



Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council

FOR INFORMATION

Annual Performance Assessment – 2019/20	22 September 2020
Corporate Policy and Resources Committee	

Linkage to Council Strategy (2015-19)	
Strategic Theme	Innovation and Transformation
Outcome	More effective performance reporting to Council
Lead Officer	Head of Performance
Cost: (If applicable)	Costs allowed for within the annual budget

1.0 Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this report is to present to Elected Members for information Council's self-assessment of performance against the indicators set out in the 2019/20 Performance Improvement Plan.

2.0 Background

2.1 The Council's Performance Improvement Plan for 2019/20 was approved by Council in June 2019. The Plan contained improvement projects which will help to meet the Council's Performance Improvement Objectives for 2019/20.

2.2 The performance improvement cycle for the year 2020/21 is very different from standard years as Councils react and adapt to the implications of Covid-19 and the associated restrictions placed on society. Dept for Communities has confirmed that there is no requirement in 2020/21 for a Council Performance Improvement Plan

and indeed provided a further update regards the proposed plans for Performance Improvement on 17 August 2020. Please find letter attached.

2.3 All Local Authorities will still be required to publish their performance improvement assessment report covering 2019/20, with a publication date of 30 September 2020, and Council supports this approach. Please find below at Appendix 1 Council's self-assessment of performance in the three main areas of the 2019/20 Performance Improvement Plan:

- A – Performance Improvement Objectives
- B – Statutory Performance Indicators
- C – Self Imposed Indicators

2.4 Corporate Policy and Resources Committee will receive a further update on Councils 2019/20 Performance self-assessment at the October 2020 Committee meeting.

3. Conclusion

3.1 The Council's Corporate Policy and Resources Committee assumes a scrutiny role in relation to the Performance Improvement Plan and receives update reports to enable this function. Members are invited to review the attached report at Appendix 1 and take the opportunity to seek any further information necessary with regard to the various outcomes that are detailed.

Appendix A

Section A – 2019/20 Performance against Improvement Objectives

Performance Improvement Objectives 2019/20	
1	We will increase the participant usage of, and income generated by, our Leisure centres
2	We will increase support for local businesses
3	We will introduce a robust arrangement for engaging with our citizens
4	We will lower staff absenteeism rates
Long Term	1. We will reduce the % of Council income that is spent servicing Council debt 2. In terms of overall Council income, we will increase the % of non-rates income

Performance Improvement Plan – Improvement Objectives - Highlights 2019/20
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Integrated Information Management system rolled out across all Leisure facilities. - Leisure Centre Members, number of individual swims and annual income have all improved - Number of jobs created through direct Council assistance has improved - Number of instances of businesses assisted and engaged by Council has improved - Over 1,200 respondents to the Leisure Centre & Sports Centre Customer Survey - A new Council Absence Management Policy and Procedure has been agreed by Council

- Improved focus on Health and Wellbeing of staff with increasing participation in Council led initiatives
- Rates of staff Absenteeism are falling
- Establishment of Council's Finance Committee to be responsible for recommending to Council the key decisions and actions required to be taken specifically in relation to the work of the Finance function within Council.

Performance Improvement Plan – Improvement Objectives – Areas for further improvement 2019/20

- Engagement with citizens through a Borough wide consultation and publication of subsequent report has not been completed as originally planned, but work is well under way to address this within 2020/21
- Rates of Absenteeism falling, which is welcomed, but the target reduction was missed. Targets have been revised for 2020/21 and the successful output improvements realised in 2019/20 put Council in a strong position to improve again.

Performance Improvement Objective 1 We will increase the participant usage of, and income generated by, our Leisure centres	
Outputs - (The things that we will do in 2019/20)	How did we perform against these outputs in 2019/20?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver a new Marketing Plan and promotional campaign • Agree and roll out a new pricing scheme for leisure centre membership to ensure equality of product and pricing across all centres • We will review the mechanisms for customers to sign up to membership packages • We will review our equipment within all centres • We will oversee the transfer of all centres on to the same digital management platform to ensure that we collect and utilise performance information much better for the interests of Council and customers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leisure Marketing Plan and Promotional Membership campaign launched across all sites including digital media and traditional promotional techniques, as well as special Membership offers • Mobile Phone App for Leisure Services launched to include membership sign up and bookings • As part of the ongoing Council Shadow Bid process in leisure, a mechanism was put in place for the ongoing review of leisure centre equipment • Integrated “Legend” Performance Management system rolled out across all Leisure facilities. • New pricing schedule for Members has been agreed and rolled out across all sites
Outcomes - (The measurable differences made in 2019/20)	How did we perform against these outcomes in 2019/20?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2% increase in participant user numbers across all centres (2018/19 – 695,354) • 2% increase in the number of individual swims across our three swimming pools (2018/19 – 122,949) • 2% increase in the number of members across all centres (Dec 2018 – 3,029) • 2% Increase in Income (2018/19 was £2,007,842) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participant user levels at 642,127 • The number of Leisure Members has risen 17% from 2,308 in April 2019 to 2,728 in March 2020. • April 2019 – Feb 2020 - 122,473 individual swims which is a 9% against period April-Feb last year (note. loss of individual swims from JDLC Pool Closure circa 7,000) • Income across Leisure centres has improved against the same period last year, totalling £2,104,455 by the end of March 2020.

Explanation of performance and how this contributes to the achievement of the Performance Improvement Objective

The provision of Leisure through our Centres is one of the most tangible and visible forms of service that we provide to the citizens of Causeway Coast and Glens. It is no surprise therefore that when consulting with the general public as well as elected members that the provision of Leisure is one of the main topics raised, and as such has for several years been the focus of Improvement Objectives.

This Improvement Objective for 2019/20 was framed in such a way as to focus the improvement work in several Outcome areas i.e. overall number of users, number of Leisure Members, number of individual swims and of course income generated. A focus on outputs and improvement works in these areas should see a corresponding rise in the Outcomes measured, and hence deal with many of the key areas highlighted by the public and elected members.

In terms of the improvement outputs planned for the year, Council can report a year of successful implementation, with the highlights being the development and delivery of a new Digital App to support Leisure customers and Members, the transfer of all centres on to the same digital management platform and also a successful Council wide campaign and recruitment drive for new Leisure members.

In terms of the associated Outcomes measured, 3 out of the 4 have seen an increase against the 2018/19 position, with a 17% rise in Leisure Members, 9% rise in individual swims and a 5% rise in income. All 4 outcomes had a standard ambition of 2% increase placed on them so we can see that the number of Leisure members, the number of swims and total income have surpassed this. The fourth Outcome, the number of overall users, saw a 12% drop in overall numbers. However, in the context of the 3 very important factors listed below, Council believes that overall the Outcomes achieved still demonstrates a positive year of performance against this Improvement Objective:

- Firstly, during the year Council was forced to close one of its swimming pools for an extended period of time in order to carry out important repairs to the ceiling and roof that covered the pool. Based on previous years this was estimated to have led to the loss of almost 7,000 individual user experiences.
- Secondly, as noted above, the Council completed a significant piece of work around integrating all centres on to the same digital management systems. During that work there were several significant “down” periods during which access controls and data collection systems were not operating at their usual capacity.
- Thirdly, and indeed most significantly, was the impact of Covid-19 and the subsequent shutting of our Leisure Centres in early/mid-March 2020. The impact on user numbers was being felt for weeks before the centres were closed as concerns grew amongst citizens and therefore some slippage against target is to be expected.

Risks identified and mitigated

1- The hugely significant and ongoing social, health and economic impact that Covid19 has had on our whole society with lockdown measures, facility closures, social distancing requirements etc. Council took the correct decision to close all facilities when it did as our paramount concern was for the health, safety and wellbeing of customers and staff. The knock on affect to income and participation rates from February onwards was significant and indeed will be with us for some time and we attempt to provide the best service possible within the constraints placed on us all.

2- Early lag in the provision of performance information due to new system installation. During the “down” time staff kept manual records and endeavoured to record as much activity as possible.

3 - The temporary closure of JDLC Pool has had a significant impact on usage figures and an estimated £65,000 loss in income. This was mitigated by Council prioritising the procurement and delivery of the work in order to have it resolved as quickly as possible. Furthermore, customers where directed to and provided with flexible access to our other swimming pools.

Next steps?

As Council moves into the year 2020/21 it does so with all Leisure Facilities closed, and a limited opening not expected until August. This is a truly unique environment in which all of society finds itself. Council’s focus will be on attempting to provide the best possible service for our members and customers within the limits that are set by the Covid-19 related restrictions. The health, safety and wellbeing of citizens and staff will remain the priority.

Performance Improvement Objective 2 We will increase support for local businesses	
Outputs - (The things that we will do in 2019/20)	How did we perform against these outputs in 2019/20?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will continue to grow the number of businesses that are engaged in and receive direct support and mentoring through the Alchemy Programme • We will consult on, agree, and implement a new Economic Development Strategy for the Borough • We will continue to work with key partners to increase the number and quality of business start-ups and to promote enterprise and entrepreneurship throughout the borough, including through the Council's Business Start-Up Programme. • We will launch a Retail Development Programme to assist town centre and retail businesses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Terms of Reference for new Causeway Coast and Glens Economic Development Strategy produced the engagement and consultation stage are progressing. • Alchemy Programme and Business Start-Up Programme both continue to grow and perform well. Please see below. • Retail Development Programme progressed well with 192 businesses registered for the CCG gift card which was officially launched 14th November 2019 • Emergency Response to Covid-19 by Project Alchemy was initially focused on our 'Emergency Phase' responding to immediate issues from 18th March as lockdown loomed. These enquiries were mostly in regard to the new rates grant and furloughing staff due to closures. Alchemy mentors responded with a call back service within 24hrs of enquiry and can report that 106 businesses were assisted within the first 10 days of lockdown in March 2020.
Outcomes - (The measurable differences made in 2019/20)	How did we perform against these outcomes in 2019/20?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grow the Alchemy Programme by registering a further 150 businesses, with 100 receiving 5 days business mentoring and 50 receiving 2.5 days business mentoring • Increased number of Business Plans Approvals to 235 (231 in 2018/19) • Exceed the statutory target number (125) of jobs created through Business Start-up activity • Through our Business Engagement and Communications Service we will engage with 1000 businesses and manage 10 business 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 240 businesses recruited and mentored under the Alchemy Programme with 38 jobs created • 195 Business Start Business Plan approvals • 120 jobs created through the Business Start Programme • 2,987 businesses engaged and assisted • 89 retail staff participated in Retail Development Programme workshops/clinics and 192 businesses registered for the CCG gift card through this Programme

- engagement events (800 businesses engaged in 2018/19)
- 40 new retail businesses engaged in training activities through the new Retail Development Programme

Explanation of performance and how this contributes to the achievement of the Performance Improvement Objective

Performance against this Improvement Objective in 2019/20 has been positive, building on similar Performance Improvement Objectives over the past years. Measurable target outcomes were agreed in 5 areas with baselines from previous year's performance available. A good start towards the aims of increasing support to local businesses in early 2019 was followed by some strong numbers towards the end of 2019. Job creation rate and support to Businesses spent the majority of the year ahead of target but it was the impact of Covid-19 and the subsequent lockdown measures that had the biggest impact on performance against this Improvement Objective over the last period of the year.

The Alchemy Programme and the improvements that they have made to their engagement and support systems has been a success, achieving outcomes well above target and indeed contributing to the success of other business development related targets across Council. Furthermore, the response of colleagues in the Alchemy Programme to the Covid-19 crisis was a clear success and undoubtedly improved the capacity of local businesses. During the first 10 days of the Lockdown, Alchemy staff assisted 106 businesses with information and support to do with financial support packages and furlough regulations.

Through the Business Start Programme, Council contributed to the approval of 195 Business Start Business Plans (missed target by 40) and the creation of 120 jobs (missed target by 5). As mentioned above, both of these outcomes remained above target for the majority of the year, but were halted significantly in the later months due to concerns over, and then the subsequent shut down in response to, Covid-19. However, in terms of overall job creation that was supported by Council's Business Support team, the performance was very positive as outlined below with **244 jobs created**:

- 120 Business Start Programme
- 38 Alchemy
- 17 Exploring Enterprise
- Learn To Earn Initiative - 63 people assisted into employment including sheltered employment
- 6 jobs created through the Digital Causeway Programme (Programme only started in November 2019)

The changes and improvements in approach in terms of our overall engagement and interaction with businesses has seen a significant rise in the numbers of businesses that we are actively engaging with. The total of 2,987 businesses engaged and assisted was significantly higher than target and was made up of the following:

195 business start approvals, 240 businesses recruited through Alchemy, 183 businesses at Alchemy workshops, 80 Exploring Enterprise enrolments, 12 artisan producers at Balmoral Show, 5 Taste Causeway businesses attended INI Meet the Buyer event, 28 people at Labour Relations training programme,

1,717 e-mail addresses subscribed to business support e-zine, 68 businesses recruited to Digital Causeway Programme, 19 businesses funded Rural Business Development Programme, 89 retail staff participated in Retail Development Programme workshops/clinics, 154 shop fronts completed Revitalise Shop Front Scheme i.e. businesses assisted (37 in Limavady & 117 in Portrush) and 5 businesses funded through the completed **Enterprise Fund grants** totalling **£42,000**.

Risks identified and mitigated

Political Uncertainty - Potential impact of Brexit – The full impact of Brexit, whilst not yet fully clear, has had an unsettling affect amongst the business community affecting confidence and potential growth. Council’s Business Support Team ensures that it remains fully updated and briefed in terms of the affects that Brexit is having local businesses, working with local and national government departments and agencies, and offering direct support for Brexit concerns.

The hugely significant and ongoing social, health and economic impact that Covid19 has had on our whole society with lockdown measures, business closures, social distancing requirements etc. The knock on affect to jobs, business confidence and our local economy will be with us for some time, with many institutions such as the Bank of England predicting an economic recession. The Council’s response to the risk presented by Covid-19 was focused on the following:

Emergency phase

Council’s initial response was the 'Emergency Phase' responding to immediate issues from 18th March as lockdown loomed. These enquiries were mostly in regard to the new rates grant and furloughing staff due to closures. Alchemy mentors responded with a call back service within 24hrs of enquiry. 106 businesses were dealt with in this emergency phase during this financial year 2019-2020 (in those 10 days during March). In total, nearly 300 businesses were given advice and help during this phase from March to the beginning of May 2020.

Next steps?

As of April 2020, Council enters the new business year of 2020/21, in which hundreds of businesses are either temporarily closed or running at a limited capacity, with national lockdown continuing in response to the threat from Covid-19. This is a truly unique environment in which all of society finds itself.

Council’s Business Support team moved into their Recovery Phase during which many businesses then received additional support/guidance/referrals from May 2020 onwards – focusing on such issues as looking at ways to change the way they conduct business, their plans to reopen, recovery from COVID-19 etc. 110 businesses received mentoring during this recovery phase May - August 2020.

Performance Improvement Objective 3 We will introduce a robust arrangement for engaging with our citizens	
Outputs - (The things that we will do in 2019/20)	How did we perform against these outputs in 2019/20?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will conduct a public procurement exercise to commission a Citizen’s Survey for Causeway Coast and Glens • We will create an all Council survey for Causeway Coast and Glens that will include key questions and measures on the services we provide, the perceptions of our citizens and indicators that are demonstrative of how we are delivering for our citizens. • We will hold public meetings and conduct face to face conversations with citizens in order to understand better how we are performing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Market Research conducted and meetings held with external consultants to assist in the development of this project. • Procurement Documents and Specification developed in advance of Public Procurement exercise • Longer term approach agreed with Senior Leadership Team, who now look to utilise the engagement expertise offered through our newly committed membership of APSE Performance Network
Outcomes - (The measurable differences made in 2019/20)	How did we perform against these outcomes in 2019/20?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will engage directly with 750 citizens across the Borough • We will publish the findings of the first Causeway Coast and Glens Citizen’s Survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leisure Centre & Sports Centre Customer Survey - 1271 returns • Every Customer Counts surveys – 340 returns • Citizens survey was not completed in 2019/20
Explanation of performance and how this contributes to the achievement of the Performance Improvement Objective	
<p>Performance against this Improvement Objective has not fully met the Outcomes that had been agreed at the beginning of 2019/20.</p> <p>The year started strongly in terms of developing this work, with Market research conducted, fact finding meetings held with consultancy companies, and procurement/tender/specification documents developed. Links were also made with other Councils who had delivered such work as we refined and improved our ideas around the approach to public engagement. All of this early work and the outputs from it have contributed positively to achievement of this Improvement Objective.</p>	

The progress against this Improvement Objective however did not continue to develop within the 2019/20 as planned, and what follows are the two most crucial factors in that:

1- Finance – During the year 2019/20 Causeway Coast and Glens Council conducted a large scale cost cutting and budget realignment exercise at the clear direction of Elected Members and Senior Management. Tough choices had to be made with regards to pieces of work that could be delayed to further years in order to release some budget within the 2019/20 financial year, and as such it was agreed that the £15,000 budget for the Citizens Survey would remain on hold until the Financial Review was completed.

2- Uncertainly due to the advance of Covid-19 – Planning for work to commence on the survey work in the new year of 2020/21 was halted during March 2020 once it became very clear that the Covid-19 regulations would mean that interviews, face-to-face surveys, public meetings etc would be impossible to plan for until further notice.

The final output that contributed positively to this Improvement Objective was the Council decision to fully commit to membership of the APSE Performance Network, which will allow for benchmarking of performance nationally as well as expertise and consultant led guidance of citizen's engagement.

Risks identified and mitigated

Financial – Councils' extensive financial review during 2019/20 has led to the decision being made to delay the delivery of the Citizens Survey until the next financial year. To ensure that we are as prepared as possible when a new budget is agreed, Council has undertaken the preparatory work in terms of research, market testing and the production of pre-procurement documentation.

Covid-19 – Limitations in terms of social distancing will affect the techniques used when collecting citizen's data.

Next steps?

Council's Senior Management Team have agreed that the next step in this process will be engaging with the Public Engagement consultants at APSE and utilising the networks that we have there to move this Objective to the next stage. However, as with a significant number of Council Objectives, the outcomes are very dependent on the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

Performance Improvement Objective 4 We will lower staff absenteeism rates	
Outputs - (The things that we will do in 2019/20)	How did we perform against these outputs in 2019/20?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and agree a new Council Absence Management Policy and Procedure, by August 2019 and roll out a programme of training for employees and line managers September – December 2019 • Work with stakeholders to identify and agree further measures to support employees such as access to private Health Care, access to specific treatments, health insurance etc by December 2019 • Review the effectiveness of the Occupational Health process within Council and introduce an Occupational Health Nurse/adviser provision. • We will oversee an improved focus on the health and wellbeing of our staff by offering more education and opportunities for physical activity. This will include a new programme of activities and education including for example yoga/Pilates/kettlebells classes across all our main offices, golf and walking events, weight loss challenges, focus on mental health etc. • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A new Council Absence Management Policy and Procedure, has been developed, consulted on and agreed with Trade Unions at JCNC. The Policy was agreed by Council on 4th February 2020. • A programme of training for employees and line managers has been developed following approval of the Policy. This training was due to commence in April 2020 to coincide with the implementation of the Council wide policy, but this was impacted by Covid-19 implications. • Work is ongoing with stakeholders to identify and agree further measures to support employees such as access to private Health Care, access to specific treatments, health insurance etc • A review has been carried out regarding the effectiveness of the Occupational Health process within Council and an Occupational Health Nurse/adviser provision has been introduced with effect from April 2019
Outcomes - (The measurable differences made in 2019/20)	How did we perform against these outcomes in 2019/20?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A 5% reduction in the number of days lost to Council through long term sickness (9,623.49 days in 2018/19) • A 5% reduction in the average number of days lost per employee through sickness absenteeism (18.36 days per employee in 2018/19) • We will reduce the average time for an Occupational Health Review from 4 weeks to 2 weeks by September 2019 • 150 staff members will take part in the Council's new physical wellbeing activities and events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9,510.23 days lost to Council through long term sickness which was an almost 3% reduction • 17.82 days was the average number of days lost per employee through sickness absence which was a 1.18% reduction • Reduction in the average time for an Occupational Health Review is complete and average time is now 2 weeks, which can be evidenced via the new appointment dates • Over 300 staff engaging in numerous wellbeing events and initiatives such as ongoing lb for £ weight loss challenges, Corporate sporting events, new walking and running groups, and ongoing growth in the exercise/activity classes we provide in our main buildings.

How did we perform against these outputs and outcomes?

Causeway Coast and Glens Council, like many other Local Authorities, has experienced several years of increases in terms of the number of colleagues who are absent from work. Growth in this area is not sustainable for any organisation, and as such Council has set this clearly defined Improvement Objective with measurable outcomes and corresponding outputs for the year 2019/20.

In terms of the specific outputs that Council had set for 2019/20, Council has performed well against this Improvement Objective. One of the output highlights was the development, agreement and delivery of a new Absence Management Policy and Procedures for Council. This important piece of work brought together the four legacy Council arrangements into one single Policy that now applies to all members of staff. This puts in place the tools and mechanisms through which Council can seek further improvements. Improvements to the managing absence procedures also have contributed to these reduced rates, for example the reduced time that staff have to wait to see as Occupational Therapist which has contributed directly to staff returning to work faster.

Traditionally, Councils' highest reason for absence has been stress. During 2019/20 Council ensured that employees who report sick with stress are referred immediately to Occupational Health so that interventions can be put in place at an early stage. Employees have also been directed to the counselling services provided by Council through INSPIRE and over this period more than 100 employees availed of these services.

A further highlight has been the improvements made by Council in its approach to enabling the Health and Wellbeing of staff. Well over 300 colleagues have been taking part in a wide range of activities across Council locations such as facilitated weight loss programmes, lunchtime fitness/Pilates/yoga classes, new walking and running groups, campaigns that focus on mental health etc. These improvements have all gone some way to creating a working environment in which the Health and wellbeing of staff is more centrally connected to the culture of the organisation.

Council had set itself an ambitious target of a 5% reduction in the outcomes of the average number of days lost per employee through sickness absenteeism and then the total number of days lost due to sickness absenteeism. Against these targets Council achieved reductions of 1.18% and 3% respectively. Whilst it was very encouraging that Council was able to achieve a reduction in the numbers associated with absenteeism, it has to be recognised that the 5% target was not achieved and further work is required over the coming years to ensure that the absenteeism rates continue to fall.

Finally, it should be noted that the onset of Covid-19 and the corresponding restrictions had an impact on absenteeism figures in March 2020. This is not to say that without Covid-19 Council would have met the 5% target reductions, but it did have a notable impact as colleagues had to self-isolate and take up additional caring responsibilities outside of work from March onwards.

Risks identified and mitigated

- Ongoing engagement with stakeholders in development and delivery of new Absence Management Policy – Such an important policy and new set of procedures, which has a clear focus on people, has many stakeholders ranging from trade unions and staff to the elected members and affiliated health care providers. Council worked hard at every stage to ensure that all stakeholders were fully engaged and had opportunities to contribute towards the improvements that were being designed and implemented.

- Covid-19:

- In terms of absenteeism the effects of Covid-19 were felt from early March 2020 onward, with staff having to self-isolate and shield in line with Government led restrictions. Compounding on this was the lockdown of society which led to the closure of schools and educational facilities, which in turn had a significant impact on the caring responsibilities for all staff. Council moved as quickly as possible to enable staff to work from remotely and from home, offering as much technical and logistical assistance as possible.

- Covid-19 had an effect on the programme of training for employees and line managers which was developed following approval of the Policy. This training was scheduled to commence in April 2020 to coincide with the implementation of the Council wide policy. However, in light of COVID-19 this was postponed. The OD/HR team liaised with the training provider and the training has now commenced using video technology so that social distancing measures are adhered to. The schedule of training has been revised and a new plan is in place

- During this period of COVID-19 lockdown, OD/HR have issued daily emails to all staff covering a variety of topics from Mental Health awareness, anxiety, bereavement, to activities for home schooling

Next steps?

- Work is ongoing with stakeholders to identify and agree further measures to support employees such as access to private Health Care, access to specific treatments, health insurance etc

- A revised target for the year ahead 2020/21 of a 2.5% reduction in absenteeism has been agreed and will be reported quarterly to the Council's Audit Committee.

Long Term Performance Improvement Objectives	
<p>1. We will reduce the % of Council income that is spent servicing Council debt</p> <p>2. In terms of overall Council income, we will increase the % of non-rates income</p>	
Outputs - (The things that we will do in 2019/20)	How did we perform against these outputs in 2019/20?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will track, monitor and report on the Council’s level of debt repayment, borrowing and non-rates income • We will establish clear data and information baselines from which to continually review performance • Council will conduct a review of its debt repayment structure • Council will conduct a review into the different possible areas in which it can increase its non-rates income • These two Long Term Performance Improvement Objectives will be the first two objectives and/or themes to be considered when Council develops its new Corporate Strategy 2019-23 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work associated with this Long Term Improvement Objective has been taken over by the newly created Finance Committee • The first planning session for development of the 2019-23 Corporate Strategy have taken place, with sessions held between elected members and senior Council staff. • Wide ranging, independent, Consultant led Financial Review exercise was conducted by Council to analyse and report on all of management of Council budgets. Findings have been reported to Members and this work continues
Outcomes - (The measurable differences made in 2019/20)	How did we perform against these outcomes in 2019/20?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased awareness of, monitoring and reporting of, and opportunities for Members to analyse the Council’s debt repayment structures • Increased confidence for Members to make important financial decisions • Long term trend towards decreasing the % of Council income that is spent servicing Council debt • Long term trend towards increasing non-rates income 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work associated with this Long Term Improvement Objective has been taken over by the newly created Finance Committee which met of the first time in September 2019. • In terms of Financial Performance Council concluded the year 2019/20 under budget, and this trend has continued into the first quarter of 2020/21 • Council has improved the management and level of its financial reserves during 2019/20

Explanation of performance and how this contributes to the achievement of the Performance Improvement Objective

These long term improvement objectives were added to the 2019/20 Performance Improvement Plan at the express instruction of Elected Members. The Members sought to create new and improved mechanisms that would enable Council to have improved monitoring functions over finance, budgets and debt. Whilst in the main the outcomes associated here are “Long-term” in their ambition and scope, it is the improvements associated with key outputs in 2019/20 that have contributed to a positive performance against these long term improvement objectives.

Furthermore, Council has completed the year 2019/20 under agreed annual budget, maintained that trend into 2020/21 and has also improved the management and levels of its financial reserves.

One of the major output improvements has been the formal creation of the new Council Finance Committee. The Finance Committee is responsible for recommending to Council the key decisions and actions that are required to be taken specifically in relation to the work of the Finance function within Council. Several of its key responsibilities are as follows:

- Leading on the annual Rates Estimate setting process;
- Monthly review of the management accounts; to include a summary by service area of income and expenditure, with commentary of positive or negative outcome on their budgets;
- Setting key finance targets and monitoring their delivery, including efficiency and income generation;
- All capital and resource expenditure to be reviewed by the committee before going to full council;
- To investigate, review and set targets for efficiencies and income for each department.
- To implement and review a 3 year rolling budget/forecast
- Monitoring and reviewing business and service delivery plans for the Finance Service;
- To review the annual statement of accounts. Specifically, to consider whether appropriate accounting policies have been followed and whether there are concerns arising from the financial statements or from the audit that need to be brought to the attention of the Council;
- Receive a rolling programme of finance related presentations from all service areas.

Risks identified and mitigated

Covid-19 and the effects that it has on several of Council’s most significant income streams - The Finance Committee has taken the lead in coordinating and monitoring the financial support that has been provided in response to Covid-19 as well as contributing towards the consolidation and recovery plans associated with our major income generating services.

Citizen's confidence in Council – During the year 2019/20 there were several news and press reports concerning Council and its financial position. Council is very aware that any negative coverage can have an overall detrimental effect on the confidence that citizens have in Council as a whole. As such, Council has created the new Finance Committee to monitor and report on this function as well as ensuring that it remains as open and transparent as possible when communicating with citizens and media.

Next steps?

The finance Committee will continue to meet once a month to carry out its important work, and its Terms of Reference will be continue to be reviewed during its first year in operation.

The Finance Committee will play a central role in 2020/21 in overseeing Covid-19 financial support as well as monitoring the overall affect that Covid-19 is having on Council finances.

Section B – 2019/20 Performance against Statutory Indicators

Performance against Statutory Indicators 2019/20 – Highlights

- Continuing strong performance by our Planners in terms of the conclusion of enforcement cases
- Improvements in our Waste and Recycling services has led to Council for the first time surpassing the 50% recycling rate target against the indicator of the % of household waste collected by District Councils that is sent for recycling.
- Furthermore, Council performed strongly against the indicator of the amount (tonnage) of biodegradable Local Authority Collected Municipal Waste that is landfilled, by lowering its % of allocation used by 18.9 points from the previous year, and indeed shows a drop of almost 40% points over the past two years.

Performance against Statutory Indicators 2019/20 - Areas for improvement

- Performance against our Planning indicators relating to processing rates for Major and Local Development Planning Applications has fallen short of the targets set by central Government. This reflects a trend over the past 3 years. From the analysis below one can see that we are not massively out with the trend of other Councils, but despite this Council's Planning Department continues to strive to make as much progress against these targets as possible. However, with a number of vacant posts not filled currently within the Planning Department due to reductions in income, this is likely to impact on performance going forward for the 2020/21 business year.

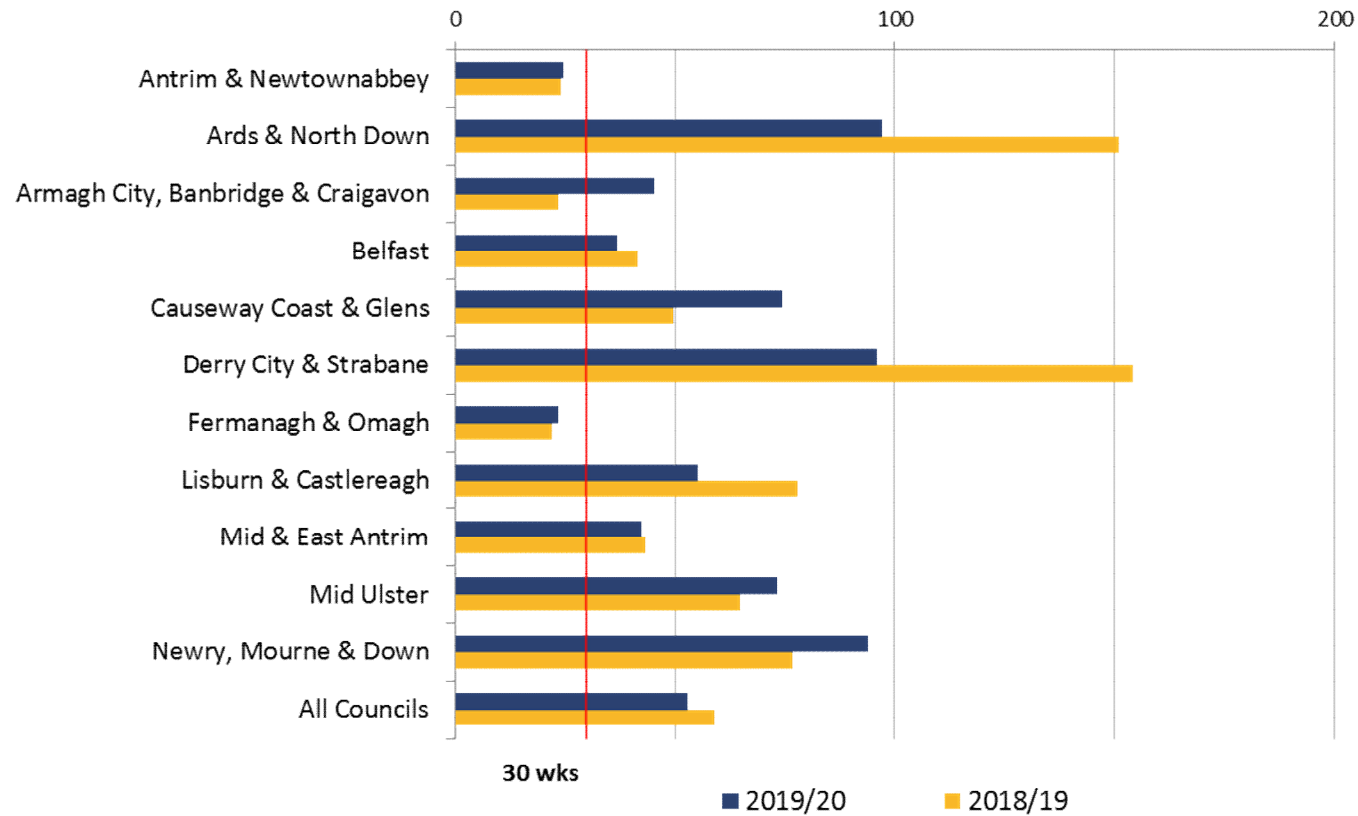
B1 Statutory Planning Indicators

The information included in the tables below for Statutory Indicators (NI Local Authority Planning Statistics) is verified and published by DfI. Please see the following link <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-planning-statistics-april-2019-march-2020>

Please note that final validation of the following Planning performance information will not be completed until November 2020.

Statutory Planning Indicators		
P1 - It is a statutory target for each council that their Major Development planning applications will be processed from the date valid to decision issued or withdrawal date within an average of 30 weeks.		
Performance Year	Performance in number of weeks and % success rate against target	National Average
2019/20	74.5 weeks (15%)	52.8 weeks (26.1%)
2018/19	49.6 weeks (16.7%)	59 weeks (28%)
2017/18	58.4 weeks (30%)	50.2 weeks (13.3%)
2016/17	51.4 weeks (13.3%)	50.2 weeks (20.4%)
<p>Explanation of performance in 2019/20</p> <p>Performance against this statutory planning indicator did not meet the statutory targets that have been set by central government and as such our performance against this target remains an area for further improvement. It should be noted however, that of the 11 Councils only 2 managed to meet the statutory target and there were 3 that underperformed in comparison to Causeway Coast and Glens. The graphic below illustrates this further.</p> <p>Unfortunately, the postponement of the March Planning Committee meeting due to the Covid-19 pandemic, impacted on the number of decisions that issued in March as a further 1 major application had the potential to issue subject to determination at that meeting.</p> <p>In comparison to the same period last year, the number of major applications received has decreased by 6, however, the number of major applications decided has increased by 8. The major category of planning application improved to 100% approval rate, an improvement of 11.1% when compared to the previous year. However, this strive to improve approval rates resulted in longer negotiations on applications.</p>		

Major Development average processing times by council, 2018/19 & 2019/20



Statutory Planning Indicators

P2 - It is a statutory target for each council that their Local Development planning applications will be processed from the date valid to decision issued or withdrawal date within an average of 15 weeks.

Performance Year	Performance in number of weeks and % success rate against target	National Average
2019/20	20 weeks (40.8%)	15 weeks (54.1%)
2018/19	21.6 weeks (36.8%)	14.8 weeks (50.9%)
2017/18	20.4 weeks (32.3%)	15.2 weeks (49.7%)
2016/17	18.8 weeks (38.1%)	16.2 weeks (47.1%)

Explanation of performance in 2019/20

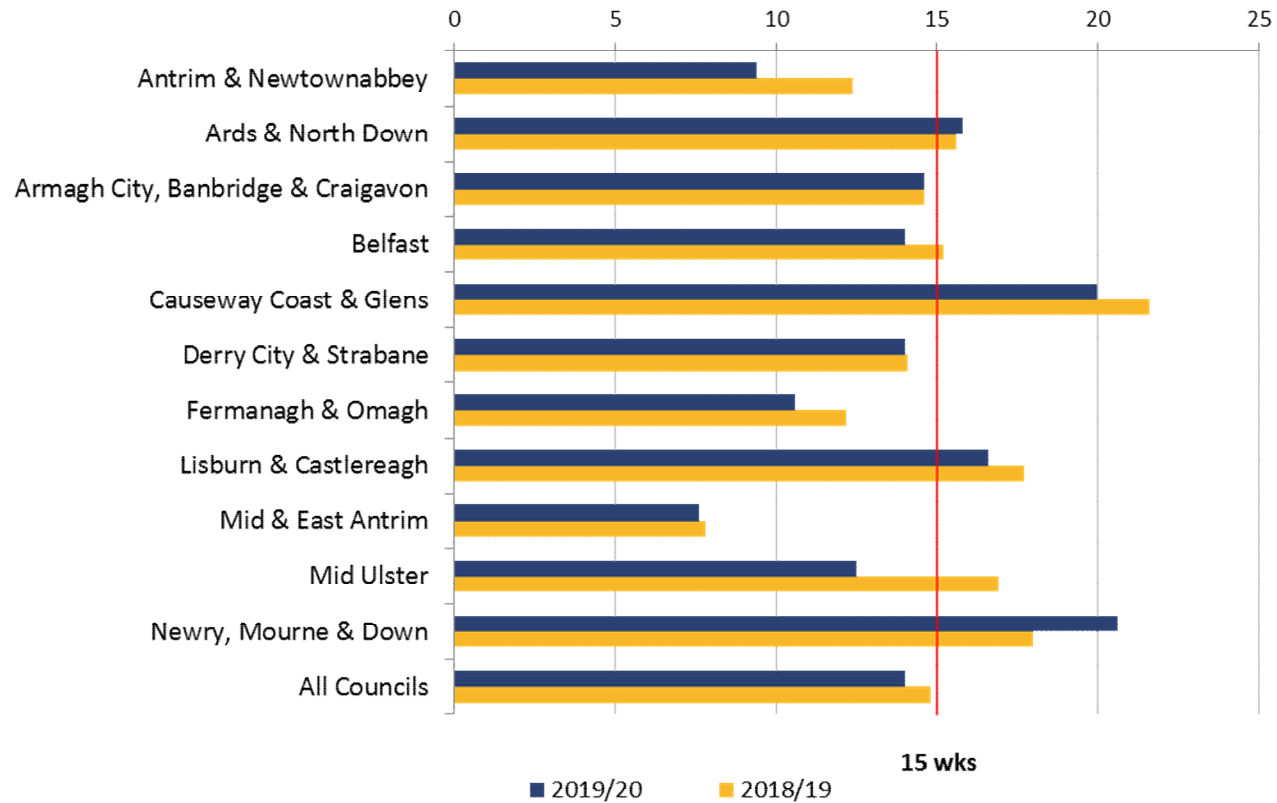
Performance against this target remains an area for further improvement. Although we did not meet the statutory target of 15 weeks for processing local applications, processing times has improved by 1.6 weeks when compared to the same period last year and with 4% more local applications being processed within the statutory target when compared to same period last year. Furthermore, the number of applications decided/withdrawn is greater than the number of applications received resulting in a reduction in the number of live applications in the system.

Unfortunately, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic in March impacted on the processing times for that month with staff unable to issue decisions from 24 March 2020. As a result the average processing times for March was much higher than would have been anticipated, impacting not only on the monthly but also the yearly average processing times.

In comparison to the same period last year, the number of applications received has decreased by 91 applications and the number of decisions issued/withdrawn has decreased by 57 applications.

Seven of the 11 Councils met this target, and 4 did not. The graphic below is provided to enable further comparisons with other Councils.

Local Development average processing times by council, 2018/19 & 2019/20



Statutory Planning Indicators

P3 - It is a statutory target that 70% of all enforcement cases dealt with by councils are progressed to target conclusion within 39 weeks of receipt of complaint.

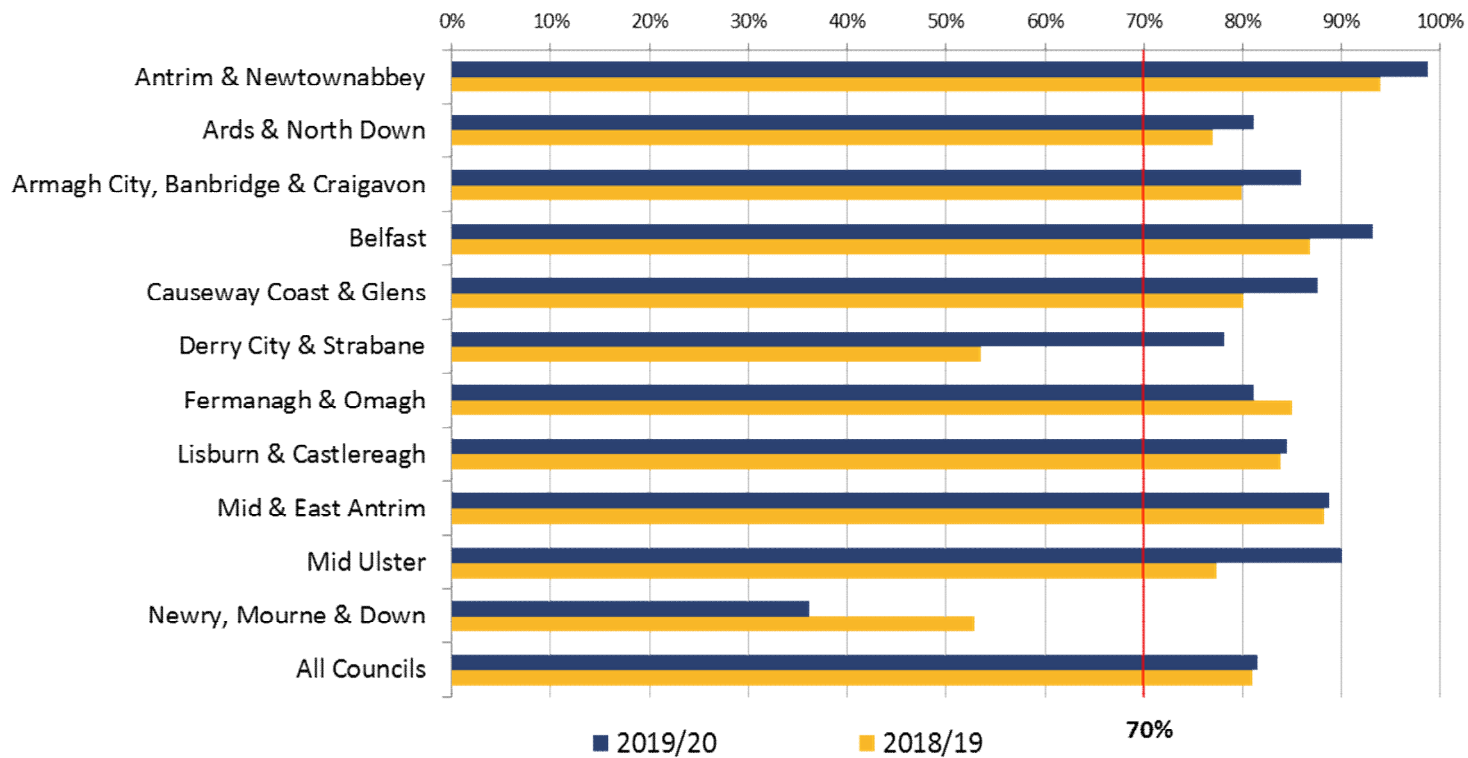
Performance Year	Council Performance	National Average
2019/20	87.6%	81.4%
2018/19	80%	81%
2017/18	70.5%	77%
2016/17	89.5%	80.7%

Explanation of performance in 2019/20

The statutory target for concluding 70% of enforcement cases within 39 weeks continues to be exceeded by our Enforcement team with 87.6% of cases concluded within the statutory target. An improvement of 7.6% when compared to the same period last year. Furthermore, the length of time taken to conclude 70% of cases has reduced by 3.8 weeks taking just 28 weeks to conclude. Council's performance against this indicator in comparison to other Councils is strong, as we remain above the average and well in line with the top performing Councils. Please see the graphic below for further illustration of our performance against this indicator in relation to other Councils.

In comparison to the same period last year, the number of cases opened has increased by 54 and the number of cases brought to conclusion has decreased by 16.

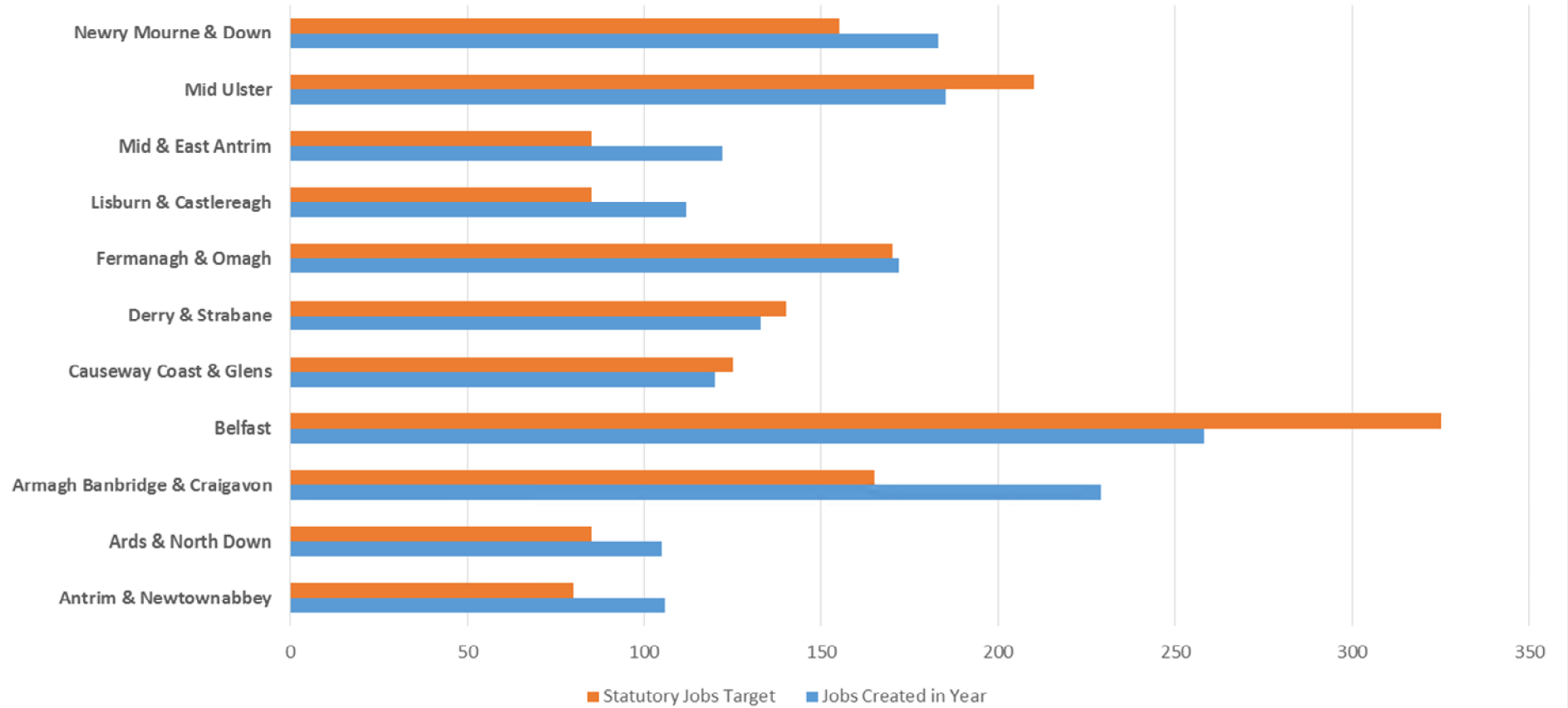
Percentage of cases concluded within 39 weeks by council, 2018/19 & 2019/20



B2 Statutory Economic Development Indicator

Statutory Economic Development Indicator	2019/20 Performance	2019/20 National Average	2018/19 Performance	2018/19 National Average	2017/18 Performance	2017/18 National Average	2016/17 Performance	2016/17 National Average
Target – 125 - The number of jobs promoted through business start-up activity	120 (96% success rate)	106%	142 (114% success rate)	111%	185 (148% success rate)	107.8%	209 (167% success rate)	141%
<p>2019/20 Explanation of performance</p> <p>Council continues to perform well against its Statutory Economic Development Performance Indicator, and indeed spent the majority of the year 2019/20 ahead of target. However, the impact of Covid-19 of job creation and business confidence in March 2020 led to a drop in performance which ultimately contributed to Council narrowly missing out on target. Council’s performance against this target in relation to other Councils can be further illustrated in the table below.</p> <p>This being said, overall, Council has been able to demonstrate that in 2019/20 its work has directly contributed to the creation of 244 jobs.</p>								

NI Business Start Up Programme - Jobs Promoted by Councils



B3 Statutory Waste Performance Indicators

The information included in the tables below for Statutory Indicators (NI Local Authority Collected Municipal Waste Management Statistics) is verified and published by DAERA. Please see the following link <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/northern-ireland-local-authority-collected-municipal-waste-management-statistics#toc-1>

Please note that final validation of the following waste performance information will not be completed until November 2020.

Statutory Indicator W1 – The percentage of household waste collected by District Councils that is sent for recycling		
Standard to be met – 50% by December 2020		
Performance Year	Performance Achieved	National Average
2019/20	54.4%	52%
2018/19	47.7%	50%
2017/18	42.7%	47.6%
2016/17	42.5%	44%
2019/20 Explanation of performance		
<p>Performance in 2019/20 has been very positive with Council happy to report that it has surpassed the 50% recycling rate for the first time and indeed now sits above the national average. Against this indicator Council has seen year on year increases, and in 2019/20 our recycling rate is now a full 6.7% points above performance from the previous year</p> <p>Performance in 2019/20 has been helped by improvements in waste/recycling education for the public as well as the successful embedding of the rollout of the brown biodegradable waste bins to all households in the Borough.</p>		

Statutory Indicator W2 - The amount (tonnage) of biodegradable Local Authority Collected Municipal Waste that is landfilled**Standard to be met annually – To limit utilisation of 17,062T allocation and do not exceed 100%**

Performance Year	Annual Tonnage	% of allocation usage	National average % of allocation usage
2019/20	9,999	58.6%	57.4%
2018/19	14,082	77.5%	65.5%
2017/18	18,992	98.5%	68.9%
2016/17	18,996	93.2%	77.8%

2019/20 Explanation of performance

Council has shown a marked improvement in 2019/20 and now has a landfilled rate of 58.6%, which is down 18.9 points from the previous year, and indeed shows a drop of almost 40% points over the past two years.

Council's performance in this area has also remained above the national average.

Performance in 2019/20 has been helped by improvements in waste/recycling education for the public as well as the successful embedding of the rollout of the brown biodegradable waste bins to all households in the Borough.

Statutory Indicator W3 - The amount (tonnage) of Local Authority Collected Municipal Waste arisings

Standard to be met – Ongoing reduction in growth rate

Performance Year	Annual Tonnage	% growth rate
2019/20	81,270	-0.01%
2018/19	81,763	2.5%
2017/18	79,634	-0.02%
2016/17	79,758	

2019/20 Explanation of Performance

Council has shown a slight decrease in its growth rate in its Municipal Waste arising which is to be welcomed. Whilst the Department has not set specific targets for this indicator, it is clear that the preferred trend will be to see a continuing decrease in this figure.

In terms of comparisons with other Councils, it is perhaps difficult to make accurate comparisons due to the differing size and population of each area, but Causeway Coast and Glens does appear to follow that size trend with 4 Councils returning larger tonnage of Waste.

Section C – Performance Against self-imposed indicators

	Measure	2018/19 Outcome	Target	2019/20 Outcome	Assessment of Performance
1	% of invoices paid within 30 days	82.25%	90%	80%	<p>Council’s performance in this area was very close to that achieved last year, but suffered somewhat during March 2020 as Covid-19 restrictions where put I place. It should also be noted that the average processing time was 22.53 days as opposed to 24.49 days in 2018/19</p> <p>Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic Council had introduced electronic purchase order processing (POPs) in January 2020, staff were trained and this was working well. For staff to access the system they need access to the Council network which has caused issues for some staff working from home without VPN connection. Many staff enter the council buildings at designated times to raise and approve orders but it is anticipated that as more staff return to the workplace this will improve.</p>
2	Debt owed to Council		Reduce		Awaiting final consolidated information
3	% of complaints dealt with at stage 1	93%	95%	93%	Council has maintained this high level of performance in 2019/20, with the lockdown restrictions in March 2020 having an effect on this work in the last month of the reporting year.
4	% of FOI and EIR requests dealt with within target 20 working days	93%	100%	90%	Once again Council has delivered a good performance in terms of meeting this statutory based directive. It is important to note that this high level of performance was managed in the context of 72 more cases than in the previous year, and the Covid-19 restrictions from March 2020, which both help to demonstrate the effort and performance delivered in this area.
5	Number of staff	1,714	2,000	1,537	Target of 2,000 separate incidents of training has not been reached, and

	training attendees				<p>indeed on reflection, this may have been an over-projection. To provide some context, in the 2018/19 there was a large scale training programme rolled out across all Council in response to the new Data Protection legislation. This was completed by every member staff, and as such the numbers for 2018/19 could be considered to be skewed from a more normal pattern. Furthermore, once the Covi-19 restrictions were in place from March 2020 onwards, all planned training was postponed.</p> <p>Plans have been developed and indeed some training is now being delivered to staff via various online and interactive mechanisms.</p>
6	The cost of agency staff across the Council	£7,063,201.47	Reduce cost	£7,859,509	Agency staff continue to provide a vital and highly valued role in terms of the delivery of Council services, and Council continues to work hard to strike an efficient balance between Permanent and Agency workers.
7	The % of agency staff hours as overtime hours	<p>Environmental – 8.95%</p> <p>Leisure & Development – 10.7%</p> <p>Corp Services / CEX – 3.53%</p>	Reduce in each Directorate by 10%	<p>Environmental – 7.3%</p> <p>Leisure & Development – 14.5%</p> <p>Corp Services / CEX – 1.6%</p>	<p>As stated above, agency staff continue to provide a vital and highly valued role in terms of the delivery of Council services, and Council continues to work hard to strike an efficient balance between Permanent and Agency workers.</p> <p>In terms of Agency staff overtime as a percentage of total agency hours, Council has been able to demonstrate an overall slight reduction. At the Directorate level, 2 out of the 3 Directorates have seen reductions in this rate and work will continue in 2020/21 to maintain this trend.</p>

All Chief Executives

Director
Local Government Housing Regulation Group
Causeway Exchange
1-7 Bedford Street
Town Parks
Belfast
BT2 7EG

Phone: **028 90 823456**

Email: Anthony.carleton@communities-ni.gov.uk

Dear Chief Executive

17 August 2020

Performance Improvement in Local Government 2020/21

Subsequent to my letter dated 11 June 2020 a decision has been made to set aside the requirement to produce and publish a performance improvement plan for the 2020/21 year.

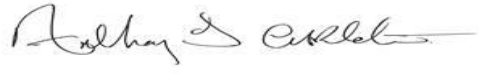
Councils will still be required to publish their performance improvement assessment report covering 2019/20, with a publication date of 30 September 2020.

We have been considering the arrangements that should be put in place for councils regarding performance improvement for the next few years. Our initial thinking, subject to taking the views of councils, is that, rather than being required to produce and publish performance improvement plans in the current difficult climate, it may be more beneficial for councils to produce plans setting out their proposals for service delivery and performance recovery.

In addition to seeking input from councils, we will also need to take the views of the Local Government Auditor before submitting proposals for the Minister's consideration.

Further work on council performance requirements is ongoing and the Department will be engaging with local government representatives to review the way forward for 2021/22 onwards.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Anthony Carleton". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Anthony Carleton