January 17th, 2025

Notice Of Meeting

You are requested to attend the Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee meeting to be held on Thursday, 23rd January 2025 at 6:00 pm in Council Chamber, Downshire Civic Centre.

Committee Membership 2024-2025

Councillor T Howie **Chairperson**

Councillor C King **Deputy Chairperson**

Councillor C Bowsie

Councillor P Byrne

Councillor W Clarke

Councillor C Enright

Councillor O Hanlon

Councillor A Mathers

Councillor D McAteer

Councillor S O'Hare

Councillor A Quinn

Councillor H Reilly

Councillor M Rice

Councillor G Sharvin

Councillor D Taylor

Agenda

1.0   Apologies and Chairperson's Remarks

2.0   Declarations of Interest

3.0   Action Sheet arising from Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 12 December 2024

For Approval

For Discussion/Decision

4.0   IT Strategy 2030

For Decision

5.0   Digital Transformation Strategy 2030

For Decision

Items deemed to be exempt under paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014

6.0   Proposed Renewal of Lease of Lands at Saul, Downpatrick

For Decision

This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 - information relating to an individual and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.

Items deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014

7.0 Proposed Renewal of Licence at Aughnagun, Mayobridge
For Decision

This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.

📄 ***Proposed Renewal of Licence at Aughnagun Mayobridge.pdf***   ***Not included***

📄 ***Licence Map Aughnagun.pdf***   ***Not included***

8.0 Proposed Lease of Lands at Bessbrook
For Decision

This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.

📄 ***Proposed Lease of Lands at Bessbrook.pdf***   ***Not included***

📄 ***Map SPR.pdf***   ***Not included***

9.0 Request for Purchase of Land
For Decision

This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.

Report to follow

10.0 AHC Capital Projects
For Decision

This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.

📄 ***SP&R - AHC Capital Projects - 17.01.2025.pdf***   ***Not included***

📄 ***Appendix 1 - Capital Projects.pdf***   ***Not included***

📄 ***Appendix 2 - Capital Projects .pdf***   ***Not included***

11.0 Public Realm Downpatrick Update
For Decision

This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.

📄 ***S P R Report_Jan 25_Public Realm.pdf***   ***Not included***

12.0 Castlewellan Forest Park
For Decision

This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.

Report to follow

FOR NOTING Items deemed to be exempt under Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014

13.0 IT Strategy 2016 – Progress Review
For Information

This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.

📄 ***23012025 ITS 2016 Prog Review.pdf***   ***Not included***

📄 ***IT Strategy 2016 Review.pdf***   ***Not included***

14.0 Strategic Finance Working Group Action Sheet of meetings held 3 and 17 December 2024.
For Information

This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.

📄 ***SFWG Minutes - 03.12.24 (2).pdf***   ***Not included***

📄 ***SFWG Minutes - 17.12.24 (002) (002).pdf***   ***Not included***

15.0 Statutory reporting: Section 75 Policy Screening Report – Quarterly Report for period October - December 2024

For Information

16.0 Equality and Diversity in Local Councils Diversity Ambassador Network

For Information

17.0 Planning Department Update

For Information

Report to follow

Invitees

Cllr Terry Andrews

Cllr Callum Bowsie

Fionnuala Branagh

Cllr Jim Brennan

Cllr Pete Byrne

Mr Gerard Byrne

Cllr Philip Campbell

Cllr William Clarke

Cllr Laura Devlin

Ms Louise Dillon

Cllr Cadogan Enright

Cllr Killian Feehan

Cllr Doire Finn

Cllr Aoife Finnegan

Ms Joanne Fleming

Cllr Conor Galbraith

Cllr Mark Gibbons

Cllr Oonagh Hanlon

Cllr Glyn Hanna

Cllr Valerie Harte

Cllr Roisin Howell

Cllr Tierna Howie

Ms Catherine Hughes

Cllr Jonathan Jackson

Cllr Geraldine Kearns

Miss Veronica Keegan

Mrs Josephine Kelly

Mrs Sheila Kieran

Cllr Cathal King

Cllr Mickey Larkin

Cllr David Lee-Surginor

Cllr Alan Lewis

Cllr Oonagh Magennis

Mr Conor Mallon

Cllr Aidan Mathers

Cllr Declan McAteer

Cllr Leeanne McEvoy

Cllr Andrew McMurray

Ms Aveen McVeigh

Mr Colin Moffett

Maureen/Joanne Morgan/Johnston

Cllr Declan Murphy

Sinead Murphy

Cllr Kate Murphy

Cllr Selina Murphy

Cllr Siobhan O'Hare

Mr Andy Patterson

Cllr Áine Quinn

Cllr Henry Reilly

Cllr Michael Rice

Mr Peter Rooney

Cllr Michael Ruane

Cllr Gareth Sharvin

Mrs Amanda Smyth

Donna Starkey

Sarah Taggart

Cllr David Taylor

Cllr Jarlath Tinnelly

Cllr Jill Truesdale

Mrs Marie Ward

Mr Conor Woods

Cllr Helena Young

Minute Ref	Subject	Decision	Lead Officer	Actions taken / progress to date	Remove from Action Sheet? Y/N
		ACTION SHEET – STRATEGY, POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING (SPR) – ==**Thursday 18 April 2024**==			
SPR/056/2024	Notice of Motion – Ethical Procurement	It was agreed that NMD Council affirms to consider a section under ethical procurement and will review the Council's tender process. It was also agreed this item remain on the action sheet until such time as new Policies were forthcoming to Committee	J Kelly	**Procurement Policy is being updated with new legislation. Report to be brought back to February SP & R Committee.**	N
		ACTION SHEET –STRATEGY, POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING (SPR) – ==**Thursday 12 December 2024**==			
SPR/192/2024	Action sheet of SPR meeting held 14.11.24	It was agreed to note the action sheet	J Kelly	**Agreed**	Y
SPR/193/2024	S95 Audit & Assessment Report 2024-25	The Performance Improvement Audit & Assessment Report 2024/25 was agreed	G Byrne	**Agreed**	Y
SPR/194/2024	Newry City Park	It was agreed to accept the recommendations as contained within the Officer's Report	A Patterson	**Agreed**	Y
SPR/195/2024	AHC Capital Budget Requirement	It was agreed to accept the recommendations as contained within the Officer's Report	A Patterson	**Agreed**	Y
SPR/196/2024	Disposal of Land	It was agreed to sell the lands outlined in red on Map 2 to the party outlined within the Officer's Report at market value	P Rooney	**Agreed**	Y
SPR/197/2024	Proposed Lease of lands under Council's Sports & Community Leasing Policy	the following was agreed: •To enter into a lease with the successful group noted in the Officer's Report in respect of that portion of the lands knows as Carrigenagh Road, Kilkeel as coloured yellow on map 1 attached for a term of 25 years as a peppercorn rent, subject to Departmental Consent. •To enter into a lease with the successful group noted in the Officer's Report in respect of the portion of lands known as St Anne's Park, Mayobridge as coloured yellow on map 2 attached for a term of 25 years at a peppercorn rent, subject to Departmental Consent. •To enter into a lease with the successful group noted in the Officer's Report in respect of the portion of lands known as Killough Playing Fields, Killough as outlined in blue on map 3 attached for a term of 25 years at a peppercorn rent, subject to Departmental Consent.	P Rooney	**Agreed**	Y

1

| SPR/198/2024 | SFWG Action Sheet 13 November 2024 | it was agreed to note the action sheet | J Kelly | **Agreed** | Y |
| END | | | | | |

Report to:	Strategy Policy and Resources Committee
Date of Meeting:	23 January 2025
Subject:	Draft IT Strategy 2030
Reporting Officer (Including Job Title):	Veronica Keegan, Assistant Director Digital and Communications
Contact Officer (Including Job Title):	Gavin Ringland, IT Manager

Confirm how this Report should be treated by placing an x in either:				
For decision	X	For noting only		

1.0	Purpose and Background
1.1	The purpose of this report is to seek Member approval of the recommendation as set out in section 3.1 of the report.

2.0	Key issues
2.1	The **IT Strategy 2030** builds on the good work of the IT Strategy (2016) and is designed to operationally support the Council's digital goals, focusing on building a flexible, secure, and future-ready IT environment. It aims is to enable seamless service delivery by integrating modern technologies into our daily operations, ensuring that we can respond effectively to the evolving needs of our community.
2.2	The strategy is driven by four core objectives: i. Ensuring service continuity and cybersecurity in a rapidly changing technological landscape. ii. Providing staff and councillors with the right tools, skills, and technologies to work efficiently. iii. Aligning our IT infrastructure with the Council's broader digital transformation agenda to create a data-driven, customer-focused organisation. iv. Supporting innovation and continuous improvement by investing in scalable, adaptable IT solutions.
2.3	The strategic deliverables, identified under the themes below, incorporate recommendations from recent audits (IT Strategy 2021/2022; and Information Systems and Security 2021/2022) to ensure past gaps are addressed and the Council keeps building on its strengths.
2.4	Themes: • IT Capability & Infrastructure: Building Strong Foundations • IT Tools and Services: Empowering the Workforce • Smarter Working: Driving Efficiency and Agility • A Culture of Innovation: Embracing Emerging Technologies • IT Governance and Security: Ensuring Compliance and Oversight
2.5	The document also details a robust governance framework for the successful implementation of the IT Strategy 2030, that is aligned with audit recommendations for governance and reporting improvements.
2.6	Consultation took place with a range of stakeholders during 2023/2024 and 2024/2025 during the development phases of the strategy; the draft strategy has been revised to reflect the feedback received through the consultation process. Rural Needs Impact

	Assessment and Equality Screening were also completed on 20 and 29 November 2024 respectively.
2.7	The IT Strategy 2030 complements the Digital Transformation Strategy 2030, which defines the broader goals of creating a digital-first, customer-centric organisation. While the Digital Transformation Strategy focuses on the high-level vision of digital services, the IT Strategy outlines how the underlying technology infrastructure will support these ambitions.
2.8	The IT Strategy 2030 will be published on the Council's website and available for all to read.
3.0	**Recommendations**
3.1	To approve the (draft) IT Strategy 2030.
4.0	**Resource implications**
4.1	Resource requirements will be funded via the current IT Budget and included in the 2025/2026 estimates; transformation initiatives will be considered through the IT Project Group (ITPG) governance process.
5.0	**Due regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations (complete the relevant sections)**
5.1	*General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes* It is not anticipated the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations ☒
5.2	*Proposal relates to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision* Yes ☒ No ☐ If yes, please complete the following: The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) has been equality screened ☒ The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) will be subject to equality screening prior to implementation ☐
5.3	*Proposal initiating consultation* Consultation will seek the views of those directly affected by the proposal, address barriers for particular Section 75 equality categories to participate and allow adequate time for groups to consult amongst themselves ☐ Consultation period will be 12 weeks ☐ Consultation period will be less than 12 weeks (rationale to be provided) ☐ *Rationale:*

6.0	**Due regard to Rural Needs (please tick all that apply)**	
6.1	Proposal relates to developing, adopting, implementing or revising a policy / strategy / plan / designing and/or delivering a public service Yes ☒ No ☐ If yes, please complete the following: Rural Needs Impact Assessment completed	☒
7.0	**Appendices**	
	1. Draft IT Strategy 2030	
8.0	**Background Documents**	
	N/A	

www.newrymournedown.org

Straitéis TF 2030

IT Strategy 2030

Comhairle Ceantair
an Iúir, Mhúrn agus an Dúin
Newry, Mourne and Down
District Council

Ag freastal ar an Dún agus Ard Mhacha Theas
Serving Down and South Armagh

Réamhrá

De réir mar a fhorbraíonn an saol sa ré dhigiteach, aithníonn Comhairle Ceantair an Iúir, Mhúrn agus an Dúin an ról ríthábhachtach atá ag an teicneolaíocht chun cur ar ár gcumas seirbhísí ardchaighdeáin, inrochtana agus inbhuanaithe a sholáthar.

Leagtar amach sa Straitéis TF seo an dóigh a ndéanfaimid bonneagar TF atá slán, seasmhach agus nuálach a thógáil agus a chothú; agus í sin ag teacht lenár Straitéis um Chlaochlú Digiteach, 2030, agus ár bPlean Corparáideach, 2024-2027. Cuirfidh an t-infreastruchtúr seo bonn faoi sheirbhísí riachtanacha poiblí a sheachadadh; tacóidh sí lenár riachtanais oibriúcháin agus lenár n-uaillmhianta straitéiseacha araon.

Tá muid tiomanta don teicneolaíocht a úsáid ar bhealach a rachaidh chun tairbhe do gach cónaitheoir, gnólacht agus cuairteoir; agus muid ag cur fhorás digiteach na Comhairle chun cinn.

Foreword

As the world continues to evolve in the digital age, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council recognises the crucial role that technology plays in enabling us to deliver high-quality, accessible, and sustainable services.

In alignment with our Digital Transformation Strategy 2030 and Corporate Plan 2024-2027, this IT Strategy outlines how we will build and maintain a secure, resilient, and innovative IT infrastructure. This infrastructure will underpin the delivery of essential public services, supporting both our operational needs and strategic ambitions.

Our commitment is to leverage technology in a way that benefits all residents, businesses, and visitors while driving the Council's digital maturity.

Contents

1.0
Introduction

Our IT Strategy 2030 is designed to operationally support the Council's digital goals, focusing on building a flexible, secure, and future-ready IT environment. Our aim is to enable seamless service delivery by integrating modern technologies into our daily operations, ensuring that we can respond effectively to the evolving needs of our community.

The strategy is driven by four core objectives:

Ensuring ———— service continuity and cybersecurity in a rapidly changing technological landscape.

Providing ———— staff and councillors with the right tools, skills, and technologies to work efficiently.

Aligning ———— our IT infrastructure with the Council's broader digital transformation agenda to create a data-driven, customer-focused organisation.

Supporting ———— innovation and continuous improvement by investing in scalable, adaptable IT solutions.

2.0
Strategic Context

This IT Strategy 2030 complements the Digital Transformation Strategy 2030, which defines our broader goals of creating a digital-first, customer-centric organisation. While the Digital Transformation Strategy focuses on the high-level vision of digital services, this IT Strategy outlines how the underlying technology infrastructure will support these ambitions.

Digital Customer
Providing reliable IT systems that ensure online services are available and accessible for citizens, with minimal downtime and maximum efficiency.

Digital Workforce
Equipping Council employees with robust and secure digital tools to improve collaboration, productivity, and service delivery.

Digital Infrastructure and Security
Developing a modern, cloud-based infrastructure that supports the Council's move toward digital services while ensuring data security and regulatory compliance.

Data Driven Organisation
Creating the technological environment necessary for effective data collection, management, and analysis to enhance decision-making.

3.0
Core Themes and Strategic Deliverables

The IT Strategy 2030 is structured around five core themes, each critical to ensuring the Council's IT capabilities are future-ready, resilient, and aligned with our broader business objectives.

Five Core Themes:

These themes incorporate recommendations from recent audits (IT Strategy 2021/2022; and Information Systems and Security 2021/2022) to ensure we address past gaps and build on our strengths.

1   **IT Capability & Infrastructure**
Building Strong Foundations

2   **IT Tools and Services**
Empowering the Workforce

3   **Smarter Working**
Driving Efficiency and Agility

4   **A Culture of Innovation**
Embracing Emerging Technologies

5   **IT Governance and Security**
Ensuring Compliance and Oversight

3.1 **IT Capability and Infrastructure** – Building Strong Foundations

We are committed to developing a scalable, secure, and future-proof IT infrastructure that supports both operational resilience and strategic transformation. This directly responds to audit recommendations for enhancing infrastructure and aligning IT with the Council's broader objectives.

Key Deliverables:

- **Cloud Migration:** A continued move towards cloud services will ensure flexibility, cost-efficiency, and improved disaster recovery (DR) capabilities. This aligns with the audit recommendation to ensure service continuity and robust infrastructure.

- **IT Business Continuity Plan (BCP):** A dedicated IT BCP will be developed and regularly reviewed to ensure that Council IT services are maintained as much as possible in the event of significant disruptions. While IT will make every effort to provide continued access to services, it is important to recognise that this is part of a broader organisational BCP response. This plan will also address the audit recommendation for establishing comprehensive continuity planning within the IT domain.

- **Wide Ares Network (WAN) Expansion:** Complete migration of all Council buildings to a secure, high-speed network, ensuring consistent access to resources across locations.

- **Server and Network Upgrades:** Regular infrastructure updates to enhance performance, security, and alignment with business transformation needs.

- **Cybersecurity Enhancements:** Continuous investment in penetration testing, firewalls, and incident detection and response protocols to safeguard Council operations, addressing the audit's focus on security gaps.

Outcomes:

- A future-proof infrastructure that strengthens resilience, security, and operational efficiency.

- Reduced risk of downtime, enhancing staff productivity and public service availability.

- Robust protection against evolving cybersecurity threats.

- Full continuity planning, ensuring the Council can operate during IT disruptions.

3.2 **IT Tools and Services** –
Empowering the Workforce

In alignment with audit recommendations, we are focused on delivering digital tools that drive efficiency, support collaboration, and enhance overall service delivery.

Key Deliverables:

- **Maximising Microsoft 365:** Expanding the implementation of the M365 suite will drive data-driven decision-making and collaboration. This supports the audit's recommendation to provide the workforce with the tools needed for modern operations.

- **Device Upgrades:** Standardise and upgrade devices (laptops, tablets, smartphones) to ensure staff can work efficiently, securely, and flexibly, particularly in remote environments.

- **Self-Service IT Support:** Launch a self-service portal to empower staff to resolve issues independently, reducing pressure on IT support teams.

Outcomes:

- Enhanced employee productivity and satisfaction with modern, responsive tools.

- Improved internal and external communication through unified systems.

- Increased efficiency and reduced reliance on IT support through self-service capabilities.

3.3 Smarter Working –
Driving Efficiency and Agility

We are embedding smarter working practices across the Council, directly addressing audit recommendations regarding automation, operational efficiency, and staff empowerment.

Key Deliverables:

- **Digital Skills Training:** Continuous development programmes to ensure all staff are equipped to use modern tools effectively, aligning with recommendations for workforce capability improvements.

- **Business Process Automation:** Automating routine tasks such as approvals and reporting through robotic process automation (RPA), freeing up staff for high-value activities.

- **Workforce Mobility:** Expanding secure remote access to allow staff to work from any location, ensuring flexibility and agility in service delivery.

Outcomes:

- Streamlined processes through automation, enabling staff to focus on critical service delivery.

- A digitally empowered workforce that is agile, flexible, and ready to meet future challenges.

3.4 A Culture of Innovation –
Embracing Emerging Technologies

In line with the Council's vision for digital leadership, we are embracing emerging technologies to deliver better services and stay ahead of the curve.

Key Deliverables:

- **Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning:** Leverage AI for predictive analytics and to improve citizen interactions, such as through AI-driven chatbots.

- **Internet of Things (IoT) and Smart Cities:** Explore IoT opportunities to enhance service delivery (eg traffic management, waste collection) and collaborate on smart city initiatives.

Outcomes:

- Early adoption of innovative technologies to improve public service efficiency and delivery.

- A competitive edge through forward-thinking technology use.

3.5   IT Governance and Security –
Ensuring Compliance and Oversight

Following audit recommendations, we are strengthening our governance structures to ensure transparent decision-making, rigorous risk management, and comprehensive security measures. This section incorporates formal mechanisms for oversight and project prioritisation, aligning with audit recommendations for governance and reporting improvements.

Key Deliverables:

- **IT Project Group (ITPG) and Regular Reporting:** ITPG will oversee the prioritisation and delivery of IT projects, ensuring alignment with corporate objectives. Regular reporting mechanisms will be established to monitor costs, project progress, and outcomes, ensuring transparency and oversight as per audit recommendations.

- **Cybersecurity Governance:** Regular audits, reviews, and updates to policies ensure IT security is continually enhanced, in line with best practices and regulatory requirements.

- **Data Management:** Implementing data governance policies to guarantee data accuracy, security, and availability across all Council services.

- **Regular IT Policy Reviews:** All IT policies will be reviewed annually, or following significant changes, to ensure they remain current and compliant with both internal standards and external regulations. This addresses the audit's concern about policy updates.

- **Project Prioritisation with Target Dates:** All IT projects will be prioritised with clear target completion dates, ensuring alignment with Council objectives and timely delivery, as recommended in the audit.

Outcomes:

- Effective oversight of IT projects and investments through formal reporting to ITPG and Strategic Finance Working Group (SFWG).

- Enhanced risk management and security, reducing the risk of data breaches.

- A transparent and accountable approach to IT decision-making.

- Timely completion of IT projects, ensuring alignment with Council priorities.

4.0
IT Governance and Security

A robust governance framework will ensure the successful implementation of the IT Strategy 2030.

This will be underpinned by:

ITPG:
A dedicated team responsible for prioritising IT projects, ensuring alignment with Council goals, and overseeing project delivery.

Cybersecurity Governance:
Regular audits and reviews to ensure IT security remains at the forefront of operations. This includes monitoring compliance with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and other data protection regulations.

Data Management:
Implementing strong data governance policies that ensure data accuracy, security, and availability across all Council services.

Outcomes:

- Effective oversight of IT investments and projects.

- Improved risk management, especially related to data and cybersecurity.

- Transparent decision-making and accountability across all IT initiatives.

5.0
IT Work Programme

The IT Work Programme is a vital component of our strategy, detailing the digital projects required to achieve our objectives. Each year, we will assess and prioritise projects based on the Council's strategic goals, community needs, and resource availability.

Once projects are identified and prioritised, we will allocate the necessary resources—both financial and human—ensuring we have the right expertise to implement each project successfully.

Progress on the IT Work Programme will be regularly monitored and reported to ITPG and other relevant stakeholders. This will include updates on project timelines, budget utilisation, and any challenges encountered.

We will continually review the IT Work Programme, adapting our approach as needed based on feedback and changing circumstances. This flexibility will allow us to remain responsive to community needs and technological advancements.

By effectively managing our IT Work Programme, we aim to ensure the successful delivery of projects that enhance our IT capabilities and support the overall goals of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council.

6.0
Measuring Success

The success of the IT Strategy 2030 will be measured using the following key performance indicators (KPIs):

Service Availability	Uptime percentage of key IT services and applications.
Cybersecurity Metrics	Number of security incidents and the effectiveness of incident response times.
Employee Satisfaction	Feedback on IT tools and support services through regular surveys.
Cost Efficiency	Proactive management of IT operational costs leveraging cloud migration and automation to support service delivery, as appropriate.
Project Delivery	Timely completion of IT projects, as measured against project timelines and budgets.

7.0
Conclusion

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council's IT Strategy 2030 is a critical enabler for the Council's digital transformation journey.

By focusing on modernising our IT infrastructure, providing innovative tools to our workforce, and fostering a culture of innovation, we are ensuring that the Council is well-positioned to meet the challenges of the future while delivering high-quality services to our citizens.

0330 137 4000
info@nmandd.org
www.newrymournedown.org

facebook.com/nmdcouncil

twitter.com/nmdcouncil

Oifig an Iúir
Newry Office
O'Hagan House
Monaghan Row
Newry BT35 8DJ

Oifig Dhún Pádraig
Downpatrick Office
Downshire Civic Centre
Downshire Estate, Ardglass Road
Downpatrick BT30 6GQ

Comhairle Ceantair
an Iúir, Mhúrn agus an Dúin
Newry, Mourne and Down
District Council

Report to:	Strategy Policy and Resources
Date of Meeting:	23 January 2025
Subject:	Draft Digital Transformation Strategy 2030
Reporting Officer (Including Job Title):	Veronica Keegan, Assistant Director Digital and Communications
Contact Officer (Including Job Title):	Gavin Ringland, IT Manager

Confirm how this Report should be treated by placing an x in either:

For decision	X	For noting only	

1.0	Purpose and Background
1.1	The purpose of this report is to seek Member approval of the recommendation as set out in section 3.1 of the report.

2.0	Key issues
2.1	The **Digital Transformation Strategy 2030** is a cornerstone of the Council's ambitious transformation agenda. It places ratepayers, visitors, communities and stakeholders, including employees and elected members, at the centre of how we design, develop and deliver high quality digital services which are sustainable, accessible and meet people's needs. It builds on the work of the IT Strategy (2016).
2.2	The strategy focuses on four key ambitions: i. Delivering effective and user-friendly services that are accessible to everyone. ii. Equipping our Council teams with the right digital tools and skills to enhance service delivery. iii. Building sustainable technology and infrastructure to support our operations. iv. Enhancing our data-driven decision making to improve transparency and effectiveness.
2.3	The strategy is designed to foster a digital culture, leveraging technology to transform service delivery and enhance the quality of life for our communities, with anticipated benefits including increased customer satisfaction, improved operational efficiency and a strengthened commitment to sustainability.
2.4	The strategy also details a robust governance framework designed to ensure effective oversight, decision-making and resource management. The governance structure will ensure alignment with the Council's strategic objectives and facilitate collaboration across departments to deliver transformative outcomes for our customers and stakeholders.
2.5	The Digital Transformation Strategy 2030 represents a bold commitment to modernise our services and infrastructure in a way that benefits both our community and our teams. By prioritising accessible, user-friendly services, we aim to meet the needs of everyone we serve. Empowering our Council teams with essential digital tools and skills ensures that our workforce is well equipped to deliver quality, responsive services.
2.6	We are committed to investing in sustainable technology that not only supports our current operations but also prepares us for future challenges. Finally, our focus on data-driven decision-making will allow us to be more transparent and responsive, fostering trust and effectiveness in every aspect of our work. Together, these ambitions set a clear path

2.7	toward a more accessible, efficient, and forward-thinking Council, fully prepared to meet the evolving needs of our community by 2030 and beyond.
2.8	Consultation took place with a range of stakeholders during 2023/2024 and 2024/2025 during the development phases of the strategy; the draft strategy has been revised to reflect the feedback received through the consultation process. Rural Needs Impact Assessment and Equality Screening were also completed on 20 and 29 November 2024 respectively.
2.9	The Digital Transformation Strategy 2030 is supported by the IT Strategy 2030, and the implementation timeframe is aligned to support delivery of the strategic ambitions and outcomes set out in the Corporate Plan 2024-2027. The strategy will be underpinned by a prioritised Digital/IT Transformation Work Programme for the next five years, which aligns with NMD Community Plan 2030.
2.10	The Digital Transformation Strategy 2030 will be published online and will be available for all to read. The Digital/IT Transformation Work Programme will be internal working document that will be governed by the IT Project Group (ITPG)**.**
3.0	**Recommendations**
3.1	To approve the (draft) Digital Transformation Strategy 2030.
4.0	**Resource implications**
4.1	Any future resource requests will be considered via the IT Project Group (ITPG) governance process. External funding will also be applied if available.
5.0	**Due regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations (complete the relevant sections)**
5.1	*General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes* It is not anticipated the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations ☒
5.2	*Proposal relates to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision* Yes ☒ No ☐ If yes, please complete the following: The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) has been equality ☒ screened The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) will be subject to ☐ equality screening prior to implementation
5.3	*Proposal initiating consultation* Consultation will seek the views of those directly affected by the proposal, address ☐ barriers for particular Section 75 equality categories to participate and allow adequate time for groups to consult amongst themselves

	Consultation period will be 12 weeks	☐
	Consultation period will be less than 12 weeks (rationale to be provided)	☐
	Rationale:	
6.0	**Due regard to Rural Needs (please tick all that apply)**	
6.1	Proposal relates to developing, adopting, implementing or revising a policy / strategy / plan / designing and/or delivering a public service Yes ☒ No ☐ If yes, please complete the following: Rural Needs Impact Assessment completed	☒
7.0	**Appendices**	
	1. Draft Digital Transformation Strategy 2030	
8.0	**Background Documents**	
	N/A	

www.newrymournedown.org

Straitéis um Chlaochlú Digiteach 2030

Digital Transformation Strategy 2030

Comhairle Ceantair
an Iúir, Mhúrn agus an Dúin
Newry, Mourne and Down
District Council

Ag freastal ar an Dún agus Ard Mhacha Theas
Serving Down and South Armagh

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council is a place with strong, safe and vibrant communities where everyone has a good quality of life and access to opportunities, choices and high-quality services which are sustainable, accessible and meet people's needs.

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council
Corporate Plan 2024–2027

Réamhrá

Is bunchloch í an Straitéis um Chlaochlú Digiteach de chlár uaillmhianach oibre na Comhairle i leith an athruithe.

Cuireann sé íocóirí rátaí, cuairteoirí, pobail agus páirtithe leasmhara, lena n-áirítear fostaithe agus comhaltaí tofa, i lár an aonaigh maidir le dearadh, forbairt agus soláthar seirbhísí digiteacha ardchaighdeáin - seirbhísí atá inbhuanaithe, inrochtana agus a fhreastalaíonn ar riachtanais daoine.

Ag tógáil ar an dea-obair a rinneadh inár Straitéis TF roimhe seo, táimid tiomanta do theicneolaíocht a úsáid chun seachadadh seirbhíse a fheabhsú agus chun freastal ar riachtanais athraitheacha ár bpobal, ag cinntiú go bhfuil rochtain ag gach duine ar sheirbhísí ardchaighdeáin, inbhuanaithe.

Ag croílár na straitéise seo tá ár dtiomantas don chomhoibriú. Trí oibriú lenár gcomhpháirtithe agus trí dhul i dteagmháil lenár bpobail, aithnímid gur féidir linn seirbhísí a athdhearadh chun riachtanais áitiúla a shásamh. Tagann an cur chuige seo lenár dtiomantas don trédhearcacht agus don fhreagracht, lena chinntiú go n-éistimid le glórtha ár gcónaitheoirí.

Is príomhábhar spreagtha go fóill don Chomhairle seo an inbhuanaitheacht. Trí phróisis atá as dáta a fhágáil inár ndiaidh agus trí réitigh dhigiteacha

a ghlacadh chugainn, ní hamháin go gcuirimid feabhas ar éifeachtúlacht oibriúcháin na Comhairle ach cuidímid fosta lenár lorg carbóin a laghdú. Tacaíonn an straitéis seo lenár gcuspóirí is leithne chun seirbhísí inbhuanaithe a sholáthar agus chun dul i ngleic leis an éigeandáil i dtaca leis an athrú aeráide.

Is í an fhís atá againn, mar atá curtha in iúl sa Phlean Chorparáideach, 2024-2027, pobail láidre, shábháilte agus bhríomhara a chruthú ina bhfuil teacht ag gach duine ar dheiseanna agus ar roghanna. Is céim ríthábhachtach an Straitéis um Chlaochlú Digiteach chun an fhís sin a bhaint amach. Le chéile, cuirfimid ár seirbhísí digiteacha chun cinn agus oibreoimid le chéile chun dul i ngleic leis na dúshláin agus na deiseanna atá amach romhainn.

Foreword

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council's Digital Transformation Strategy 2030 is a cornerstone of the Council's ambitious transformation agenda.

It places ratepayers, visitors, communities and stakeholders, including employees and elected members, at the centre of how we design, develop and deliver high quality digital services which are sustainable, accessible and meet people's needs.

Building on the good work of our previous IT Strategy, we are committed to leveraging technology to improve service delivery and meet the evolving needs of our communities, ensuring that everyone has access to high-quality, sustainable services.

At the heart of this strategy is our dedication to collaboration. We recognise that by working alongside our partners and engaging with our communities, we can redesign services that truly reflect local needs. This approach aligns with our commitment to transparency and accountability, ensuring that we listen to the voices of our residents.

Sustainability remains a key driver for our Council. By moving away from outdated processes and adopting digital solutions, we not only enhance operational efficiency but also contribute to reducing our carbon footprint. This strategy supports our broader objectives of delivering sustainable services and tackling the climate change emergency.

Our vision, articulated in the Corporate Plan 2024-2027, is to create strong, safe, and vibrant communities where everyone has access to opportunities and choices. This Digital Transformation Strategy is a crucial step towards realising that vision. Together, we will advance our digital services and work collaboratively to meet the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

Contents

Executive Summary

Welcome to Newry, Mourne and Down District Council's Digital Transformation Strategy 2030. This strategy responds to the accelerating pace of technological change and the evolving expectations of our customers. It is designed to foster a digital culture, leveraging technology to transform service delivery and enhance the quality of life for our communities.

Building on the success of our previous IT Strategy, we aim to further our digital transformation. This strategy not only seeks to change our business models but also to cultivate an organisational culture that prioritises innovation. We will optimise our processes to deliver tangible improvements in digital services for all citizens.

Strategic Goals

Our Digital Transformation Strategy 2030 focuses on four key areas:

1   Delivering effective and user-friendly services that are accessible to everyone.

2   Equipping our Council teams with the right digital tools and skills to enhance service delivery.

3   Building sustainable technology and infrastructure to support our operations.

4   Enhancing our data-driven decision-making to improve transparency and effectiveness.

The anticipated benefits of this strategy include increased customer satisfaction, improved operational efficiency, and a strengthened commitment to sustainability. Our digital ambitions align seamlessly with the Corporate Plan 2024-2027, ensuring that our efforts support the Council's broader objectives and community aspirations as outlined in Newry, Mourne and Down's Community Plan 2030: Living Well Together.

Collaborative Approach

We will adopt a collaborative approach, engaging stakeholders throughout the implementation process to ensure our digital initiatives are responsive to community needs. The Digital and Communications Department will lead the strategy's development, but collaboration across all levels of the Council will be essential to achieving our goals. This strategy is designed to be flexible, allowing us to adapt to new challenges and opportunities as they arise, ensuring we are well-equipped to meet the future needs of our district.

Through SOLACE NI, councils, including ours, have been invited to work with Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA) to develop collaborative digital strategies. While Newry, Mourne and Down District Council is advanced in its digital transformation efforts, we recognise the value of this collaborative work. We have integrated the vision, goals, and principles from the NILGA Digital Development Partnership into our strategy, reflecting a regional commitment to creating a unified approach to digital transformation across NI councils.

1.0
Introduction

Our Digital Transformation Strategy 2030 places ratepayers, stakeholders and communities (herein referred to as 'customer') at the centre of how we design, develop and deliver high quality digital services which are sustainable, accessible and meet people's needs. It builds on the good work of our previous IT Strategy (2016).

Our definition of customer:

Within the context of this strategy, customers are defined as anyone who lives, works or visits our district, including our internal employees and elected members.

As a Council, being digital is about using technology and embedding new ways of thinking and working to improve service delivery, enhancing the sustainable quality of life and environment for our customers.

The implementation timeframe is aligned to our Community Plan 2030 and will support the delivery of the strategic ambitions and outcomes set out in the Corporate Plan 2024-2027. The Strategy will be underpinned by a prioritised IT Digital Transformation Work Programme.

1.1 Our Digital Vision

Our vision for digital transformation was co-designed with stakeholders from across NILGA and NI councils and aligns closely to the wider ambition set out in our IT Strategy.

Digitally empower and connect an inclusive, vibrant community by delivering secure, innovative and sustainable solutions that foster engagement, value for money and positive customer centric services for all.

1.2   Our Strategic Digital Goals

Our Digital Transformation Strategy 2030 focuses on four key areas:

1   **Delivering effective and user-friendly services** that are accessible to everyone.

2   **Equipping our Council teams** with the right digital tools and skills to enhance service delivery.

3   **Building sustainable technology and infrastructure** to support our operations.

4   **Enhancing our data-driven decision-making** to improve transparency and effectiveness.

Regional Digital Goals

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council's strategic goals align with the broader regional digital goals developed through the partnership with NILGA:

Empowerment & Connection — We will strive to create seamless, connected experiences for residents and teams, fostering a digitally inclusive community where everyone is engaged and empowered.

Innovation & Sustainability — We are committed to driving innovation, ensuring secure and sustainable solutions that evolve with the needs of our environment and residents.

Customer Centric Value — By focusing on delivering value for money and customer centric services, we aim to enhance both internal and external customer journeys while positively impacting the community.

Our strategy sets clear goals around empowerment, innovation, and customer-centric value, supported by key digital enablers such as data-driven decision-making, fostering connectivity, and promoting collaboration with other councils and external partners to optimise service delivery.

1.3   Our Digital Principles

Our digital transformation principles were collaboratively developed with input from stakeholders across NILGA. The following principles will underline and guide our strategy.

Governance

Ensure digital technology and data is used in ways that support residents' participation, transparency and accountability in local decision-making processes.

Ethical

Apply ethical principles and values to the development, deployment and use of digital technology and data in the Council.

Sustainable

Ensure the environment, social and economic impacts of digital technology, data and resources are considered and minimised throughout their lifecycle in local government.

Inclusive

Deliver services that are accessible and usable by everyone who needs them, regardless of ability, background or circumstances.

User-centric

Prioritise the needs, preferences and experiences of staff, residents, businesses and visitors when designing and delivering digital services.

Security

Build the capacity of digital systems and services to withstand, adapt to and recover from cyber security threats and risks, ensuring continuity of essential Council functions.

2.0
Strategic Direction, Challenges & Opportunities

To us, digital transformation means securely and safely using technology, tools, and information to deliver services better, faster, and more efficiently.

It also means solving traditional problems through the capabilities brought by technology and improved access to quality information. It is a vital part of changing how the Council operates and engages with our customers. It goes beyond basic improvements to current systems and working practices, and should be used to deliver services more effectively, improve access and participation, reflect citizens' preferences, and maximise opportunities to partner with other organisations. Additionally, by leveraging improved broadband access across the Council area, including urban and rural communities, we aim to open up new opportunities and ensure that digital transformation benefits everyone.

This is a major task, and it is made more challenging in several ways which are important to recognise and address:

- There is continued pressure on services and less financial and staff resource available to meet demand. This puts a financial requirement on increasing people's access to (and use of) digital services, which can benefit them whilst costing us less. This will also help us make sure our offline options more available to those who need them.

- We have a very large IT estate, some of which still requires investment and improved housekeeping. There is a continued need to simplify and modernise in many areas, to make sure things keep working and are secure.

- There is a high and increasing threat to cyber-security, requiring investment in security and privacy measures to protect people's data and our services.

- Technology previously focused more on capital investment to buy physical kit. Now it is more focused on consumption-based subscriptions, changing the way we pay for it. This makes it even more vital to carefully manage how we use it, including procurement and managing supplier contracts.

- Global issues, post-pandemic changes to ways of working and an ever-increasing pace of technological change make for an unpredictable environment.

- There are greater opportunities for different organisations to work together and work anywhere, meaning we need more flexible technology provision. The same is true of hybrid and flexible working options which are now more widely available to many of our staff.

A further key challenge in realising this strategy is people's understanding of the term 'digital'. Digital is not another word for IT; it is not about wires, boxes and computer code; it is not about doing everything on-line. Digital is about people - but people empowered with a digital culture, useable data, and the right technology.

A key challenge in realising the outcomes contained within the strategy is managing the competing priorities that exist between maintaining compliant, legal and resilient legacy services whilst moving to new modern platforms for digital services. With finite resources prioritisation is key to managing a programme approach to delivering what matters most.

Ultimately our investment in technology and capabilities must allow us to focus our limited time, people, and money on the delivery of our corporate priorities and higher value activities.

3.0
Shaping Our Strategy

This is a Council-wide strategy and has been informed by a number of difference sources:

Community Plan 2030: Living Well Together	Corporate Plan 2024–2027	Residents' Household Survey 2022	Digital Development Partnership	Mobile Action Plan for NI	All Ireland SMART Cities Forum
Newry, Mourne and Down District Council	Newry, Mourne and Down District Council	Newry, Mourne and Down District Council	NILGA and NI Councils	MAP NI, Department for Economy, June 2022	AISCF

Feedback from consultation and workshops:
- Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Councillors
- Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Senior and Corporate Management Teams
- Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Corporate Plan 2024-2027 Consultation

3.1 Cross-Cutting Themes and Actions

Sustainability and Climate Change

Our Digital Transformation Strategy will support the Council's Sustainability and Climate Change policy and is a key enabler in supporting low carbon activity:

- The strategic move towards the removal of on-site data centres towards the transition of the Council's IT services to the Cloud will reduce energy use by the Council, whilst the technology-enabled move to remote working has been beneficial in reducing road use and hence pollution.

- Increasing the percentage of digital-led services will reduce the Council's environmental/carbon footprint, contributing to reaching our 2030 net-zero target. The sending of paper letters has a considerable environmental impact, and so moving towards digital-led services will reduce this[1].

- As our customers become more environmentally conscious and aware of the need to address climate change, going digital should also mean going 'green'. This strategy will support our ambitions and significantly enhance operational efficiency, reduce operational costs, and elevate service delivery to our customers.

Community Wealth Building

As a key principle of our Community Wealth Building ambition, where possible, digital devices for staff and/or Council facilities will be purchased from local businesses and suppliers.

This Digital Transformation Strategy will form part of a suite of documents that convey the digital transformation for Newry, Mourne and Down District Council. Other documents include the IT Strategy 2030; IT policies and procedures embracing data and cyber security.

[1] www.sciencefocus.com/planet-earth/the-thought-experiment-what-is-the-carbon-footprint-of-an-email

4.0
Our Digital Environment

Many of us use internet banking and online shopping; we drive using a sat-nav with traffic updates, and we connect with friends, family and those with shared-interests using social media. The pandemic has accelerated the use of videoconferencing for both business and pleasure, and for many, working from home is the new normal.

Many of our customers have embedded digital into their lifestyles, with a raised expectation for convenient, real-time access to services, and control over their private data. Those customers who have not embraced digital themselves, have come to expect the quality of service that a modern workforce can provide when a digital culture is supported by the tools and skills for collaboration and innovation.

4.1 External Environment

Our Digital Transformation Strategy focuses on creating seamless, accessible, and user-centred digital services that meet the diverse needs of our community. By adopting modern solutions, we will enhance accessibility and responsiveness, allowing residents and businesses to connect with us effortlessly—whether through improved online platforms, mobile options, or streamlined digital processes.

Our commitment to a customer-first approach ensures that individuals can navigate our services easily, with centralised solutions and online self-service options, we will ensure that residents and stakeholders alike can access information and complete transactions from anywhere, at any time, fostering a more responsive and inclusive Council.

4.2 Internal Environment

Internally, we are equipping our teams with modern tools and infrastructure that support efficient, agile and flexible work environments.

Our Digital Transformation Strategy seeks to foster a culture of innovation, drive productivity, and provide the foundation for ongoing digital transformation within the organisation, ensuring that our workforce is well-equipped to support our community's evolving needs.

5.0
Our Digital Ambitions

Our Digital Transformation Strategy Ambitions are summarised below:

Digital Customer
We want to deliver effective services that are easy to use.

Digital Workforce
We want to give our Council teams the right digital tools and skills to do their jobs.

Digital Infrastructure and Security
We want to build sustainable, reliable and secure technology and infrastructure to support Council services.

Data Driven Organisation
We want to improve our data and evidence-based decision making.

5.1 Digital Ambition 1:

Digital Customer —
We Want To Deliver Effective Services That Are Easy To Use

Why this Ambition?

We want to provide accessible services that are on time, right first time and delivered professionally and inclusively. We will develop and enhance our online services so that customers will choose them as their preferred means of doing business with the Council. Increasing digital services means that we are more cost effective and enables us to focus our resources on those who need them most.

We believe that public services need to be responsive to change. Increasingly, this means making better use of the digital, data and technology that is shaping the world around us.

We will maximise the opportunities presented by digital technology to transform our service delivery whilst ensuring secure and modern information governance and data sharing arrangements.

We will not implement new systems and approaches without fully understanding customers and their needs.

We aim to:

- develop digital services based on what our customers need
- make our services more accessible, making it easier for everyone to contact us, and to get the service they need.

High-level actions:

- we will take a customer-centred design approach to service delivery
- we will have more service delivery journeys that can be completed online
- we will improve our customer journeys and ensure customers can contact us easily using their preferred method
- we will provide assistance to customers to enable them to do more online themselves
- we will develop our digital services that are easy to use and fully accessible across a range of devices by our customers at a time that suits them
- we will aim to provide a better service.

Measures of Success

- regularly review our approach and benchmark progress
- protect customer and Council data and only use it appropriately
- increase in easy to use, self-service solutions for customers
- collate feedback on our digital services and seek to improve them as a result
- measure our performance and publish our results on how we are delivering against agreed performance indicators
- customers spending less time on routine queries and tasks.

5.2 Digital Ambition 2:

Digital Workforce —
Give Our Council Teams The Right Digital Tools And Skills To Do Their Jobs

Why this Ambition?
Our technology will enable and empower all our users rather than add complexity to the work they do.

We will use technology to introduce new ways of working to reduce processes and to help us to improve and anticipate service requirements, ensuring that Council staff have the skills, devices and modern workplace technology to do their job, and to enable them to deliver improved public services across communities.

Our systems and applications will be available, as appropriate, and to wherever we need to work from. Digital skills will be elevated to new levels with staff supported to meet their full potential.

Staff will have the opportunity to train and further develop relevant digital skills as identified by their performance reviews and development plans and their Directorates' operational needs.

We aim to:

- continue to build the skills and have teams that can adapt quickly to the changing needs of customers and new service requirements
- design and implement improved customer journeys and experience to achieve better customer outcomes
- seek to automate routine tasks so that our staff can focus on service delivery improvement
- encourage greater collaboration.

High–level actions:

- we will continue to improve and expand our online self service capability
- we will create opportunities for all staff to develop digital skills and knowledge through learning and practice
- we will provide training in tools that enable staff to collaborate easily wherever and whenever they choose to work
- we will identify and support people in the Council who have the right skills to become digital champions
- we will carry out user research with staff so that we can continuously improve our processes and services.

Measures of Success

- staff trained and equipped with the digital tools and skills focused on providing improved services
- use of technology, digital and data to support service delivery and when working with our customers
- measure the results of our investment in innovation.

5.3 Digital Ambition 3:

Digital Infrastructure and Security —
Building Sustainable Technology And Infrastructure To Support Council Services

Why this Ambition?
Our Data, Digital and Technology (DDaT) environment will be secure, accessible, responsive and maintained to a high standard. Our core platforms, systems, hardware, and devices will be fit for purpose and meet the changing needs of our customers, businesses and staff.

We will continue to provide a secure, resilient and reliable core infrastructure. We will take the measures necessary to protect our network against cyber-attacks and to ensure robust arrangements are in place to ensure business continuity.

We will maximise the use of existing systems and past investment whilst embracing technological advances to deliver a truly flexible and mobile working environment that is fit for the digital age.

We aim to:

- have reliable, secure technology that is cost effective and seeks to minimise our carbon footprint
- make the most of the technology we already have
- bring new technologies and innovations to the Council in order to help improve our services and how we work
- invest as appropriate in our digital infrastructure always focussed on alignment with strategic priorities and delivering value for money
- maintain our systems so they are safe and secure.

High-level actions:

- we will maximise our use of existing investment, investing further only where appropriate
- we will trial new technologies and innovate to understand if they will deliver business benefit before, we formally take ideas forward
- we will provide appropriate digital tools and role specific training
- we will communicate our plans and activity throughout the Council
- we will robustly manage our technology spend.

Measures of Success

- safe and secure digital services and information
- dependable, reliable, services that provides value for money
- technology that assists employees in their job role/s
- access to sustainable IT systems.

5.4 Digital Ambition 4:

Data Driven Organisation —
Improve Our Data And Evidence–Based Decision Making

Why this Ambition?
Our use of data plays an important role in shaping how we understand and deliver services. We already hold and safely control a significant amount of information relating to our ratepayers and communities, but this is spread across multiple systems as our customers engage with our services at different parts of their user journey.

Bringing this information together to get a rounded and as full a picture as possible and using analytical tools will support more informed and effective decision making, contributing to service improvement and savings.

We aim to:

- enable sharing of data across the Council and with delivery partners to help improve outcomes for our customers
- design and continuously improve services making informed decisions based on evidence
- protect customer and Council data.

High–level actions:

- we will make our data more easily available for decision makers to access
- we will commission research with ratepayers and stakeholders to support our understanding of issues
- we will identify data champions who will upskill Council teams in making decisions based on evidence and using data appropriately
- we will publish data about the performance of services for customers and businesses.

Measures of Success

- access to the data needed to deliver and make decisions about services effectively
- better understanding of our customers so that we can continually improve our services
- decisions based upon robust data and insight
- data being used appropriately, compliantly and stored securely.

6.0
Our Digital Transformation Programme Governance

Our Digital Transformation Strategy will be supported by a robust governance framework designed to ensure effective oversight, decision-making, and resource management. The governance structure will ensure alignment with the Council's strategic objectives and facilitate collaboration across departments to deliver transformative outcomes for our customers and stakeholders.

The governance framework shaping our digital transformation programme will incorporate the following themes (Digital Development Partnership, September 2024):

Data	Connectivity	Leadership
Use data and analytics to inform effective decision-making, optimise service delivery and improve outcomes for local communities.	Support reliable and affordable access to digital infrastructure for all residents and businesses in the local area.	Demonstrate vision and commitment in driving the adoption and use of digital technology and data; and align digital initiatives with strategic objectives.

Capability	Collaboration	Value
Build skills, knowledge and resources within the Council to effectively integrate, manage and leverage digital technology and data.	Work with other councils, public, private and community partners to share resources, expertise and best practices in digital technology and data.	Ensure digital initiatives and investments deliver tangible benefits and value for money.

The governance framework is centred on the principles of accountability, transparency, and strategic alignment.

7.0
Conclusion

To conclude, our Digital Transformation Strategy 2030 represents a bold commitment to modernise our services and infrastructure in a way that benefits both our community and our teams.

By prioritising accessible, user-friendly services, we aim to meet the needs of our customers. Empowering our Council teams with essential digital tools and skills ensures that our workforce is well-equipped to deliver quality, responsive services.

We are committed to investing in sustainable technology that not only supports our current operations but also prepares us for future challenges.

Finally, our focus on data-driven decision-making will allow us to be more transparent and responsive, fostering trust and effectiveness in every aspect of our work.

Together, these ambitions set a clear path toward a more accessible, efficient, and forward-thinking Council, fully prepared to meet the evolving needs of our community by 2030 and beyond.

0330 137 4000
info@nmandd.org
www.newrymournedown.org

facebook.com/nmdcouncil

twitter.com/nmdcouncil

Oifig an Iúir
Newry Office
O'Hagan House
Monaghan Row
Newry BT35 8DJ

Oifig Dhún Pádraig
Downpatrick Office
Downshire Civic Centre
Downshire Estate, Ardglass Road
Downpatrick BT30 6GQ

Comhairle Ceantair
an Iúir, Mhúrn agus an Dúin
Newry, Mourne and Down
District Council

Report to:	Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee
Date of Meeting:	23 January 2025
Subject:	Statutory reporting - Section 75 Policy Screening Report – Quarterly Report for period October – December 2024
Reporting Officer:	Colin Moffett, Head of Corporate Policy
Contact Officers:	Suzanne Rice, Corporate Policy and Equality Officer

Confirm how this Report should be treated by placing an x in either:-

For decision		For noting only	X

1.0	**Purpose and Background**
1.1	In line with Council's Section 75 statutory duties and commitments within our approved Equality Scheme, policy screening reports are published quarterly.
	The Quarterly Policy Screening Report for the period October – December 2024, including screening reports, is available on Council's website https://www.newrymournedown.org/corporate-policy-and-equality. This information has also been forwarded to our equality consultees.
2.0	**Key issues**
2.1	As per the Council's approved Equality Scheme:
	• All policies Council proposes to adopt must be equality screened, prior to implementation, to assess the likely impact of the policy on the promotion of equality of opportunity and/or good relations.
	• Council must publish quarterly reports on equality screening which are available on Council's website and forwarded to equality scheme consultees.
3.0	**Recommendations**
3.1	To note the Section 75 Policy Screening Report – Quarterly Report for period October – December 2024.
4.0	**Resource implications**
4.1	No financial or resources implications are anticipated.
5.0	**Due regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations (complete the relevant sections)**

5.1	*General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes*	
	It is not anticipated the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations	☒
5.2	*Proposal relates to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision*	
	Yes ☐ No ☐	
	If yes, please complete the following:	
	The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) has been equality screened	☐
	The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) will be subject to equality screening prior to implementation	☐
5.3	*Proposal initiating consultation*	
	Consultation will seek the views of those directly affected by the proposal, address barriers for particular Section 75 equality categories to participate and allow adequate time for groups to consult amongst themselves	☐
	Consultation period will be 12 weeks	☐
	Consultation period will be less than 12 weeks (rationale to be provided)	☐
	Rationale:	
6.0	**Due regard to Rural Needs (please tick all that apply)**	
6.1	Proposal relates to developing, adopting, implementing or revising a policy / strategy / plan / designing and/or delivering a public service	
	Yes ☐ No ☒	
	If yes, please complete the following:	
	Rural Needs Impact Assessment completed	☐
7.0	**Appendices**	
	Appendix I: Section 75 Policy Screening Report – Quarterly Report for period October – December 2024.	

Agenda 15.0 / Statutory reporting - Section 75 Policy Screening Report Q...

Back to Agenda

48

8.0	**Background Documents**
	Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Equality Scheme.

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Section 75 Policy Screening Report
Quarterly Report October - December 2024

Policy	Details of policy	Screening Outcome
Digital Transformation Strategy 2030	This strategy responds to the accelerating pace of technological change and the evolving expectations of our customers. It is designed to foster a digital culture, leveraging technology to transform service delivery and enhance the quality of life for our communities. The Digital Transformation Strategy 2030 focuses on four key areas: • Delivering effective and user-friendly services that are accessible to everyone. • Equipping our Council teams with the right digital tools and skills to enhance service delivery. • Building sustainable technology and infrastructure to support our operations. • Enhancing our data-driven decision-making to improve transparency and effectiveness. The anticipated benefits of this strategy include increased customer satisfaction, improved operational efficiency, and a strengthened commitment to sustainability. Our digital ambitions align seamlessly with the Corporate Plan 2024-2027, ensuring that our efforts support the Council's broader objectives and community aspirations as outlined in Newry, Mourne and Down's Community Plan 2030: Living Well Together.	No EQIA considered necessary
IT Strategy 2030	This IT Strategy 2030 is designed to operationally support the Council's digital goals, focusing on building a flexible, secure, and future-ready IT environment. Our aim is to enable seamless service delivery by integrating modern technologies	No EQIA considered necessary

	into our daily operations, ensuring that we can respond effectively to the evolving needs of our community. The strategy is driven by several core objectives: - Ensuring service continuity and cybersecurity in a rapidly changing technological landscape. - Providing staff and councillors with the right tools, skills, and technologies to work efficiently. - Aligning our IT infrastructure with the Council's broader digital transformation agenda to create a data-driven, customer-focused organisation. - Supporting innovation and continuous improvement by investing in scalable, adaptable IT solutions.	
Legionella Management Policy	The aim of the policy is to prevent, so as far as is reasonably practicable, the occurrence of legionella bacteria in breathable form that can be inhaled by employees and others who may be present in the workplace. The policy applies to all premises including temporary structures such as marquees and activities falling, to any extent, under the Council's control. The Policy and associated Control Scheme sets down the framework by which the Council, all employees, contractors and visitors will be expected to meet their legal duties. The Control Scheme details the requirements and standards that must be complied with in order to prevent the release of legionella bacteria in breathable form that can be inhaled by employees and others who may be present in the workplace and maintain compliance with all applicable health and safety legislation.	No EQIA considered necessary

	The Control Scheme provides a standardised approach for all persons who are responsible for managing workplaces, premises and facilities and work activities, thus ensuring consistency across the Council.	
Financial Assistance Policy	The overall aim of financial assistance is to enable Council to maximise the impact of its work across the Council area for the benefit of residents. The objectives of the policy are to: • Maximise the impact of, and outcomes from, all Council funding. • Seek to address needs which are clearly demonstrated and fall within, or are compatible with, Council priorities. • Increase community engagement and voluntary participation in addressing areas of common concern. • Enhance the sustainability of community-based activities and provision. • Support community-based work which addresses the needs of those who are most deprived. • Support the development of mutual respect, understanding and appreciation of diversity and shared cultural experiences. • Ensure fairness, transparency and value for money in all Council's Financial Assistance Practice.	No EQIA considered necessary
Raising Concerns Policy	Newry, Mourne and Down District Council is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability and will not tolerate malpractice or wrongdoing. In line with that commitment, the Council encourages workers and third parties with serious concerns about any aspect of the Council's work to come forward and voice those concerns without fear of reprisals. This policy document makes it clear that you can do so without the fear of victimisation, subsequent discrimination or disadvantage. This Policy aims to:	No EQIA considered necessary

	• Make you feel confident to raise concerns within the council, as soon as possible, rather than overlooking a problem or raising the concern externally; • Give you avenues to raise concerns and receive feedback; • Inform you how to take the matter further if you are dissatisfied with our response; and • Reassure our workers that, in line with legislation, you will be protected from reprisals or victimisation for raising concerns that you reasonably believe to be true and in the public interest.	
Development Naming, Postal Numbering and Erection of Nameplates Policy	The policy aims and objectives are: • To assist with way-finding, to strengthen 'pride-in-place', to capture and reflect local townland names/local geographical features/historical feature/events/cultures etc. thereby safeguarding local history and traditional place names for future generations. • To control inappropriate references and suggestions, duplication, disassociation of 'name-to-place' and business interests. To avoid names that are capable of misinterpretation or phonetically similar or which could cause offence. To assist Developers/Agents or other interested parties in choosing an appropriate name. • To facilitate the proper preservation and signposting of Irish and Ulster-Scots place-names and the naming of new housing developments. • To provide a consistent approach to the naming/re-naming of streets across the whole District Council area. • The Council shall allocate a budget for the erection of new road nameplates. This budget must be appropriate and should be kept under review based on the previous year's expenditure.	No EQIA considered necessary

Report to:	Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee
Date of Meeting:	23 January 2025
Subject:	Equality and Diversity in Local Councils Diversity Ambassador Network
Reporting Officer:	Colin Moffett, Head of Corporate Policy
Contact Officers:	Suzanne Rice, Corporate Policy and Equality Officer

Confirm how this Report should be treated by placing an x in either:-

For decision		For noting only	X

1.0	**Purpose and Background**
1.1	Attached is correspondence from the LGSC Equality and Diversity Group received dated 16 December 2024 (Appendix I) in relation to the Equality & Diversity in Local Councils initiative.

Following on from the Diversity Ambassador series of best practice and information sessions during the period October 2023 to November 2024 they are aiming to formalise a Diversity Ambassador Network to sustain collaboration, learning and the sharing of best practice across Councils.

For information, appendix II contains the proposed Diversity Ambassador Network Terms of Reference. |
| **2.0** | **Key issues** |
| 2.1 | Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Diversity Ambassadors are:

Elected Members
- Councillor Aine Quinn
- Councillor David Lee-Surginor
- Councillor Jonathan Jackson
- Councillor Pete Byrne

Officer
- Colin Moffett, Head of Corporate Policy |
3.0	**Recommendations**
3.1	To note the correspondence from the LGSC Equality and Diversity Group regarding the establishment of a Diversity Ambassador Network.
4.0	**Resource implications**

Agenda 16.0 / Equality and Diversity in Local Councils Diversity Ambassad...

Back to Agenda

54

4.1	Associated financial or resource implications in relation to participation in the Diversity Ambassador Network.	
5.0	**Due regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations (complete the relevant sections)**	
5.1	*General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes*	
	It is not anticipated the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations	☒
5.2	*Proposal relates to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision*	
	Yes ☐ No ☒	
	If yes, please complete the following:	
	The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) has been equality screened	☐
	The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) will be subject to equality screening prior to implementation	☐
5.3	*Proposal initiating consultation*	
	Consultation will seek the views of those directly affected by the proposal, address barriers for particular Section 75 equality categories to participate and allow adequate time for groups to consult amongst themselves	☐
	Consultation period will be 12 weeks	☐
	Consultation period will be less than 12 weeks (rationale to be provided)	☐
	Rationale:	
6.0	**Due regard to Rural Needs (please tick all that apply)**	
6.1	Proposal relates to developing, adopting, implementing or revising a policy / strategy / plan / designing and/or delivering a public service	
	Yes ☐ No ☒	
	If yes, please complete the following:	

	Rural Needs Impact Assessment completed		☐
7.0	**Appendices**		
	Appendix I - Correspondence re Diversity Ambassador Network Appendix II - Diversity Ambassador Network Terms of Reference		
8.0	**Background Documents**		
	Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Equality Scheme.		

Equality & Diversity
in Local Councils

16 December 2024

Marie Ward
Chief Executive
Newry, Mourne and Down District Council

Dear Marie

Equality and Diversity in Local Councils
Diversity Ambassador Network

The Local Government Equality and Diversity Group prioritises and influences equality, good relations, diversity and inclusion initiatives across local government in Northern Ireland. The Group attempts to bring together best practice across the sector and in so doing, seeks to integrate the priorities of the Group with the ongoing work of individual Councils.

The Group identified a key implementation initiative: establishing a network of Diversity Ambassadors to actively advance the equality and diversity agenda within Councils. From October 2023 to November 2024, a series of best practice events and information sessions took place, consisting of five sessions, offering Diversity Ambassadors opportunities to exchange insights and engage with subject experts.

These sessions were facilitated by the Commission and supported by Equality and Diversity Group members Bronagh Hinds (DemocraShe) and Bernie Kelly (Vice Chair of the Commission).

Looking ahead, the initiative aims to formalise a Diversity Ambassador Network to sustain collaboration, learning, and the sharing of best practices across Councils. It is proposed that the network will convene every four months, and the purpose of the Network will be reviewed annually.

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Diversity Ambassadors are:

Elected Members
Councillor Aine Quinn
Councillor David Lee-Surginor
Councillor Jonathan Jackson
Councillor Pete Byrne
Officer
Colin Moffett
Head of Corporate Policy

Agenda 16.0 / Appendix I - Correspondence re Diversity Ambassador Network...

Back to Agenda

57

I attach the Diversity Ambassador Network Terms of Reference and would ask that it is included on the agenda for your Council or appropriate Committee meeting.

On behalf of the Equality and Diversity Group, I would like to thank your Council for its continued support for the Diversity Ambassadors.

If you have any queries or require further information, please do not hesitate to contact Paula Hamilton by telephone on 028 9031 3200 or via email on paula.hamilton@lgsc.org.uk.

Yours sincerely,

_____

Sharon McNicholl
Chair, Equality and Diversity Group

Enc.
Terms of Reference

Diversity Ambassador Network – Terms of Reference

Context

Local Government has an important role in promoting equality of opportunity, diversity, and inclusion. The regional Equality and Diversity Group has responsibility for the development of the overall strategic direction for equality and diversity initiatives in local government. A key feature of the work of the Equality and Diversity Group is the establishment of the Diversity Ambassadors' Network.

Vision for Local Government

To create a fully inclusive and diverse local government service where the workforce reflects the community it serves, where as a sector diversity and inclusion are recognised, supported, and celebrated, and where staff are comfortable to be authentically themselves in the workplace.

Objectives and Delivery

The objective of the Network will be to support Elected Member and Officer Diversity Ambassadors. Diversity Ambassadors will be supported to champion diversity and inclusion in their councils to create positive impacts on this agenda in services and local communities, specifically to:

➢ Continue to build capacity for Diversity Ambassadors
➢ Promote and encourage EDI agendas in individual councils including at Elected Member level, linking to the EDI Strategy and Action Plan 2024 – 2027
➢ To assist councils to improve cross departmental working within councils, (across Good Relations, Human Resources and Equality)
➢ To assist collaborative working across all 11 councils

The delivery of these objectives will be done by creating a forum for Diversity Ambassadors to gather and share best practice, engage with the work of others on this agenda, develop skills to support and influence innovative practices, and embrace the opportunity to work in collaboration with existing and new partners in the delivery of this programme of work.

Agenda 16.0 / Appendix II - Diversity Ambassador Network Terms of Referen...

Back to Agenda

59

Operational Arrangements

The Network will meet at least three times a year and will work in the following ways:

➢ Members of the Network are encouraged to suggest items for the agenda and to suggest expert speakers and key stakeholders to contribute to the Network
➢ Non-members may be invited to join the Network, permanently or temporarily, to aid discussions on topics
➢ Decisions will be made by consensus, but if that is not possible the Co-Chairs will make the final decision
➢ Diversity Ambassadors are expected to attend, and apologies should be given in advance where possible
➢ Hybrid Meetings will be offered with at least 1 meeting per year, in person only.

Membership

The Network will consist of the nominated council and NILGA Elected Member and Officer Diversity Ambassadors.

Chairing of the Network Meetings

The Network will be Co-Chaired by an Elected Member and Officer Diversity Ambassador. The Co-Chairs will ensure that the proper running of meetings in a timely, fair transparent and inclusive manner and will have the final say on the finalisation of minutes. Items on the agenda should be alternated between the Co-Chairs.

Location of meetings are to be rotated around each council area.

Accountability

The Co-Chairs be expected to report regularly to the regional Equality and Diversity Group on the work of the Network either verbally or through reports.

Secretariat

The Local Government Staff Commission will serve as the secretariat for the Network until 31 March 2026. From that point onward, the hosting council of each meeting will assume the secretariat role for the respective meeting.

Network Values

Members of the Network will:

➢ Treat all other Members with respect
➢ Act in a courteous and ethical manner at all times,
➢ Improve communication on and within Network
➢ Not disclose any matter that the Network is satisfied should remain confidential.

Agenda 16.0 / Appendix II - Diversity Ambassador Network Terms of Referen...

Back to Agenda

60

Review

The Network will review the relevance and value of the terms of reference and its work on a regular basis.

Agenda 16.0 / Appendix II - Diversity Ambassador Network Terms of Referen...

Back to Agenda

61

Co-Chair Role

➢ Both should be treated as equal in the role, Officer and Elected Member
➢ Co-Chairs should remain in place for at least 1 year
➢ Schedule of meetings to be approved at least 1 year in advance
➢ Meetings which are being held every 4 months should be hosted by a different council. Practical issues for the host council include ensuring ICT and accessibility are appropriate and hospitality is agreed with Co-Chair
➢ Pre-meetings should take place 2 weeks in advance of the meeting to agree the agenda items and liaise with secretariat
➢ The Co-Chair should make space for diverse viewpoints to be heard and support challenging discussions
➢ The Co-Chair should agree and track actions, communicating outcomes either prior to or the following meeting dependant on their urgency
➢ The Elected Member Co-Chair is encouraged to contact other Elected Member to encourage participation.