



# Corporate Improvement Plan (Working Draft) (2017-18)

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## **Foreword**

We are pleased to introduce our Corporate Improvement Plan for 2017-18.

This confirms our commitment to make a difference to services and outcomes for the people of our Borough. It has been aligned with the draft Community Plan and the Council's Corporate Plan to ensure the Borough of Antrim and Newtownabbey is 'A Prosperous Place, Inspired by our People; Driven by Ambition.'

We have set seven areas for improvement, balancing the need to improve services such as leisure and recycling with our determination to continue to improve the cleanliness of our Borough and achieve excellence in terms of customer satisfaction. We want to increase staff attendance, encourage entrepreneurship and streamline processes and systems to ensure that suppliers receive payments more promptly.

In delivering this Plan we look forward to working with all of our partners and stakeholders, making a difference for the people of the Borough.

We will provide the strong leadership that is needed to deliver these challenging objectives, and are confident that with the continued support of people throughout the Borough, staff, trade unions and partners, we will be able to deliver on the commitments that we have set out in this Plan.

## Introduction and Context

The Council's Corporate Improvement Plan 2017-18 sets out what we will do in the year ahead to deliver on our statutory duty, as listed in Part 12 of the Local Government Act 2014 (herein after referred to as "the Act"). These 'duties' relate to sections 84(1), 85(2) and 89(5) of the Act, whereby the Council has a statutory responsibility to make arrangements to:

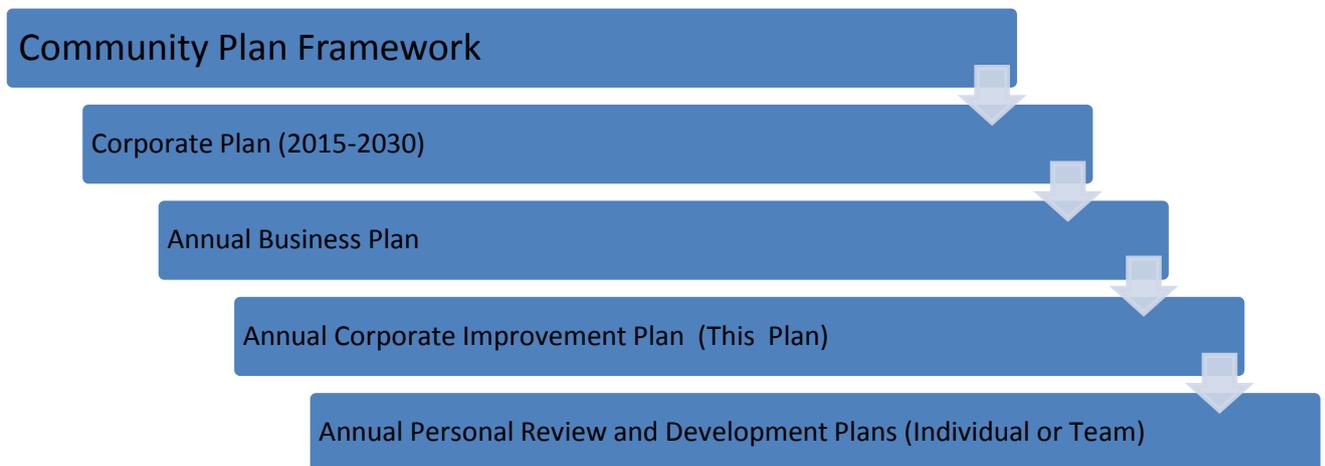
- secure continuous improvement;
- secure achievement of its improvement objectives; and
- exercise its functions so that any Departmental specified standards are met.

Specifically, the Plan provides a rationale for why we have chosen our improvement objectives and details the expected outcomes.

Each objective has been framed so as to bring about improvement in at least one of the specified aspects of improvement as defined in Section 76 of the Act (Strategic Effectiveness; Service Quality; Service Availability; Fairness; Sustainability; Efficiency and Innovation).

The Corporate Improvement Plan sits within a hierarchy of plans which guide our strategic policy direction and drive our service delivery arrangements (Figure 1 below).

**Figure 1: Strategic Planning Process**



## Identifying Improvement Objectives

Improvement Objectives have been identified through a number of sources:

Our **Corporate Plan (2015-30)**, is a medium term strategy and clearly sets out 14 key priorities and measures under three themes: Place; People; and Prosperity, these are underpinned by the Council's drive to optimise the performance of the organisation and the new powers of Community Planning as detailed below.



**Community Plan.** The draft Community Plan framework aims to improve the sustainable social, economic and environmental wellbeing of the Antrim and Newtownabbey area. A comprehensive engagement exercise with communities, partners and other stakeholders has been undertaken on the development of our new Community Plan framework at a Borough wide level and through our locality forums. This engagement process has led to the development of four priority areas described as outcomes, on which we will focus the delivery of services over the life of the Plan to 2030. The four priority areas are:

- Our citizens enjoy good health and wellbeing.
- Our citizens live in connected, safe and vibrant places.
- Our citizens benefit from economic prosperity.
- Our citizens achieve their full potential.

**Consultations/Surveys.** We recognise the varying needs of our community and the need to provide appropriate opportunities for stakeholders to participate and influence the services and facilities we provide. Throughout 2016-17, we have consulted widely with our residents and stakeholders on a broad range of services. We have listened to, and responded to this feedback and it has been incorporated into this Plan.

**Medium Term Financial Plan.** In setting these improvement objectives the Council's three-year financial plan has been considered, ensuring that we have the financial stability to be able to invest in capital programmes and be at the forefront of innovation and improvement, whilst minimising the rates burden for our residents.

**Digital Transformation.** The Council aspires to '*be the most digitally advanced Council in Northern Ireland*'. This vision is central to the Council's improvement and transformational success and hence has been considered when setting these objectives.

Through the appropriate use of technology, we aim to ensure that business processes and customer transactions are delivered in a smarter, more agile way to enhance customer engagement and service excellence.

**Performance Data.** We have reviewed performance and benchmarking data, when setting these improvement objectives and measures. This has allowed us to assess our performance against comparable organisations, expose areas where improvement is needed and identify 'superior performance and excellence' elsewhere with a view to striving to achieve similar or improved standards of performance in our delivery of services.

**Programme for Government.** We have reviewed the outcomes identified in the draft Programme for Government in the context of this Corporate Improvement Plan.

## Improvement Objective 1

### We will improve the level of cleanliness of the Borough.

#### **Which of the 7 statutory aspects of improvement will this objective aim to deliver against?**

Strategic Effectiveness; Service Quality; Service Availability; Sustainability and Efficiency

#### **Associated Community Plan Framework outcome.**

*“Our citizens live in connected, safe and vibrant places.”*

#### **Associated Corporate Plan 2015-2030 objective.**

*“A place where people take pride in their surroundings.”*

*“We have vibrant and welcoming towns, villages, neighbourhoods and rural area and an efficient planning process that promotes positive development.”*

#### **Why has this objective been chosen?**

Ensuring that the Borough is clean is critical if we are going to give people a sense of vibrancy and pride in their surroundings. However, changing lifestyles and social attitudes have led to an increase in litter levels meaning that keeping the Borough clean is becoming more challenging.

There is no doubt that littering and dog fouling impact upon people in every community. As a result, the Council invests over £2,360,908 annually to keep the Borough clean.

A resident satisfaction survey conducted in the December 2015 edition of 'Borough Life', identified that there is scope to improve satisfaction with our services. Respondents reported:

- 55% satisfaction with the '*cleanliness of the roads and streets in your area*'.

In addition, the Council participated in the Keep NI Beautiful National Benchmarking Survey (2015). The survey rated the Borough as 7<sup>th</sup> in terms of the cleanliness score, and had the 5<sup>th</sup> highest number of fixed penalties issued by the Council.

Over the course of the last year, measures have been put in place to improve the cleanliness of the Borough, such as the introduction of new litter bin collection rounds and street cleansing routes, the installation of a new public realm cleaning contract and improved litter bin provision. In the March 2017 edition of 'Borough Life' and through social media, we will conduct a follow-up survey, to re-assess residents' satisfaction with the cleanliness of the Borough. In 2016, the Council supported 30

community clean-ups through our Support in Kind scheme and this was a 130% increase on the previous year.

However, the Council received approximately 1,800 requests for service to deal with litter and dog fouling issues, during the past year.

Dog fouling is offensive and a proven risk to public health. Parks and recreation areas have the highest levels of dog fouling, with retail areas the lowest, which reflects where dogs tend to be walked. The Council will continue with its two pronged approach of education and enforcement. Working with local residents, we will continue to establish the Dog Watch Schemes which engages residents in the battle against irresponsible dog owners. We will also fully utilise the powers in the Council's Enforcement Policy to punish those who continue to blight the Borough through littering and dog fouling.

**What will we do?**

1. Review and improve our enforcement service to further tackle dog fouling and littering, with a view to responding to requests for service within one working day.
2. Implement a cleanliness education campaign to prevent littering and dog fouling and to encourage the public to report litter and dog fouling incidents/hotspots.

**We will have succeeded if:**

1. Our residents report a 5% increase in satisfaction with the level of cleanliness of our Borough.
2. Our performance is in the top quartile of the annual Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful National Benchmarking Report.
3. Our performance for the number of fixed penalties issued is in the top quartile of the annual Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful National Benchmarking Report.

## Improvement Objective 2

**We will increase levels of household recycling and reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill.**

**Which of the 7 statutory aspects of improvement will this objective aim to deliver against?**

Strategic Effectiveness; Service Quality; Service Availability; Sustainability; Efficiency and Innovation

**Associated Community Plan Framework outcome**

*"Our citizens benefit from economic prosperity."*

**Associated Corporate Plan 2015-2030 objective**

*"A place where people choose to reuse or recycle their waste"*

**Why has this objective been chosen?**

The Council's annual budget for waste operations is approximately £12 million and therefore forms a significant part of the domestic rates bill.

During 2015/16 the Council achieved a household recycling rate of 47.5% and with continued efforts expects to achieve 49% during 2017/18. Residents in the Borough can recycle a wide range of products at the kerbside, e.g. paper, cardboard, plastic bottles and containers, metal food and drink cans and food and garden waste. In addition, our Recycling Centres also accept timber, rubble, carpets, and old electrical items.

The Council expanded the collection of dry recyclables in the Antrim area and introduced 4000 triple stack units and smaller 180L general waste bins in parts of Newtownabbey area to replace the existing kerbie boxes. We also expanded the commercial food waste recycling service to businesses in the Newtownabbey area and improved our Bulky Waste Collection Service by purchasing new collection vehicles to allow more reuse and recycling of the materials lifted.

Currently residents in Newtownabbey can recycle glass bottles and jars in at the kerbside, whilst residents in Antrim use a 'bring site'. Therefore, in 2017/18 the Council will use the Recycling Gap Analysis<sup>1</sup> to identify the most efficient method of collecting glass from the Antrim residents. Funding will also be sought from Central Government to reduce the initial financial burden in relation to the introduction of this service.

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<sup>1</sup> Recycling Gap Analysis: Carried out by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to ensure that Northern Ireland as a whole meets the target of recycling 50% of household waste.

To maximise opportunities for recycling the Council will also provide an additional 16,000 triple stacks and smaller 180L general waste bins to homes in the Newtownabbey area.

Continuing to improve our recycling performance is not only important for the environment but also is financially advantageous. The costs of waste disposal per tonne are increasing due to inflationary pressures and a rise in landfill tax. Therefore, by increasing the usage of our direct recycling collection services e.g. kerbie boxes, blue and brown bins, and reducing the amount of municipal waste that is landfilled we will reduce costs. On average the cost of recycling is £50 per tonne, whereas to landfill a tonne of waste costs approximately £100. We aim to divert 1,115 tonnes from landfill to recycling, resulting in savings of approximately £55k.

**What will we do?**

1. Expand the garden and food waste recycling scheme to 3,500 rural properties in the Antrim area.
2. Expand the range of dry recyclable materials in the Antrim area with the introduction of a recycling collection service for glass bottles and containers.
3. Expand the use of triple stack bins and smaller 180L general waste bins to a further 16,000 homes in the Newtownabbey area.
4. Support these changes with an effective education and awareness campaign.

**We will have succeeded if:**

1. We recycle at least 49% of our household waste by 2017/18.
2. We landfill no more than 33,000 tonnes (circa) of waste in 2017/18.

### Improvement Objective 3

**We will increase overall customer satisfaction by using technology to increase accessibility to information and services.**

**Which of the 7 statutory aspects of improvement will this objective aim to deliver against?**

Strategic Effectiveness; Service Quality; Service Availability; Fairness; Sustainability; Efficiency and Innovation

#### **Associated Community Plan Framework Outcome**

*“Our citizens live in connected, safe and vibrant places.”*

#### **Associated Corporate Plan 2015-2030 Objective**

*“We will communicate clearly with our residents, listen to their feedback and respond to their needs. Customers will increasingly use the Council's website for its convenience and ease of use to order, pay for and request services.”*

#### **Why has this objective been chosen?**

Our customers are at the heart of all the services we offer. A Resident Survey (December 2015), indicated a positive result i.e. '74% overall customer satisfaction with the Council Services'. Over the course of the last year positive efforts to further improve customer services have been made and we will carry out a survey with residents to assess if we have improved (March 2017).

Technology is ever changing and we need to keep pace with the opportunities this gives the Council to improve the customer experience, reduce costs and make our services more accessible. One of the ways we can do this is to encourage more customers to book online.

In order to do this effectively, the Council's website will need to be updated to make online tasks easy and accessible. Feedback from our residents (December 2016), stated a 57% satisfaction<sup>2</sup> rate with the quality of information available on the Council's website.

During 2016/17 seven new services were offered online<sup>3</sup> and the Council launched a new Facebook page and an improved dog licensing online service. Over the next year, the Council aims to build on this success and identify and scope those services which would be suitable for digital development with a view to improving customer services and reducing costs. (e.g. Waste App).

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<sup>2</sup> Satisfaction measured by 'Very Good and Good' responses.

<sup>3</sup> Fourteen online services in 2015-16

**We will we do?**

1. Improve the 'user friendliness' of the Council's website.
2. Identify, scope and deliver digital developments to improve customer service (e.g. Waste App).

**We will have succeeded if:**

1. 5% increase in overall customer satisfaction with Council services.
2. 5% increase in the number of services provided digitally.
3. There is a 65% resident's satisfaction rating with the quality of information on the Council's website and digital services.

## Improvement Objective 4

**We will increase the number of people who use our leisure centres.**

### **Associated Community Plan Framework outcome**

*"Our citizens enjoy good health and well-being".*

### **Associated Corporate Plan 2015-2030 objective**

*"The support we provide will lead to a more active, healthy and empowered community."*

### **Which of the 7 statutory aspects of improvement will this objective aim to deliver against?**

Strategic Effectiveness; Service Quality; Service Availability; Fairness; Sustainability; Innovation and Efficiency

### **Why have we chosen this Improvement Objective?**

We recognise the valuable social, health and economic benefits that the provision of leisure facilities can create for our communities, alongside an improved quality of life.

Research which was carried out as part of the community planning process, identified a number of key health indicators of concern for our Borough, for example:

- Approximately 1 in 8 people in Antrim and Newtownabbey are registered as suffering from high blood pressure – it is the most commonly recorded disease in the Borough affecting more than twice as many people as either diabetes or heart disease.
- The 2011 census figures indicate that across the Borough 81.09% of usual residents were in "good" or "very good" health, but this ranges across the Borough from 89% (in Mallusk) to 65% (in Whitehouse).
- 19% of usual residents had a long term health problem, 10.7% having a mobility or dexterity difficulty.
- Our citizens are active – 34% of respondents to a Sport NI survey in 2010 did 30 minutes of physical activity 5 times per week. 19% of respondents had been out walking.

The Council plays a key role in helping people in our Borough improve their health and well-being. With excellent resources such as six high quality leisure centres and well-trained staff it is in a pivotal position to have an impact. During 2015/16, usage of leisure centres was 1,023,296, and we had 13,511 people who were part of the leisure membership scheme. We want to see these figures increase.

The introduction of a new and innovative membership scheme and pricing policy that removes barriers to access and encourages participation, should contribute to increased levels of activity our population across all age ranges.

**What will we do?**

1. Introduce a new leisure membership scheme and pricing policy.
2. Develop and implement a marketing and branding campaign to increase awareness of the benefits of participation, what's on offer and its value for money.

**We will have succeeded if:**

1. There is a 10% increase in the number of people taking out leisure memberships.
2. There is a 20% increase in the number of people attending our leisure centres.

## **Improvement Objective 5**

**We will encourage entrepreneurship across the Borough.**

### **Associated Community Plan Framework outcome**

*“Our citizens benefit from economic prosperity.”*

### **Associated Corporate Plan 2015-2030 objective**

*“We identify and support entrepreneurship.”*

### **Which of the 7 statutory aspects of improvement will this objective aim to deliver against?**

Strategic Effectiveness; Service Quality; Service Availability; Sustainability and Innovation

### **Why has this objective been chosen?**

The Council wants to ensure that Antrim and Newtownabbey is a prosperous Borough with a culture of entrepreneurship. A thriving local economy will create employment opportunities and offer a variety of valued services to our residents and visitors.

The Council is responsible for delivering the Northern Ireland Business Start-Up Programme to encourage and support our entrepreneurs. Our entrepreneurial activity rate, however, is the one of the lowest in Northern Ireland (4.2%<sup>4</sup>), compared to a Northern Ireland rate of 6.7%.

The Council, therefore wants to improve our entrepreneurial rate and sustain a strong prosperous economy. We will engage with businesses, universities, colleges, Invest NI and other relevant stakeholders, taking a lead on an economic ‘think tank’, to address skills gap, maintain a varied and strong business case and attract investment from outside the Borough.

Our current Programme for Government target to promote jobs within this programme is 80. We intend to create approximately 90 jobs in the 2017/18 year by increasing participation on this programme.

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<sup>4</sup> Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, NI Report 2014

**What will we do?**

1. Deliver a high quality support service to those interested in starting a new business.
2. Deliver innovative measures to attract and support new businesses. to help them develop and grow.

**We will have succeeded if:**

1. We have promoted approximately 90 jobs via the Business Start-Up Programme.

## Improvement Objective 6

**We will increase the speed with which we pay suppliers.**

**Which of the 7 statutory aspects of improvement will this objective aim to deliver against?**

Strategic Effectiveness; Service Quality and Efficiency

**Associated Community Plan Framework outcome**

*“Our citizens benefit from economic prosperity.”*

**Associated Corporate Plan 2015-2030 objective**

*“We will deliver savings and improvement programmes across a range of services and we are committed to paying our suppliers promptly.”*

**Why has this objective been chosen?**

As a key procurer of goods and services in the Borough, the Council is aware of the importance of cash flow to businesses, particularly small businesses and will review its current processes to ensure that suppliers receive payments more quickly.

During 2015-16 our performance in relation to payments was:

<b>Period</b>	<b>% Paid within 30 Days</b>	<b>% Paid within 10 Days</b>
1 April 2015 – 30 June 2015	89%	70%
1 July 2015 – 30 September 2015	49%	23%
1 October 2015 – 31 December 2015	59%	35%
1 January 2016 – 31 March 2016	88%	61%

Significant progress has been made during 2016/17 to improve this performance, however further work is required during 2017/18 to ensure our targets are met.

**What will we do?**

1. We will review and improve internal processes to ensure that payment targets are met.

**We will have succeeded if:**

1. 80% of invoices are paid within 10 working days.
2. 90% of invoices are paid within 30 working days.

## **Improvement Objective 7**

**We will increase staff attendance levels across the Council.**

**Which of the 7 statutory aspects of improvement will this objective aim to deliver against?**

Strategic Effectiveness; Service Quality; Service Availability and Efficiency

**Associated Community Plan Framework outcome**

*“Our citizens enjoy good health and well-being.”*

**Associated Corporate Plan 2015-2030 objective**

*“We are innovative and results focused, aiming to make the best use of resources available to us.”*

**Why has this objective been chosen?**

High levels of attendance at work contribute to the planning and provision of quality services and high levels of morale among employees. It also contributes the overall health and well-being of our Borough, as on average 60% of our employees reside in the Borough.

During 2015/16 the average days lost per employee was 12.12, this was an 8.31% increase on the previous year.

The Council is committed to maximising attendance and during 2015/16, 48% of our employees had 100% attendance. We will continue to work collaboratively to manage absence closely, review procedures and make improvements where appropriate. Through employee engagement, recognition and well-being initiatives we will encourage staff to focus on their own health.

**What will we do?**

1. We will manage absence closely, review procedures, and deliver employee engagement, recognition and well-being initiatives to reduce sickness absence levels across the Council.

**We will have succeeded if:**

1. There is a 1% reduction in the average number of days lost per employee.
2. We have maintained 100% staff attendance levels.

## STATUTORY INDICATORS

Section 89(5) of the Local Government Act 2014 specifically refers to the standards specified in the Local Government (Performance Indicators and Standards) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015.

In addition to the Corporate Improvement Objectives identified, Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council is committed to meeting and, where possible exceeding the standards set by central government departments through statutory performance indicators, as set below:

### PLANNING

**Indicator:** The number of major planning applications processed.

**Standard:** Processed from date valid to decision or withdrawal within an average of 15 weeks.

**Indicator:** The number of local planning applications processed.

**Standard:** Processed from the date valid to decision or withdrawal within an average of 15 weeks.

**Indicator:** Progress of enforcement cases.

**Standard:** 70% of all enforcement cases progressed to target conclusion within 39 weeks of receipt of complaint.

### WASTE MANAGEMENT

**Indicator:** The percentage of household waste collected that is sent for recycling.

**Standard:** A recycling rate of 50 % of household waste by 2020.

**Indicator:** The amount (tonnage) of biodegradable municipal waste that is landfilled.

**Standard:** No more than 18,968 tonnes in 2017-18

**Indicator:** The amount (tonnage) of collected municipal waste arising.

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

**Indicator:** The number of jobs promoted through business start-up activity.

(Business start-up activity means the delivery of completed client-led business plans under the Department of Enterprise, NI Business Start Programme).

**Standard:** 80

## **Annual Report on Performance**

The Council will publish information annually its performance in achieving the improvement objectives and those performance indicators and standards set by the Department.

These assessments and improvement plans will be subject to audit by the Local Government Auditor who will produce an Annual Improvement Report for each financial year for each Council.