



DRAFT

PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2026-2027

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Foreword

As a local Council, Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council has a legal duty to publish improvement objectives each year. We continue to be committed to making things better, delivering better, making services better and using our best efforts to deliver efficiently, economically and to an excellent standard.

We have conducted a comprehensive review of our services, identified key areas for improvement, and engaged in consultation to inform our approach. We have outlined the planned actions, established metrics for evaluating success, and, most importantly, outlined how our customers and citizens will benefit.

As a result, this year we have identified 5 Performance Improvement Objectives (PIOs) for 2026-27.

PIO 1	We will reduce the total number of days' sickness absence lost per employee
PIO 2	We will reduce Council's environmental impact through the development and implementation of a Climate and Sustainability Action Plan.
PIO 3	We will improve our Waste Management Services through the implementation of technological solutions and continued communication
PIO 4	We will improve the Council's Cemetery Service to ensure a safe, high-quality, customer-focused, and resilient bereavement service.
PIO 5	We will improve recruitment processes to ensure vacancies are filled in a timely manner.

We are committed to ensuring that our performance improvement objectives contribute meaningfully to enhancing the quality of life for all stakeholders across the Borough. We wish to assure residents, businesses, and stakeholders of our dedication to continuous improvement. Through the implementation of this Plan, we will strive to reduce staff absence rates, reinforce our long-term commitment to environmental sustainability, enhance our waste and cemetery services, and improve our recruitment processes.

Successful delivery of this Plan will depend on our ability to work efficiently and collaboratively, supported by our dedicated staff and trade union colleagues. Progress against the Plan will be reported as part of our annual Performance Self-Assessment Report, scheduled for publication in September 2027.

Introduction

This Performance Improvement Plan explains what we hope to achieve, how we plan to deliver it and how our citizens/other stakeholders will be better off as a result. It focuses on the key areas identified for improvement through our corporate and business planning processes, data analysis, and stakeholder engagement.

In this document we present our Performance Improvement Objectives for 2026 - 2027 in line with our statutory duty under the Local Government Act 2014 to publish an annual Performance Improvement Plan. As per Department for Communities (DfC) Government Guidance, Council's identified improvement objectives are based on a strong evidence base, an understanding of our citizens' needs, and were selected on basis of critical self-analysis.

In developing the Performance Improvement Objectives, due consideration was given to the Department for the Economy (DOE) Guidance (March 2016), the Borough's Community Plan, and Council's Corporate Plan. The process was informed by a range of relevant sources, including historical performance data, local and regional strategic priorities, and operational delivery insights, as well as feedback received from the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) during the 2025 Performance Audit. This comprehensive approach, outlined in greater detail later in this document, led to the identification of five proposed Performance Improvement Objectives for 2026–2027. Following approval by Council, these objectives were subject to an eight-week public consultation period, which ran from 05 February to 02 April 2026.

An analysis of the consultation responses provided reassurance that the proposed Improvement Objectives for 2026–2027 are appropriate and well-founded. Comments and feedback received during the consultation have been summarised and shared with the relevant departments and business units for further consideration. Additional details regarding the consultation process and its outcomes are available in Appendix 2.

Duty to Improve & Continuous Improvement

In line with the Statutory Duty to put in place arrangements for continuous improvement, each year Council is required to develop a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP). The PIP identifies objectives for the year ahead and Council's actions to meet these objectives. The development and publication of this PIP assists Council in meeting its statutory obligations in relation to Part 12 of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014. It is aligned to the Community Plan outcomes and Corporate Plan priorities and is subject to, and informed by, public consultation.

Paragraph 45 of the current guidance for Local Government Performance Improvement (Local Government Circular 21/2016) states the suggested date for councils to publish their Improvement plan is by the end of June.

The NIAO Audit & Assessment Report 2025-26 relating to the Council's statutory duty for continuous improvement and Certificate of Compliance was received by Council in November 2025. The report summarizes the work of the Local Government Auditor (LGA) on the 2025-26 performance improvement audit and assessment undertaken in September-November 2025. The report considered the wider statutory duty and focused on the Council's Performance Improvement Plan 2025-26 and Self-Assessment Report for 2024-25 and sets out LGA findings and conclusions. Contained within the report are detailed observations on thematic areas and notably for 2025-26 the Local Government Auditor made no statutory recommendation or any proposals for improvement.

The Certificate of Compliance outlines that Council had discharged its duties in connection with (1) improvement planning and (2) publication of improvement information in accordance with section 92 of the Act as a result of the assessment, the Council had discharged its duties under Part 12 of the Act and had acted in accordance with the Department for Communities' guidance sufficiently. It also outlines the Council had demonstrated a track record of ongoing improvement and that NIAO believe that the Council was likely to comply with Part 12 of the Act during 2025-26.

Appendix 3 outlines the Council's Strategic Management Approach, illustrating how performance improvement plans are aligned with the Council's Corporate Plan and other strategic frameworks. This integrated approach ensures that improvement initiatives are not developed in isolation but are firmly embedded within the broader strategic direction of the organisation. The Council's Quality and Performance Management Framework sets out the structures, governance arrangements, and processes that support a culture of continuous performance improvement across all service areas. This framework provides a clear roadmap for how performance is monitored, managed, and enhanced at all levels of the organisation.

A copy of the current Performance and Quality Management Framework can be accessed [here](#).

Progress with Council's Improvement Objectives 2025-26:

As per Department for Communities (DfC) Government Guidance, Council's improvement objectives for 2026-27 are based on a strong evidence base, an understanding of our citizens' needs, correspond directly with Council's priorities, and selected on basis of critical self-analysis. This resulted in Council proposing 5 improvement objectives which were subject to public consultation exercise. Where an improvement objective has not been taken forward from 2025-26 to 2026-27 or has changed focus, the reasons are outlined below.

Please note details of the progress on the 2025-26 performance improvement objectives will be contained within our Annual Performance Self-Assessment Report due to be published by end of September 2026.

PIOs 2025-26	PIOs 2026-27	Progress /Rationale	Status
PIO1: We will reduce the average number of days sickness absence lost per employee.	PIO1: We will reduce the average number of days sickness absence lost per employee.	The Council remains committed to reducing absence levels and significant investment in this performance improvement objective has been demonstrated through the revision of policies, training for all leaders and managers, and health and wellbeing sessions across the organisation. Notable progress has been achieved in promoting health and wellbeing initiatives. However, the Council has fallen behind in meeting its sickness absence target, with the current average standing at 21.35 days, which is above the target of 16 days. The primary causes of absence remain as, non-work related, work-related stress and musculoskeletal. The Council continues to prioritize strategies to address these challenges and remains focused on supporting employee health and wellbeing while working to meet absence reduction targets. Recognising that staff are the Council's most valuable resource, we acknowledge that reducing absence levels is a long-term objective. As such, this priority will be carried forward into 2026-27, ensuring sustained focus and continued investment in supporting employee health and wellbeing.	Retained This improvement objective has been retained for 2026-27.

PIO 2: We will reduce Council's environmental impact through the development and implementation of a Climate and Sustainability Action Plan.	PIO 2: We will reduce Council's environmental impact through the development and implementation of a Climate and Sustainability Action Plan.	Good progress has been made in relation to this improvement objective. This includes the Climate & Sustainability Action Plan, staff training and awareness, the submission of project proposals for renewable technologies at 3 facilities and a successful energy procurement exercise. It is recognised that this is a long-term objective for Council with additional statutory reporting and therefore this improvement objective will be carried over for 2026-27.	Retained This improvement objective has been retained and revised for 2026-27.
PIO3: We will improve our Waste Management Services through the implementation of technological solutions and continued communication.	PIO3: We will improve our Waste Management Services through the implementation of technological solutions and continued communication.	Following review of progress, it was evident that the communications element of this improvement objective is progressing well. However, due to operational issues the target of 80% of the waste collection services using in cab technology has been significantly delayed, therefore, this PIO will be retained 2026-27.	Retained This improvement objective has been retained and revised 2026-27.
PIO4: We will improve Communications with our customers on Council and non-Council services and responsibilities.		Good progress has been made in relation to this improvement objective. The re-design of the website was finalised 31 March 2026. The website design upgrade includes a more user friendly section, on Council Departments, what they are responsible for and generic email address for each Council Departments. The Home Page now features a How we can Help You Section, with Tiles more aligned with common customer enquiries and links to public bodies/ external organisations for non-Council services. Therefore, it is recommended that this PIO is removed.	Removed
	PIO4: We will improve the Council's Cemetery Service to ensure a safe, high-quality, customer-focused,	This is a new objective for 2026-27. The delivery of a Cemetery Service is one of the primary functions of local councils and a recent service review identified a number	New

	and resilient bereavement service.	of areas where improvements could be made to ensure a fit for purpose, resilient Cemetery Service for the future.	
	PIO5: We will improve recruitment processes to ensure vacancies are filled in a timely manner.	This objective is new for 2026-27 This performance improvement objective will help ensure consistent service delivery, attract and retain candidates through the recruitment process and support workforce planning	New

Performance Improvement Objectives 2026-2027

PIO1: We will reduce the total number of days' sickness absence lost per employee

PIO2: We will reduce Council's environmental impact through the development and implementation of a Climate and Sustainability Action Plan.

PIO3: We will improve our Waste Management Services through the implementation of technological solutions and continued communication

PIO4: We will improve the Council's Cemetery Service to ensure a safe, high-quality, customer-focused, and resilient bereavement service.

PIO5: We will improve recruitment processes to ensure vacancies are filled in a timely manner.

A detailed summary of each of the Improvement Objectives is set out at Appendix 4.

Improvement Objective 1:***We will reduce the total number of days' sickness absence lost per employee.***

 Why	• This objective has been carried over from 2025-26 • The management of absenteeism remains a high priority within Council and will therefore remain an improvement objective • Musculoskeletal, work related and non-worked related stress have remained as the top 3 reasons for absence.
 What Action will we take?	• Continue to provide support to line managers enabling them to effectively manage staff absence. • Develop and implement an annual Staff Health & Wellbeing Action Plan. • Conduct an internal review and analysis of absence across all departments. • Deliver initiatives / activities aligned to the main reasons for absence. • Mental Health First Aider (MHFA) Champions within Council and provide refresher training, as required. • Communicate MHFA Champions to staff
 How will we measure progress?	• Target of 16 days or lower, for the total sickness absence lost per employee. • Staff Health & Wellbeing Action plan delivered by 31 March 2027. • Quarterly reports and analysis of absence across all departments completed using the internal Quality Management System • Health and wellbeing initiatives/activities delivered across the main themes of absence by 31 March 2027 • Maintain a minimum of 85% Mental Health First Aiders (MHFA) provision in March 2027. • 2 targeted communications on MHFA services issued to staff by 31 March 2027
 Benefits to you	This objective will contribute to the overall health and well-being of our Borough, as a large majority of our employees reside in the Borough. If progress is made, then it should also result in better continuity of service delivery.
 Who is responsible	The Senior Responsible Officers (SRO's) for this Objective in conjunction with the HR&OD Department are • Interim Chief Executive. • Director of Development, Community & Wellbeing • Director of Regulatory Services, Facilities & Assets • Director of Environmental Services & Sustainability

Improvement Objective 2:

We will reduce Council's environmental impact through the development and implementation of a Climate and Sustainability Action Plan 2025-2030

 Why	• This objective has been carried over from 2025-26. • It is acknowledged that this is a long-term objective for Council and that there is still a significant amount of work to be carried out to ensure that Council deliver on the commitment to reduce their environmental impact. • Council has 5 priorities which includes Environment & Place and commitment to actively respond to the climate crisis and support others to do likewise.
 What Action will we take	• Implementation of the Climate & Sustainability Action Plan 2025-2030 • Cross departmental working group operational and meeting regularly. • Project proposals and business cases relating to 'invest to save' • Identify areas of improvement in terms of systems and processes relating to energy usage and cost savings. • Update communications on Climate through regular review and updates of the internet/intranet • Deliver and maintain mandatory staff training.
 How we will measure progress	• Working Group meetings and minutes during 2026-27 • 20% of Climate and Sustainability Action Plan delivered by 31 March 2027 (subject to review). • 100% of 'invest to save' business cases approved. • 5% reduction in energy consumption across portfolio of facilities portfolio (subject to review). • Updated Intranet page – Climate Sustainability & EMS • 70% of staff trained by 31 March 2027 (subject to review)
 Benefits to you	• In the long term there will be a reduction in energy consumption • There will be a positive impact on the health and well-being of our citizens. • Our actions will support nature-recovery, enhancing biodiversity • Delivery of the action plan will support climate-resilience
 Who is responsible	The Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) for this Objective in conjunction with the Climate, Sustainability & Parks Department is the: • Director of Environmental Services & Sustainability.

Improvement Objective 3:

We will improve our Waste Management Services through the implementation of technological solutions and continued communication

 Why	• This objective has been carried over from 2025-26. • Following a review, it was evident that whilst good progress has been made on relation to the communications element, the in-cab technology has been delayed.
 What Action will we take	• Continued implementation of in cab technology, to include training and awareness. • Continued update and review of the Waste Management section of Council website, including Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) • Provide standardisation of relevant, accurate and up to date information on appropriate communication channels • Undertake regular analysis of customer communication methods including departmental Contact Us/ complaints/ Website hits/ ABC Council App Usage/social media.
 How we will measure progress	• 100% of waste collection service using in cab technology by March 2027 • Training and awareness material developed. • Real time data and analytical reports produced. • Quarterly updates of Waste Management section on website, including Frequently Asked Questions • Copies of publicity/PR posted on all communication channels as required. • Quarterly review of all communication channels • Quarterly review of ABC Council App usage statistics • Quarterly review/monitoring of the number of hits on website section
 Benefits to you	• Increased customer satisfaction with information about Waste Management Services. • Customers will have improved accessible information on Waste Management Services on a range on channels
 Who is responsible	The Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) for this Objective in conjunction with the Head of Environmental Services and Communications Team is: • Director of Environmental Services & Sustainability

Improvement Objective 4:

We will improve the Council's Cemetery Service to ensure a safe, high-quality, customer focussed and resilient bereavement service.

 Why	• This is a new improvement objective for 2026-27. • The delivery of a Cemetery Service is one of the primary functions of local councils. • A service review identified a number of areas where improvements could be made to ensure a fit for purpose, resilient Cemetery Service for the future
 What Action will we take	• Review cemetery staffing structure and job descriptions. • Procure new cemetery software to enhance accessibility of the burial booking system. • Review of current out of hours arrangements. • Review and update Council website information. • Purchase equipment to increase safety and dignity. • Introduce a programme of memorial safety inspections.
 How we will measure progress	• Review of cemetery staffing structure and job descriptions completed by 31 March 2027. • Software procured and in use by 31 March 2027. • Out of hours arrangements reviewed, and outcomes implemented by 31 March 2027. • Website updated by 31 March 2027 • Equipment purchased and in use by 31 March 2027 • Memorial inspection programme developed and programme in place by 31 March 2027.
 Benefits to you	• Provision of a safer, inclusive, and modern cemeteries service. • An improved quality of service for all stakeholders (the public, funeral directors, memorial masons, and clergy) including better access to information
 Who is responsible	The Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) for this Objective in conjunction with the Climate, Sustainability & Parks Department is the: • Director of Environmental Services & Sustainability

Improvement Objective 5:

We will improve recruitment processes to ensure vacancies are filled in a timely manner.

 Why	• This is a new improvement objective for 2026-27 • This performance improvement objective will help ensure consistent service delivery, attract and retain candidates through the recruitment process and support workforce planning
 What Action will we take	• Continue to implement the new Recruitment Procedure and Guidance. • Undertake an end-to-end process review, from approval of vacancy to appointment date. • Set target timelines for each stage of the recruitment process. • Continue to deliver improvements via digitalisation. • Expand our use of recruitment pools for high volume roles.
 How we will measure progress	• Recruitment Procedure and Guidance implemented by 31 March 2027 • End-to-end process review completed with improvements identified and implemented by 31 March 2027. • Target timelines and % vacancies filled within target timeframe (<i>target to be set upon completion of end-to-end review</i>) • Digital Improvements delivered by 31 March 2027. • Use of recruitment pools implemented by 31 March 2027.
 Benefits to you	• This objective will contribute to the overall service delivery to citizens/ rate payers of the Borough, as improvements will be made to expedite recruitment timelines and ensure staff vacancies are fulfilled effectively. • If progress is made, then it should also result in better continuity of service delivery. • Improved recruitment experience.
 Who is responsible	The Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) for this Objective in conjunction with the HR&OD Department is: • Interim Chief Executive

Statutory Indicators and Standards

In addition to the improvement areas identified in the Performance Improvement Plan, the Department for Communities also set statutory targets for Councils in the areas of Planning, Economic Development and Waste. The Statutory performance Indicators and standards, as outlined in the Local Government Performance Indicators and Standards Order (2015), are set out below.

Statutory Indicators & Standards Performance Indicators	Standards/Targets
The number of jobs promoted through business start-up activity. (Business start-up activity means the delivery of completed client-led business plans under Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment's Regional Start Initiative or its successor programmes)	182 (Statutory target)
The average processing time of major planning applications. (An application in the category of major development within the meaning of the Planning (Development Management) Regulations (NI) 2015 (a))	30 weeks
The average processing time of local planning applications. (An application in the category of local development within the meaning of the Planning (Development Management) Regulations (NI) 2015, and other applications for approval or consent under the Planning Act (NI) 2011 or any Regulations made under the Act)	15 weeks
The percentage of planning enforcement cases processed within 39 weeks. (Enforcement cases are investigations into alleged breaches of planning control under Part 5 of the Planning Act (NI) 2011 or any Regulations made under the Act)	70%
The percentage of Municipal waste collected by district Councils that is sent for recycling (including waste prepared for reuse).	The Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 requirement for at least 70% of waste to be recycled by 2030. The Waste (Circular Economy) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 amended the Waste and Contaminated Land (Northern Ireland) Order 1997: 65% of municipal waste prepared for re-use and recycling by 2035, (60% 2030) The amount of municipal waste sent to landfill to be reduced to 10% or less of the total amount of municipal waste generated (by weight) by 2035)
The amount (tonnage) of biodegradable Local Authority Collected Municipal Waste that is landfilled. (Targets set via NILAS)	NI Landfill Allowance Scheme (NILAS) has not set a target for 2026-27. The scheme concluded at the end of the 2019/20 financial year with a target of 24,417T, with 6,104T being landfilled, however the continued monitoring of biodegradable waste is required for existing target commitments which specify that it must be reduced to 35% of the total amount (by weight) of biodegradable municipal waste produced in 1995. Non-Statutory Targets: measures to be taken to ensure that the amount of municipal waste landfilled is reduced to 10% or less of the total amount of municipal waste generated by 2035.
The amount (tonnage) of Local Authority Collected Municipal Waste arising (The total amount of waste collected)	No statutory target has been set for 2026-27.

Self-imposed Performance Indicators

In addition to the statutory performance indicators, we include a series of self-imposed performance measures (performance indicators and standards/targets) within all Business Plans for 2026-27 which will be monitored and reported on in line with our Performance and Quality Management Framework.

Performance Management, Reporting and Governance Arrangements

We are committed to ensuring continuous improvement in the delivery of our services across **all** areas of the organisation. This publication is our 'forward-looking' Performance Improvement Plan for 2026 - 2027 that fulfils, in part, the statutory requirement set out in Part 12 of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014.

Whilst we have identified 5 performance improvement objectives, this in no way prescribes or limits Council's commitment to continuous improvement in all services/functions; it does however concentrate efforts and limited resources, on monitoring and review of those key areas we wish to improve on in 2026 - 27.

Our Strategic Management approach is aligned to a number of key strategic plans, including the Borough's Community Plan, our Corporate Plan, and our Performance Improvement Plan. The approach is carried through into our Business Plans, other action plans as well as with team and individual performance development conversations. The process is supported by reporting and monitoring at corporate, department, and team level as appropriate.

Council has made a concerted effort to build on the work so far and ensure that all aspects of quality management are consolidated within the Performance and Quality Management Framework.

A six-monthly progress report on the 2026-2027 Performance Improvement Plan will be presented to the Council's Executive Management Team and Council's Performance and Audit Committee as part of the Quarterly Corporate Performance Management Report.

By 30 September 2026, we will publish a retrospective Annual Performance Self-Assessment Report, setting out details of how we have performed during 2025-2026 against this Performance Improvement Plan; including the statutory performance indicators and

standards for Economic Development, Planning and Waste, self-imposed indicators and standards and any relevant benchmarking information.

The Council has in place the following specific arrangements to monitor progress against the standards set for the statutory performance indicators and standards/targets:

- Inclusion within Performance Improvement Plan, with progress monitored on bi-annual basis by the Performance & Audit Committee.
- Inclusion within relevant business plans, with progress being monitored on a bi-annual basis to the relevant Council service committee.
- Data submission to Government Departments, with reports being issued/published quarterly and annually to monitor the performance of each Council, outlining regional trends and comparisons.

The Council has in place the following specific arrangements to monitor progress against the self-imposed performance indicators and standard/targets:

- Inclusion within business plans and the Quality Management System (QMS), with progress being monitored on a monthly basis by Department Management Teams, quarterly by Directorate Management Teams and twice per year by the Executive Management Team.
- Business Plan Progress reporting to relevant Council service committees. The committee reports are published on our Council website. <https://abc.public-minutes.com/>
- Progress monitored by the Council's Performance & Audit Committee through the quarterly Corporate Performance Reports and the annual Performance Self-Assessment Reports

In addition, Council is a member of the Association of Public Sector Excellence (APSE), which is a public sector benchmarking organisation. Benchmarking is a useful tool that can assist Council to compare our performance across a range of services and activities, efficiencies, and value for money with other councils, where appropriate.

For further information on Council's Performance, including corporate publications, self-assessment, and NIAO report, please see link below:

[Performance Improvement - Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council \(armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk\)](https://armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk/PerformanceImprovement)

Always seeking to Improve. How to propose new Improvement Objectives.

We welcome on-going feedback, comments, or suggestions on how we might improve our services and if you would like to propose any new improvement objectives. Please use one of the following methods to do so:

Email	performance@armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk
Telephone	0300 0300 900
In Writing	Strategy and Performance Department Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council Armagh Old City Hospital Armagh BT61 7DY

This document is available in hard copy format and in a range of formats upon request using the contact details above.

Identifying Performance Improvement Objectives:

how we identified improvement areas and timeline for implementation

As per Department for Communities (DfC) Government Guidance, we identified our improvement objectives based on:

- a strong evidence base,
- an understanding of our citizens' needs,
- alignment with Council's priorities in the new Corporate Plan, and
- critical self-analysis.

When developing the proposed Performance Improvement Objectives for 2026–2027, an analysis was undertaken of a wide range of evidence sources. This included performance data, trend analysis, committee reports, service-level performance reports, and other relevant information to ensure the objectives were evidence-based and aligned with both operational and strategic priorities.

Internal analysis and engagement within Council took place during Autumn/ Winter 2025 with senior management and Council officers from across Directorates including:

- **Self-analysis** by individual Heads of Department, reviewing Departmental data and information, Business Plan progress, performance & risk management data, and information, 2025-26 Mid-Year Self-assessment report
- **Peer analysis** at Head of Department and Directorate team meetings with Directors and Executive Management Team members and finally,
- **Independent critical analysis** by the Strategy & Performance Department.

Based on the knowledge, data and evidence sourced, 5 Performance Improvement Objectives were identified and approved by Council for public consultation. An 8-week Public Consultation exercise took place 5 February – 2 April 2026. Further detail on the Consultation process and responses can be found in Appendix 2.

The timeline included provides an overview of the process for the development of Council's Performance Improvement Plan, from drafting our Performance Improvement Objectives, through to consultation, delivery, monitoring, and reporting arrangements.

Timeline - Development of Performance Improvement Plan 2026-27

Jul – Sep 2025	➤ Preparation of Annual Performance Self-Assessment Report for 2025-26 ➤ Preparation for NI Audit Office: audit fieldwork ➤ Annual Performance Self-Assessment Report for 2024-25 presented to EMT, Committee and Full Council, ahead of publication by 30 September 2025 ➤ Initiate Departmental Business Planning process for 2026-27 ➤ Review of Performance Improvement Objectives 2025-26 ➤ Initiate internal engagement to review, identify Performance Improvement Objectives for next year: 2026-27 ➤ Desktop analysis of Evidence / data/ information/ trends, performance reports, committee reports etc. examined as primary sources of evidence for identification of areas for improvement
Oct – Dec 2025	➤ 6 monthly progress updates on Departmental Business Plans to Service Committees ➤ Mid-Year Performance Report on 2025-26 presented to Performance & Audit Committee and Council. ➤ Ongoing engagement & support with Departments for development of Business Planning (2026-27) Process ➤ Ongoing engagement on development of the proposed Performance Improvement objectives and Plan for 2026-27 in line with departmental business planning process across council. ➤ Ongoing Business Planning, Efficiency & Estimates Process for 2026-27 ➤ Ongoing support/ liaison with NI Audit Office and departments on Performance Audit ➤ Final NIAO Section 95 Report on Audit issued November 2025
Jan – Mar 2026	➤ Draft Improvement Objectives for public consultation presented to Senior Managers, recommended to Executive Management Team (EMT) ➤ Draft Performance Improvement Objectives reported to Governance Resources and Strategy Committee and Council for approval. ➤ Council strikes the Rate for 2026-27 (February) ➤ Ongoing engagement with Departments on development of 2026-27 Business Plans. ➤ Public consultation on Draft Improvement Objectives opened 5 February 2026 ➤ Internal audit of Performance Improvement
Apr – Jun 2026	➤ Public consultation on Proposed Improvement Objectives closed 2 April 2026 ➤ Consultation responses collated and summary report presented to senior management. ➤ Draft Performance Improvement Plan 2026-27 reported to senior management, GRS Committee and Full Council for approval. ➤ Performance Improvement Plan 2026-27 published on Council's website by 30 June 2026 ➤ New 2026-27 Business Plans presented to Service Committees May 2026. ➤ Year End Annual Reports on 2025-26 Departmental Business Plans presented to Service Committees June 2026

Consultation Process & Responses

The 5 proposed draft performance improvement objectives for 2026-27, were subject to an 8-week public consultation, from 5 February to 2 April 2026.

During the public consultation period Elected Members and Council staff as well as Trade Unions representatives were also encouraged to provide further feedback on the draft performance improvement objectives.

The proposed Performance Improvement Objectives were therefore developed taking into consideration the views of internal and external stakeholders.

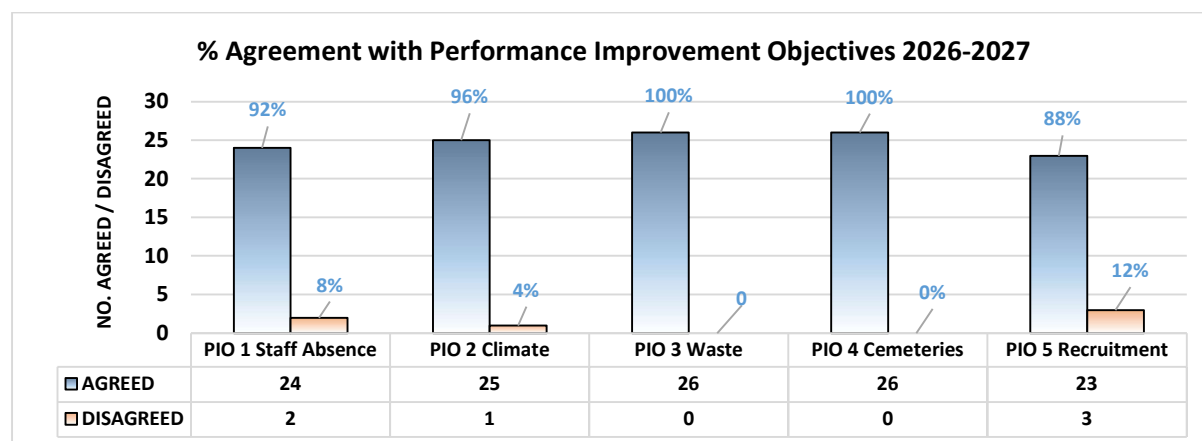
- **Internal:** *Employees including the Senior Leadership Team, trade unions, and Elected Members.*
- **External:** *Citizens/customers, communities, businesses, and other stakeholders.*

In the Consultation document we provided further detail on each of the Performance Improvement Objectives, including:

- How each objective links with 'Connected' - our Community Plan,
- How each objective links to the priorities and commitments within our Corporate Plan
- Why we have chosen the objective
- What we will do to achieve the objective – our actions
- How we will measure success – our Performance Indicators
- What success will look like – our targets
- How our Citizens and stakeholders will benefit
- Which aspects of improvement we are addressing

The timeline within Appendix 1, outlines the internal consultation within Council that took place, exploring potential areas for improvement, and the synergies between corporate, business planning, efficiency and estimate setting processes. It also indicates that we undertook the necessary public consultation exercise in line with our Public Consultation Policy. We used social media, Community Planning partners' contacts, business e-zine, community networks, emails to Section-75 groups, other councils, staff memos, intranet promotion, informed the Trade Unions and made hard copies available on request.

A total of 26 responses were received, indicating a slight increase in response rates when compared with 23 responses in 2025-26. 73% of respondents were residents of the Borough, with the majority indicating they became aware of the consultation through our social media platforms. An analysis of the responses has been undertaken, and it is considered that the level of agreement expressed provides a sound basis for concluding that the proposed performance improvement objectives for 2026–2027 are appropriate. The analysis is presented below.



The diagram shows between 88% and 100% of consultees agreed with the 5 proposed performance improvement objectives. The comments received were summarised and forwarded to relevant departments for consideration in line with their business plans and service delivery. The relevant departments will provide general feedback to the comments received that will be used to provide responses via the *'We asked, You Said, We Did'* section of the Council's Consultation Hub. This will be uploaded to the Consultation Hub, thereby closing the feedback loop on the consultation process.

Link to Community Plan/Other Plans & Strategies

Identifying and communicating the Council's vision of its purpose and intended outcomes for citizens and service users.

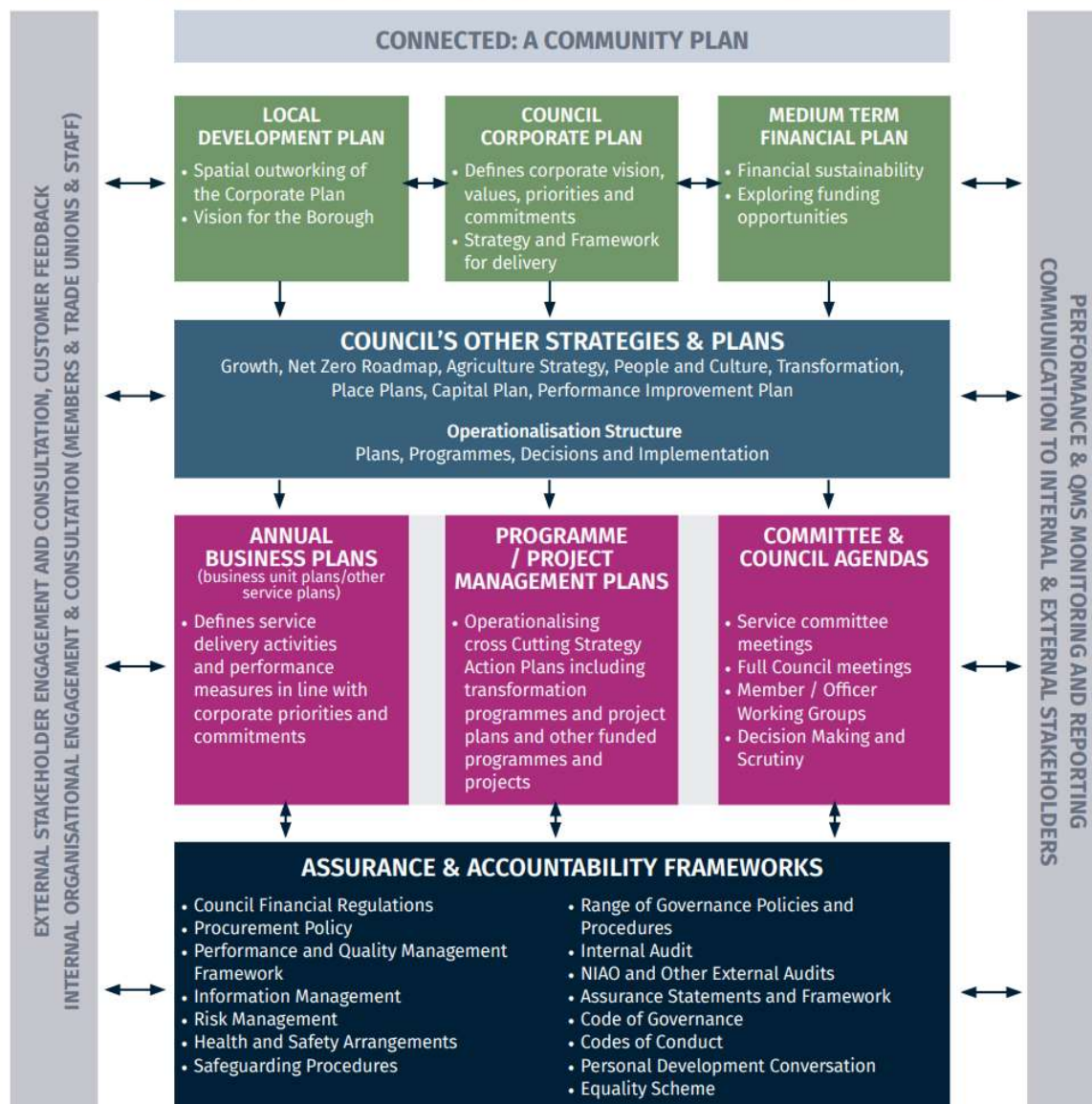
The Council's Strategic Approach to Management is represented in the diagram below demonstrating how all the component parts align and work together in the delivery of Council services. It seeks to link the overarching Council priorities and commitments to service and individual work plans, making clear the contribution individuals make towards achieving strategic outcomes. The diagram also demonstrates the other elements that make up our accountability and assurance and performance management framework supported by two-way stakeholder and customer engagement, consultation, and feedback.

ARMAGH CITY, BANBRIDGE & CRAIGAVON BOROUGH COUNCIL STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT APPROACH

OPERATING ENVIRONMENT

Regional, National Strategies and Partnerships

Immediate Influencers - Political Stability and Direction | Health of the Economy | Labour Market - skills, capacity and availability



The diagram above illustrates the need for connections between all levels. This golden thread is supported by engagement and improvement processes. The plans listed above are illustrative of the key plans, rather than an exhaustive list.

Our Community Plan gives us the **WHY** of what we are doing, providing a holistic view of the needs and aspirations of our Borough, and articulating them in 9 long-term outcomes.

Our Corporate Plan explains **WHAT** we as the Council are doing to contribute to these outcomes as well as outlining any other key objectives for us as an organisation.

Finally, our annual departmental business plans will detail the **HOW** giving staff and Elected Members the detail on actions, which departments are taking to achieve the corporate plan commitments.

Our Corporate Plan has been developed, with our vision aligned to the Community Plan 2017-2030. The new Corporate Plan identifies 5 priorities which Council will deliver.

- Environment and Place,
- Community Wellbeing,
- Economic Growth,
- Service Delivery
- Staff Leadership and Resources

A copy of Council's Corporate Plan can be found at the link below.

<https://www.armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk/council/corporate-publications/>

Performance Improvement Objectives identified for 2026-27

The tables below provide examples of actions, performance measures, and potential benefits in relation to the draft objectives, which are subject to consultation.

Performance Improvement Objective 1	Link to Community Plan/ Corporate Plan 2023-2027	Why have we chosen this Objective?	What we will do (Actions)	How do we measure (Performance Indicators)	We will have succeeded if (Standards/Targets)	How our citizens and stakeholders may benefit
We will reduce the average number of days sickness absence lost per employee.	Service Delivery: Continuously review to improve our services. Monitor and report our performance. Staff, Leadership and Resources: Value staff and be civic leaders. Strengthen our governance and review efficiency of our resources and assets	This objective has been retained for 2026-27. The management of absenteeism remains a high priority within Council and will therefore remain an improvement objective.	Human Resource and Organisational Development Department to provide support to line managers enabling them to effectively manage staff absence.	The average number of days sickness absence lost per employee.	16 days or lower	This objective will contribute to the overall health and well-being of our Borough, as a large majority of our employees reside in the Borough.
			Develop and implement annual Staff Health & Wellbeing Action Plan.	Staff Health & Wellbeing Action Plan delivered	31 March 2027	
		Musculoskeletal, work related and non-worked related stress have remained as the top 3 reasons for absence.	Internal review and analysis of absence across all departments.	Report and analysis completed using internal Quality Management System	Quarterly Reports	
			Deliver initiatives / activities aligned to main reasons for absence.	Wellbeing initiatives delivered across main themes of absence.	31 March 2027	
			Mental Health First Aider (MHFA) Champions within Council and provide refresher training, as required.	The percentage of Mental Health First Aiders available	Minimum of 85%	
			Communicate MHFA Champions to staff	The number of targeted communications on MHFA services issued to staff.	At least 2	
Performance Improvement Aspects: Strategic Effectiveness, Service Quality, Service Availability, Fairness						

Performance Improvement Objective 2	Link to Community Plan/ Corporate Plan 2023-2027	Why have we chosen this Objective?	What we will do (Actions)	How do we measure (Performance Indicators)	We will have succeeded if (Standards/Targets)	How our citizens and stakeholders may benefit
We will reduce Council's environmental impact through the development and implementation of a Climate and Sustainability Action Plan 2025-2030	Environment and Place: Actively respond to the climate crisis and support others to do likewise Service Delivery: Monitor and communicate our performance Staff, Leadership and Resources: Strengthen our governance and review efficiency of our resources and assets	This objective has been retained and revised for 2026-27. It is acknowledged that this is a long-term objective for Council and that there is still a significant amount of work to be carried out to ensure that Council deliver on the commitment to reduce their environmental impact.	Cross departmental working group operational.	Working Group meetings	Regular meetings and reporting from Working Group throughout 2026-27.	In the long term there will be a reduction in energy consumption and a positive impact on the health and well-being of our citizens.
			Implementation of the Climate and Sustainability Action Plan 2025-2030.	Action Plan implemented (Regulatory Reporting)	20% of action plan implemented by 31 March 2027.	
			Project Proposals and Business cases relating to 'invest to save' aligned to action plan.	'Invest to Save' business cases developed and approved	100% of 'Invest to Save' business cases approved.	
			Identify areas of improvement in terms of systems & processes relating to energy usage and cost savings.	The percentage reduction in energy consumption.	5% reduction in energy consumption across portfolio of facilities.	
			Updated Communications on Climate through regular review and update of the Internet/intranet	Frequency of review and update	Quarterly.	
			Deliver and maintain mandatory staff training	The percentage of staff trained (new and existing)	70%	
Performance Improvement Aspects: Strategic Effectiveness, Service Quality, Service Availability, Fairness, Sustainability, Efficiency, Innovation.						

Performance Improvement Objective 3	Link to Community Plan/ Corporate Plan 2023-2027	Why have we chosen this Objective?	What we will do (Actions)	How do we measure (Performance Indicators)	We will have succeeded if (Standards/Targets)	How our citizens and stakeholders may benefit
We will improve our Waste Management Services through the implementation of technological solutions and continued communication.	Service Delivery: Continuously review to improve our services Seek and use regular customer engagement and feedback. Staff, Leadership and Resources: Communicate and engage with staff, communities, and others.	This objective has been retained and revised for 2026-27. A review of performance at Mid-Year showed that whilst good progress has been made in relation to the communications element, the in-cab technology has been delayed.	Continued Implementation of in-cab technology, to include training and awareness	In-cab Technology in use.	100% of waste collection service using in cab technology	Increased customer satisfaction with information about Waste Management Services. Customers will have improved accessible information on Waste Management Services on a range on channels.
				Development of Training and awareness material	Training Records and Materials available	
				Availability of real time data and analytical reports.	Weekly and as required.	
			Update Waste Management section of website, including Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)	Frequency of updates	Quarterly	
			Provide standardisation of relevant, accurate and up to date information on all appropriate communication channels	Regular standardised up to date information on all appropriate communication channels issued throughout 2026-27	Throughout 2026-27 as required	
			Undertake regular Analysis of customer communication methods including Departmental Contact Us/ complaints/ Website hits/ ABC Council App Usage/social media	Frequency of review ABC Council App usage statistics The number of hits on website section	Quarterly Quarterly Review	
Performance Improvement Aspects: Strategic Effectiveness, Service Quality, Service Availability, Fairness, Efficiency, Innovation						

Performance Improvement Objective 4	Link to Community Plan/ Corporate Plan 2023-2027	Why have we chosen this Objective?	What we will do (Actions)	How do we measure (Performance Indicators)	We will have succeeded if (Standards/Targets)	How our citizens and stakeholders may benefit
We will improve the Council's Cemetery Service to ensure a safe, high-quality, customer-focussed, and resilient bereavement service	Service Delivery: Continuously review to improve our services Seek and use regular customer engagement and feedback. Staff, Leadership and Resources: Communicate and engage with staff, communities, and others.	This is a new objective for 2026-27. The delivery of a Cemetery Service is one of the primary functions of local councils. A service review identified a number of areas that could be improved to ensure a fit for purpose, resilient Cemetery Service for the future.	Review cemetery staffing structure and job descriptions.	Review of Cemetery Staffing Structure and job descriptions completed	31 March 2027.	Provision of a safer, inclusive, and modern cemeteries service. An improved quality of service for all stakeholders (the public, funeral directors, memorial masons, and clergy) including better access to information.
			Procure new cemetery software to enhance accessibility of the burial booking system.	Software procured and in use	31 March 2027	
			Review of current out of hours arrangements	Out of hours arrangements reviewed and outcomes implemented.	31 March 2027	
			Review Council website content and update	Website Updated	31 March 2027	
			Purchase equipment to increase safety and dignity	Equipment purchased and in use	31 March 2027	
			Introduce a programme of memorial safety inspections	Memorial safety inspection programme developed and programme in place	31 March 2027	
			Performance Improvement Aspects: Strategic Effectiveness, Service Quality, Service Availability, Fairness, Efficiency, Innovation, Sustainability			

Performance Improvement Objective 5	Link to Community Plan/ Corporate Plan 2023-2027	Why have we chosen this Objective?	What we will do (Actions)	How do we measure (Performance Indicators)	We will have succeeded if (Standards/Targets)	How our citizens and stakeholders may benefit
We will improve recruitment processes to ensure vacancies are filled in a timely manner.	Service Delivery: Continuously review to improve our services. Staff, Leadership and Resources: Communicate and engage with staff, communities, and others	This objective is new for 2026-27 This performance improvement objective will help ensure consistent service delivery, attract and retain candidates through the recruitment process and support workforce planning	Continue to implement the new Recruitment Procedure and Guidance, effective from July 2025	Recruitment Procedure and Guidance implemented	Recruitment Procedure and Guidance implemented by 31 March 2027.	This objective will contribute to the overall service delivery to citizens/ rate payers of the Borough, as improvements will be made to expedite recruitment timelines and ensure staff vacancies are fulfilled effectively.
			Undertake an end-to-end process review, from approval of vacancy through to appointment date	End to end process review completed with improvements identified and implemented.	31 March 2027.	
			Set target timelines for each stage of the recruitment process.	Target timelines and % vacancies filled within target timeframe.	% Vacancies filled within target timeframe (<i>Target to be set upon completion of end-to-end review</i>)	
			Continue to deliver improvements via digitalisation.	Delivery of digital improvements.	31 March 2027.	Improved recruitment experience.
			Expand our use of recruitment pools for high volume roles	Use of recruitment pools for high turnover roles.	Use of recruitment pools by 31 March 2027.	
Performance Improvement Aspects: Strategic Effectiveness, Service Quality, Service Availability, Efficiency						