Plan	A new Corporate Plan for the 2019-2023 period was launched in July 2019 and includes six strategic themes that are aligned with the Community Plan.
Performance Improvement Plan	A Performance Improvement Plan is produced annually and includes improvement objectives that align with the key priorities of both the Community Plan and Corporate Plan.
Annual Business Plans	Annual Business Plans are developed to set the direction for all Directorates. They define outcomes for the year and include key performance indicators to monitor and drive performance improvement.
Employee Personal Development Plans	Personal Development Planning (PDP) ensures that all staff objectives and development activities are fully aligned with the Business Plans, and ultimately the Corporate Plan and Community Plan.

The table above provides a brief summary of the plans illustrated within the Performance Management Framework

## 2.2 Governance Arrangements

Within Mid and East Antrim Borough Council, the following governance arrangements were established to manage performance during 2019/20 for the Corporate Plan, Performance Improvement Plan and Annual Business Plans.

 Plan	 Council / Committee	 Reporting Cycle
Corporate Plan	SMT	6-monthly
	Council	6-monthly
Performance Improvement Plan	SMT	Quarterly
	Audit & Scrutiny	Quarterly
Directorate Business Plans	SMT	Quarterly
	Audit & Scrutiny	6-monthly

These governance arrangements facilitate and support transparency, accountability and improvement across the Council.

## 2.3 Mid and East Antrim Borough Council's Audit & Scrutiny Committee

The Terms of Reference for Mid and East Antrim Borough Council's Audit & Scrutiny Committee sets out the Committee's overall purpose and objectives.

The Committee has two key functions of 'Audit' and 'Scrutiny'. The area of performance improvement falls within the 'Scrutiny' function, and includes the monitoring, assessment and review of the following:

- Business Plan performance
- Service Risk Registers
- Business Improvement & Efficiency Strategy progression
- Performance Improvement Plan performance
- Council Transformation

During 2019/20, the Committee met 3 times during the year in August, December and February 2020.

Meetings were scheduled for April and June 2020; however, due to the COVID-19 pandemic these were cancelled.



## 2.4 The Performance Improvement Plan

We demonstrate our commitment to continuous improvement in the delivery of our services through our Performance Improvement Plan. On 30 June each year, Council publishes a new plan, which sets out how we will deliver improvement in at least one of the seven improvement areas, as stipulated in the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014:



Strategic effectiveness



Service quality



Service availability



Efficiency



Fairness



Sustainability



Innovation

The plan sets out our improvement objectives for the year. It outlines what we hope to achieve, how we plan to do it and how our citizens will be better off as a result.

Our improvement objectives are developed through a process of collaboration, engagement and research. The development process commences in the autumn, with a series of workshops with senior managers and Elected Members from across Council.

The Performance Improvement Plan for 2019/20 was developed alongside the new Corporate Plan 2019-2023 which was launched in July 2019. Further details of the Corporate Plan are provided in section 4.

Section 3 of this Self-Assessment Report details our specific improvement objectives for the year 2019/20, and the progress made against these.

It also looks back at previous objectives that were not fully completed, and provides updates on the progress made with them. Progress update reports were scrutinised by the Audit & Scrutiny Committee on a quarterly basis.

The year-end progress report was scrutinised on 18 August 2020, and can be viewed at: [www.midandeantrim.gov.uk/PIP](http://www.midandeantrim.gov.uk/PIP)



# COVID-19 Response and Arrangements

In March 2020, a global pandemic was declared and the UK Government announced measures to tackle the COVID-19 virus. This included the closure of all non-essential businesses and restriction on movement to enforce social distancing, reducing the spread of the virus.

Mid and East Antrim Borough Council invoked its Emergency Plan in response to the pandemic. A number of services were closed, for example, leisure centres and parks, in order to protect the public and staff. Many services continued to operate as normal and some vital new services were introduced to meet the needs of residents, at very short notice.

Council ensured minimal disruption to many services, for example, Waste Services, Planning & Building Control services and many more. Additionally, we established a Council Remote Call Centre to provide residents and business owners with advice and support. We also expanded our business support programmes to support local businesses during the crisis.

Council increased its communication activities to residents, businesses, partners and other relevant stakeholders during this time. MEA Stars was introduced to recognise the work of individuals, groups and businesses who had supported local community organisations, charities and the NHS to provide much needed support during the crisis.

Council has worked extensively with local communities to provide support to those most in need. The Community Support Grant Scheme was launched to provide financial support to projects that have aimed to assist those more vulnerable. Council has introduced innovative services during the lockdown period. For example, Council used an emergency community funding stream to enable the

Members of the borough's Dementia Friendly Choir to stay connected virtually. In other initiatives the council has also started creating virtual museum visits.

Council has had to be flexible and this emergency situation has impacted on the delivery of some of our Performance Improvement Plan objectives for 2019/20.

However, we are confident that all improvement objectives will be fully delivered once normal business resumes.

Further detail on some of the services that Council has delivered during the early weeks of the pandemic can be found on the opposite page.



**£100,000**

Awarded through the Community Support Grant Scheme



**2,500**

DfC Food Parcels Delivered



Supported deliveries for **8** local shops



**1,300+**

Businesses Engaged and Supported by the Economic Development Team

**157+**

Elected Member Support Requests



**2,356+**

Additional Facebook Followers

**400**

Businesses signed onto the BuySupplyNI Portal



**200+**

Harbour Inspections Completed

**40,000+**

Visits to the Council website



**18,500+**

#MEAStars Engagement Figure

Digital, Finance and Human Resources webinars held with **94** local businesses attending



**28**

Virtual Physical Activity Videos

**587+**

Virtual Business Mentoring Hours Delivered



**2,926**

Supplier Invoices Processed and Paid



**117+**

Planning Applications Decided

**235**

Virtual Building Work Inspections



**100%** Priority One Animal Welfare Cases Responded to



**99**

Property Searches Completed and Responses Returned



**3,164** Kerbie Boxes Delivered



# 3.0 Assessment of Performance 2019/20

## 3.1 Performance Improvement Objectives 2019/20

Mid and East Antrim Borough Council identified improvement objectives within the following six areas as the focus of the Performance Improvement Plan for 2019/20:



Strategic effectiveness



Service availability



Service Quality



Efficiency



Sustainability



Innovation

The plan was based on the strategic priorities agreed by Council in the current Corporate Plan 2019-2023.

Five improvement objectives were identified for 2019/20:

1. Grow the economy and create jobs within Mid and East Antrim Borough.
2. Support the communities within the historic conservation area of Carrickfergus, contributing to the sustainability of the local economy.
3. Improve the quality of life and economic prosperity in local villages.
4. Encourage people to value our natural environment.
5. Improve customer engagement and service delivery by enhancing our use of information technology.

A series of outcomes and indicators were developed to support the monitoring and reporting of performance. These are outlined within Project Initiation Documents (PIDs) for each objective, and progress is reported on a quarterly basis.

Further detail can be found on Council's website at [www.midandeantrim.gov.uk/PIP](http://www.midandeantrim.gov.uk/PIP)

## 3.1.1 Year-end Performance Review for 2019/20 Summary

### Performance Improvement Plan 2019/20 Outcomes

19 outcomes were defined against the five improvement objectives. 18 of these were due for completion by March 2020. Of the outcomes due for completion, Council achieved the following results:



**78%** of outcomes achieved (14 of 18).  
**22%** delayed but progressing (4 of 18).

During 2019/20, the percentage of outcomes achieved was 78%, compared to 81% in 2018/19. There were no outcomes flagged as red this year again.

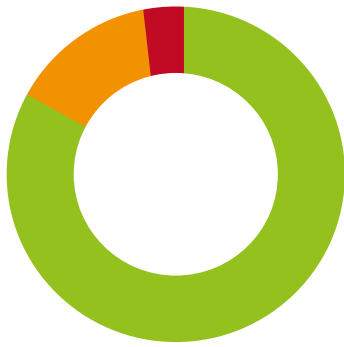
3 of the 4 delayed outcomes relate to the 'Improve customer engagement and service delivery by enhancing our use of information technology' objective. There has been a delay in the implementation of 3 out of 5 of the Digital Transformation projects, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. These

will be fully implemented once normal business resumes.

The other outcome that is delayed relates to the restoration of targeted properties in Carrickfergus. 3 letters of offer of funding have been issued versus a target of 4. The principal funder, National Lottery Heritage Fund, has offered flexibility over a proposed new grant expiry date of March 2022 and beyond, as a result of the uncertainty around the impact of COVID-19.

### Performance Improvement Plan 2019/20 Indicators

Of the 17 key performance indicators defined within the five objectives, 13 of these were due for completion by March 2020. Of the indicators due for completion, Council achieved the following results:



**77%** of outcomes achieved (10 of 13)  
**15%** delayed but progressing (2 of 13).  
**8%** were not achieved (1 of 13).

The indicators that are delayed but progressing relate to the Carrickfergus Townscape Heritage Initiative and the Digital Transformation projects, as discussed above.

The indicator where the target was not achieved relates to the statutory Planning performance indicator 'The average processing time of major planning applications'. This is discussed further on page 30.



# Grow the economy and create jobs within Mid and East Antrim Borough

The tables that follow provide more detail on the progress made against each objective during the period April 2019 – March 2020. The outcomes are analysed using R/A/G status updates:

- Green** | On track / completed / progressing as planned
- Amber** | Progressing but delayed
- Red** | Not progressing / stopped
- Grey** | Not due yet



## Outcomes




	Our aim	What we've delivered
	Create jobs and deliver an effective and efficient Planning Service.	
	The promotion of new jobs in the borough by successfully delivering the 'Go for It' Programme.	Council continues to successfully deliver the 'Go for It Programme', with 122 jobs promoted and 199 business plans created during the 2019/20 period. Of the 11 councils, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council is ranked top for the percentage of jobs created versus their statutory jobs target.
	The growth of new industry sectors by being a Centre of Excellence for start-ups, spin-outs and social-economy businesses within the Ecos Innovation Centre.	<p>Progress is continuing with our Integrated Property Programme to create grade A office accommodation that will encourage start-ups, allow our local indigenous businesses to grow and attract new investment.</p> <p>Plans for an extension of the Ecos facility to support a 50-person grade A office space are well underway with the focus on professional services companies in the Fintech and Digital sectors who are rethinking their business models post COVID-19.</p>
	Delivery of an effective and efficient Planning Service to maximise economic development.	<p>Due to a number of complicated applications, with a large number of consultees, Council have not met the target set for the processing time of major planning applications for 2019/20.</p> <p>However, we remain well above target, and indeed a top performing Council, for both the processing of local planning applications and enforcement conclusion times.</p> <p>The Local Development Plan continues to progress. The 'Draft Plan Strategy' was published in September 2019. The public consultation finished in December 2019 with 200 responses received. 80 counter representations were completed by the end of March.</p>
	85 jobs promoted through the 'Go for It' Programme by March 2020.	122 jobs promoted through the 'Go For It' Programme.
	125 knowledge-economy jobs created in Ecos Innovation Centre by March 2022.	123 knowledge-economy jobs created in Ecos Innovation Centre.
	£87,230 in rental income from Ecos Innovation Centre by March 2020.	Target met for rental income for 2019/20.
	Major Planning applications processed within an average of 30 weeks by March 2020.	42.4 weeks
	Local Planning applications processed within an average of 15 weeks by March 2020.	7.6 weeks
	70% of planning enforcement cases concluded within 39 weeks by March 2020.	89%
	Who is responsible?	Director of Development.



# Carrickfergus Townscape Heritage Initiative

Support the communities within the historic conservation area of Carrickfergus, contributing to the sustainability of the local economy



	Our aim	What we've delivered
 Outcomes	Offer grant assistance to support the structural repair, refurbishment and re-use of properties within the Carrickfergus conservation area.	
	Approximately 10 buildings of historical and architectural interest restored, through grant assistance, by July 2021.	<p>The Dobbins Inn is complete. Kelly's Coal Office has been handed over to a tenant and is complete, subject to the defects period.</p> <p>One new project, the Warrant Officer's House and Guard Room was awarded a Letter of Offer on 30 January 2020. Construction work began on site in early March 2020 and continued until the site closed on 24 March, due to restrictions introduced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>Three further funding applications were submitted to the THI in July 2020.</p> <p>The principal funder, National Lottery Heritage Fund, has offered flexibility over a proposed new grant expiry date of March 2022 and beyond, as a result of the uncertainty around the impact of COVID-19.</p>
	The local community will have a better understanding of built heritage.	<p>The Education Programme continues to exceed targets. From April 2019 to March 2020 inclusive, there were 40 events/initiatives with 1,202 participants. Specifically in the last 3 months of 2019/20, 5 events were held involving 188 participants plus an exhibition entitled 'Women in Carrickfergus Gaol'. Additional activities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The built heritage publication, 'Carrickfergus Through the Centuries: A Walk through the Historic Town and Harbour' was published in May 2020.</li> <li>A Digitisation Project of Carrickfergus Town Records 1600s - 1800s has progressed with the appointment in July of Queen's University to carry out the digitisation of this rare document in the collection of Carrickfergus Museum. The project will create on-line historic building resource for those interested in researching building and family history.</li> </ul>
 Indicators	Increased inward investment and local employment opportunities related both directly and indirectly to heritage and tourism growth.	<p>Approximately 6-10 construction jobs were supported for the duration of the Kelly's Coal and Dobbins Inn schemes, with one full-time and one part-time job expected on completion of each. The numbers of jobs created on completion of projects will be evaluated at programme close.</p> <p>A further 6-10 construction jobs are estimated to be supported during the conservation of the Warrant Officer's House and Guard Room.</p>
	Four new grants awarded by March 2020.	One further grant was awarded on 30 January 2020. A total of 3 projects have been funded by the THI programme.
	Education Programme completed by December 2020. *1	From April 2019 to March 2020 inclusive, there were 40 events/initiatives with 1,202 participants.
	Increase town centre footfall by July 2021. *2	Footfall counters in place, performance will be evaluated at the end of the project.
	Lower levels of town centre vacancy by July 21. *2	<p>One previously vacant property, Kelly's Coal Offices, brought back into office/retail use.</p> <p>The recently awarded project, the Warrant Officers House, will create new exhibition and office accommodation. Further projects currently under development will create residential and retail accommodation. This will be evaluated at the end of the project.</p>
 Who is responsible?	Increased floor space for retail, commercial or residential use by July 2021. *2	Kelly's Coal Office has brought back into use 114 m2 of floorspace. An evaluation will take place at the end of the project.
	Director of Development.	



# Improve the quality of life & economic prosperity in local villages






	Our aim	What we've delivered
 Outcomes	Priority infrastructure projects delivered in five villages within Mid and East Antrim Borough. The programme is funded by Council and DAERA with support from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development.	
	Redesigned Diamond area in Ahoghill by May 2019.	The new look Diamond area in Ahoghill includes a new clock, seating, paving, planting and ornamental railings. It is hoped this will prove popular with both visitors and locals as a meeting space and be a valuable asset to the community.
	Enhanced children's play area in Broughshane by May 2019.	Broughshane Play Park benefited from a £150,000 makeover and provided equipment to make it as accessible as possible, including a wheelchair roundabout, 30-metre cableway, inclusive swing seat, standing pendulum swing, cradle nest, four-person see-saw and a chain path.
	New small community multi-use games area (MUGA) in Clough by June 2019.	The new MUGA pitch in Clough will encourage more people to get outdoors and enjoy the benefits that sport can bring. The pitch measures 25 metres by 15 metres and has been enclosed with steel fencing.
	New floodlit multi-use games area (MUGA) in Ballycarry by June 2019.	The new floodlit multi-use games area (MUGA) in Ballycarry was completed in July 2019.
 Indicators	Enhanced Whitehead Coastal Park / Promenade by October 2019.	The coastal promenade in Whitehead completed ahead of schedule in September 2019.
	Five projects delivered by March 2020.	All five projects are successfully completed.
 Who is responsible?	Director of Community.	



# Encourage people to value our natural environment






	Our aim	What we've delivered
 <p>Outcomes</p>	Continue to encourage responsible dog ownership through the Green Dog Walkers scheme.*3	
	Responsible dog ownership through increased participation and support of the Green Dog Walkers Scheme.	Following the successful and continued roll-out of the Green Dog Walkers marketing and promotional campaign, pledge numbers have surged by 100%, reaching 1,022 pledges by April 2020 from a baseline of 512 in April 2019.
	A marketing and promotional campaign to challenge attitudes and change behaviours.	<p>The campaign continues to have a positive influence on dog fouling in the borough. Campaign activities have included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joint events and PR with the Dogs Trust.</li> <li>• Launch of the Reportable App.</li> <li>• Circulation of information posters to external organisations such as vets and dog groomers, and internally to key departments, such as Parks and Waste.</li> <li>• Name the dog competition – 226 different names suggested by residents/staff.</li> <li>• Numerous press releases distributed to local newspapers.</li> </ul>
	A cleaner borough.	Dog foul on our streets has reduced by 50% according to the Keeping Northern Ireland Beautiful (KNIB) survey (July - September 2019). Of 100 streets, dog foul was noted on 5, compared to 11 streets in the previous period. Substantiated dog foul complaints received by Council also continues to fall as detailed below.
 <p>Indicators</p>	At least 500 active Green Dog Walker Pledges by March 2020.	1,022 Green Dog Walker pledges are currently active.
	A 10% reduction in the number of dog fouling complaints by March 2020.	43% decrease - 111 complaints were received in 2019/20 compared to 195 complaints in 2018/19.
	At least two community organisation committed to taking action.	8 community groups are committed to taking action. 7 of these groups are now active with the 8th expected to become active during 2020/21.
	A reduction in the number of residents perceiving dog fouling to be an issue in our local areas.	The first survey was issued in July 2019 in the summer edition of 'Connections', our residents' magazine and 40 responses were received. An internal survey was distributed to Council staff in autumn 2019 and circulated again in January 2020; these surveys received 34 responses. Existing pledge holders were scheduled to be contacted in July 2020; however, it is expected this survey will be delayed due to the impacts of COVID-19.
 <p>Who is responsible?</p>	Director of Community.	

\*3 The Green Dog Walkers Scheme is an innovative approach to dog fouling. Responsible dog owners and dog walkers support the scheme by signing a pledge to clean up after their pets, and to encourage other owners to do the same by giving them bags.



# Improve customer engagement & service delivery

## by enhancing our use of information technology

	Our aim	What we've delivered
 <b>Outcomes</b>	Deliver our agreed Digital Transformation Strategy.	
	A Customer Complaints & Contact system.	This project is currently on hold until we review a module that has become available within the new Financial Management System that may provide a suitable solution.
	A Marina Booking system.	The booking system is now operational for the process of issuing invoices and account paperwork. The system will be further enhanced to include the completion of site maps and introduction of online inventory and fault reporting.  Payments made at Carrickfergus Marina are currently being processed using the previous system as staff have not yet received the relevant training, as a result of the closure of the marinas due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This training will be completed as soon as practicably possible to remove any duplication of processing.
	A Citizen Text Alert / Reminder system.	This project has been completed and the text alert system is now fully operational. The first batch of texts was sent in March 2020 and to date there have been 150 texts sent to registered Dog Licence owners with renewal reminders.
	Online Building Control Certificates.	The contract was awarded, however, there have been a number of operational issues identified which have stalled the system becoming fully operational; for example, streamlining the individual processes into one overall process. The pandemic has resulted in a delay in the resolution of these issues. It is expected that the issues will be resolved with the contractor as soon as is practicable in 2020/21.
	Additional Wi-Fi points.	All hardware has been purchased; however, installation has been paused due to building closures as a result of COVID-19. Once normal business resumes, the additional wifi points will be installed.
 <b>Indicators</b>	A minimum of five digital projects completed by March 2020.	All projects are well progressed. COVID-19 has disrupted the final implementation of a number of projects. All projects will be fully implemented when normal business resumes.
 <b>Who is responsible?</b>	Director of Support Services.	



### 3.1.2 Review of outstanding actions from previous years' Improvement Objectives

The table opposite provides an update on previous improvement objectives that were not carried forward to the subsequent years' plans. Some were not fully completed in the financial years in which they related. The objectives have now been completed.

Objective	Outcome	Status
<b>2016/17</b>		
A consistent and fair Leisure Service Pricing Policy which promotes access to leisure services across the borough.	Leisure Services Pricing Policy for Council which will be used to cost charges and fees.	Revised Leisure Pricing Policy implemented from April 2020.
High level of customer satisfaction based on standards which are well communicated to both service users and staff.	Full ISO14001:2015 accreditation across the whole organisation.	Full accreditation was achieved in February 2020.
<b>2017/18</b>		
To achieve a culture of high performance which will support the provision of first-class front-line services, which make a positive impact on the quality of life for all our citizens.	The ACHIEVE Project.	The Personal Development Planning process is a key element within our Performance Management Framework and is now embedded within our operational management systems.
<b>2018/19</b>		
Our older people are active, respected and supported in their community	Extend the Dementia Friendly programme into the Carrickfergus area of the Borough and expand it into broader, Age Friendly programmes.	This project has successfully completed. Key achievements included the training of 19 Dementia Champions, 215 Dementia friends and 21 businesses throughout the year.
<b>2019/20</b>		
Improve quality of life and economic prosperity in local villages	Priority infrastructure projects delivered in five villages within Mid and East Antrim Borough	All five projects are now complete.







# 3.2 Statutory Performance Indicators

The Local Government (Performance Indicators and Standards) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 sets out statutory performance indicators and standards for Councils. Standards are set for each Council within Northern Ireland. For 2019/20, these were set in the functional areas of Economic Development, Planning and Waste Management.

The information is currently collated by the Department for the Economy, Department for Infrastructure and Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) respectively and published on their websites. Once released to Council, this information is published for citizens and other stakeholders to assess Council's performance in these areas.

Mid and East Antrim Borough Council's 2019/20 performance against these indicators is outlined in the tables which follow.

## Performance is analysed using R/A/G status

Status		Trend	
	On track and progressing as planned		Performance has improved since the previous year
	Progressing but may be delayed		Performance is similar to the previous year
	Not progressing/ stopped /not achieved		Performance has declined significantly since the previous year



3.2.1 Economic Development

Ref	Statutory Indicator	Standard	2018/19	2019/20				
			Year-end result	Year-end result	Ranking against other councils	% over target	Status	Trend
ED1	The number of jobs promoted through business start-up activity	85	124	122	1st	44%		

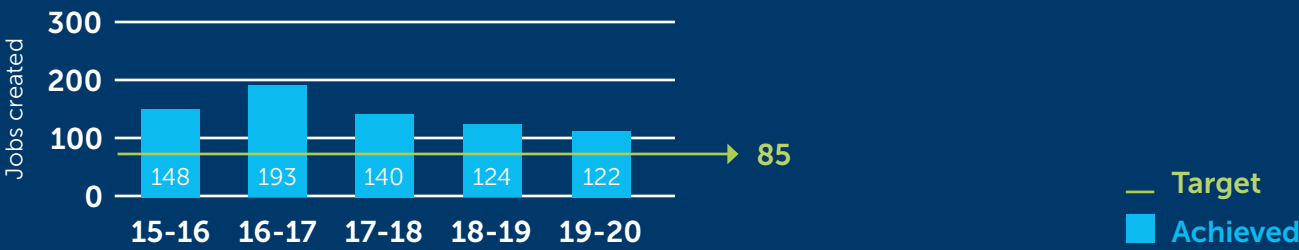
We have exceeded the Business Start-up job promotion target every year since 2015/16 as outlined in the opposite diagram. This trend has continued into 2019/20 where despite a slightly lower result than last year, we were still 44% over target.

Council has consistently been one of the top performers across the region. The chart opposite highlights the year-end performance for the Northern Ireland Business Start Up Programme for each council during the period April 2019 – March 2020.

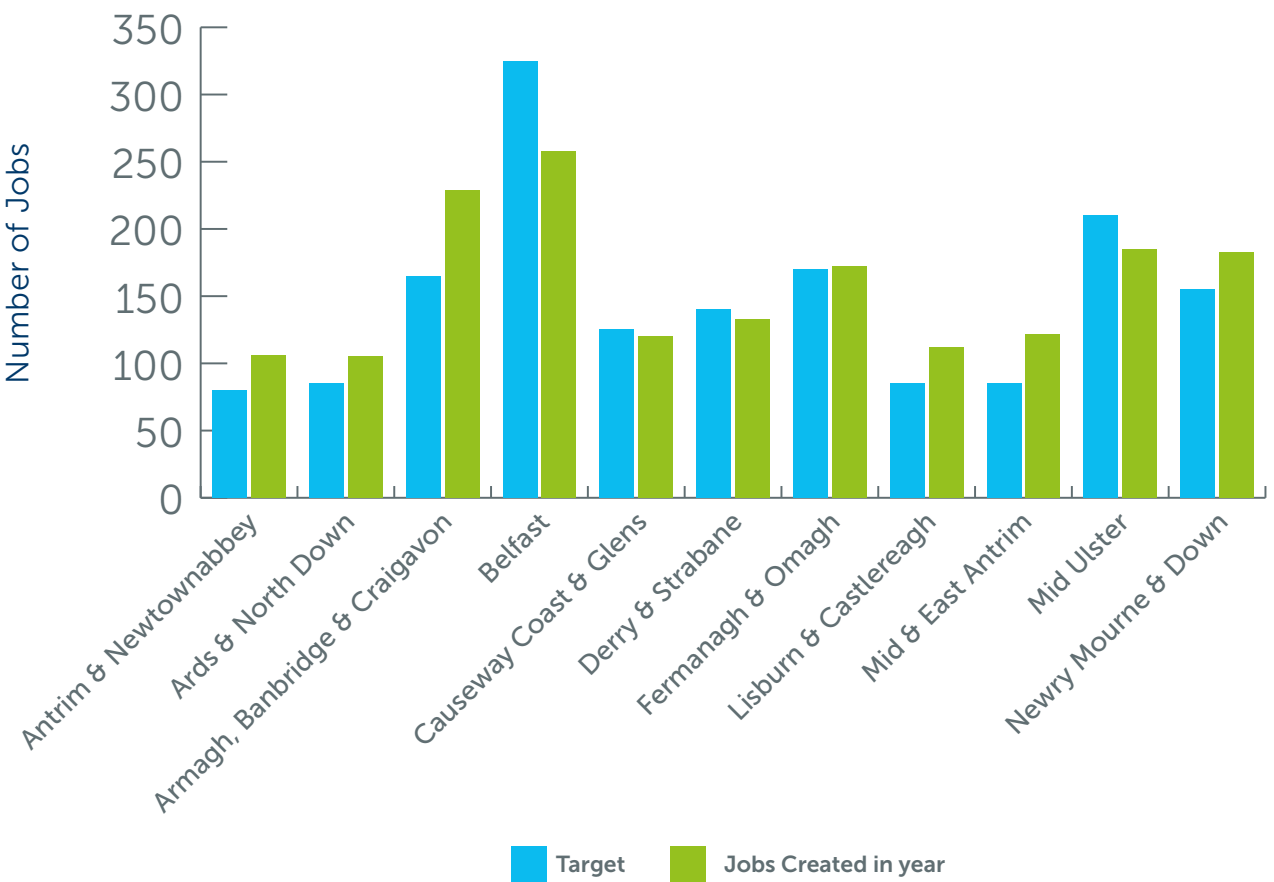
- 199 business plans were completed and 122 jobs promoted against a statutory target of 85 jobs per annum.
- Council is in first position in Northern Ireland for percentage over-achievement of the jobs target having held second position last year.

A suite of business support programmes has been developed under Amplify, the integrated economic strategy for the borough. The programmes encourage entrepreneurship, provide guidance at the pre-enterprise stage and raise awareness of the support in place through the NI Business Support Programme. Council officers are working very closely with Enterprise NI and local delivery agencies to ensure that job targets and business start numbers continue to grow and exceed the statutory target, building a dynamic small business base in the borough.

No of jobs promoted through business start-up activity

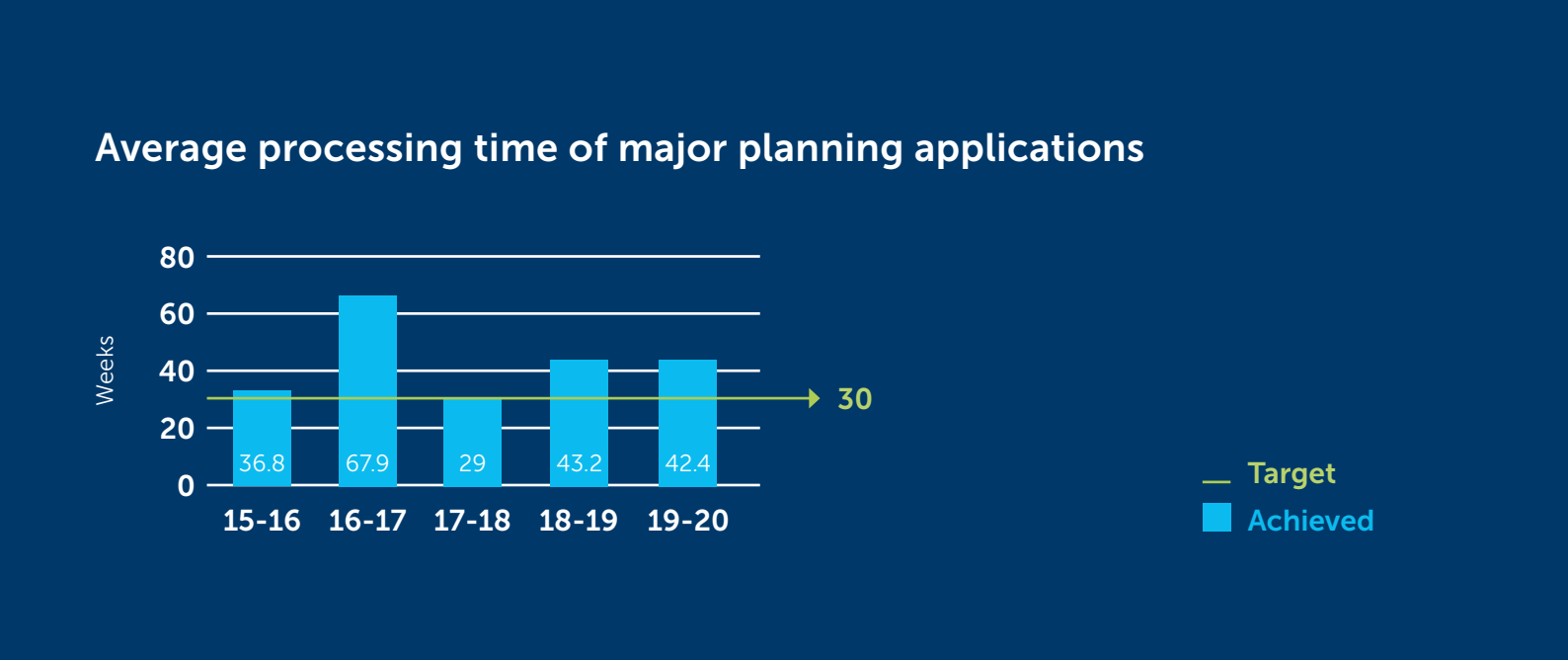


Jobs promoted by Councils 2019/20 (actual vs. target)



3.2.2 Planning

Ref	Statutory Indicator	Standard	2018/19	2019/20			Status	Trend
			Year-end result	Year-end result	NI average	Ranking against other councils		
P1	The average processing time of major planning applications.	30 weeks	43.2 weeks	42.4 weeks	52.8 weeks	4th		➡
P2	The average processing time of local planning applications.	15 weeks	7.8 weeks	7.6 weeks	14 weeks	1st		⬆
P3	The percentage of enforcement cases processed within 39 weeks.	70%	88.2%	89%	81.4%	4th		⬆



P1: The average processing time of major planning applications

The statutory target set for each council for processing major development planning applications (from the date valid to decision issued or withdrawal date) is an average of 30 weeks.

In 2015/16 and 2016/17, a number of legacy issues meant that the 30 week target was not achieved. Council did meet the target in 2017/18 but some complicated applications received thereafter have resulted in an average processing time of over 40 weeks in the last 2 years.

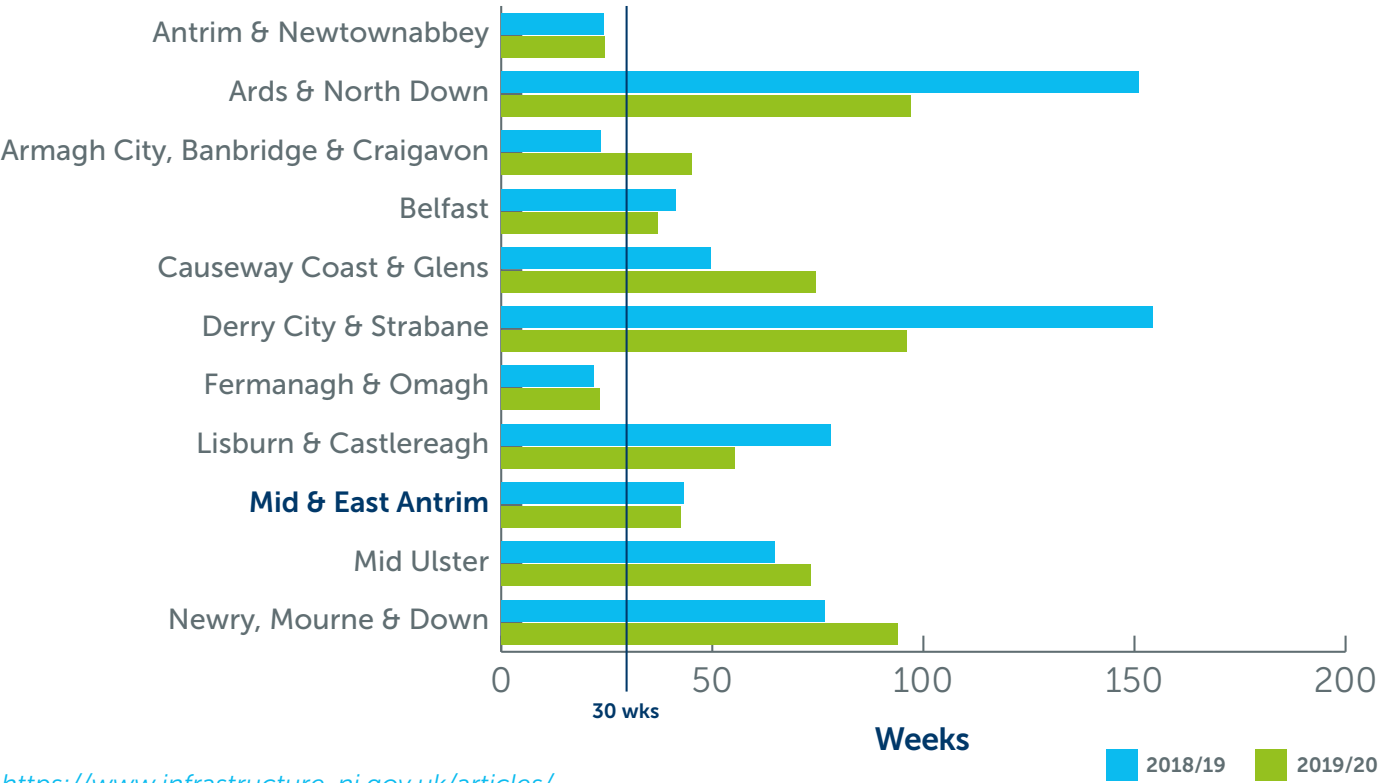
The result for Mid and East Antrim during 2019/20 was 42.4 weeks, a slight reduction from the 2018/19 result of 43.2 weeks. Three complex applications were approved for the

regeneration of St Patricks Barracks which impacted on processing times during the year. Pre-application discussions are being actively encouraged to reduce the processing time of major applications.

The average processing time for major applications was 52.8 weeks across all councils in 2019/20, an improvement on the previous year's 59 weeks but still significantly slower than the statutory target. Only 2 NI Councils processed their major applications under the 30 weeks.

Our comparative performance with other NI Councils is outlined in the chart opposite which is published by the Department for Infrastructure.

Average processing time of major planning applications by Council



<https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/articles/planning-activity-statistics>

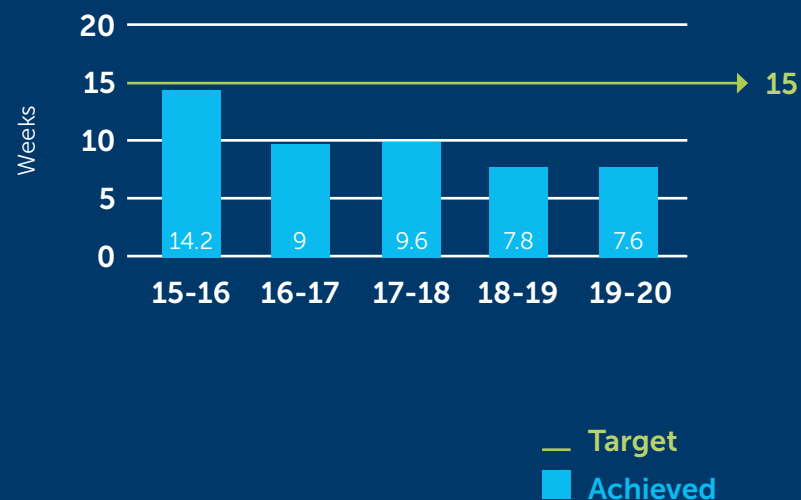


## P2: The average processing time of local planning applications

In each of the past five years, we have outperformed the target set for processing times for local planning applications of 15 weeks.

Since 2015/16, the average processing time for local applications has almost halved from 14.2 weeks to 7.6 weeks. Mid and East Antrim have consistently been a top performer for this indicator and is ranked as the best performing council in 2019/20.

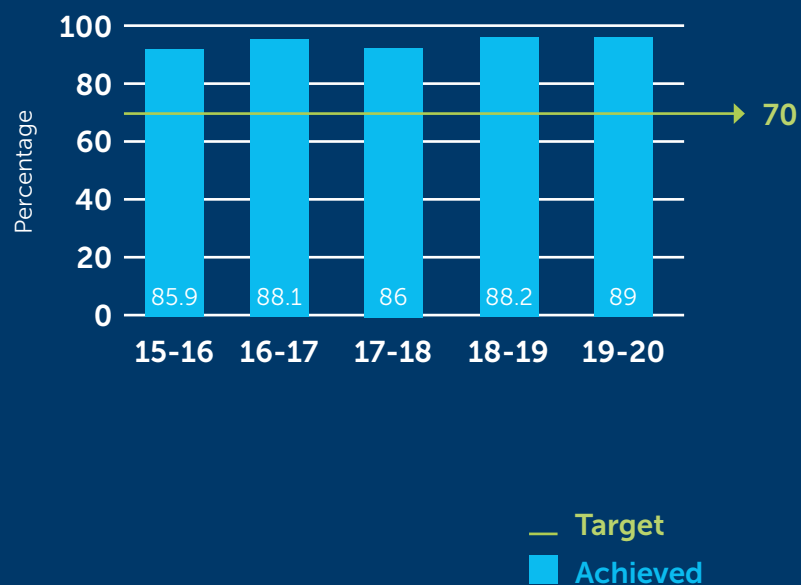
In 2019/20, 7 Northern Ireland Councils met the statutory target as outlined in the chart opposite, published by the Department for Infrastructure. The NI average was 14 weeks.



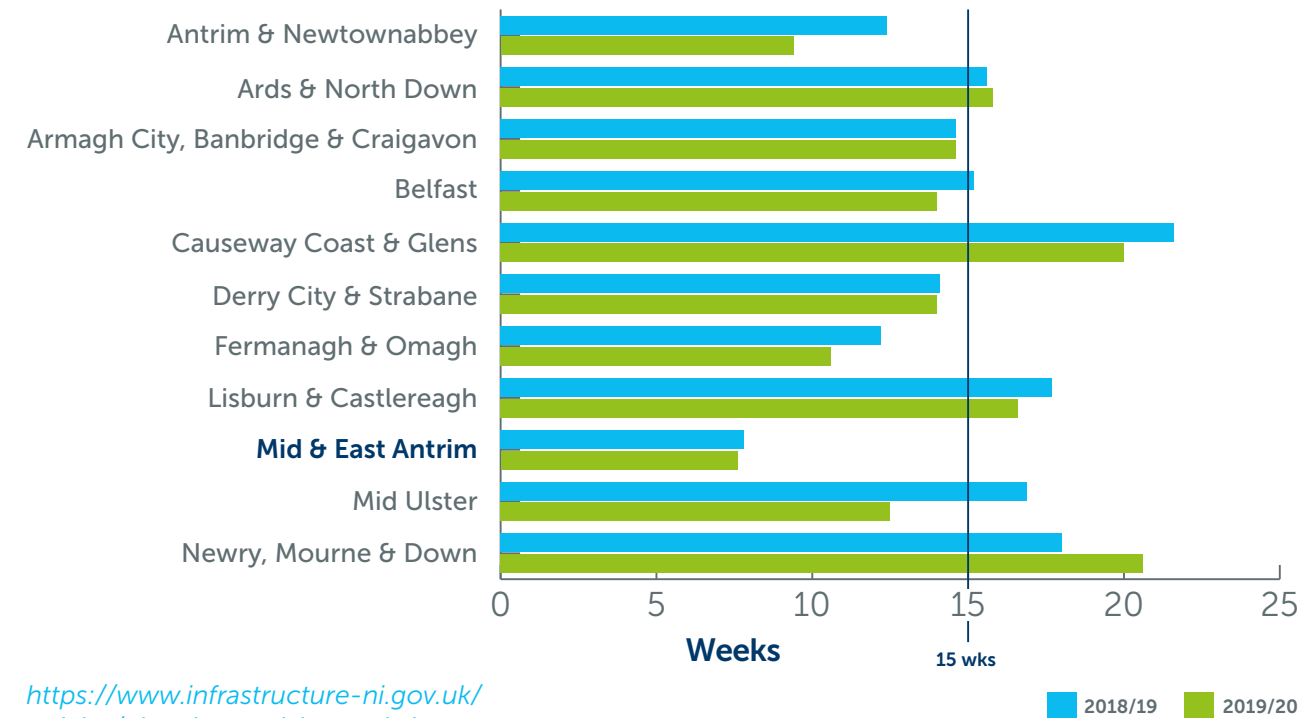
## P3: The percentage of enforcement cases processed within 39 weeks

Performance remained well above the 70% target in 2019/20 at 89%. Performance has been relatively consistent and above target over the five-year period from 2015-2020.

Across councils, 81.4% of enforcement cases were concluded within 39 weeks during 2019/20. This is similar to the rate reported for the previous financial year (81.0%). Individually, ten of the 11 councils met the target in 2019/20 as outlined in the chart opposite which is published by the Department for Infrastructure. Mid and East Antrim placed 4th against other Councils.

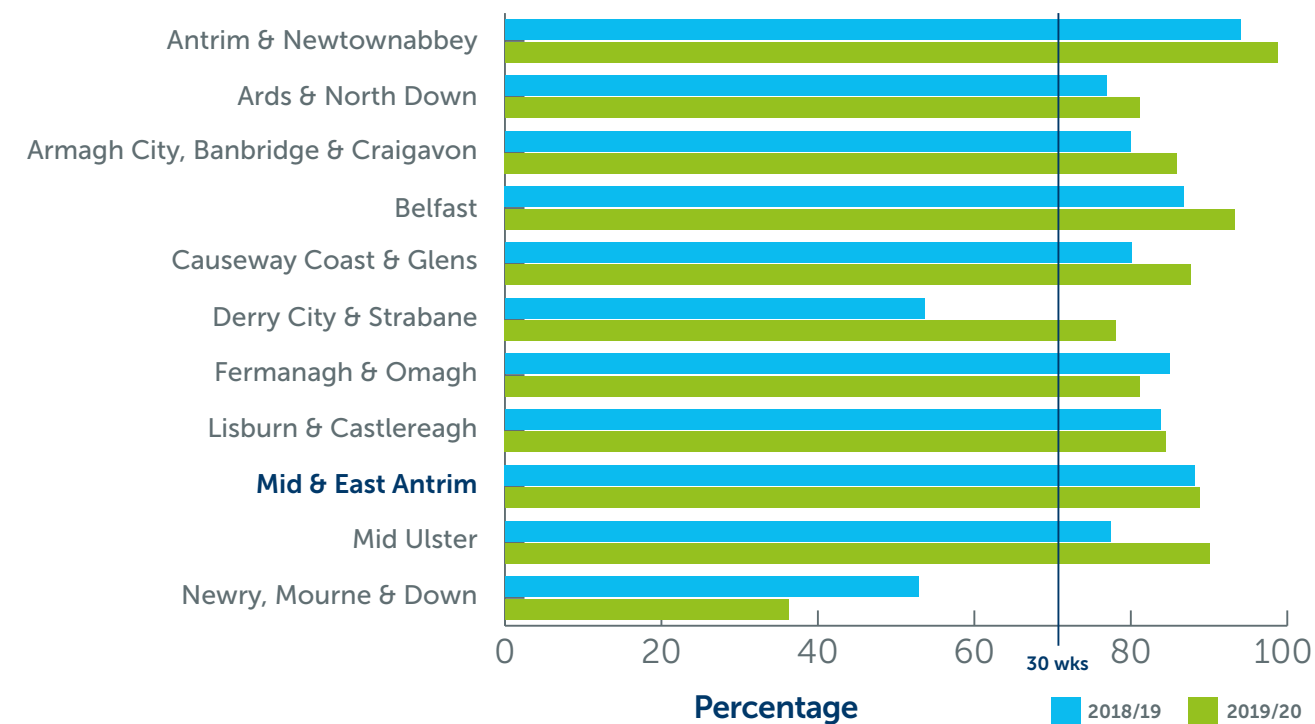


## Average processing time of local planning applications by Council



<https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/articles/planning-activity-statistics>

## The percentage of enforcement cases processed within 39 weeks by Council

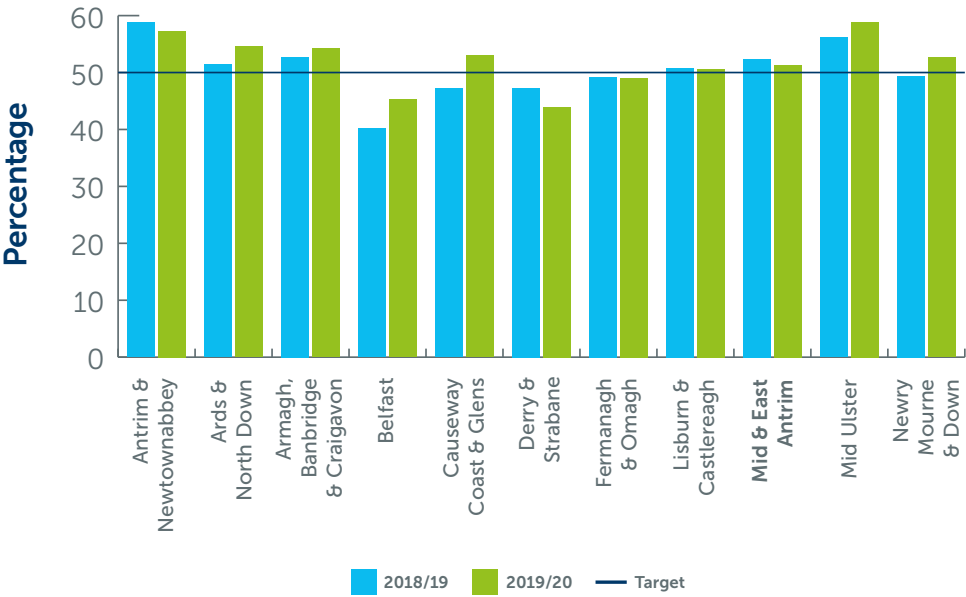


<https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/articles/planning-activity-statistics>

3.2.3 Waste

Ref	Statutory Indicator	Standard	2018/19		2019/20		Status	Trend
			Year-end result	NI average	Year-end result	Ranking against other councils		
W1	The percentage of household waste collected by councils that is sent for recycling	50% by 2020	52.4%*5	49.80%	51.4%*4	7th		➡
W2	The amount of biodegradable Local Authority Collected Municipal Waste that is landfilled	16,387 tonnes (2019/20)	14,444*5 tonnes	N/A	13,684 tonnes*4	N/a		⬆
W3	The amount (tonnage) of Local Authority Collected Municipal Waste arisings	No standard	73,032*5 tonnes	N/A	73,797 tonnes*4	N/a		➡

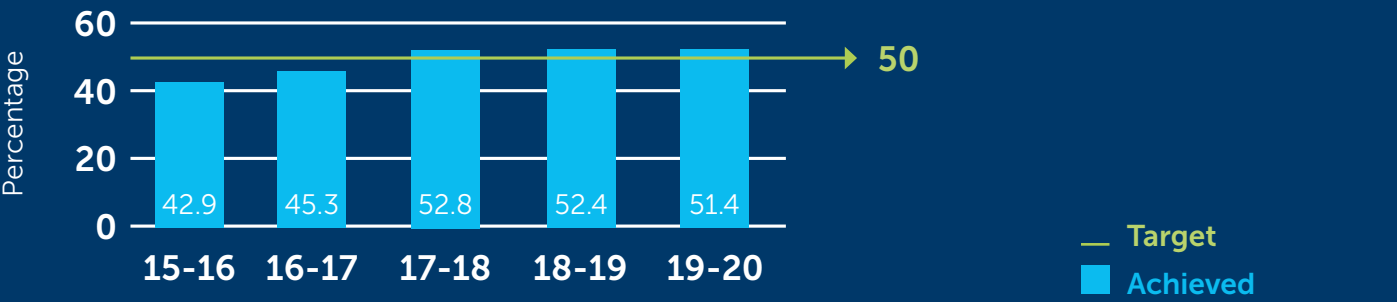
W1: Percentage of household waste collected by Council that is sent for recycling (including waste prepared for reuse) \*4\*5



W1: Percentage of household waste collected by Council that is sent for recycling (including waste prepared for reuse) \*4

The 2019/20 figures for the three indicators for Waste Management are to date not audited and confirmed by the NIEA (Northern Ireland Environment Agency). However, on the basis of the draft year-end figures, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council is placed 7th amongst Councils in Northern Ireland in relation to the percentage of household waste sent for recycling. Council were placed 4th at the end of 2018/19. Over the past three years, we have exceeded the 50% household recycling target and for 2019/20 the recycling rate was 51.4%, a slight decrease of 1% from the previous

year. Campaigns rolled out during 2019/20 included bespoke communications on reducing and recycling plastic waste and on recycling household food waste. Council also obtained bathroom recycling bags for MEA householders, encouraging them to recycle what can be ‘missed capture’ from household bathrooms. Council are currently reviewing new initiatives for 2020/21. Council’s Household Recycling Centres recycled just over 70% of the 14,800 tonnes that went through the sites during 2019/20.

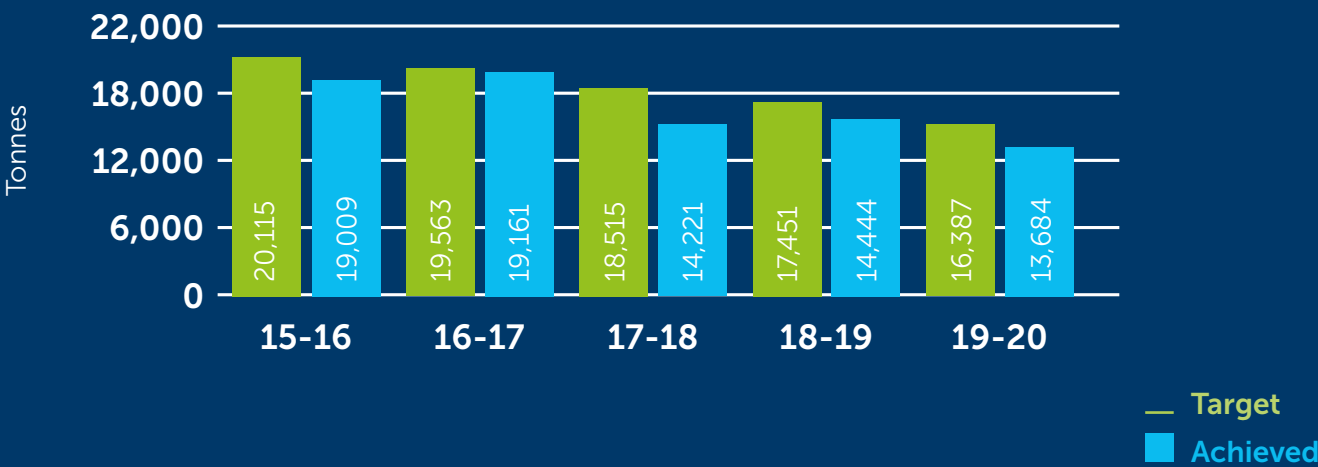


Notes  
\*4 The final Waste figures for 2019/20 will be audited and publicly released by NIEA on 1st December 2020. They can be used as a strong indicator of performance and are unlikely to change, but cannot be published anywhere in advance of their release by NIEA.  
\*5 2018-19 figures amended slightly from figures reported previously following verification by NIEA.



W2: The amount of biodegradable Local Authority Collected Municipal waste that is landfilled (tonnage) \*4

In each of the last five years, Council has collected less than the allowance set by the Northern Ireland Landfill Allowance Scheme (NILAS). In 2019/20, Council achieved a 5.3% decrease in the amount of biodegradable waste that landfilled compared to the previous year and used 83.5% of our allocated landfill allowance.

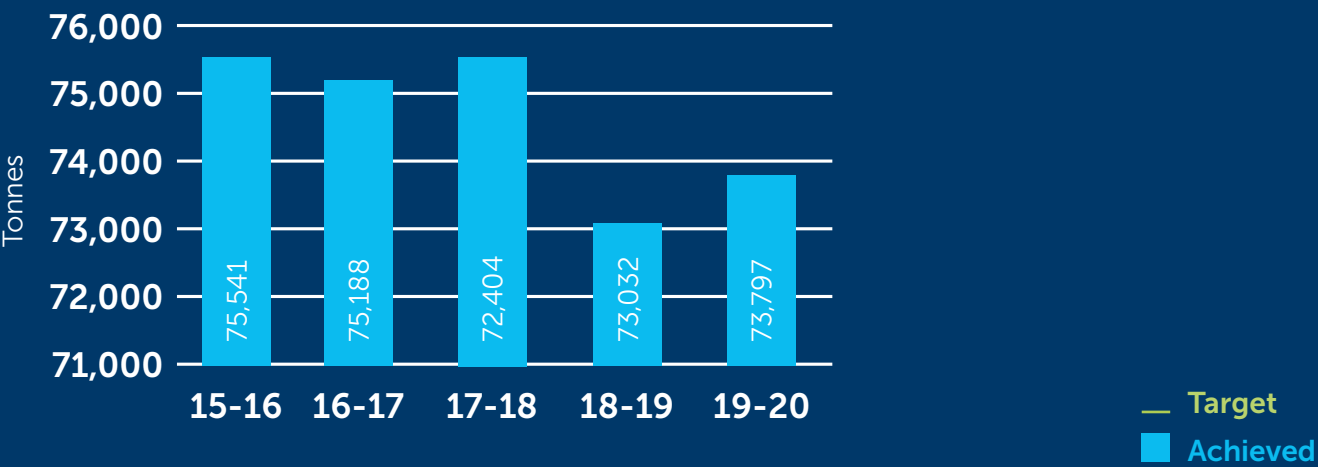


W3: The amount of Local Authority Collected Municipal Waste arisings (tonnage) \*4

The amount of collected municipal waste arisings during 2019/20 was 73,797 tonnes, which is a slight increase (1%) from 73,032 tonnes for 2018/19.

The slight increase in waste arisings without a corresponding increase in recycling has resulted in a slight decrease overall in recycling rates.

No statutory target is set for this indicator.



Summary

Council remains well within target in all the Waste Performance indicators. Some 65,500 bins are collected each week from households in the Borough. A recent customer survey showed that 91.7% of residents are satisfied with Household Recycling Centres and 77.2% are satisfied with the kerbside collection service.

# 3.3 Self-Imposed Performance Indicators

In addition to the seven statutory indicators in section 3.2, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council measured its performance using a range of self-imposed indicators in 2019/20, as discussed below.

## 3.3.1 Corporate Plan 2019-2023

A new Corporate Plan was launched in July 2019 to guide Council for the 2019-2023 period. The Plan was developed following extensive consultation. It aligns with the Borough's Community Plan and seeks to achieve our vision of "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".

As the diagram illustrates, the Plan is based upon six strategic themes:

1. Sustainable Jobs and Tourism;
2. Our Environment;
3. Community Safety and Cohesion;
4. Learning for Life;
5. Good Health and Wellbeing; and,
6. High Performing Council.

Five of these themes are consistent with those in the Community Plan. The 'Progress in Education' theme from the Community Plan was adjusted to 'Learning for Life' to better reflect our contribution to education. Another theme of 'High Performing Council' has been wrapped around the outside to show that everything we do will help us achieve our outcomes and, ultimately, the vision for the Borough.

The Chief Executive works with Elected Members to continue towards fulfilling the vision for the Borough through the delivery of the Corporate Plan. Members are provided with an opportunity to review progress on a six-monthly basis. Corporate Plan progress reports were brought



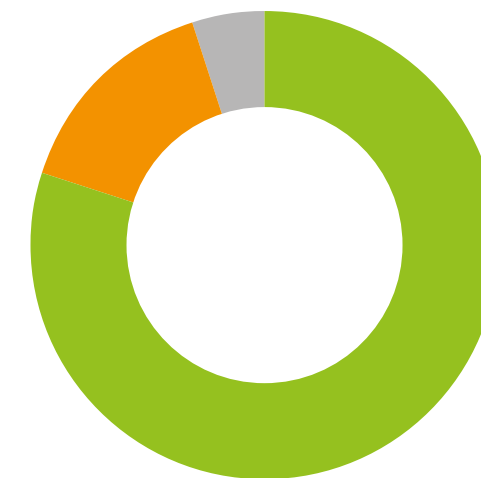
to Council in December 2019 and August 2020. These can be viewed on our website:

[www.midandeantrim.gov.uk/corporateplan](http://www.midandeantrim.gov.uk/corporateplan)

To ensure full delivery of the Corporate Plan, 25 corporate objectives have been developed that underpin the six strategic themes. As well as the statutory indicators discussed in section 3.2, we use a suite of 20 self-imposed indicators to ensure that progress is continually monitored and measured and that appropriate action is taken on a timely basis.

The next section demonstrates how we have performed against our corporate objectives and our self-imposed indicators during 2019/20.

## 3.3.2 Self-imposed performance indicators 2019/20



Of the 20 self-imposed performance indicators:

**16** (80%) indicators showed performance was achieved/on track;

**3** (15%) indicators showed that performance was delayed but progressing;

**1** (5%) indicator was not due at the time of reporting.

## The 3 performance indicators showing amber relate to:

1. Visitors at strategic tourist attractions – performance was 92,026 visitors versus a target of 100,000 for 2019/20. See page 41 for more details.
2. Percentage of people with a sense of belonging to their area – the most recent performance recorded was 88.7% during 2016-18 which was a minor drop on the 89.2% recorded in the previous period (2015-17). See page 45 for more details.
3. Number of days per employee spent on training – on average, a total of 8.5 days were spent on training versus a target of 9 days. See page 47 for further details.

do not cover everything that the Council has delivered, but highlight a selection of the significant actions.

The following R/A/G status was used to analyse progress with the Corporate Objectives and Corporate Indicators.

<span style="color: green;">■</span>	On track and progressing as planned
<span style="color: orange;">■</span>	Progressing but may be delayed
<span style="color: red;">■</span>	Not progressing / stopped / not achieved
<span style="color: grey;">■</span>	Target not yet defined / data not yet available

The tables that follow illustrate some of the key actions that have been progressed, as well as progress against the Corporate Performance Indicators. The achievements



# Sustainable Jobs & Tourism

## Objectives: What we will do by 2023

1. Grow, support and sustain new and existing businesses through council and other initiatives.
2. Position MEA as a dynamic, outward-looking region which welcomes and supports inward investment.
3. Enable entrepreneurs to deliver economic growth through partnership and other supports.
4. Attract more visitors to stay longer and spend more through the delivery of our tourism strategy.
5. Create a compelling tourism and economic proposition by developing and investing in our unique heritage and assets.

## Key achievements

- In response to the announcement on the 25th September that Wrightbus had entered into administration, Council immediately activated its **Rapid Redundancy Response Programme**. It initiated a Northern Ireland-wide campaign along with central government and business leaders from throughout the region who rallied behind the workers and their families to keep the factory site open and save as many jobs as possible.
- Council's flagship **Business Escalator Programme** mentored 166 businesses providing an equivalent value of circa £107,500 of mentoring support. This support has secured £3.1 million worth of sales/contracts for participating businesses and supported at least 2 businesses growth expansion relocating to larger premises.
- Council is partnering within the consortium led by the Graham Group as one of 18 tenderers invited to final stage bidding to secure one of the 4 proposed **Heathrow Expansion Logistics Hubs**. A response to the Invitation to Tender was submitted on 25 January 2020. Heathrow are currently reviewing the tender documents and will continue to assess the merits of the proposed sites. Council are waiting for a response from Heathrow.
- A wide range of activities is underway to realise the benefits from **City Deal** funding and Council is working towards submission of Outline Business Cases. City Deal funding will be invested in Carrickfergus regeneration, works to further enhance the Gobbins and re-development of the St Patrick's Barracks Site in Ballymena which includes development of an Innovation Centre – i4C, the Integrated Industrial Inspiration and Innovation Campus.
- 13 rural businesses received some £344k of funding under the **DAERA Rural Business Investment Scheme**.
- Council launched the pop-up shop project in November coinciding with **Global Entrepreneurship week**. The project involved engaging with entrepreneurs across the borough and enabling them to test trade their products in two high street locations within Carrickfergus and Larne.
- Council hosted a successful, inspirational **employer breakfast** on Thursday 16 February 2020 as part of the first Northern Ireland Apprenticeship Week to highlight the different types of apprenticeships available and the benefits of having an apprentice to bring new skills and talent to businesses.
- Plans for an extension of the **Ecos** facility to support a 50-person Grade A office space are well underway with the focus on professional services companies in the Fintech and Digital sectors who are rethinking their business models post COVID-19.
- Council successfully secured £50,000 additional marketing spend from the Department For Communities to enhance its existing integrated festive **"Find your Christmas"** marketing campaign.

# Key Performance Indicators

## Number of businesses engaged across business support programmes



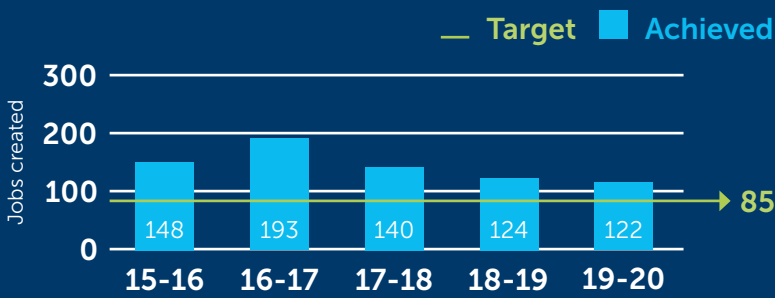
We have engaged with 372 businesses between April 2019 and March 2020.

**372** businesses engaged under our Amplify strategy

This includes participants on our Amplify Business Escalator, NIBSUP, Exploring Enterprise, Stride, Jobmatch, Verve, Kickstart, Yes you Can, Enterprising Women and Inspiring Communities programmes.

## Number of jobs promoted through business start-up activity

We promoted 122 jobs through the Business Start Up programme between April 2019 and March 2020.



This is 44% more than the statutory target of 85. Council was the top Council in Northern Ireland for overachievement against its jobs target.

## Visitors at strategic tourist attractions



This indicator counts the number of visitors at The Gobbins, Carrickfergus Castle, Arthur Cottage, Andrew Jackson Cottage and US Rangers Museum.

**92,026** ticket sales

We recorded 92,026 visitors between April 2019 and March 2020. This was slightly below the 100,000 target for the year, as Carrickfergus Castle Keep was closed for works. This resulted in reduced visitor numbers and educational visits during the year.

# Our Environment

## Objectives: What we will do by 2023

1. Deliver high quality places where people want to live, work and invest, using the Local Development Plan, regeneration and excellence in leadership.
2. Improve and sustainably manage our environment, protecting it for future generations.
3. Encourage people to value our natural environment and built heritage, by enhancing responsible access to it and promoting the benefits it offers for our health and wellbeing.
4. Lead by example and reduce the impact of council services on the environment.



## Key achievements

- Council achieved accreditation to ISO 14001:2015 **International Environmental Management Standard** across all services in February 2020. This ensures that Council reduces the impact of its services on the environment and improves its environmental performance year on year. 2019/20 statistics show that our carbon footprint has shrunk by **10%**, use of fleet fuel dropped by **6%** and our paper consumption fell by **7%** compared to the previous year.
- **MEA4Trees** launched during National Tree Week in December 2019, and running until 2025, promotes the importance of trees. The ambitious tree planting initiative engages local communities to plant a tree for every household in the Borough over the next six years, that is 56,000 trees across Mid and East Antrim. The total number of trees planted so far is **17,348**, leaving 38,652 more trees to be planted by 2025. Trees have been planted in many locations across the Borough including Glynn, Ahoghill and Carnfunnock.
- Ballymena won **Ulster in Bloom's** Best 'Small City / Large Town' award and were progressing to the **Britain in Bloom** competition before the COVID-19 pandemic curtailed the competition. Cullybackey won a gold award from Britain in Bloom 2019 and Ahoghill received 'Best of the Best' at the **Best Kept Awards 2019** in the 'Best Kept Large Village' category.
- Millions of **wildflower seeds** have been sown at 12 sites across the Borough. This is not only great news for nature, it also reduces Council's maintenance requirements.
- Council currently uses 650 litres of herbicide per annum. Our Parks team are on track to reduce our **chemical usage** across the borough over a three-year period. Two machines have been purchased which remove moss and weeds from hardstanding areas and this year we met our target reduction. We hope to achieve a 45% reduction overall by April 2023.
- The **Green Dog Walkers Scheme** is an innovative approach to dog fouling where responsible dog owners and dog walkers support the scheme by signing a pledge to clean up after their pets and to encourage other owners to do the same. The Scheme has been very successful this year with 1,022 pledges to date, well over the 500 target. There has been a marked 43% decrease in dog foul complaints with 111 recorded in 2019/20 versus 195 in the previous year.
- In total, 7 villages in the borough received over £515,000 of Rural Development Programme funding to complete their **village projects**. Projects included a new village clock, enhancement of child's play area, floating jetties, outdoor fitness equipment, community garden, and environmental enhancements.
- Council delivered 56 local **clean-ups** across the borough with 954 bags of rubbish collected.
- Work continues under the **Carrickfergus Townscape Heritage Initiative**. The Dobbins Inn and Kelly's Coal Office are complete and one more grant was awarded for the Warrant Officer's House and Guard Room.
- **Red squirrels** were successfully reintroduced to Carnfunnock Country Park and are doing well.

# Key Performance Indicators

## Major awards secured and maintained

In 2019/20 we are monitoring the achievement of the following environmental awards: ISO 14001; Green Flags; Britain in Bloom; NI environmental benchmarking; and Seaside Awards.



14/14

2019/20 was a successful year for Mid and East Antrim in securing and maintaining awards. Council obtained certification to the International Environment Standard 2015:ISO 14001 for the entire organisation. Cullybackey secured a gold award from Britain in Bloom 2019 and Council retained its Platinum status in the Northern Ireland Environmental Benchmarking Survey. We also achieved 8 Green Flags for our local parks and retained 3 Seaside Awards

## Level of external investment secured per annum for regeneration projects

£560,000 of funding was secured from the Department for Communities for public realm works in Greenvale Street, Ballymena.



£560,000 investment

## 'Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful' Cleanliness Index

Scores closer to 100 indicate better performance and 66% is the point at which performance is considered acceptable.



72% score  
(70% 2018)

Council's score is 72% for the July-September 2019 period, a 2% improvement from 2018 for the same period and 4% better than the NI 2019 average.



# Community Safety & Cohesion

## Objectives: What we will do by 2023

1. Encourage good relations by creating vibrant, shared, and cohesive communities within the borough.
2. Improve community safety and confidence to enable people to feel safe and have a sense of belonging to their area.
3. Build the capacity of local communities to become resilient and self-sustainable.
4. Work with partners to provide support to vulnerable people who need it.

## Key achievements

- The **PEACE IV** programme has funded a number of successful projects across the Borough. Completed projects include Trans-i-tions project, Piece by Peace Stress Control, Community Leadership Programme & WISE (Women Interacting, Socialising & Engaging) project. The St.ART (Street Art) project delivered eight Pop-up Cinemas across the Borough with over 1000 people attending. In November, approx. 2,500 people attended the Lumiere event in Carrickfergus. Under the Conflict Transformation & Srebrenica project, 17 young people from the borough travelled to Bosnia-Herzegovina in October as part of a conflict transformation initiative which was organised by Remembering Srebrenica UK.
- New water safety signage was erected throughout our **Harbours & Marinas** sites.
- Council's Community Health and Wellbeing Team, in conjunction with the Registrars Service launched a campaign in December 2019 to reduce the number of home accidents involving young children.
- Parents receive **blind cord safety** devices and fitting instructions free of charge as well as safety advice packs. This project, supported by funding from the Public Health Agency, is designed to raise awareness of the dangers of blind cords and highlight the range of other home safety support measures available to young families in the Borough.
- The new **Entertainment licence policy** was developed following the tragic events at Greenvale Hotel in 2019 in order to improve standards in our licenced premises. The new policy introduces, for the first time, a series of risk categories for licenced premises, providing a framework to streamline licencing activity by focussing resources on those premises deemed to present a higher risk and to provide them with additional support. The policy details the steps and options available to Council where officers identify non-compliance with entertainment licence conditions.
- During 2019/20, Council took part in a regional, multi-agency campaign to raise public awareness of the

importance of being prepared for emergencies. The campaign called **#BeReadyNI** issued a message through social media every day in September. The messages covered a wide range of different topics such as how to protect your home against flooding. In addition, a bi-annual newsletter was produced and circulated to Elected Members to keep them up to date with the impressive work of our local community resilience groups, whilst making sure Elected Members have the latest emergency helplines and other key information to equip them to support Borough residents in times of crisis.

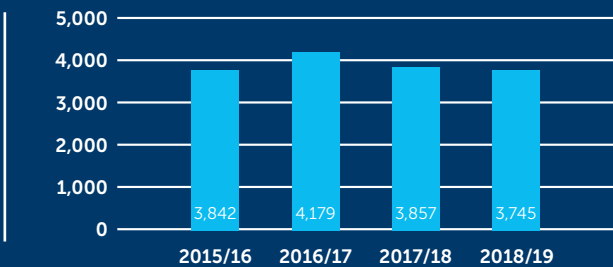
- Council promoted the **'Here2help'** app which was developed by East Antrim Counselling and Ownies Bar. The aim of the app is to provide 'quick to find' helplines for users to get support instantly and also a wide range of links to reading materials that can help people in a time of need. By the start of April, the app had been downloaded over 5,000 times.



# Key Performance Indicators

## Number of anti-social behaviour incidents

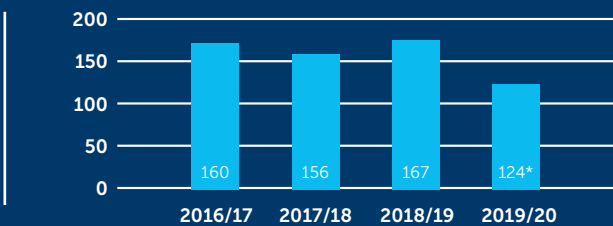
The figures are based on annual data published by the PSNI.



In 2016/17, the number of anti-social behaviour incidents spiked to 4,179, however this has since fallen steadily to 3,745 in 2018/19 and is now at its lowest level in the last 4 years. This reduction in anti-social behaviour incidents may be as a result of a number of projects delivered in the last 2 years via community planning and the PSCP action plan which include 'on street' youth activity targeted programmes for hotspot areas across the Borough.

## Number of incidents recorded with a hate crime motivation

The figures are based on annual data published by the PSNI.



\*The figure for 2019/20 is subject to change. The official annual figure will be published in November 2020.

Over the last 4 years, the number of hate crime incidents rose to a high of 167 in 2018/19, however this has since fallen to a low of 124 in 2019/20. This may be partially accredited to the 'No Hate Here!' Initiative delivered in partnership with Council, PSNI and Inter Ethnic Forum to raise awareness of the impact of hate crime.

## % of people reporting that fear of crime has a minimal impact on their quality of life



The figures are based on annual data published by the Department of Justice via the Northern Ireland Crime Survey. The percentage reporting a minimal impact on their quality of life was at the highest level in 2015/16, however this fell to a low of 69% in 2017/18. 2018/19 saw the figure improve to 74%. This may be partly a result of the 'safer places planning' and 'paramilitary activity' actions which have commenced through community planning; although it is still too early in the community planning process to directly attribute improvement to these actions.

## % of people with a sense of belonging to their area



The figures are based on annual data published by ARK via the Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey. The percentage of people in Mid and East Antrim who feel a sense of belonging to their neighbourhood has increased since 2014-16 to a high of 89.2% in 2015-17 but has fallen slightly to 88.7% in 2016-18.

# Learning for life

## Objectives: What we will do by 2023

1. Work in partnership with the private and community sector to develop the skills needed to support sustained economic development in the borough.
2. Encourage our people to realise their potential through awareness, training and lifelong learning.
3. Develop a joined-up approach to the delivery of education and training programmes in schools and in the wider community.
4. Enhance opportunities for volunteering, work experience and apprenticeship programmes to develop social and employment skills.

## Key achievements

- Following the development of a **Play Strategy** in 2018, officers have delivered fun and innovative ideas to promote access to play. In 2019, thanks to £20,000 in funding secured from the Public Health Agency, officers trained 20 community workers in the basics of being a Play Ranger and delivered 10 equipped 'Play Pods' packed with loose play items such as balls and bean bags to support free play.
- National Children's Play Day** last year saw the delivery of a circus themed event which included a 'quiet hour' for families with children who have additional needs. Children enjoyed a fun-packed day full of challenge and laughter thanks to the support of Belfast Community Circus. Further inclusive events were hosted in Dixon Park, Larne and at Eden Community Centre and will inform future inclusive events delivered by the service.
- Elected Members participated in 6 workshops during the last financial year to help identify the priorities for investment in **fixed play areas** for the next 5 years.
- The Northern Ireland **Forest Schools** Association (NIFSA) has worked with Council to provide a programme of outdoor education opportunities for schools across the borough whilst promoting best use of Council's managed parks and open spaces.
- Horticultural training sessions have been funded through the **Peace IV** Programme. Sessions delivered include, horticultural support for the Base Community Garden, Ballymena and the Dementia-friendly garden in Larne. Rescue and Emergency Care (16 hrs) training took place in March in Carnfunnock Country Park, Larne. The emergency first aid course is designed to introduce a systematic way of managing casualties in an outdoor and austere environment. The course was designed to be as practical as possible and provide participants with realistic scenarios to equip them with the skills to effectively cope in an emergency.
- Council supported two part-time **volunteers** in Waste, one assisting in street cleansing and one based at a Household Recycling Centre.
- Council's Waste team carried out 81 **Eco Schools** / school visits providing continued support to MEA nursery, primary and secondary schools to deliver waste and recycling educational talks/presentations. These visits encourage participation in the Eco Schools programme and to work towards Green Flag status. The team also delivered the **PROUD** Detectives programme to MEA Schools (tackling single-use plastic) and the **MEA Growing Clubs** in partnership with Parks and Open Spaces.
- Environmental Management Awareness Training** was delivered across 10 Council premises.
- 50 candidates were trained in **Food Safety** with a 100% pass rate between October and March.

# Key Performance Indicators

## Number of participants securing employment as a result of employability programmes



**128 participants**

Council supported 4 European Social Fund Employability Programmes helping the unemployed and most vulnerable to receive personal and skills development support and assistance to enter the workplace. The collective target for participants of 150 was well exceeded with 252 people receiving support. 273 accreditation qualifications were gained and 379 non-accredited courses completed. 128 participants have secured employment as a result of employability programmes against a 12-month target of 50.

## Number of days per employee spent on training



**8.5 days**

On average a total of 8.5 days were spent on training versus the target for the year of 9 days. The target was almost met. An ambitious target was set for the first year delivering a full learning & development programme. Learning and feedback from delivery of this year's programme will be fed into the development of future years' programmes.

## Number of apprenticeship/work placement/work experience opportunities delivered by Council



**37 participants**

For the year 2019/20, Council provided a total 37 work experience opportunities which is more than double the annual target of 15. 25 work experience placements were offered to secondary school pupils. Council offered 4 bursary placements through an initiative by the Ulster University with students being based across various service areas for a period of six months. Two industrial placements were provided with the relevant department bearing the costs. A further 6 placements were undertaken on a voluntary basis.

## Number of education and training programmes delivered by council



**15/15 in progress**

In 2019/20 we are monitoring delivery of 15 education and training programmes.

All 15 programmes ran successfully during 2019/20 with a few minor delays caused by COVID-19. The programmes ranged from Exploring Enterprise to Horticultural Training to Slow Cooker demonstrations highlighting the diversity of the educational programmes run by Council.



# Good Health & Wellbeing

## Objectives: What we will do by 2023

1. Deliver a joined-up approach to improve physical and emotional health and wellbeing.
2. Play our part in enabling people to live longer and healthier lives, reducing health inequalities and social isolation.
3. Enable older people to be active, respected and supported in their community.
4. Lead by example to ensure that our workplaces are for health as well as wealth.

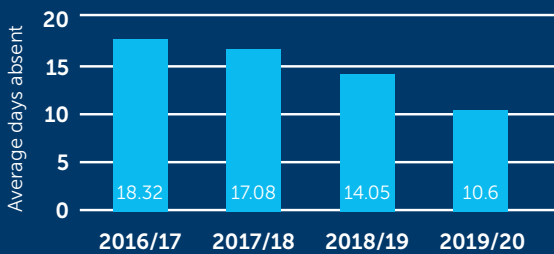
## Key achievements

- We ran a number of successful promotional campaigns for **MEActive**. By February 2020, leisure centre membership increased by 56%, well over the 12% target for the year.
- We completed extensive work at the **Showgrounds** in Ballymena which included an extension to the pitch and the addition of synthetic run-offs. As a result, we achieved Category 2 UEFA approval for the venue. This means that the Showgrounds is now the IFA's second preferred facility after Windsor Park in Belfast, and Ballymena United were able to host their first UEFA game at the ground for 15 years.
- A PEACE IV funded **urban beach** was installed at People's Park, Ballymena. Designed by Chelsea Flower Show Gold winner, Ian Price, the beach provided an expansive space on which to host fun beach-themed events from June to September 2019. The park enjoyed a 30% increase in the number of visitors compared with the previous year.
- Our Communications team have ramped up the output, content and channels to **engage with staff**. This has included the creation and ongoing development of a staff intranet, regular staff e-zine, promotion of staff incentive schemes and recognition of achievements, increased use of Yammer and delivery of Senior Management staff roadshows.
- New **multi-use games areas** were constructed in Ballycarry and Clough facilitating a wide range of sport and recreation activities.
- The MEA **Disability Sports Hub** operates across MEA and supports users with a disability. In 2019/20 728 participants benefitted from 2,258 participating opportunities. Amongst the key initiatives were inclusive bike hire opportunities in Carrickfergus, a 'Take 5' Carrick Grammar Event, wheelchair activities, Pan Disability Clubs across Ballymena, Larne and Carrickfergus, and Boccia Taster Sessions at Larne Leisure Centre.
- Council hosts and supports a **MacMillan Move More Coordinator** who assists people living with cancer through physical activity. 198 people participated in the scheme during 2019/20 versus a target of 175.
- Funded by Sport NI, 3 **Everybody Active** coaches delivered physical activity programmes across the Borough to 5,217 participants.
- We revised the operation of the **oil fuel stamp scheme** run in conjunction with Saint Vincent DePaul to maximise access across the Borough, thus helping those affected by fuel poverty.
- In Autumn 2019, the Health and Wellbeing Forum carried out the first ever **staff wellbeing** survey. Staff from every Directorate contributed. 71% of respondents said that they had a good work/life balance and 79% felt that their work make a difference to others. The findings will now be used by the Health and Wellbeing Forum to prepare its next action plan.

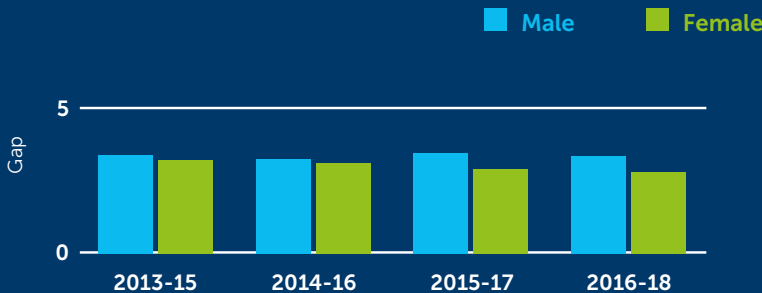
# Key Performance Indicators

## Employee attendance

Absenteeism has continued to drop since 2016/17. A new Attendance Policy was issued in April 2019 and absence has remained a key focus for Council.



## Gap in life expectancy between the most deprived areas in the borough and the borough as a whole



Since 2015/17, there has been a marginal improvement in the life expectancy gap for both males and females. In particular, the gap for females is now at its lowest over the past 4 years, having narrowed by almost a year from 4.0 years in 2013/15 to 3.2 years in 2016-18. Meanwhile the gap in life expectancy for males has remained relatively consistent and is currently 4.3 years.

## % of available Grant Support Scheme funding awarded



104% of the available Grant Support Scheme funding for 2019/20 was awarded. Projects supported included major international events like SuperCup NI, ISPS Handa World Invitational, Royal Landings Celebrations and Dalriada Festival. Senior citizens get togethers, community fun days and individuals participating in community or sporting events have also benefited.

# High Performing Council

## Objectives: What we will do by 2023

1. Take the lead on delivering both the Community Plan and the Local Development Plan, working effectively with our partners.
2. Increase customer satisfaction with our services by being a listening and responsive council.
3. Be recognised as a leading council, delivering excellent services and facilities through collaborative working, innovation and continuous improvement.
4. Embed our values to ensure that our employees feel supported and motivated to realise their potential.



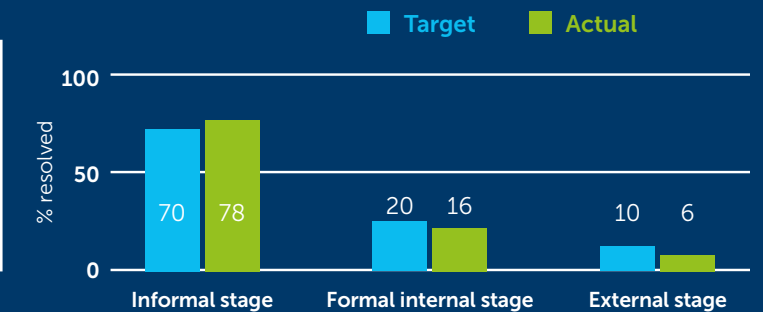
## Key achievements

- Mid and East Antrim's partnership response to the Wrightbus administration announcement and the subsequent economic fightback plans have been heralded as an example of excellence in public sector leadership and recognised with a **Gold iESE Award** at a ceremony held in Westminster in March.
- Council continues to successfully roll out its **Digital Transformation** strategy. A citizen text alert system was introduced in March 2020 and 150 renewal reminder texts were sent to registered dog licence owners. In addition, a booking system has been put in place for marinas which also assists with invoicing and accounting.
- Waste customer service was recognised by **Agenda NI** as a digital transformation case study of best practice in local government.
- Council introduced an online **request/ payment portal facility** and rolled out 30 mobile devices to the waste officers. The Waste Service processed 38,199 requests in total, 2,301 cashdesk payments and orders, made 6,695 deliveries and dealt with 7,266 bulky requests.
- Council are leading on the development of the **Local Development Plan** for the Borough. The 'Draft Plan Strategy' was published in September 2019. The public consultation finished in December 2019 with 200 responses received. 80 counter representations were completed by the end of March.
- Blue flags were awarded to Carrickfergus, Portglenone and Glenarm marinas. Carrickfergus marina retained the **5 Gold Anchors** award.
- Mid and East Antrim Borough Council was crowned **Outstanding In-House Public Relations Team** by judges at the CIPR Pride Awards 2019. Council was recognised for its "expertise and professionalism" at a ceremony attended by leading public relations practitioners from across the public and private sectors. In their citation, the judges said Council's approach to communications had achieved "concrete results" such as increased attendance at local events and the showcasing of the area's attractions".
- **Council's Public Protection, Health and Wellbeing Team** made service accessibility improvements making best use of everyday technology such as a dedicated email address for service requests, text facilities and updated website to assist communications with service navigation to facilitate out-of- hours contact.
- 1,511 residents responded to a **customer survey** on Waste services in February 2020. 91.7% are satisfied or very satisfied with household recycling centres; and 77.2% are satisfied or very satisfied with kerbside collection services.
- Following the annual performance audit, the Northern Ireland Audit Office issued an **unqualified audit opinion** stating that Council has discharged its performance improvement and reporting duties. Satisfactory assurance has been given year on year since performance auditing commenced.
- The **Community Plan Statement of Progress** was published ahead of the statutory deadline of 30th November.

# Key Performance Indicators

## Average escalation rate of complaints

Our aim is to resolve any complaints received at the earliest point of contact in line with good practice.



We exceeded our target of resolving at least 70% of complaints informally in 2019/20.

## Net cost of council services per head of population

This indicator is reported annually to the Association of Public Sector Excellence.



**£307**  
2018/19 figure

The figure for 2019/20 will be reported to Council in December 2020.

## Customer Satisfaction

In Autumn 2018, Council carried out a comprehensive survey of 775 local householders.



**88%** residents satisfied

88% of residents said that they were satisfied with Council. We are considering cost-effective ways of effectively measuring customer satisfaction in the future.

## Staff satisfaction

Council commissioned Investors in People to run an online staff engagement survey in Spring 2018.



Likely to be repeated during **2020/21**, subject to implications from the COVID-19 pandemic.

An action plan was put in place by the staff-led ACHIEVE team to address the issues identified.



3.3.3 Performance Improvement Plan

Specific performance indicators are defined against each of the five improvement objectives within the Performance Improvement Plan for 2019/20.

These are outlined within the Project Initiation Documents for each objective. Progress has been made against the objectives and relevant indicators, as outlined in section 3.1 of this report.

3.3.4 Business Planning and Performance Management System

During 2019/20, self-imposed performance indicators were defined within Directorate and Department Business Plans across each service area and used to drive continuous improvement in all areas.

As outlined in section 2, a Performance Management Framework was introduced during 2017. A business planning process was developed within this framework that was used for Directorate and Departmental business planning for 2019/20. Self-imposed performance indicators were defined within the business plans across each department and used to drive continuous improvement in all areas.

From 1 April 2019, all business plans are held within the electronic performance management system. This ensures that all business plans are held centrally and planned outcomes are required to have defined

performance indicators. The system enables clear progress monitoring throughout the year.

Each Directorate Business Plan was approved by the Chief Executive and scrutinised by the Audit & Scrutiny Committee during the year. Department Business Plans were approved by the relevant Director. Progress is reviewed against the defined outcomes and self-imposed indicators at least every six months using R/A/G status updates in order to provide a clear picture of performance. During 2019/20, significant progress was made in all areas.

Corporate and Directorate Plan indicators

The pie chart below summarises progress made against the 27 corporate KPIs, including the statutory KPIs, and the corporate objectives that are defined at a strategic level within Directors’ business plans. The results show that the majority of objectives and key performance indicators are on track. Of the 149 objectives and indicators that were monitored during 2019/20, 118 were on track, 20 were delayed but progressing, 4 were not yet due and 7 did not meet their targets at year-end.



Overall summary of performance

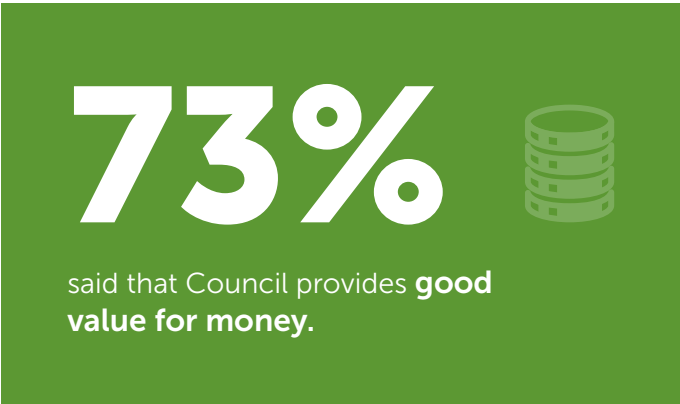
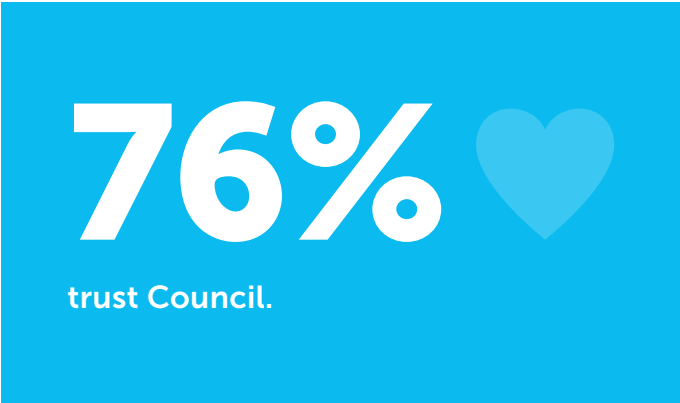
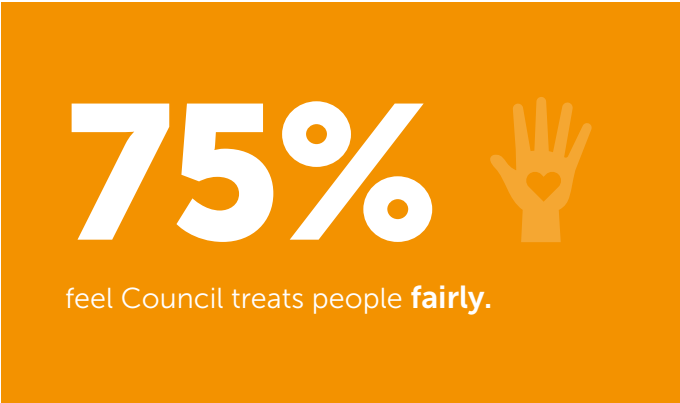
- 118 targets achieved/on track
- 20 delayed but progressing
- 7 targets not achieved
- 4 not due yet



3.3.5 Household Survey

In Autumn 2018, Council commissioned a household survey to inform the new Corporate Plan and determine residents’ satisfaction. A representative sample of 775 people across the Borough were interviewed and the headline results are summarised below.

The survey results serve as valuable baseline data for monitoring our performance over the life of the Corporate Plan for 2019-2023. We are considering cost-effective ways of running another survey in the future.





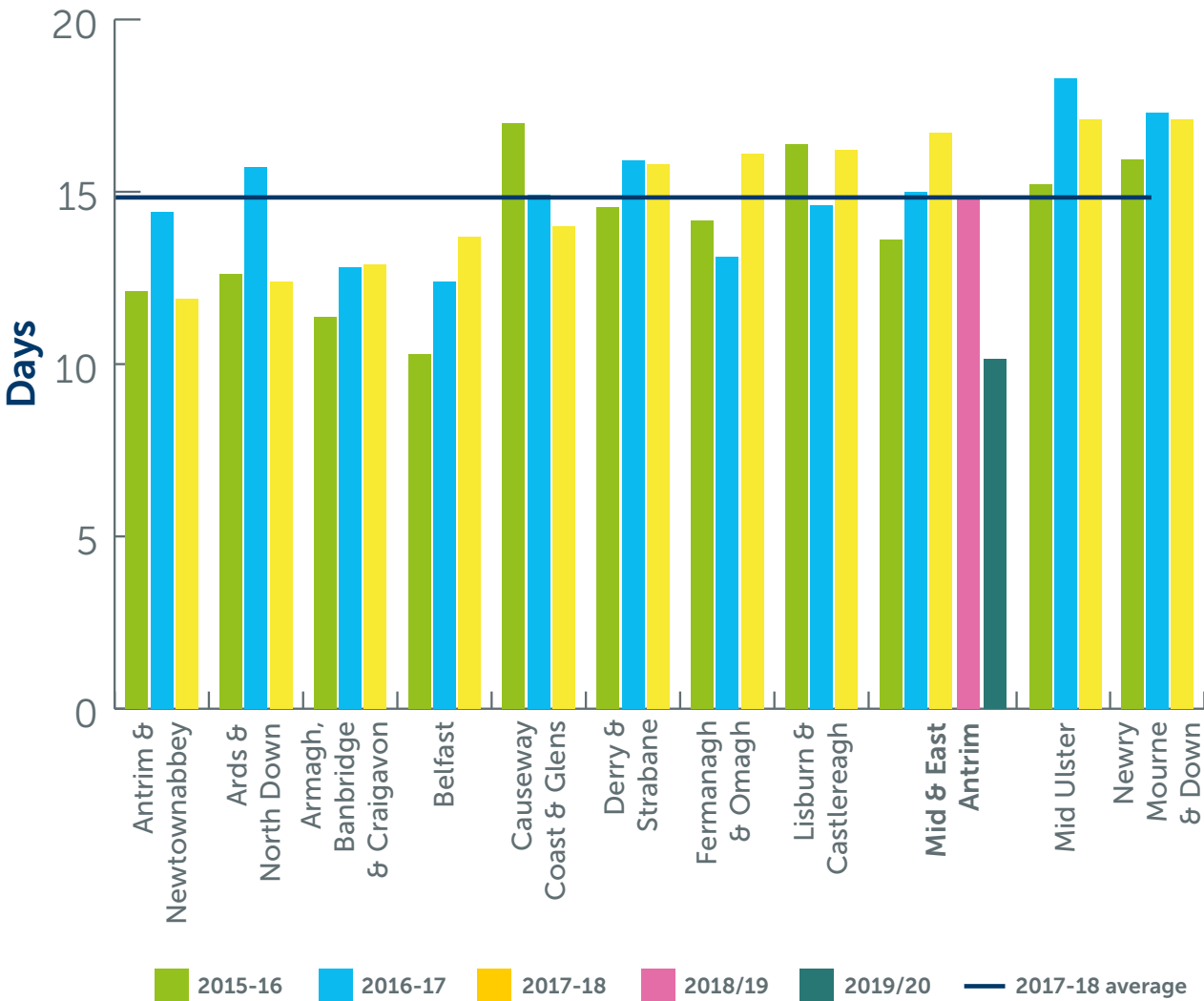
# 3.4 Benchmarking

## 3.4.1 Absenteeism

Absenteeism in Mid and East Antrim is now on a downward trend after Council experienced the highest rate in Northern Ireland during the two years 2016/17 and 2017/18.

As discussed in section 3.3, a range of actions were implemented during 2018/19 resulting in a reduction in absenteeism from an average of 17.08 days during 2017/18 to 14.05 days in 2018/19. This has since fallen to a low of 10.64 days in 2019/20.

Absenteeism benchmarking

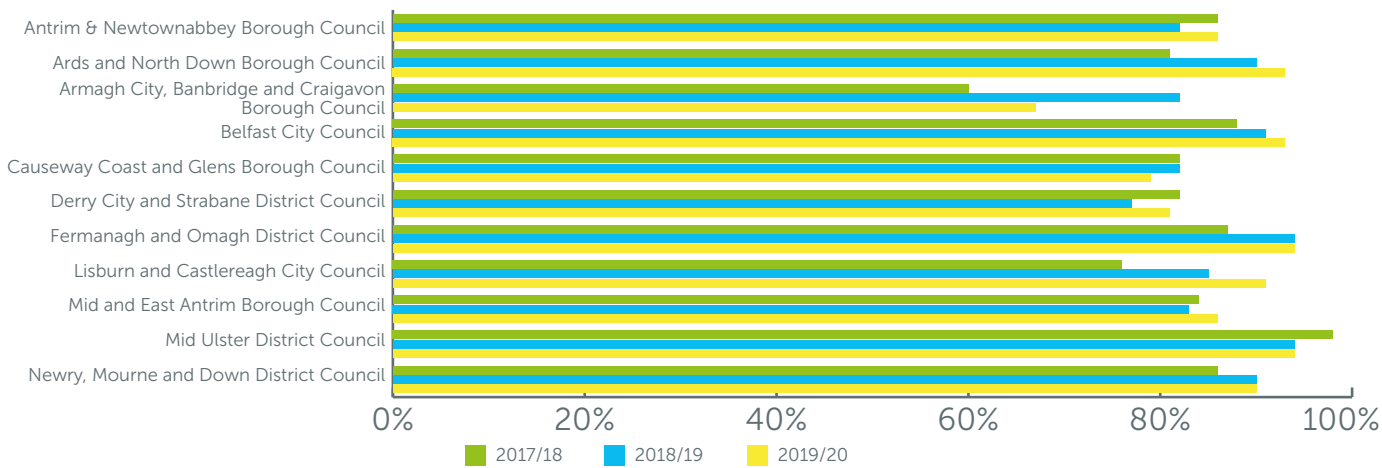


## 3.4.2 Prompt payments

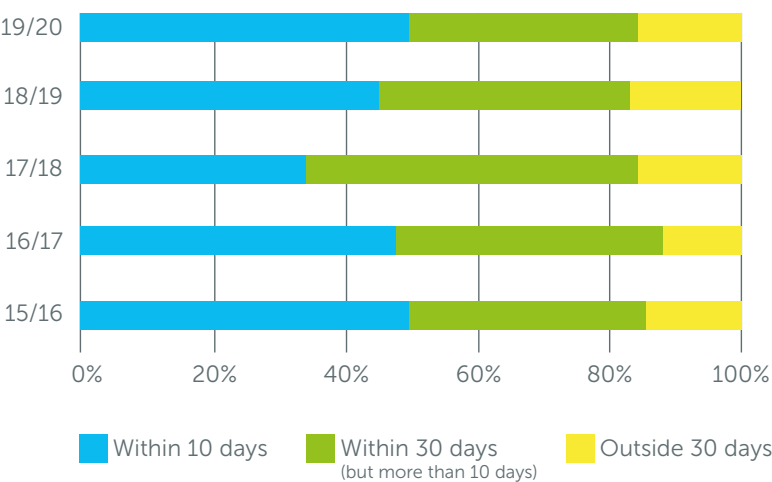
In order to process payments as quickly as possible, in line with the guidance provided by Department for Communities, Council implemented an Electronic Purchase Ordering system in late 2017. At that stage, Council was paying 32% of all invoices within 10 working days and 83% within 30 calendar days. In 2018/19, performance had improved to 45% of all invoices within 10 working days and we maintained the 30 day percentage.

Since April 2019, Council has also operated an alert system which provides notifications when an order requires action. With this new addition and the experience gained from using the system, we achieved the target of 50% of invoices paid within 10 working days during 2019/20. Furthermore 86% of invoices were paid within 30 days.

Percentage of payments within 30 days across the last three years



Mid and East Antrim Borough Council - year on year tracking of prompt payments



Source: Unaudited data from Department for Communities quarterly publications

### 3.4.3 Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE)

Mid and East Antrim Borough Council has signed up with APSE on the 'NI Benchmarking Project', alongside a number of other Northern Ireland Councils.

Benchmarking supports the development of a culture of continuous improvement, allowing us to compare our performance with other Councils within Northern Ireland and throughout the UK. Data collection templates have been developed for the following 11 service areas:

- **Arts and Heritage**
- **Building Control**
- **Cemetery and Crematorium Services**
- **Community Development**
- **Corporate Services (OD/HR, ICT, Registration Services, Training & Learning, Finance & Financial Services, Legal Services, Democratic Services, Complaints and Cost of Services)**
- **Economic Development**
- **Environmental Health**
- **Parks, Open Spaces and Horticultural Services**
- **Planning**
- **Refuse Collection**
- **Street Cleansing**

The APSE NI benchmarking project commenced in 2015/16 and is now in its fifth year; however, there have been several amendments to the agreed indicators over that time. As the project develops and the indicators stabilise, the data will become more useful for both year on year trend analysis and benchmarking against other Councils. For 2018/19, there were 131 performance indicators in the APSE benchmarking framework, of which Mid and East Antrim submitted data for 99 indicators.

Detailed analysis was completed internally by Council and included comparisons between figures submitted for the Borough in 2018/19 and the NI average and identified any improvement or deterioration since 2017/18 (where data was available).

For the purposes of analysis of the 2018/19 data, 85 comparable indicators were considered.

- In 39% (33 indicators) of these indicators, Council performed best or better than the NI average;
- In 59% (50 indicators) of the comparable indicators, there was an improvement since 2017/18;
- In 40% (34 indicators), Council performed below the NI average but not worst across participating councils; and
- In 21% (18 indicators), Mid and East Antrim performed worst across all participating councils.

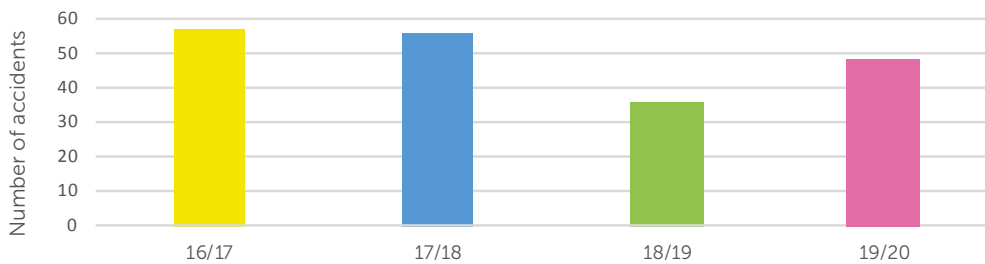
In particular, Mid and East Antrim performed best in NI on 12% of all the comparable indicators they submitted. It should also be noted, more than a third of the indicators for which Mid and East Antrim performed below average were due to staff absences, both long and short term. This was the case in Operational Services such as refuse collection and street cleansing.

### 3.4.4 Benchmarking (Internal)

As well as benchmarking with external bodies, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council also carry out internal benchmarking with year-on-year comparisons.

As discussed in section 3.3, year-on-year comparisons are carried out for the Corporate Plan indicators. Further comparisons are conducted by individual Council departments relevant to their service delivery and used to inform improvements. An example is provided below for Health & Safety accidents.

#### Health and Safety accidents



### 3.4.5 Best Practice Research

In addition to participation in the APSE Northern Ireland Benchmarking Project, Council officers across a range of service areas, alongside Elected Members, undertook a range of visits to look at best practice in other Councils areas and external organisations.

These included:

- Periodic meetings by the Communications Team with the NI Public Sector Communications Forum to share experiences and knowledge.
- Visit by the Public Protection, Health and Wellbeing team to three recently opened leisure centres in Belfast, Newtownards and Antrim to assist in the planning and design of the new leisure centre at St. Patricks Barracks.
- Visit by the Parks and Open Spaces Development team to newly completed fixed play facilities in three separate council areas to investigate the different approaches to play area design and safety surfacing.

A comprehensive list of best practice visits is included at Appendix 5.





# 3.5 Performance Audits

## 3.5.1 Northern Ireland Audit Office – External Audit 2019

Council's continuous improvement approach is subject to statutory external audit by the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO).

In 2019, the NIAO completed an audit of Council's assessment of its performance for 2018/19 and its 2019/20 Performance Improvement Plan in accordance with section 93 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 and the Code of Audit Practice for local government bodies.

As a result of the audit that took place between September and October 2019, the Local Government Auditor certified Mid and East Antrim Borough Council's performance arrangements with an unqualified audit opinion.

**Mid and East Antrim Borough Council has discharged its duties in connection with (1) improvement planning and (2) publication of improvement information in accordance with section 92 of the Act and has acted in accordance with the Department for Communities' guidance sufficiently.**

With regards to the Improvement Assessment, the NIAO concluded that Council had discharged its duties under Part 12 of the Act and acted in accordance with the Department for Communities' guidance sufficiently.

It was also concluded that the Council delivered some measurable improvements to its services in 2018/19, demonstrating a track record of ongoing improvement and is likely to comply with Part 12 of the Act during 2019/20.

A summary of the key actions taken by Council in response to the NIAO audit recommendations are outlined in Appendix 2.

## 3.5.2 Internal Audit

ASM were appointed to conduct an internal audit review of Performance Improvement within Mid and East Antrim Borough Council during June 2017.

A review audit was conducted by ASM during June 2019, following the audit that took place during 2017. The review noted that 12 out of 13 recommendations for improvement were fully implemented with one partially implemented.

The partially implemented recommendation highlighted that Business Plans for 2019/20 were all developed, approved and input into the new electronic Performance Management system by 1st April, in line with the required business planning process. However, evidence relating to the approvals was gathered after this date. This continues to be an area for improvement.

Draft business plans for 2020/21 were received in advance of 1st April 2020 for all Directorates and Departments. However, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, these have not been finalised and interim business plans have been developed. These interim plans will not be subject to the same monitoring and review process that would normally apply. It is hoped that the business planning process will resume as normal for the 2021/22 year.

Between October 2019 and February 2020, ASM conducted a further internal audit review of Performance Improvement within Mid and East Antrim Borough Council.

The objective of the review was to provide Council with an independent opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the control framework established by the Council.

The audit resulted in 3 recommendations for improvement, including:

- The introduction of an Assurance Statement regime which requires relevant Heads of Service and Directors to confirm that they have validated the data which is reported by them within the quarterly performance reports.
- Evidence of the Corporate Performance Team's review of the annual APSE return is retained to allow for a sufficient audit trail.
- Given the "live" nature of the grants system, we recommend that the Council ensure that there is sufficient documentation retained supporting the figures reported within its annual Self-Assessment Report.

All of these recommendations have been accepted and measures have been put in place to ensure compliance. Details of these measures and updates on previous internal audit recommendations can be found in Appendix 3.

# 4.0 Performance Improvement Plan 2020/21

The Department for Communities advised local Councils on 11 June 2020 that as a result of the pandemic, a Performance Improvement Plan was not required for publication by the statutory deadline of 30 June 2020.

However, due to the significant work already undertaken, public support for the improvement objectives and to build on progress achieved over the last few years, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council agreed to proceed with the publication of the Performance Improvement Plan 2020/21. Adjustments were made to the plan to take account of the implications of the pandemic.

The Performance Improvement Plan for 2020/21 does not detail every improvement we intend to deliver this year, but focuses on key areas identified for improvement.

The consultation process and the criteria used to select the improvement objectives is detailed within the Performance Improvement Plan 2020/21, which is published on Council’s website at [www.midandeantrim.gov.uk/PIP](http://www.midandeantrim.gov.uk/PIP)

## Consultation process

The plan and its objectives were developed through a process of collaboration with the Chief Executive, Senior Management Team and Elected Members, before the launch of a public consultation.

A 14 week public consultation process from 4 February – 12 May 2020 and included:

- Public consultation events in Ballymena, Larne and Carrickfergus as part of the information events for the Council Grants Programme. These were attended by a wide range of community groups, representing a wide variety of interests.
- An online survey on our website.
- Emails to local community groups who engage with the Council.
- An email from the Chief Executive to all employees requesting their views via the online survey.

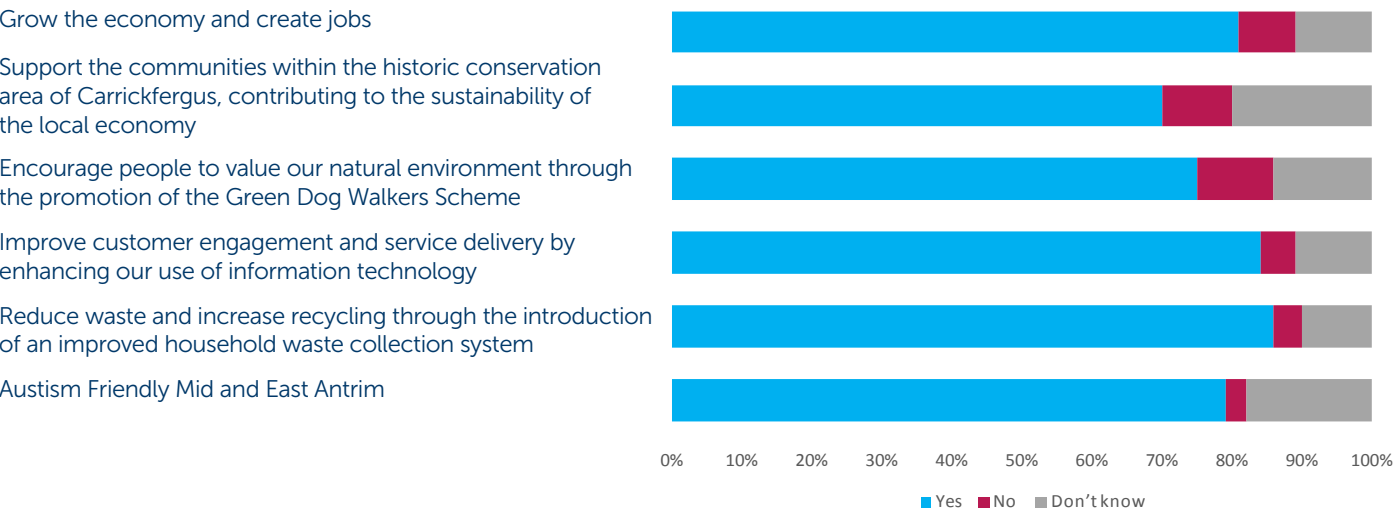
113 people responded to the Performance Improvement Plan 2020/21 online survey.

Substantial support was given for our proposed Improvement Objectives with all of our objectives receiving at least 70% support.

Our objective to ‘Improve customer engagement and service delivery by enhancing our use of information technology’ received significant support with 84%.

Our objective ‘Support the communities within the historic conservation area of Carrickfergus, contributing to the sustainability of the local economy’ received the least support at 70%. However, only 10% of respondents disagreed, with 20% neither agreeing nor disagreeing.

The full results are laid out in the chart below.



Following the consultation process, 5 improvement objectives were taken forward for delivery during 2020/21.



As a result of the COVID 19 pandemic, government funding was not received as was expected for the Waste related project. Therefore, this project is not financially viable to deliver in the 2020/21 year. The high level of public support demonstrated through the consultation means that the scheme may be taken forward at a future date, if funding becomes available.





# 4.1 Publication of Performance Improvement Plan

The draft Performance Improvement Plan for 2020/21 was agreed by Council on 9 June 2020 and subsequently published on the Council website. The agreed improvement objectives for the 2020/21 year are summarised in the table below.

Improvement Objective	What you will see	By when*
Grow the economy and create jobs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The promotion of new jobs in the borough by successfully delivering the 'Go for It' Programme.</li> <li>The growth of new industry sectors by being a Centre of Excellence for start-ups, spin-outs and social-economy businesses within the Ecos Innovation Centre.</li> <li>Delivery of an effective and efficient Planning Service to maximise economic development.</li> </ul>	March 2022
Support the communities within the historic conservation area of Carrickfergus, contributing to the sustainability of the local economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Up to 10 buildings of historical and architectural interest restored (including 3 existing awarded schemes), through the Townscape Heritage Initiative, with Council and National Lottery Heritage Fund grant assistance, by March 2022 or beyond.</li> <li>The local community will have a better understanding of built heritage.</li> <li>Increased inward investment and local employment opportunities related both directly and indirectly to heritage and tourism growth.</li> </ul>	March 2022 or beyond
Encourage people to value our natural environment through the promotion of the Green Dog Walkers Scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Responsible dog ownership through increased participation and support of the Green Dog Walkers Scheme.</li> <li>A marketing and promotional campaign to challenge attitudes and change behaviours.</li> <li>A cleaner borough.</li> </ul>	March 2021
Improve customer engagement and service delivery by enhancing our use of information technology	<p>Further implementation of our Digital Transformation Strategy through delivery of a number of citizen-focused projects to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A redesign of the Council website developed from user experience feedback.</li> <li>Transformation of Council telephony services.</li> <li>Conversion of additional services to citizen text alert system.</li> <li>Digital Transformation of at least one customer facing service.</li> <li>Additional WiFi Points (Phase three).</li> </ul>	March 2021
Autism Friendly Mid and East Antrim	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An awareness-raising programme to develop the borough as an autism friendly place.</li> <li>We will secure 'Autism Friendly' organisation status as a potential model for other Community Planning Partners.</li> </ul>	March 2021

\* Timescales may be subject to change as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.





# 5.0 Overall Performance Assessment

Area	Strengths	Areas for improvement
Arrangements to secure continuous improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mid and East Antrim Borough Council's Performance Management Framework was revised in line with the new Corporate Plan for 2019-2023 and continues to drive performance improvement across the organisation.</li> <li>Council's Performance Management System was used to collate key performance information for monitoring, reporting and managing performance delivery of all directorate and departmental business plans during 2019/20. Quarterly update reports were provided to all directorates, ensuring timely and clear reporting of performance.</li> <li>Audit &amp; Scrutiny Committee continue to receive quarterly progress updates regarding progress with Improvement Objectives and statutory performance indicators.</li> <li>Council used the internal audit function during 2019/20 to identify areas for improvement and follow-up on the implementation of previous recommendations.</li> <li>Over the last 2 years, the Personal Development Planning (PDP) process has embedded within the normal operating procedures of the organisation. The process has been modified because of the COVID-19 pandemic and is expected to return to normal once normal business resumes.</li> <li>Council have published a Performance Improvement Plan for 2020/21, despite COVID-19, in order to maintain momentum and build on progress made over the last few years regarding performance improvement. A number of targets are dependent on the implications of the pandemic.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Personal Development Planning process is being reviewed for effectiveness by the ACHIEVE team. This work has been delayed as a result of COVID-19 but will be progressed during 2020/21.</li> <li>An assurance scheme is being developed to improve validation of data collated within the performance management system.</li> </ul>
Assessment of Performance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improvement Objectives</li> <li>Statutory indicators</li> <li>Self-imposed indicators</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>78% of the outcomes from the Improvement Objectives for 2019/20 have been fully completed with a further 22% in progress.</li> <li>6 out of the 7 statutory performance indicators have exceeded the standards set.</li> <li>A new Corporate Plan 2019-2023 was launched that is now more closely aligned with the Community Plan for the Borough. 84% of the 19 Corporate Plan self-imposed indicators that were due, were fully achieved, with a further 16% progressing against targets during 2019/20.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A number of recommendations from recent internal and external audits are outstanding. These have all been accepted and plans are in place in fully implement these going forward.</li> </ul>

Area	Strengths	Areas for improvement
Assessment of Performance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improvement Objectives</li> <li>Statutory indicators</li> <li>Self-imposed indicators</li> </ul> (continued)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Director level business plans are scrutinised by Audit &amp; Scrutiny Committee every 6 months. Of the 149 objectives and indicators that were monitored throughout the year, 92% were either fully achieved or progressing.</li> <li>Outstanding actions from previous Performance Improvement Plans have now been fully implemented.</li> <li>A wide range of recommendations from previous internal and external audits have been implemented.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A number of Performance Improvement Objectives for 2019/20 were not fully implemented as a result of COVID-19. These will be taken forward once normal business resumes.</li> </ul>
Comparisons: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To previous financial years</li> <li>With other Councils</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Statutory performance indicators have year-on-year figures that are used to manage performance and identify improvement actions within the relevant Departments.</li> <li>Mid and East Antrim Borough Council are within the top performing Councils for the statutory performance indicators in the areas of Economic Development (1st) and Planning (1st in processing local applications).</li> <li>Corporate Indicators have baselines and targets, where possible, to provide trend analysis which will be further developed over the 4 years of the Corporate Plan 2019-2023.</li> <li>Council's absenteeism continues to decrease from 17.08 days in 2017/18 to 10.64 days during 2019/20.</li> <li>Mid and East Antrim Borough Council has conducted best practice visits and reviews with other organisations in specific service areas to learn improved ways of delivering services.</li> <li>A wide range of benchmarking activity has taken place within Council Departments and used to identify improvements to service delivery.</li> <li>Mid and East Antrim Borough Council participate in the APSE 'Northern Ireland Benchmarking Project'. During 2018/19, Mid and East Antrim performed best on 12% of all indicators submitted. There was also an improvement in 59% of the Borough's comparable indicators since 2017/18.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The APSE 'Northern Ireland Benchmarking Project' continues to be reviewed and improved each financial year, working alongside other local Councils.</li> <li>The corporate approach to benchmarking will be developed in line with recommendations from the Local Government Performance Improvement Working Group, in conjunction with the Department for Communities and NIAO, through a wider review of performance requirements for the next few years.</li> </ul>



# 6.0 Conclusions

Part 12 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 (The Act) requires Council to make arrangements for the publication of its assessment of its performance.

Council are required to publish a self-assessment report on performance by 30 September each year. This is the fourth year that Councils have been required to publish a self-assessment report in order to fulfil statutory requirements.

This Performance Self-Assessment report for Mid and East Antrim Borough Council covers the following areas relating to performance during 2019-2020:

- **Arrangements to Secure Continuous Improvement**
- **Assessment of Performance during 2019/20**
- **Performance Improvement Plan 2020/21**
- **Overall Performance Assessment**

Mid and East Antrim Borough Council have taken a wide range of actions throughout 2019/20 in order to further embed arrangements for continuous improvement.

The Performance Management System was used to collate key performance information for monitoring, reporting and managing performance delivery of all directorate and departmental business plans during 2019/20. Over the last 2 years, the Personal Development Planning (PDP) process has embedded within the normal operating procedures of the organisation. A wide range of recommendations from previous internal and external audits have been implemented.

Council have published a Performance Improvement Plan for 2020/21, despite COVID-19, in order to maintain momentum and build on progress made over the last few years.

A new Corporate Plan 2019-2023 was launched that is now more closely aligned with the Community Plan for the Borough. Corporate Plan indicators have baselines and targets, where possible, to provide trend analysis which will be further developed over the 4 years of the Corporate Plan 2019-2023.

Council continues to perform well with regard to the Statutory Performance Indicators, in particular with jobs promotion through the Business Start-Up programme and processing of local planning applications.

Areas for improvement have been identified as a result of this self-assessment process which include an assurance scheme to improve validation of data collated within the performance management system on a regular basis. Outstanding actions relating to our Performance Improvement Objectives and internal and external audits need to be completed to fully realise the planned outcomes. The corporate approach to benchmarking will be developed in line with recommendations from the Local Government Performance Improvement Working Group, in conjunction with the Department for Communities and NIAO, through a wider review of performance requirements for the next few years.

## Abbreviations:

NIAO	Northern Ireland Audit Office
NIEA	Northern Ireland Environment Agency
OMT	Operational Management Team
SMT	Senior Management Team

## Appendices:

Appendix 1	Annual Planning Cycle
Appendix 2	Management Response to NIAO recommendations
Appendix 3	Management Response to internal audit recommendations
Appendix 4	Internal and external benchmarking
Appendix 5	Best practice benchmarking visits by MEA staff and/or Elected Members

# Appendix 1

## Mid and East Antrim Borough Council Performance Planning Cycle

The table below illustrates the typical annual cycle for planning and review (excluding the Community Plan) for key elements within the Performance Management Framework. The exact dates may vary depending on operational circumstances. The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted on some of these dates for 2019/20 reports.

Milestone	Who	When
Review of Corporate Plan	Council	December and July
Review of Performance Improvement Plan	Audit and Scrutiny Committee	Quarterly
Business Planning process issued	Corporate Performance and & Improvement Department	November
Directorate and Department Business Plans drafted (including Team Planning days)	SMT/OMT	November – January
Draft Performance Improvement Plan launched for consultation	Corporate Performance & Improvement Department	February
Directorate Business Plan to Chief Executive/Parent Committee	SMT	March
Department Business Plans to Director	OMT	January
PDPs agreed(draft)	Line Managers/	April – June
PDPs reviewed	Employees	Six-monthly
Performance Improvement Plan published on website	Corporate Performance & Improvement Department	30 June
Annual self-assessment report	Corporate Performance & Improvement Department	30 September
6 -monthly updates on Annual Business Plans	SMT	December/June

# Appendix 2

Management Response to NIAO recommendations for improvement - updated February 2020

## A) Proposals for Improvement (2019-20)

NIAO have raised one proposal for improvement.

	Issue	Proposal for Improvement	Management Comment
1.0	<p>One of the key outcomes relating to the Carrickfergus Townscape Heritage Initiative performance objective was the restoration of up to 18 properties by December 2020.</p> <p>The target of restoring up to 18 properties has been revised to the restoration of up to 10 properties by December 2020 in the 2019/20 Performance Improvement Plan and a further extension has now been granted until March 2021.</p> <p>The Council and the THI Project Board has encountered various owner / proposer difficulties which left many of them unwilling or uncertain in the take-up of grants and the proposed original target has therefore proven difficult to achieve.</p> <p>At the time of audit, 2 properties were completed and the revised target of restoring up to 10 properties may be seen to be ambitious.</p>	<p>Council should consider in detail all relevant issues that could impact on the achievement of this revised target of restoring up to 10 properties, given the continued economic problems and town centre vacancy with little or no return on investment, which could impinge heavily on the third party investors needed for this scheme to proceed.</p>	<p>As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic the principle funder, National Lottery Heritage Fund, have further offered flexibility over the proposed new grant expiry date of March 2022 and beyond during this period of uncertainty.</p> <p>The restoration of up to 10 buildings by March 2022 or beyond has been included within the Performance Improvement Plan for 2020/21.</p> <p>This target is considered realistic, as well as remaining ambitious for the regeneration of the town.</p>
2.0	<p>A number of Proposals for Improvement from prior years are still in progress and have not been fully implemented.</p>	<p>The Council should prioritise prior year Proposals for Improvement and take steps to address them.</p>	<p>Council have, and will continue to actively work towards the full implementation of prior year proposals for improvement, as outlined in the table below.</p>



## B) Prior year Proposals for Improvement (2016-2018)

For the purpose of this report, only those Proposals which are still in progress are noted below.

2016-2017		Proposal for Improvement	Action taken by Council
1.0	General Duty to Improve	Cascade the framework (or policy) and performance improvement responsibilities directly to all employees.	<p>The Performance Management Framework is reviewed regularly to ensure it remains fit for purpose. The framework is communicated to employees by the Performance team at relevant events and has been cascaded to all employees.</p> <p>The Personal Development Planning process is a key element within our Performance Management Framework and is now embedded within our operational management systems.</p> <p>86% of PDPs were completed during the 2018/19 year and 87% during 2019/20.</p> <p>As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the PDP process has been modified and will not be monitored or reviewed during 2020/21. However, the process is expected to return to normal during 2021/22.</p> <p>Mandatory indicators will be included in all Departmental Business Plans once normal business resumes to monitor achievement towards further implementation of the process.</p>
			<p>In September 2017, the Council's Internal Auditors, ASM, reviewed the Performance Improvement monitoring process within the Council and issued a "limited" rating.</p> <p>A follow-up audit took place in June 2019, which highlighted that all but one of the 13 recommendations had been fully implemented with the remaining being partially implemented but continuing to progress.</p> <p>The recommendation that was partially implemented, highlighted that Business Plans for 2019/20 were all developed, approved and input into the new electronic Performance Management system by 1 April, in line with the required business planning process. However, evidence relating to the approvals was gathered after this date.</p> <p>The business planning process for 2020/21 included a requirement that evidence of approvals must be sent to the Performance team before the plans went live on the performance management system.</p> <p>Director and Department business plans were developed within the required timescales for 2020/21; however, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, business plans were amended to refocus on Councils recovery. Therefore, the business planning process will not proceed as normal during the 2020/21 financial year. It is expected that business planning will continue as normal for 2021/22.</p>
2.0	Governance Arrangements	Using the internal audit function to provide assurance on the integrity and operation of the Council's performance improvement processes.	<p>Using the internal audit function to provide assurance on the integrity and operation of the Council's performance improvement processes (continued).</p>

2016-2017	Proposal for Improvement	Action taken by Council
2.0	Governance Arrangements (continued)	<p>Using the internal audit function to provide assurance on the integrity and operation of the Council's performance improvement processes (continued).</p> <p>Internal audit were also engaged to complete work on the validation of data used for measuring Performance Improvement. Council's internal auditors undertook a review during September to October 2019. The audit considered the adequacy and effectiveness of the data collection processes operating across the Council's directorates and to validate a sample of data reported by Council in the Performance Improvement Plan for the following indicators:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of businesses engaged across business support programmes.</li> <li>Level of external investment secured per annum for regeneration projects.</li> <li>Number of participants securing employment as a result of employability programmes.</li> <li>Employee attendance.</li> <li>Percentage of available Grant Support Scheme funding awarded.</li> <li>Net cost of council services per head of population.</li> <li>Number of dog fouling complaints.</li> </ol> <p>The findings were presented to Audit &amp; Scrutiny committee in February 2020 and a satisfactory assurance was given. The internal audit resulted in three recommendations for improvement, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The introduction of an Assurance Statement regime which requires relevant Heads of Service and Directors to confirm that they have validated the data which is reported by them within the quarterly performance reports.</li> <li>Evidence of the Corporate Performance Team's review of the annual APSE return is retained to allow for a sufficient audit trail.</li> <li>Given the "live" nature of the grants system, we recommend that the Council ensure that there is sufficient documentation retained supporting the figures reported within its annual Self-Assessment Report.</li> </ul> <p>These recommendations have been accepted and measures are being put in place to ensure compliance.</p>



2018		Proposal for Improvement	Action taken by Council
1.0	Improvement Objectives	The Council should ensure that each improvement objective and its underlying projects are focused on outcomes for citizens in relation to improved functions and/or services. The outcome(s) should always be clearly stated so that citizens can understand how they will benefit.	Previous Performance Improvement Plans and the current plan for 2020/21 have been drafted in line with this proposal for improvement, whereby all objectives within the plan are aligned with both the Community and Corporate Plans, with clearly defined outcomes for citizens.
2.0	Performance Objectives	The Council should continue working with other councils and the Department to agree a suite of self-imposed indicators and standards. This will enable meaningful comparisons to be made and published in line with its statutory responsibility.	<p>Through SOLACE, our Chief Executive chairs the Performance Improvement Working Group (PIWG), which brings together Performance Officers, the Department for Communities (DFC) and the NIAO. The Group has been working to ensure a consistent approach to performance and has identified a need to clarify benchmarking requirements.</p> <p>An initial meeting was held with the Department for Communities in December 2019 and a number of actions were agreed. However, the impacts of COVID-19 have delayed the delivery of these actions.</p> <p>The longer-term approach to benchmarking will continue to be further developed by the working group, in conjunction with the Department for Communities once normal business resumes.</p>





# Appendix 3

## Internal Audit

Performance Improvement Monitoring – Follow-up Review – June 2019  
Details of the partially implemented recommendation can be found below:

ASM report reference	Priority	Recommendations as at September 2017	ASM findings as at June 2019	Management comment
B4	2	We recommend that the Department level Business Plans should be approved by the relevant Director before the start of the year to which they relate.	<b>Partially implemented</b> During our review, we selected the 4 Department Level Business Plans as noted above for review. Our discussions with the Council’s Governance and Risk manager indicated that all Business Plans had received approval prior to their upload to the online Performance Management System on 1 April 2019. We note, however, that evidence showing these approvals was only recorded retrospectively in April and June. Going forward, these approvals should be recorded prior to the start of the year to which they relate.	The business planning process for 2020/21 included a requirement that evidence of approvals must be sent to the Performance team before the plans went live on the performance management system. Director and Department business plans were developed within the required timescales for 2020/21; however, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, business plans were amended to refocus on Councils recovery. Therefore, the business planning process will not proceed as normal during the 2020/21 financial year. It is expected that business planning will continue as normal for 2021/22.

Validation of Data – Internal audit - February 2020

ASM report reference	Priority	Recommendation as at February 2020	Management comment as at February 2020	Action Taken by Council
A5	2	We recommend that the Council introduce as Assurance Statement regime, which requires relevant Heads of Service and Directors to confirm that they have validated the data, which is reported by them within the quarterly performance reports.	An Assurance Statement regime will be implemented for the validation of quarterly performance reports during 2020/21.	Once normal business resumes following the COVID-19 pandemic recovery, all Heads of Service and Directors will be asked to sign-off on their business plans to confirm that they have validated their data. Evidence of approval will be retained on file.  Council are working with the providers of the electronic Performance Management System to explore ways of automating this process. It is expected that the system will be configured to require electronic sign-off and to store evidence of approval. It is anticipated that this will be implemented before the end of the 2020/21 financial year.
A6	2	We recommend that evidence of the Corporate Performance Team’s review of the annual APSE return is retained to allow for a sufficient audit trail.	Evidence of the Corporate Performance team’s review of the annual APSE return will be retained.	APSE data returns are verified by the Performance Team before submitting to APSE. Evidence of this will be retained.  APSE results are benchmarked and reported to the Senior Management Team on an annual basis.
B4	3	Given the “live” nature of the grants system, we recommend that the Council ensure that there is sufficient documentation retained supporting the figures reported within its annual Self-Assessment Report.	Council will maintain supporting documentation at the point at which the % of available Grant Support Scheme funding awarded is published.	Evidence is retained by the Grant Support Team and figures are published as part of the Corporate Plan monitoring process on a six-monthly basis.



# Appendix 4

## Internal and External Benchmarking

ACTIVITY - Internal	ACTIVITY – External
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Annual Business Plan</li><li>• Annual Carbon Footprint Report</li><li>• Annual Key Achievement Report</li><li>• Annual Waste customer satisfaction survey</li><li>• Climate Change Mitigation and Adaption Report 2020</li><li>• Continual review and monitoring of digital communication</li><li>• Continual review of DEA approach to Community Plan delivery</li><li>• Continual review of internal procurement guidelines</li><li>• Contribution to UN Sustainable Development Goals Report 2020</li><li>• Household Recycling Centre performance monitoring</li><li>• Household Survey 2018</li><li>• In-house Performance Monitoring System</li><li>• Internal Audit Practitioner Group</li><li>• Internal reviews of Strategic Communications Plan</li><li>• Media scrutiny via media monitoring</li><li>• Monitoring and reporting against i4C Innovation Centre proposals</li><li>• Monitoring and Tracking of BuySupplyNI subscribers</li><li>• Monthly Absence Reports</li><li>• Monthly Capital Plan meeting</li><li>• Mystery shoppers for visitor attractions</li><li>• Policing and Community Safety Partnership</li><li>• Regular monitoring and reviewing of stakeholder engagement</li><li>• Performance Self-Assessment Report</li><li>• Service Reviews and Transformation</li><li>• Tascomi System</li><li>• Tourism NI Grading Scheme</li><li>• TripAdvisor reviews</li><li>• Visitor numbers – footfall counters / ticket sales / survey reviews</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 2020 RECOUP Household Plastics Collection Survey</li><li>• APSE Network Query participation</li><li>• APSE Satisfaction Surveys</li><li>• APSE Benchmarking Indicators across 11 Service Areas</li><li>• Submission to the APSE Awards</li><li>• Belfast Region City Deal Communications Forum</li><li>• COVID-19 Tourism and Hospitality Recovery Group</li><li>• COVID-19 Town Centre Recovery Group</li><li>• Engagement with Stormont and UK Government campaigns teams for effective activation of the key national COVID-19 messages</li><li>• DAERA NI Landfill Allowance Scheme</li><li>• DAERA Audit Policy and Procedures (Rural Development and TRPSI)</li><li>• DAERA - Annual comparisons of dog fouling complaints across councils</li><li>• Monitoring of awards won – Green Flags, Britain in Bloom, Ulster in Bloom, Seaside Awards, Blue Flags, Gold Anchors</li><li>• Heritage Angel Award</li><li>• Insurance Collaborative Group</li><li>• ISO14001 International Environment Standard accreditation</li><li>• Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful</li><li>• Membership of and attendance at the regional Environmental Health NI including subgroups.</li><li>• Membership of key communications bodies in Northern Ireland, inc. CIPR and CIM</li><li>• Membership of Sustainable NI Forum</li><li>• Membership of the Waste and Resources Action Programme: National Campaign Advisory Panel</li><li>• NEC 3 training with Quigg Golden</li><li>• NI Environmental Benchmarking Survey 2019 – Gold Award</li><li>• NI Museums Council Museum Accreditation Scheme</li><li>• NIAO Annual Reports including financial indicators, absenteeism and prompt payments</li><li>• NILGA Awards</li><li>• NISRA Tourism Statistics</li><li>• Northern Ireland Leisure Managers Forum</li><li>• Quarterly liaison meetings with Department of Finance Building Standards Branch</li><li>• SEUPB Audit Policy and Procedures (PEACE IV)</li><li>• Tourism NI - mystery shoppers reports / attraction grading / Visitor Information Centre Statistics</li><li>• Statutory Indicators</li></ul>





# Appendix 5

## Visits by MEA Staff / Elected Members in relation to Benchmarking / Best Practice

Location / Council	Dates	Department	Area of Service / Purpose of Visit	Follow up from visit / lessons learnt / actions taken
Mid and East Antrim – Stormont Executive	Ongoing	Communications	Head of Communications in regular contact with Head of Communications and senior officers at Stormont Executive on behalf of Mid and East Antrim Borough Council to share key learning and advise on best practice	Shared learning, collaborative approach to Communications. Signposting of Council staff to key resources which are beneficial to the fulfilment of their duties
Northern Ireland Public Sector Communications Forum	Ongoing	Communications	This is a body made up of communications managers from right across the public sector in Northern Ireland.	Meetings take place periodically and all staff have learned best practice from experienced, respected communications experts. Learning has been implemented into day-to-day roles and has built good relationships with industry colleagues.
Emergency Preparedness Group – multi-agency	Ongoing	Communications	This body includes NIO, councils, PSNI, Fire and Rescue and a range of other statutory bodies.	Shared learning opportunities on how best to respond in an emergency.
Westminster	Ongoing	Communications	The Communications Manager joined the Chief Executive and Elected Members on several key strategic visits to Westminster to promote and lobby on behalf of Mid and East Antrim.	Engaged with a number of key council contacts and have built on relationships. Shared learning around the communications of strategic planning.
Belfast City Region Deal – Belfast City Council	Ongoing	Communications	Regular visits to Belfast City Council to discuss and influence communications around the £1bn Belfast Region City Deal proposals.	Shared learning and networking opportunities have been key to establish strong relationships with top-level public sector colleagues.
Cratus	January 2020	Communications	Shared learning with Council colleagues in England, who are keen to improve and bring a strategic approach to their Communications.	Excellent opportunity to demonstrate best practice at MEA and strong relationships formed.
Northern Ireland Office	Ongoing	Communications	Meeting with the Head of Northern Ireland Office’s communications department.	Colleagues share advice and guidance on running of NIO press office. Good working relationship established.

Location / Council	Dates	Department	Area of Service / Purpose of Visit	Follow up from visit / lessons learnt / actions taken
Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council	July 2020	Communications	Discussion with new Head of Communications at Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council.	Established useful working relationship and shared learning on a range of communications activities.
Northern Ireland Executive	May 2020	Communications	Establishment of new public sector forum in Northern Ireland representing Communications.	Mid and East Antrim asked to represent local authorities on key communications forum. Once rolled out, will provide invaluable stakeholder engagement and relationships
Department for Communities	Ongoing	Communications	Engage with relevant government departments for support and funding on key campaigns, for instance DfC on development of seasonal town centre campaigns.	Collaborative working to boost impact and efficiencies.
Derry City & Strabane District Council	June 2019	Community Planning & Development	Visit to Derry City & Strabane District Council to examine and gather best practice in relation to the management of council facilities by community organisations.	The follow up included DC&SDC sharing templates and information that they utilise in the management of their facilities. This information will assist MEA to move to new arrangements that improve the service and ensure accessible and fit for purpose facilities for the wider community.
Internal Audit Practitioners Group	Quarterly	Corporate Services	Internal Audit Practitioners Group – Best Practice Sharing with all 11 councils.	Discussions on Council risk management systems, 20/21 Internal Audit Plans; shared best practice and integration of risk management into Councils.
Grants Forum	Quarterly	Corporate Services	Best practice sharing on management of Grants Support Schemes within Councils.	Discussions on Council Grant Schemes and application systems.
Lewes District and Eastbourne Borough Councils	February 2020	Corporate Services	Council is a member of iESE, a public sector transformation partner with significant experience of transformation across the UK. As members of iESE Innovation club, Council received an invitation to participate in a Best Practice study visit and provide lessons for MEABC.	Discussions and learning on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Agile working</li><li>• Costs and benefits</li><li>• Awards</li><li>• Joint Transformation Programme</li><li>• Governance</li><li>• Joint Working</li><li>• Project examples i.e. Wishtower restaurant</li><li>• Challenges</li></ul>

Location / Council	Dates	Department	Area of Service / Purpose of Visit	Follow up from visit / lessons learnt / actions taken
Scotland	March 2020	Democratic Services/Elected Members	NILGA Local Planning Leadership Partnership Study Trip to Scotland attended by two of Council's Planning Committee Elected Members	New learning to be applied by Elected Members in their role as members of the Planning Committee
Innovation Factory Belfast	December 2019	Economic Development	Strategic Project officer visit to Innovation Factory in Belfast	Fact finding visit to meet management of Innovation Factory in order to help shape the i4C innovation project proposal being progressed by MEABC under City Deal.
Various local business visits	November and December 2019	Economic Development and Elected Members	<p>Council facilitated site visits to key local businesses for the Chair of the Economic in November and December 2019.</p> <p>An Elected Member visited a number of local businesses across the Borough, to get a better understanding of what the businesses do, what their future development or growth plans are, and how the Council might be able to support them. The Elected Member spent time with company personnel and had the opportunity to see their business in operation, have in depth discussion about their plans and discuss the Council's role in supporting business development.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Greater knowledge and understanding for Economic Growth committee chair about the range of businesses and their plans for development or growth.</li> <li>Development of strong working relationships between local businesses and the Council.</li> <li>Mutual understanding of key strategic initiatives which are a priority for both the Council and local industry,</li> </ul>
Westonbrit Arboretum, Eden Project and Lost Gardens of Heligan.	30 July to 1 August 2019	Parks and Open Spaces	Visit was primarily to inform the development of the Carnfunnock Arboretum as per the Carnfunnock Masterplan and the delivery of MEA4Trees.	Attending Officers learned a great deal about green space management, maximising sustainability on sites and providing the best experience for visitors.
Play Development Officers Forum – various Councils	Quarterly	Parks and Open Spaces	<p>Strategic group led by PlayboardNI which seeks to share best practice in fixed and non-fixed play.</p> <p>Includes site visits to leading fixed play facilities across NI.</p>	The visit helped to inform fixed play area design within MEABC and helps inform event design and delivery. Useful information shared about potential funding streams for play services.

Location / Council	Dates	Department	Area of Service / Purpose of Visit	Follow up from visit / lessons learnt / actions taken
Various Council-owned play facilities	March 2020	Parks and Open Spaces	Tour of recently completed fixed play facilities in ANBC, LCCC and ANDBC.	<p>Officers saw the different approaches other Councils take to play area design, safety surfacing and saw some of the newest products available from one of the leading play companies.</p> <p>Helped inform brief for Phase 2 of People's Park play area and other future play areas.</p>
Brook Park, Londonderry (Derry & Strabane DC)	November 2019	Parks and Open Spaces & Capital Projects	<p>Met with Officers from Derry City &amp; Strabane District Council to discuss their successful National Lottery Heritage-funded (NLHF) project to revitalise Brooke Park, develop a new café and other ancillary community-led facilities within it.</p> <p>The purpose of visit was to inform future MEABC funding bids to NLHF.</p>	The visit helped to inform officers of the challenges in getting the scope of the project right from the start, the importance of good consultation and how design can be unduly influenced by certain groups/individuals. Important to take a wide view.
Belfast City Council/ Ards and North Down/Antrim Newtownabbey	July 19	Public Protection, Health and Wellbeing – Leisure Services	Tour of leisure centre facilities to assist in the planning and design of the new leisure centre at St. Patricks Barracks.	<p>Visit to 3 recently built/refurbished leisure centres in Belfast City Council. Visit to Ards Blaire Maine new leisure centre. Visit to Antrim Forum.</p> <p>Leisure working group, consisting of councillors and leisure managers, visited these centres prior to workshops set up to establish the facility mix for the new leisure centre at St Patricks Barracks.</p>
Ballymoney, Causeway Coast and Glens	July 19	Regeneration and Strategic Projects	Best practice visit	Sharing launch information booklet with THI applicants to promote scheme.
Ards and North Down Borough Council, Donaghadee	November 19	Regeneration and Strategic Projects	THI Project Managers Practice Group Meeting	Best practice meeting and site visit to THI project sharing practice and experience.
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council	November 19	Regeneration and Strategic Projects	Shopfront Design seminar	Presentations and technical demonstrations on Traditional Shopfront design, specialist information relevant to design of THI scheme.



Location / Council	Dates	Department	Area of Service / Purpose of Visit	Follow up from visit / lessons learnt / actions taken
Seagoe Conference Centre, Craigavon	February 2020	Regeneration and Strategic Projects	Management of historical burial grounds.	The learning from this is being used to assist in the development of a funding application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund, which seeks to re-develop Church Street Graveyard in Ballymena and have the space re-opened to the public as an area of green space and calmness in the heart of the town centre.
Belfast City Council	January 2020	Regeneration and Strategic Projects	Meeting with Belfast City Council Officers to review the Project Management Software (Concerto) being utilised by Belfast City Council in the delivery of their capital programme.	Actions taken included preparation of a presentation on Project Management Software.
Belfast City Council	November 2019	Regeneration and Strategic Projects	Attended the opening of the new Lisnasharragh and Brook leisure centres by Belfast City Council, which were developed as part of their leisure transformation programme.	Lessons learnt on design, layout and accommodation requirements that will be incorporated into the new leisure centre development at St Patrick's Barracks.
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council	October 2019	Regeneration and Strategic Projects	To gain an understanding of how other Councils were rolling out their playground refurbishment programmes.	Lessons learned include separating all playground refurbishments into 3 budget categories based on scale, location and strategic importance. A number of site visits were undertaken to playparks that were recently constructed in the Armagh Banbridge Craigavon Borough to gain an understanding of what can be delivered for a particular cost. This information has been used in establishing the MEABC Playground Refurbishment Programme.
Brooke Park, Derry	November 2019	Regeneration and Strategic Projects and Parks and Open Spaces	This visit was to view examples of best practice in regards to utilisation of urban parks / green space.	The visit was highly informative and helped to develop further working relationships with colleagues in other council areas. The information received will be used to assist with the proposed rejuvenation of the Peoples Park in Ballymena as it prepares to celebrate 150 years.
Ballyeaston Cemetery	February 2020	Regeneration and Strategic Projects and Parks and Open Spaces	A joint visit by officers within our Regeneration & Strategic Projects and Parks & Open Spaces teams. This was to view examples of best practice in regards to maintenance of historic graveyards.	The visit was highly informative and the learning from this is being used to assist in the development of a funding application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund, which seeks to re-develop Church Street Graveyard in Ballymena and have the space re-opened to the public as an area of green space and calmness in the heart of the town centre.

Location / Council	Dates	Department	Area of Service / Purpose of Visit	Follow up from visit / lessons learnt / actions taken
Fermanagh & Omagh District Council	February 2020	Tourism, Arts & Culture	Meeting with the manager of Marble Arch Caves to glean understanding of how the attraction is staffed and run.	Ongoing communication with manager of the attraction, shared learning of attractions and networking opportunity
Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council	March 2020	Tourism, Arts & Culture	Site visit to Hillsborough Castle to see newly opened Visitor Attraction to see staffing levels, gift shop set up, suppliers etc.	Good insight into how a Historic Royal Palace attraction is operated.
Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council	June 2019	Tourism, Arts & Culture	Meeting with the Arts Manager of Theatre at the Mill to discuss programming and operational practices, including add-on and upselling practices for attendees to the theatre.	Ongoing communication with Theatre Manager. The result has been changes to bar layout, sales techniques and product lines, which have resulted in increased turnover. Continuing to develop programming opportunities.
Thrive Audience Development Agency, Belfast	July 2019	Tourism, Arts & Culture	Discussion on MEA residents' attendance to arts & heritage related events and programmes, as compared to other Council areas with NI.	Bespoke report commissioned and completed, with recommendations on areas of focus in order to increase attendance.
Hosted by APSE	Feb 2020	Various departments	APSE working groups to review indicators for comparison within NI Benchmarking project.	Agreement with other NI Councils on performance indicators that can be benchmarked.
Performance Improvement Working Group (PIWG)	Ongoing	Corporate Performance	MEA Chief Executive chairs the PIWG. The group is acting on behalf of SOLACE NI and is made up of all Performance officers within Councils.	The group meet regularly to review and improve performance matters across the region.
Waste & Resources Action Programme: National Campaign Advisory Panel	Ongoing	Waste & Building Services	The panel develop and deliver the NI Recycling Communications Strategy 2018 – 2021. Key partners include the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs and eleven councils who deliver waste and recycling services.	The panel meets quarterly and offers the opportunity to share resources, share learning and best practice and standardise recycling communication across 11 Councils to help achieve the 50% recycling target for NI in 2020.
NI Sustainable Development Forum	Ongoing	Waste & Building Services	The Forum represents a network of officers from the eleven councils and wider public sector, with a mutual interest in and responsibility for the implementation of sustainable development in Northern Ireland.	Quarterly network meetings help to share and stimulate good practice on sustainable development among councils and other public sector organisations.

Location / Council	Dates	Department	Area of Service / Purpose of Visit	Follow up from visit / lessons learnt / actions taken
Business in the Community NI Circular Economy Network	Ongoing	Waste & Building Services	The network facilitates cross-sector organisations to explore the opportunities that the circular economy presents for waste management.	Shared learning opportunities focusing on how waste and environmental management can support the circular economy.
Mid and East Antrim – Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs	May 2020	Waste & Building Services	Waveney Road Household Recycling Centre welcomed the Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to view the approach taken by Council to ensure the safe opening of household recycling centres during COVID-19 pandemic.	Opportunity to share best practice with the Minister on the re-opening of sites to provide an essential service whilst maintaining safety for employees and residents.
Arc21 Steering Group	Ongoing	Waste & Building Services	The group represents a network of officers from six councils with responsibility for the implementation of waste management within Councils.	The Group meets monthly and offers the opportunity to share resources, share learning, and best practice and support councils to meet legal obligations with regard to Waste Management.

