

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council

Consultation and Engagement Report on the Performance Improvement Objectives 2024-25



Introduction

The Local Government Act (NI) 2014 sets out a General Duty of Improvement, whereby all District Councils must put in place arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of their functions and set performance improvement objectives for each financial year. Each Council also has a statutory duty to consult key stakeholders on the proposed performance improvement objectives.

The five draft performance improvement objectives were considered and approved by the Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee in April 2024. This was followed by an extensive consultation and engagement process which encouraged key stakeholders, including residents, Elected Members and partner organisations to have their say on the proposed performance improvement objectives.

This report provides an overview of the consultation and engagement methodology and an analysis of the responses which were received.

Consultation and Engagement Activity

Between 19 April – 31 May 2024, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council carried out a six week consultation and engagement process with key stakeholders on the draft performance improvement objectives 2024-25, with pre-engagement consultation also carried out through the following mechanisms:

- Electronic survey and documentation on the Speak NMD platform, which was promoted through the Council's website and social media channels
- Public Notices in local newspapers
- Engagement with the following stakeholders:
 - Newry DEA
 - Crotlieve DEA
 - Slieve Gullion DEA
 - Slieve Croob DEA
 - Downpatrick DEA
 - Rowallane DEA
 - Newry and Mourne and Down Youth Voice
 - Cedar Foundation

This process was further supplemented by the consultation and engagement which was carried out to support the development of the Draft Corporate Plan 2024-27.

- Residents Survey (September 2022)
- Consultation and engagement on the Draft Corporate Plan 2024-27 (March – May 2024)
- Consultation and engagement on the draft Performance Improvement Objectives 2023-24

Analysis Methodology

A total of 48 surveys were received in response to the consultation and engagement on the Council's draft performance improvement objectives 2024-25. Respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the draft performance improvement objectives and if they had any comments to make regarding each objective. Respondents were also asked to put forward their suggested priorities for future improvement.

In carrying out the quantitative and qualitative consultation and engagement, a structured process was used to capture responses around each of the five draft performance improvement objectives 2024-25. This was supplemented by an engagement process with 111 key stakeholders, as outlined below:

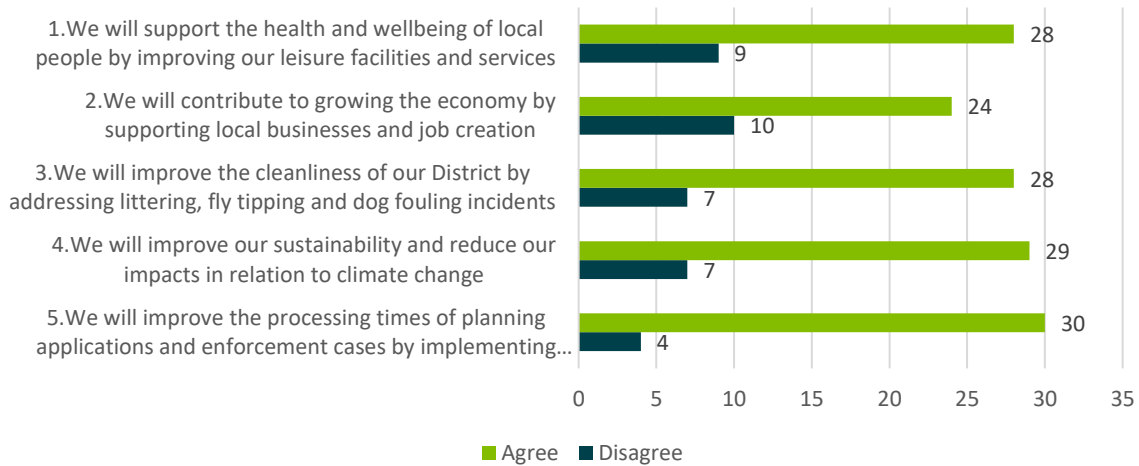
Consultation and Engagement	Details
Newry DEA Forum	14 participants – 28 March 2024
Downpatrick DEA Forum	13 participants – 09 April 2024
Rowallane DEA Forum	12 participants – 10 April 2024
Crotlieve DEA Forum	9 participants – 16 April 2024
Slieve Gullion DEA Forum	14 participants – 16 April 2024
Slieve Croob DEA Forum	12 participants – 23 April 2024
Newry and Mourne and Down Youth Voice – Newry Office	18 participants – 16 April 2024
Newry, Mourne and Down Youth Voice – Newcastle Office	12 participants – 07 May 2024
Cedar Foundation User Forum	7 participants - 07 May 2024
Residents Survey (September 2022)	764 residents aged 16+ with quotas applied for age, gender, social class and District Electoral Area

Consultation and Engagement Findings

Analysis of Findings

Responses to the draft performance improvement objectives 2024-25 have been received from residents, elected members, local community organisations, statutory organisations and others including those that work in and visit the district. There has been a positive response to the five proposed performance improvement objectives, with the majority of respondents agreeing with each objective.

Agreement on Performance Improvement Objectives 2024-25

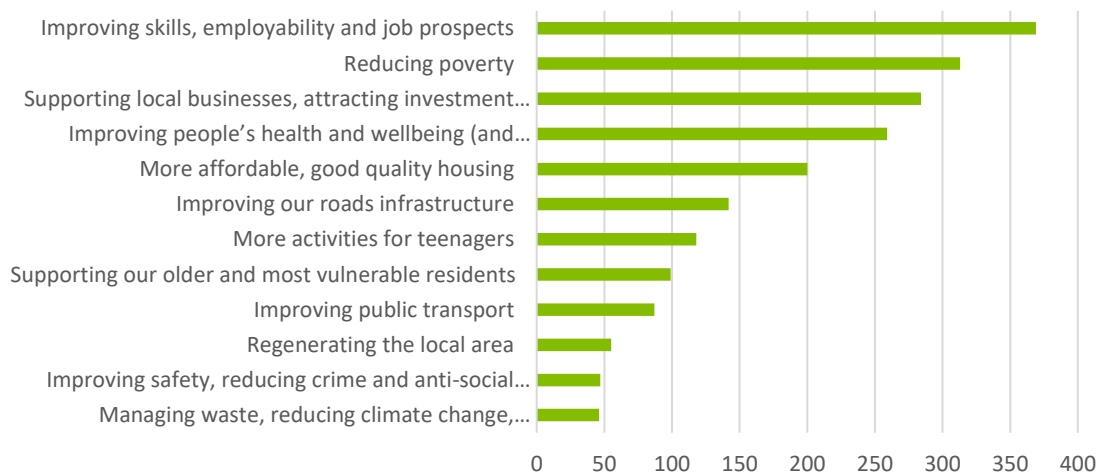


Residents Survey (2022)

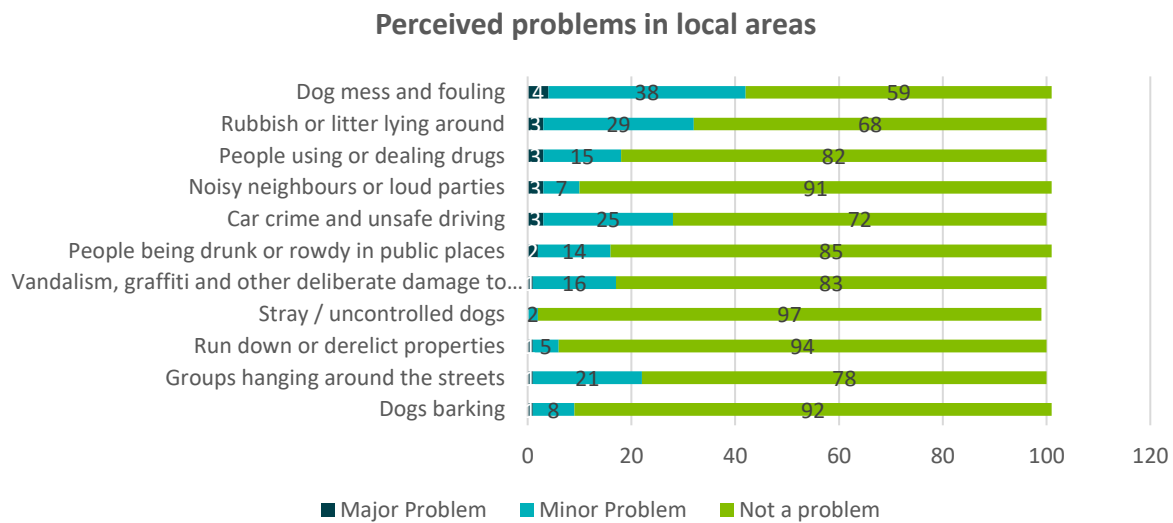
These findings are further endorsed by the results of the Residents Survey which indicate that the performance improvement objectives broadly address the top improvements identified to make somewhere a good place to live.

- The local economy, health and wellbeing, housing, infrastructure, public transport, protecting the environment, climate change and managing waste are amongst the top priorities for improvement.
- Supporting communities, educational provision, accessible leisure centres, accessible arts centres/theatres and museums and opportunities for volunteering are amongst the lesser priorities for improvement.

Top priorities for Improving the local area



These findings are further reinforced by the fact that residents identify dog mess and littering as the top perceived problems in the local area.



You Said, We Did - Overview of Consultation Feedback

Performance Improvement Objectives

An analysis of the consultation and engagement findings indicates that the issues raised will be addressed through the proposed 2024-25 performance improvement objectives, 'supporting actions' and 'measures of success', or as part of the Council's business planning process. An overview of the amendments and revisions that have been made to the performance improvement objectives, throughout the consultation and engagement process are highlighted below.

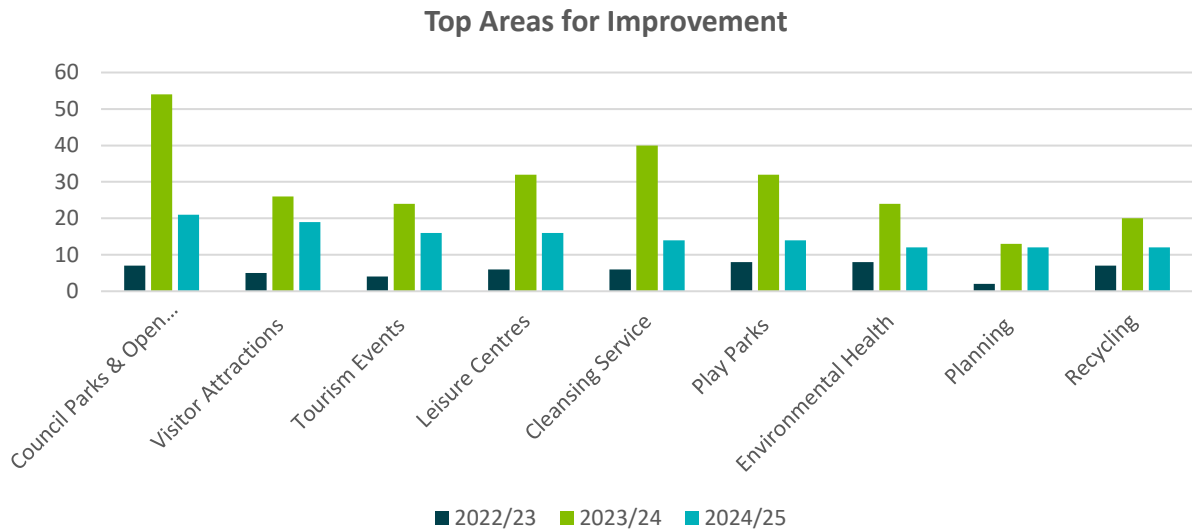
	You Said	We Listened	We Did
We will support the health and wellbeing of local people by improving our leisure facilities and services	<i>'One of the proposals is "Maintain the number of recorded visits to Community Trails". There is currently not even a list of the names of Community Trails in the district on the Council website, never mind a map of where they are.'</i>	The full list of Community trails is available on the Council's 'Be Active' app under Outdoor Leisure.	

			Revised the 2023-24 figure for community trails based on updated year end data which has also led to a revised target for 2024-25.
We will contribute to growing the economy by supporting local businesses and job creation			Figures for economic development programmes have been revised to reflect 2023-24 actual figures.
We will improve the cleanliness of our District by addressing littering, fly tipping and dog fouling incidents	<p>The wording of this objective should also include 'continue to promote recycling and' so that it reads: 'We will improve the cleanliness of our District by continuing to promote recycling and addressing littering, fly tipping and dog fouling incidents'</p> <p>'More promotion on live here love here campaign to inform and raise</p>		<p>Figures for fixed penalty notices issued and paid have been revised to reflect 2023-24 actual figures.</p> <p>Based on this suggestion and other feedback in support of recycling Council agree with the change and the objective now reads: 'We will improve the cleanliness of our District by continuing to promote recycling and addressing littering, fly tipping and dog fouling incidents'</p>

	awareness of the pros of recycling'		
We will improve our sustainability and reduce our impacts in relation to climate change			Revised the 2023-24 figure for the percentage of Council fleet younger than 8 years based on updated year end data which has also led to a revised target for 2024-25.
We will improve the processing times of planning applications and enforcement cases by implementing the Planning Service Improvement Programme			

Suggested Areas for Improvement

As part of the survey, and similar to previous years, respondents were asked to put forward their suggested areas for improvement. 'Council parks and open spaces', 'Visitor Attractions, 'Tourism Events' and 'Leisure Centres' are the top priorities for improvement in 2024-25.



Next Steps

Based on the feedback obtained through the consultation and engagement process, as well as the ongoing developmental work around each performance improvement objective 2024-25, there has been an amendment to the wording of one of the objectives as well as some minor amendments to the 'supporting actions' and 'measures of success', as outlined in the Performance Improvement Plan 2024-25.

The Consultation and Engagement report will be published on the Council's website by 30 June 2024, alongside the Performance Improvement Plan 2024-25. It will also be circulated to key stakeholders to support the business planning process.

A summary of the consultation and engagement feedback is provided below.

Summary of Consultation and Engagement Feedback

Performance Improvement Objective 1

- Better maintenance of leisure centres is needed as they are often closed, or things are broken/not in use
- More health and leisure activities should be offered and at more affordable prices
- Newry needs the park developed
- More investment in Newcastle but the support for the gondola project is not there
- Residents and visitors should not be charged into the forest parks
- More work needs to be done on playing pitches
- More information needs to be provided on community trails
- More emphasis needs to be places on Arts, Heritage and Culture across the District

Performance Improvement Objective 2

- Car parking charges and lack of spaces is adversely affecting the city and the ability to shop local
- More promotion of Council jobs, more job fairs looking at training and apprenticeships
- More awareness and visibility for the new 'Go Succeed' Programme
- Too many derelict buildings and city centre run down

Performance Improvement Objective 3

- Dog fouling and littering are still major issues across the District and it is felt that they are getting worse
- Fly tipping and fly posting are also issues that should be better addressed
- More enforcement and awareness campaigns are needed
- More cleansing needs to be done across the District

Performance Improvement Objective 4

- More trees need to be planted
- More EV charging points needed
- Improving our recycling and opening times of HRC's
- Supporting sustainable tourism
- More awareness of our carbon footprint and measures to reduce it
- The impact of flooding across the District

Performance Improvement Objective 5

- Not enough planning enforcement
- Planning applications take far too long
- More staff needed

Other comments

- People of the District are not listened to.
- Council needs to be more accountable and transparent
- More emphasis needed on the creative sector – Arts, Heritage and Tourism
- More work needed to improve the biodiversity of the District

Other improvements

- Improved governance, accountability and transparency
- Newry City Park
- Construction of the new theatre and development of a theatre and arts programme
- More cleansing, more enforcement of dog fouling, littering and fly posting
- Restoring Newry Canal

-

