



**Mid & East
Antrim**
Borough Council

Corporate Plan Progress Report

April - September 2015

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1. Background

- 1.1 In March 2015 the first Corporate Plan for Mid and East Antrim Borough Council was agreed.
- 1.2 The 40 Elected Members of Mid and East Antrim set the vision of **“Mid and East Antrim: Working together to create a better future for all”**. This vision has set the agenda for a challenging and ambitious Corporate Plan setting the direction for Council up to March 2019.



2. Introduction

- 2.1 The Corporate Plan is established around five strategic priorities. These are:



- 2.2 Just six months in to the lifetime of the Corporate Plan significant progress is underway against the identified corporate objectives.
- 2.3 This six month review of progress seeks to assure Elected Members that Council is moving forward in the realisation of its vision, within the context of the continuing transformation of the Council. Council Officers continue to provide high standards of service delivery, within a change environment, and in addition to the objectives set out in the Corporate Plan continue to strive for performance improvement in relation to strategic effectiveness, service quality and business efficiency as set out in the Council's Performance Improvement Plan.
- 2.4 As Heads of Service are appointed, and service delivery structures agreed, progress against the corporate objectives will escalate.

- 2.5 Elected Members will continue to be provided with a six monthly progress report to provide challenge and scrutiny, as well as celebrate the successes.

Mid and East Antrim Borough Council is committed to reporting progress as:

- An internal self-evaluation process allows Council to systematically examine its services, achievements and processes to assess how well it is meeting its stated aims, objectives and outcomes.
- It provides Elected Members with the required assurance that the priorities they have set are being delivered and the needs of local communities are being met.
- It is important for accountability and demonstrates the Council's commitment to corporate value of integrity.

3. Progress against Corporate Objectives April to September 2015

- 3.1 The tables as follow provide a summary of progress against the corporate objectives under each of the strategic priorities and is intended to give a holistic overview across all service, function and office areas.
- 3.2 The report does not provide detail of all progress attained over the last six months, but focusses on significant achievements.
- 3.3 Highlights include the opening of the Gobbins Cliff Path; £394k of grant funding awarded to our local communities; and successful partnership working across a wide range of areas which are maximising outcomes.

Table 1 - Growing the Economy

Strategic Priority: Growing the Economy	
Objectives	Progress April - September 2015
Attract jobs and investment to the Mid and East Antrim area through an innovative and dynamic approach to economic development and regeneration.	Ballymena Town Centre became Northern Ireland's first Business Improvement District, supported by Mid and East Antrim Borough Council. By obtaining Business Improvement District status, Ballymena Town Centre businesses can work together to invest in the local community, enhance the trading environment and make a real difference.
	The public realm improvements in Larne and Ballymena have commenced, with planned completion summer 2016 and late 2016 respectively. The public realm programmes represent a combined investment of £6.3 and will improve the quality and attractiveness of the public spaces and buildings of the town centres, creating more pleasant and liveable places with the potential to boost retail, attract new businesses and increase prosperity for Mid and East Antrim.
	TestTown Carrickfergus took place in the town centre between 27 August - 31 August 2015. At TestTown Carrickfergus, local entrepreneurs with arts and crafts and other niche retail business ideas were given an opportunity to "test trade" in a real retail scenario with the aim of helping them to gauge the future potential for their business within the marketplace. Those entrepreneurs participating were offered opportunities to take up specialist training and mentoring in those areas where they required additional support.
	Consultants are in the process of being appointed to develop an Integrated Economic Development Strategy for Mid and East Antrim Borough.

Strategic Priority: Growing the Economy	
Objectives	Progress April - September 2015
Build strong and effective integrated partnerships to address issues of identified economic need	Mid and East Antrim Borough Council has facilitated the super connected cities scheme - local small businesses in Mid and East Antrim Borough can apply for a “connection voucher” up to £3,000 to upgrade to a faster, more reliable internet connection.
Use our planning responsibilities to maximise impact on economic development	Organisation structure agreed by Council places Planning within the Economic Development, Investment and Tourism Directorate demonstrating planning as a key driver of economic development in Mid and East Antrim Borough Council.
	404 Planning Application decisions have been made by Council since 1 April 2015, with an approval rate of 95%
Maximise investment through effective lobbying of central government and private investors	Mid and East Antrim Borough Council has responded to consultations across a wide range of issues, including economic, since 1 April 2015 and has provided evidence to Assembly committees. Council continues to demonstrate its commitment to proactive engagement with central government through its position in relation to responding to public consultations.
	Working group established by Council to address the issues raised through the proposed closure of JTI Ltd.
	Council has hosted a number of Ministerial and Senior Departmental visits as well as providing evidence to Assembly Committees, e.g. lobbying against the proposed closure of Ballymena Courthouse.
	Council has provided visible support to local businesses and is building relationships with the business community at local, regional and international levels.

Strategic Priority: Growing the Economy	
Objectives	Progress April - September 2015
Identify and secure funding from the European Union, and other sources, to delivery sustainable economic development and regeneration projects	Council has submitted two transnational applications lodged seeking EU funding. One in conjunction with Women's Aid, targeted at the Equality, Rights and Citizenship Programme; the second on the protection and promotion of our natural and cultural heritage, targeting the Interreg Europe Programme.

Table 2: Developing our tourism potential

Strategic priority: Developing our tourism potential	
Objectives	Progress April - September 2015
Build our brand and make Mid and East Antrim District a “go to” destination	The Gobbins Cliff Walk Path opened in August 2015. Since its opening it has been fully booked; received strong customer reviews and raised the profile of the tourism offer of Mid and East Antrim Borough through regional, national and international media coverage.
	Carnfunnock Country Park was awarded Best Family Visitor Attraction (Large) by NI4Kids Magazine.
	Mid and East Antrim Borough hosted the 2015 Armed Forces Day event for Northern Ireland. The three day event held across the weekend of 19-21 June was attended by over 10,000 visitors and was enjoyed by families, military personnel, and veterans from across Northern Ireland.
	The Council has entered a partnership agreement with the Department of Environment to explore maximisation of use of Carrickfergus Castle, including pilot of visitor information centre based in the Castle.
Work in partnership with NITB to shape a Regional Tourism Strategy reflective of our Area’s tourism objectives.	Consultants appointed to develop a Tourism Strategy for Mid and East Antrim Borough.
Make it easy for the visitor to get to and around the Mid and East Antrim area through improved access, transport links and signage.	Branding of signage across the Borough clearly defining and marking the borough boundaries is in the final design stage. A planned and prioritised roll-out of signage will commence shortly.

Strategic priority: Developing our tourism potential

Objectives

Progress April - September 2015

Actively involve our local businesses and communities in developing and delivering tourism products.

Tourism and Cultural Events such as the Northern Ireland Open, Dalridia Festival and the Bruce 700 event were delivered in partnership with local businesses, communities and voluntary/charitable organisations.

Safeguard our tourism assets including the natural and built environment.

Completion of the Mid and East Antrim Asset Audit, with scoring matrix, which will inform strategic decision making in relation to built heritage sites of significance and their potential to support tourism objectives.

Table 3: Building stronger, safe and healthy communities

Strategic priority: Building stronger, safe and healthy communities	
Objectives	Progress April - September 2015
Through the Community Plan ensure greater integration of public services at a local level driven through partnership, collaboration and effective local working.	The Creative Citizens Programme, delivered in partnership with 12 partner organisations, including the Northern Regional College, Northern Health and Social Care Trust, Ballymena Internet Ethnic Forum, Ballymena Churches Forum and Voluntary Arts Ireland has been nominated for an Idox Innovation Award for Community Engagement.
	Working in partnership as part of the Mid Antrim Museum Service (MAMS) has generated over £43k in additional income over the last six months.
	Working with the private sector company B9, Council will generate electricity from gas extracted from its closed landfill site at Ballymacvea. This will generate income of approximately £50k year on year.
	McClure Watters completed the commissioned baseline report which will help inform the Community Plan for Mid and East Antrim.
Improve and support the health and well-being of our people and communities through our services	Active Communities Programme has delivered sport and physical activity to 5,335 participants across Mid and East Antrim Borough Council.
	Over £11k has been secured to extend the Ballymena Basketball Twinning Programme. The programme uses basketball to promote good relations and address issues such as anti-social behaviour, hate crime and drug awareness. Schools are “twinned” to work together to create better community relations.

Strategic priority: Building stronger, safe and healthy communities	
Objectives	Progress April - September 2015
	<p>From April 2015 members of the public are able to dispose of unwanted goods for re-use at the Council's main Household Recycling Centres. By working in partnership with local charities, these goods are being rehomed and reused rather than going to landfill.</p>
Protect and enhance an attractive, safe and sustainable environment	<p>Green Flag awards - Dixon Park, Larne; Diamond Jubilee Wood, Whitehead; Bashfordland Wood/Oakfield Glen, Carrickfergus; People's Park, Ballymena.</p>
	<p>Opening of Carrickfergus Mill Ponds Nature reserve.</p>
	<p>Carnlough, Ballygally and Brown's Bay Beaches awarded highest EU standard for bathing waters.</p>
	<p>The amount of waste sent to landfill in the first quarter of 2015/2016 reduced by 525 tonnes, compared to the same period last year. This has generated a saving to ratepayers of £50k. Council is currently exceeding target recycling rates as set by the Northern Ireland Waste Management Strategy - with Mid and East Antrim Borough Council recycling 49.56% of waste generated compared to the target of 45%.</p>
	<p>Continuing to deliver a range of cooking programmes which trains some of the Council's most vulnerable residents, including young mothers and those just moved out of residential care, to cook healthy, nutritious meals on a restricted budget.</p>

Strategic priority: Building stronger, safe and healthy communities	
Objectives	Progress April - September 2015
	Building on the successful pilot in Ballymena and Larne last year, the Energy Efficiency Adviser Service continues to provide a person centre approach to clients, including home visits and assistance with referrals to other council/agency services. The Energy Efficiency Adviser Service works closely with Council Officers administering the Affordable Warmth Scheme. This year to date the Affordable Warmth Scheme Officers have processed over 4000 queries.
Increase the capability and confidence of the community sector to become more self-sustainable.	An exciting Community Flood Resilience Project has been launched in the Toome Road/Leighinmohr Avenue areas of Ballymena, which are identified as being at risk of flooding. The programme involves a series of community roadshows and workshops designed to help effected residents gain a greater understanding of flood risk.
	Successful implementation of the grant schemes - Grants Support Scheme, Good Relations Scheme and Community Festivals Fund - with Council awarding £394,000 in grant funding since 1 April 2015.
Promote equality of opportunity, good relations, and social inclusion to support a better quality of life for all.	Audit of Inequalities completed; Equality Scheme, Equality Action Plan and Disability Action Plan all agreed; and Equality Working Group established to address issues identified.
	Secured £262,000 in funding from the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister for the delivery of the Council's Good Relations Programme and Action Plan.
	Community Relations and Cultural Diversity Week events were attended by over 100 people from across the Borough, looking at shared histories, dealing with the past, youth events, and networking opportunities.

Strategic priority: Building stronger, safe and healthy communities	
Objectives	Progress April - September 2015
	Police and Community Safety Partnership for Mid and East Antrim was established in June 2015. An ambitious six month action plan has been agreed, including the delivery of 23 funded projects from the predecessor Councils.

Table 4: Delivering excellent services

Strategic Priority: Delivering excellent services	
Objectives	Progress April - September 2015
Establish measurable service standards which will demonstrate our commitment to the provision of high quality, effective yet value for money services.	Performance Improvement Plan agreed by Council in May 2015. The Local Government Auditor has issued its audit opinion stating that it is assured that Council has in place the necessary mechanisms for performance improvement for year one of the Council.
	Seven Towers Leisure Centre achieved the Quest Quality Award. (Quest is a tool for continuous improvement, designed primarily for the management of leisure facilities and leisure development)
Listen and learn from our customers to identify service priorities.	Citizen's survey in relation to priorities for the Community Plan.
	A number of community engagement events held across the Borough.
	Two formal public consultations conducted by Council in relation to the Corporate Plan and Equality Scheme.
	Complaints Policy agreed for Mid and East Antrim Borough Council building on the policies and procedures of the predecessor Councils and transferring functions.
Embed effective governance arrangements which support open and transparent decision making.	Council Constitution as required in statute by the Local Government (Northern Ireland) Act 2014 was agreed and published within the statutory timeframes.
	Equality Working Group developed and Council agreed a policy framework for decision making in relation to memorials and commemorations which supports open and transparent decision making.

Strategic Priority: Delivering excellent services	
Objectives	Progress April - September 2015
	Scheme of delegation agreed which allow for Council to delegate its decision making powers in relation to prescribed functions to Committee and Officers to enable effective and efficient decision making.
	Standing Orders agreed which sets out clearly how Mid and East Antrim Borough Council will conduct its business.
Develop a joined-up approach to service delivery across the organisation where the provision of excellent service is responsibility of all.	Cross-functional working groups have been established to deliver projects including Armed Forces Day, the Council website, developing a high performing council and the ratepayer magazine.
	Harmonisation of ICT systems allowing the 700+ staff users to operate with one system, covering servers, data storage, email, telephony and integrated business systems.
	<p>Delivery of the Capital Programme, lead by the Assets and Facilities Management department, requires resource support across the Council. Key capital projects delivered in the last six months include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2G playing fields at Ballymena Showgrounds; • Harryville Community Centre; • Carnlough Library buildings; • Ultra violet treatment system at Seven Towers Leisure Centre; • Greenisland Play Area.
Work with other service providers to design and deliver services which can be delivered in partnership and avoid duplication of public resources.	Community Planning Governance Structure has been agreed which sets out how Council will interact with its statutory partners and other key stakeholders in the development of the Community Plan for Mid and East Antrim.

Table 5: Developing a high performing Council

Strategic priority: Developing a high performing Council	
Objectives	Progress
To be recognised as a leading Council in all areas of service provision, both regionally and nationally.	Elected Members and Senior Officers have been presented at high profile conferences and events in relation to the Council's approach to community planning.
	Mid and East Antrim Borough Council was runner up in the Best Waste Carrier and Safety in Waste categories of the Sustainable Ireland Awards 2015.
	Ballymena Visitor Information Centre was a finalist for Best Information Centre in Northern Ireland.
	Council's Public Realm Strategy has been used as a case study for the Landscape Institute Awards 2015.
	Mid and East Antrim Borough Council won five Ulster in Bloom awards and two international Communities in Bloom awards - for Ahoghill and Glenarm.
Invest in the people who deliver services through enhanced workforce development and effective leadership.	Mid and East Antrim Borough Council has developed a range of human resource policies, through a consultative process with both staff and trade unions, to cover key HR priorities - including Health and Safety, Recruitment and Selection, Employee issue management, Family Leave and filling posts in the new Council.
	All employee HR records are contained on the integrated PAMS platform.
	Further and higher education policy agreed and implemented. 25 officers submitted applications for further and higher education courses, with 15 approved.

Strategic priority: Developing a high performing Council	
Objectives	Progress
	Elected Members have availed of a number of training and briefing opportunities to support their skills and knowledge development.
Establish performance management systems which will track performance and support the reporting of the performance improvement plan and statutory performance indicators	Existing data capture software e.g. TOTAL financial management; Tascomi Building Control and Environmental Health; Planning NI portal; and various waste management software provide ongoing performance information.
Undertake a baseline study which will benchmark the Council's current performance levels and will inform future targets and measures.	Desktop research in relation to predecessor Council performance levels has commenced and further work in relation to the baseline study will be progressed as part of the business planning process.
Maintain the financial health of the council with robust mechanisms to support the effective and efficient use of resources.	<p>The introduction of minute pad for Council/Committee agenda papers has reduced the number of pages by over 400,000 with an estimated net saving of £30,000.</p> <p>Financial management policies and procedures agreed, including procurement procedures which will support a standardised corporate approach to financial management, delivering robust governance arrangements and business efficiencies.</p>

4. Next steps

- 4.1 The Chief Executive will work with Elected Members to continue to create a better future for all through the delivery of the corporate plan.
- 4.2 As the Senior Management Team become established and Heads of Service settle into post, delivery action plans will be developed which will set out how services can fulfil the Council's vision in an innovative yet cost effective manner. Those delivery action plans will provide detail of key performance indicators which will support future progress reporting.
- 4.3 The partnership approach between Elected Members and Council Officers will continue to be fostered, and enable Officers to provide Members with the information they require to assure Council is achieving its desired outcomes.