



**Armagh City
Banbridge
& Craigavon**
Borough Council

Annual Performance Self-Assessment Report 2024-2025

September 2025

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the 2024/25 Annual Performance Self-Assessment Report. This year's report reflects on the progress we have made as we continue to pursue our vision for Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council: fostering a happy, healthy, and connected community, building a vibrant and sustainable economy, and creating appealing places for living, working, and learning.

Over the past year, we have celebrated significant milestones that demonstrate both our resilience and commitment to growth. Highlights include the 20th anniversary of the Georgian Festival and the 25th anniversary of The Market Place Theatre and Arts Centre.

We were proud to be shortlisted in five categories at the inaugural Northern Ireland Local Government Awards, winning two prestigious titles: '*Best Outcome of the Last Decade*' for our Food Heartland initiative, and '*Innovative Planning for the Future*' for our ABC Place Plans.

Our Borough has also maintained its position as the top-ranked council area in Northern Ireland for the number of new builds completed between April 2015 and March 2025.

These examples of awards and achievements received in 2024/25 not only showcase our dedication to excellence but also reflect the hard work, passion, and commitment of our staff throughout the year.

Reflecting on our achievements and monitoring performance is a vital exercise that informs decision-making and ensures accountability. This process demonstrates progress on our Corporate Plan (2023–2027) actions and commitments and allows us to track whether we are delivering on the objectives we set out to achieve. It also provides an evidence base for shaping plans for the next financial year, including identifying new performance improvement objectives.

This report provides an overview of Council's performance against the self-imposed measures set out in our Corporate Plan 2023–2027, 2024/25 Business Plans, Service Standards, and Performance Improvement Plan. It also details our performance in 2024/25 against the statutory performance improvement indicators for Waste, Planning, and Economic Development.

In addition, the report includes a summary of our financial performance, the Annual Report on Complaints Handling, and, as required by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA), our Annual Rural Needs Assessment Report.

By publishing this Annual Performance Self-Assessment Report Council fulfils the statutory requirement for self-assessment under Part 12 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014, relating to the discharge of our general duty in respect of performance improvement arrangements.

The Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) will carry out an audit of how Council has implemented its statutory performance improvement duties. Subsequently, the NIAO will produce an independent audit report, which will be published on the Council's website, usually before 30 November 2025. Previous audit reports are available at the following link:

<https://www.armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk/council/performance-improvement>

Throughout this report, we draw on statistical evidence and supporting narratives to demonstrate how we performed in 2024/25 against a defined set of targets and standards. Where appropriate, we also benchmark our performance against previous years and against other councils. This approach also highlights how we are implementing our new Performance

and Quality Management Framework and ensuring that robust performance improvement arrangements are in place.

2.0 CORPORATE PLAN ACHIEVEMENTS

The Corporate Plan 2023-2027 outlines the vision, values and priorities of Council and captures the essence of who we are and how we will achieve a positive impact within the Borough. It demonstrates our commitment to upholding the highest standards for the betterment of 'Our People, Our Place and Our Future'. It is linked to our Community Plan, Business Plans and a number of other strategies and plans or corporate projects which we use to plan and manage our business effectively. The 'golden thread' between all these documents helps to determine and direct the work of services, departments, teams and individuals.



A copy of the Corporate Plan can be found at the following link:

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

As a Council we will focus on and deliver services across five key priorities: **Environment and Place**, **Community Wellbeing**, **Economic Growth**, **Service Delivery** and **Staff Leadership and Resources**.

In the Corporate Plan, we outline why each priority matters to us and set out three specific commitments for each. To support these commitments, we provide examples of actions that will help us achieve them. These examples are not an exhaustive list of everything we are doing, but rather a selection of activities considered particularly relevant. Every action in each department's business plan is linked to the commitments it contributes to.

Appendix 1 provides an update on progress in relation the actions detailed within the Corporate Plan up to the end of the 2024/25. Alongside the delivery of the business plans and the performance improvement measures these give an indication of how we are progressing in the delivery of our key priorities and commitments. It should be noted, that as these actions span the lifetime of the Corporate Plan they will be progressed at different rates and have differing timeframes.

In reviewing Council performance for 2024-25 we assessed delivery of services and activities during the year that contribute to the 5 priorities and 15 commitments contained within the Corporate Plan.

Below is a snapshot of our achievements across all priorities.

Priority	Commitments
Environment and Place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actively Respond to the climate crisis and support others to do likewise Seek investment to preserve the uniqueness of our heritage and places Shape our places to be attractive, accessible, healthy, safe and clean.
	How have we demonstrated our commitments?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Net Zero Roadmap approved by Council • 3 Campsites awarded British Graded Holiday Parks Scheme accreditation • Dromore Revitalisation and Lighting Scheme completed with support given to 18 retailers to regenerate shop fronts in the high street with a value of £156,648
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Priority	Commitments
Community Wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will encourage participation in arts, culture, heritage and physical activity. • Provide opportunities which improve quality of life and wellbeing for our communities and staff. • Support and empower communities.
	How have we demonstrated our commitments?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of 529 programmes for people least likely to participate in sport and physical activity. • Leisure memberships tailored for families, corporate and blue light card. • £1,000,973 awarded to community and voluntary organisations across the Borough through the Financial Assistance Programme.

Priority	Commitments
Economic Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximise the potential of our Mid South West (MSW) Growth Deal and Regional Economic Strategy. • Provide and facilitate opportunities for growth, investment, productivity and skills development in our local economy. • Seek investment in infrastructure and connectivity.
	How have we demonstrated our commitments?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representatives from the UK Government, the Northern Ireland Executive, and the three MSW councils formally signed the Heads of Terms Agreement. • Provided employability and skills training to 326 residents through the DfE funded Multiply Programme and the DfC funded ABC Labour Market Partnership (ABC LMP). • £1.35 million grant support administered to 332 local businesses through the Go Succeed Programme.

Priority	Commitments
Service Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuously review to improve our services. • Monitor and communicate our performance. • Seek and use regular customer engagement and feedback.
	How have we demonstrated our commitments?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successful upgrade of the finance system and roll out of our Quality Management System. • Annual Performance Self-Assessment Report published in September 2024. • 47 public consultations/surveys with 2661 responses issued via the Consultation Hub.
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Priority	Commitments
Staff Leadership and Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value staff and be civic leaders. • Communicate and engage with staff, communities and others. • Strengthen our governance and review efficiency of our resources and assets.
	How have we demonstrated our commitments? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed and commenced roll out of the ‘Our People’ Programme. • A new Capital Oversight Board was established to provide capital programme oversight and Capital Plan Documentation was updated to reflect a revised Capital Plan Process. • An Efficiency Programme was implemented with robust financial management reporting and monitoring to ensure financial sustainability.

3.0 SELF IMPOSED STANDARDS AND INDICATORS

3.1 Business Plans

Annual business plans are aligned with the Corporate Plan commitments and actions, performance improvement objectives, statutory and self-imposed performance indicators and standards. They developed and approved each year taking into consideration any outstanding actions from the previous year and any other priorities for the coming year. Each Business Plan contains specific self-imposed performance measures. As part of Council's Performance & Quality Management Framework, review and monitoring of all business plans and associated performance measures are reported quarterly to the Executive Management Team and 6-monthly and annually to service committees and Council. From March 2024, the Performance and Audit Committee receive a quarterly Corporate Performance Report which includes quarterly update on progress of business plans.

A summary of business plan progress was reported to the Performance & Audit Committee in December 2024 through the 2024/25 Mid-Year Performance Report. Comprehensive annual progress updates were presented to service committees in June 2025 relating to 2024/25, with the Performance & Audit Committee receiving an annual summary report as part of the Corporate Performance Report in June 2025. The minutes of service committees are available to view at the link below:

[Armagh City Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council - Meetings \(public-minutes.com\)](https://public-minutes.com)

In 2024/25, Council committed to undertaking 198 actions across all business plans with 408 associated performance indicators.

Corporately, 79.9% of standards/targets were met with 11.5% falling slightly behind schedule and 8.6% of targets not achieved. The table below shows 2023/24 data for comparative purposes.

2024/25	2023/24	Key
79.9%	81%	Standards/targets were met
11.5%	12.25%	Standards/targets fell slightly behind schedule
8.6%	6.75%	Standards/targets were missed/not achieved

Performance by Directorate in 2024/25 is outlined below.

Directorate	Green %	Amber %	Red %
Chief Executive/Deputy Chief Executive Office	84.3	11.1	4.6
Development, Community & Wellbeing	79.1	11.0	9.9
Environmental Services & Sustainability	70.2	14.0	15.8
Regulatory Services, Facilities and Assets	75.4	11.5	13.1

At year end, all Directorates achieved between 70.2% and 84.3% of their performance standards/targets. Those outstanding actions were taken into consideration during the business planning process for 2025/26. Recruitment timelines, staff turnover, staff absence, severe weather conditions and legal issues accounted for some of the targets falling short of the target or behind schedule.

3.2 Service Standards

A suite of service standards was developed and approved in March 2022 to help monitor and improve on service delivery. At year end:

- 75% of service standards were met more than 90% of the time
- 11% of service standards met 75% to 90% of the time, and
- 9% of service standards were met less than 75% of the time.
- 5% of the service standards were not tested.

For those standards that fell short of the target contributing factors included staff absence, industrial action, recruitment, and issues with IT infrastructure. Individual charts on service standards are within Appendix 2. The table below shows 2023/24 for comparative purposes.

2024/25	2023/24	Key
75%	72%	Service Standard met more than 90% of the time
11%	9%	Service Standard met 75% to 90% of the time
9%	13%	Service Standard met less than 75% of the time
5%	6%	Service Standard not tested due to nil response

4.0 STATUTORY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS AND STANDARDS

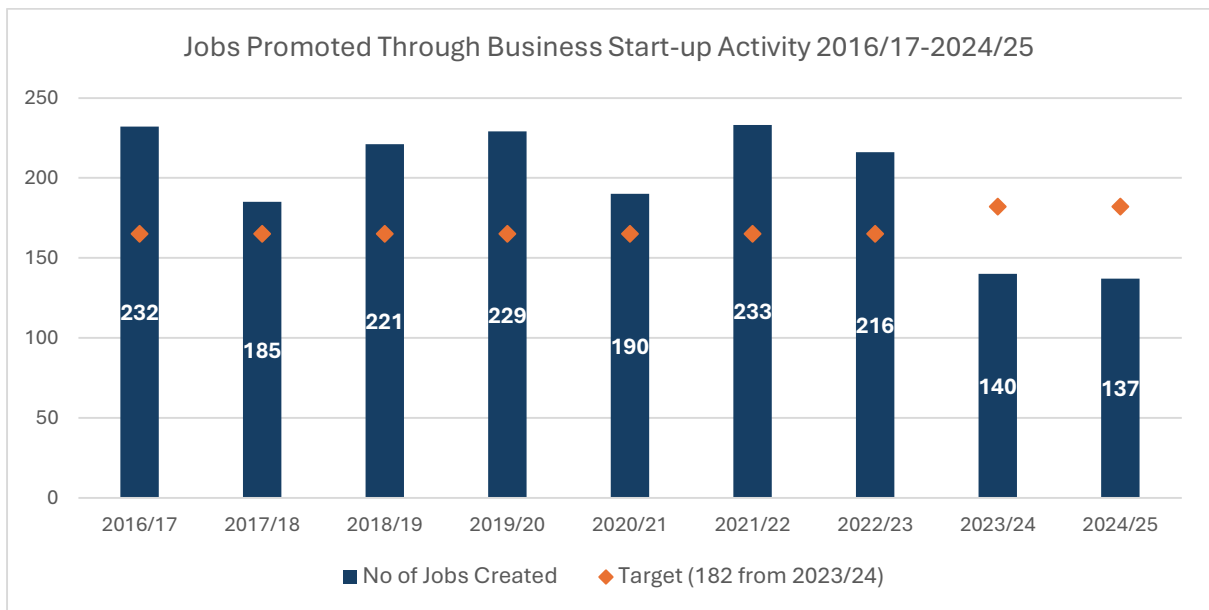
Under the Local Government (Performance Indicators and Standards) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015, performance indicators and standards are set for each of the 11 Northern Ireland councils. These indicators and standards will continue to apply until an amending order or new order is enacted and include Economic Development, Planning and Waste Management functions.

The aim of the performance measures is to promote the consistency and improvement of service delivery in these three service areas across all councils.

Appendix 3 outlines performance from 2016 – 2025 for the 7 statutory performance improvements indicators. For those actions that fell behind target, this report includes information on the reasons for this.

4.1 Economic Development

The Department of Economy set the Economic Development indicators and standards as part of the governance and performance management arrangements for the Economic Development functions. Information on the 11 Councils performance for 2024/25 is set out in Appendix 4. The economic development indicator relates to the number of jobs promoted by Council through business start-up activity.



In 2024/25, a total of 137 jobs were created through business start-up activity, marking a slight decrease of three jobs compared to 2023/24 and falling 45 jobs short of the statutory target of 182. The 2024/25 figures are provisional and subject to verification by the Department for the Economy.

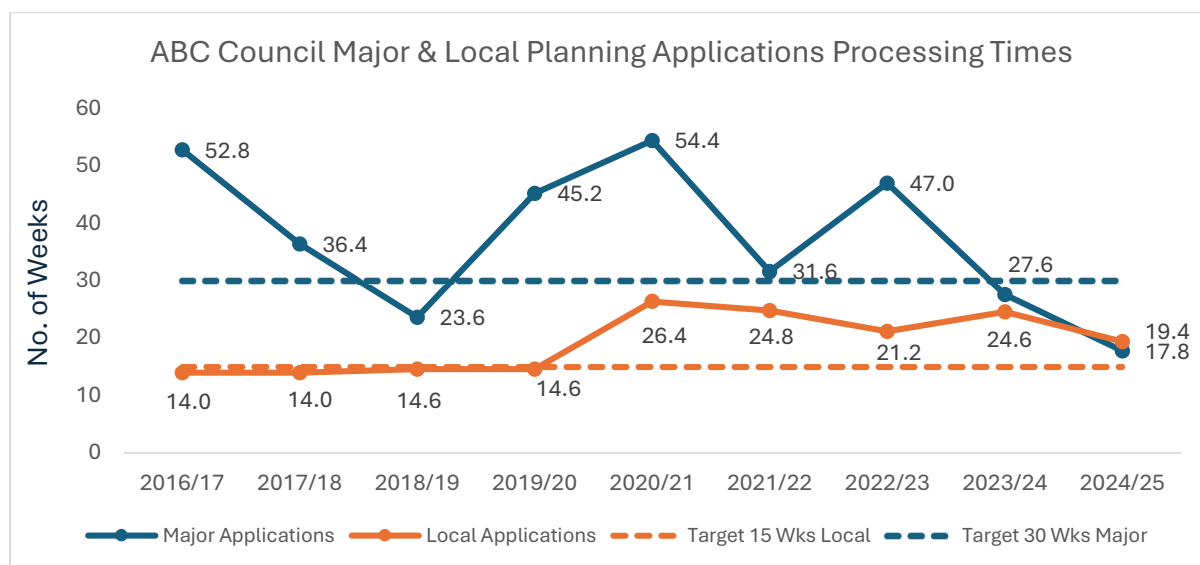
The Northern Ireland Enterprise Support Service, branded Go Succeed, is funded by the UK Government - a multi-million-pound investment in local entrepreneurs and businesses. It offers tailored, holistic support at every stage of the business journey, including mentoring, masterclasses, peer networking, access to grant funding, and business planning support. While Go Succeed has a wider remit than previous programmes, it is important to note that broader outputs are not captured in the job creation figure and the method for calculating job creation remains under review.

Fostering an entrepreneurial culture that supports business start-up, and growth continues to be a key corporate priority for the Council. We work collaboratively with the other 10 councils to enhance the delivery of the NIESS and strengthen Total Early-Stage Entrepreneurial Activity (TEA) across Northern Ireland. Locally, we maintain strong partnerships with enterprise support organisations, including local enterprise agencies, colleges, schools, social economy networks, and other stakeholders, to ensure the programme is widely promoted and accessible to all members of the community.

4.2 Planning

The Department of Infrastructure set the Planning indicators and standards as part of the governance and performance management arrangements for Planning functions. The Department publishes performance by council area on a quarterly basis through the NI Planning Statistics Report. Information may be accessed using the following link:

[Northern Ireland planning statistics April 2024 - March 2025 | Department for Infrastructure](#)



During 2024/2025, the average processing time in Armagh City Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council for **major** planning applications during 2024/25 was 17.8 weeks. This was the lowest processing time of all Councils, exceeding the 30-week target by 12.2 weeks. The 2024/25 average processing times across all councils was 39.6 weeks.

Increased interaction with applicants and agents prior to the submission of major planning applications via the Pre Application Discussion (PAD) process and face to face meetings with the agents to discuss, inform them of the level of information and details required to be submitted with their applications, greatly improved the quality of major applications received by the Planning Department.

Also, refinements to the internal validation procedure whereby the team ensure that they have all the required documents, annotation on plans etc before the applications are made valid and sent out to consultation and improved engagement with consultees including the ability to have certain applications prioritised where possible, also contributed to the processing times of major planning applications.

The average processing time for the Council to decide **local** applications during 2024/2025 was 19.4 weeks, which is outside the 15-week statutory target, but an improvement on 2023/24 figures. The 2024/25 average processing times across all councils was 19 weeks. Only 3 of the 11 councils met the statutory target of 15 weeks in 2024/25.

It should also be noted that the Department for Infrastructure has reported that the number of planning applications received across Northern Ireland was 3% down on the previous financial year. In our Borough, the number was up by 5% on the previous year. The following factors should be borne in mind when interpreting the data provided and when making comparisons with other time periods.

During 2024/25:

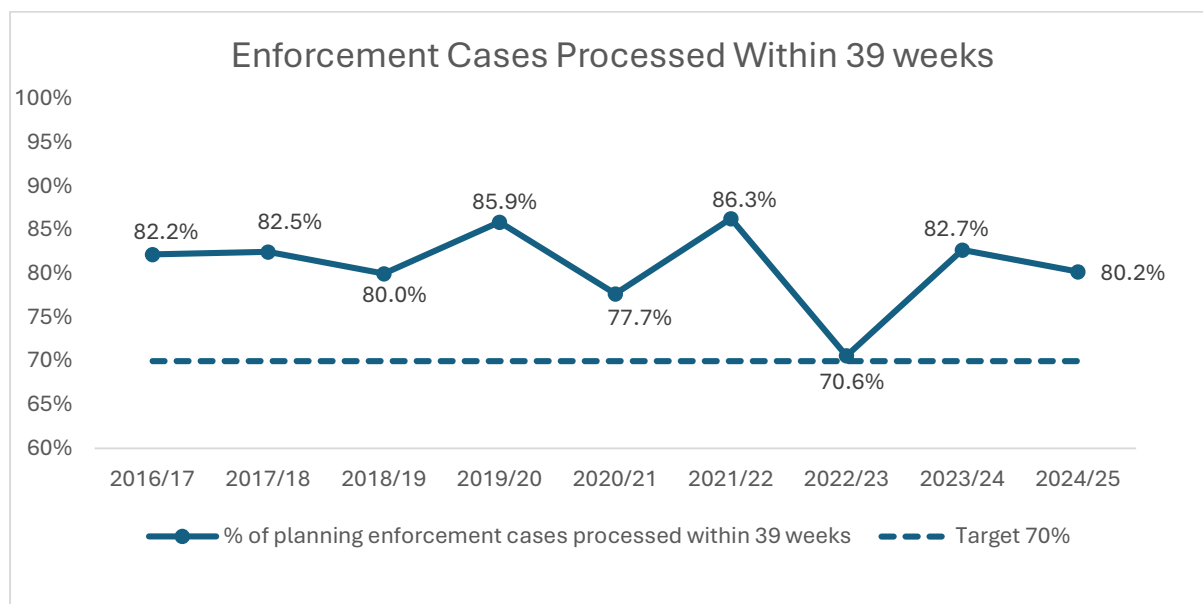
- 1,011 applications were received (4th highest across Northern Ireland) an increase of 48 on the previous financial year.
- 927 applications were decided (5th highest across Northern Ireland) – a decrease of 159 on the previous financial year.
- 256 enforcement cases were closed (5th highest across Northern Ireland) – a decrease of 132 on the previous financial year.

The number of major applications received in 2024-2025 was 19. These included:

- 4 major retail developments
- 4 major residential developments
- 4 major industrial/warehousing developments
- 2 major educational developments
- 1 major public realm scheme
- 1 major renewable development
- 1 mixed use residential/office development
- 1 major community development
- 1 major tourism development

These applications above represent not only major investment into the regeneration of the Borough, but extensive work from our Planning Department.

The number of planning applications referred to above has been taken from an official statistical bulletin published by the Department for Infrastructure (DfI). However, that bulletin does not include statistical information pertaining to the following types of application: discharge of planning conditions, certificates of lawful development and non-material changes. In 2024/25 the Council received approximately 250 such applications which, while not reported on by DfI, had a significant impact on the Council's resources and overall performance.



During 2024/25, the Council processed 80.2% of its enforcement cases to a conclusion within 39 weeks, which is significantly above the statutory target of 70%.

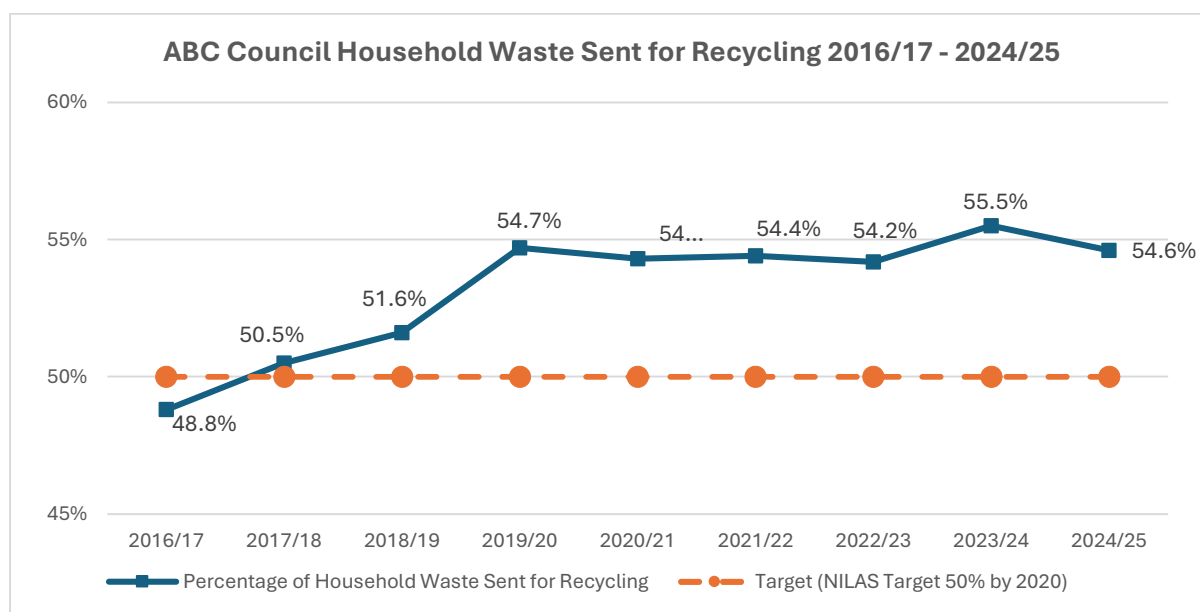
4.3 Waste Management

The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DEARA) set the Waste Management indicators and standards. The Department publishes performance by council area on a quarterly basis through the NI Local Authority Collected Municipal Waste Management Statistics report. Information may be accessed using the following links:

[Northern Ireland local authority collected municipal waste management statistics | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs \(daera-ni.gov.uk\)](#)

[Northern Ireland Local Authority Collected Waste Statistics \(nisra.gov.uk\)](#)

The current unverified figures for 2024/25 show the percentage of **household waste** sent for recycling is 54.6% against a target of 50, a slight decrease on the previous year.

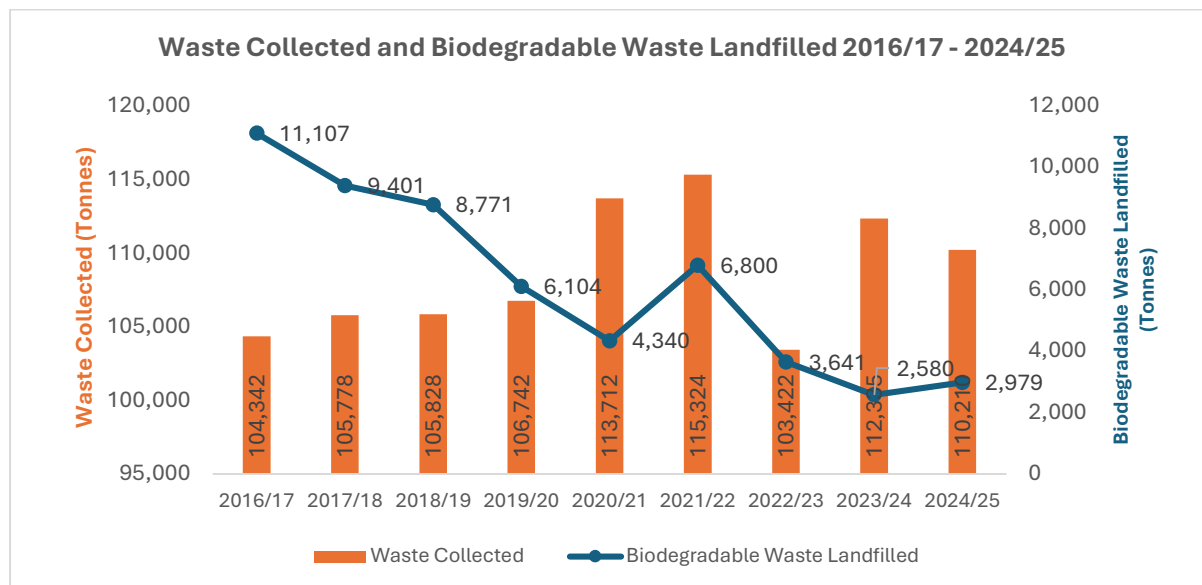


Waste targets were historically focused on household and biodegradable waste however going forward they are focused on municipal waste, encompassing household and commercial waste. The Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 requires for at least 70% of waste to be recycled by 2030 and The Waste (Circular Economy) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 has targets for recycling and landfill diversion as detailed below:

- by 2025, the preparing for re-use and the recycling of municipal waste shall be increased to at least 55% by weight.
- by 2030, the preparing for re-use and the recycling of municipal waste shall be increased to at least 60% by weight; and
- by 2035, the preparing for re-use and the recycling of municipal waste shall be increased to at least 65% by weight; and
- 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 weight) by 2035.

The **municipal waste** sent for recycling rate for 2024/25 is 54.12%, is slightly short of the target of 55% by 2025, as outlined by the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022. Despite this Council are confident that they are on track to achieve the 70% target by 2030.

It should be noted that the statutory target referred to above, 50% by 2020, (as set out on the Local Government (Performance Indicators and Standards) Order (NI) 2015) has not been replaced by the new Climate Change Act and therefore Council continues to report against it as required for the purpose of this report.



The total amount of waste collected had been increasing since 2016/17, reaching a high of 115,324 tonnes in 2021/22. Waste collected rose in 2023/24 and has fallen slightly in 2024/25. It is important to note that there has been an increase in households across the borough which has an impact on waste arisings.

The chart shows that the amount of biodegradable waste being landfilled has fell by 29% from 3,641 tonnes in 2022/23 to 2,580 tonnes in 2023/24. There has been a slight increase of 15% from 2580 tonnes to 2979 tonnes in 2024/25. This is typically an economic decision by the waste processor and not something that Council can ultimately control. No new targets have been set for the landfilling of biodegradable municipal waste, (NILAS Scheme ended in 2020) however As referenced on page 12, The Waste (Circular Economy) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 require 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 weight) by 2035. The unverified rate for our Council for 2024/25 is 5.16%.

5.0 PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT OBJECTIVES

Within the Performance Improvement Plan 2024/25, we identified specific areas we wanted to improve. We have reviewed, monitored, and assessed how we have performed on these.

Council selected five Performance Improvement Objectives for 2024/25. The graphic below indicates progress during 2024/25.









In agreeing the above objectives, Council identified key actions and associated performance measures to ensure achievement of the objectives and improvements that benefit residents, businesses, and other stakeholders.

Gathering data from relevant departments, and analysis of the progress of the Performance Improvement Objectives agreed for 2024/25, showed that Council achieved PIO2 and fell slightly behind schedule in the achievement of PIO1, PIO3, PIO4 and PIO5.

The following tables contain detailed information and narrative on the achievement of these objectives during this period. Reference to performance data from previous years, where relevant, has also been included to identify trends in continuous improvement.

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

 <p>Why</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This objective has been carried forward from 2023/24. - Trends remain largely unchanged with Chest/Respiratory, Stress/Depression Mental Health and Musculoskeletal as the main reasons for absence. - The management of absenteeism continues to receive a high focus within Council and therefore remains as an improvement objective for 2024/25.
 <p>What Action will we take?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continue to monitor and manage absence closely. - Continue to provide HR support to line managers enabling them to effectively manage staff absence. - Develop and implement an annual Staff Health & Wellbeing Action Plan. - Deliver initiatives / activities aligned to the main reasons for absence. - Maintain the number of Mental Health First Aider Champions (MHFA) within Council and provide refresher training as required. 40 current trained MHFA champions. - Communicate MHFA Champions to staff. List of champions available on the intranet and posters drafted to be placed in staff communal areas. - Develop Hybrid Working policy.
 <p>How we will measure progress</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Target of 16 days or lower, for the total sickness absence lost per employee. - Target of 1.4% or lower, for the average rate of short-term absences - Target of 5% or lower for, the average rate of long-term absences - Health and wellbeing initiatives/activities delivered across the main themes of absence. - Staff Health & Wellbeing Action plan delivered by March 2025. - Maintain a min of 85% Mental Health First Aiders provision in March 2025. - Hybrid Working policy developed and implemented by March 2025
<p>Status at Year End</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 20.37 average number of days lost per employee - 1.53% average rate of short-term absences - 7.73% average rate of long-term absences - 54 activities, with 441 attendees delivered as part of the Council's Staff Health and Wellbeing Action Plan - Maintained 100% of Mental Health First Aiders - Hybrid Working Procedure has been developed and is scheduled for implementation in June 2025.

 Benefits to you	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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?	<p>The Senior Responsible Officers (SRO's) for this Objective in conjunction with the HR&OD Department are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Deputy Chief Executive. - Director of Development, Community & Wellbeing - Director of Regulatory Services, Facilities & Assets - Director of Environmental Services & Sustainability

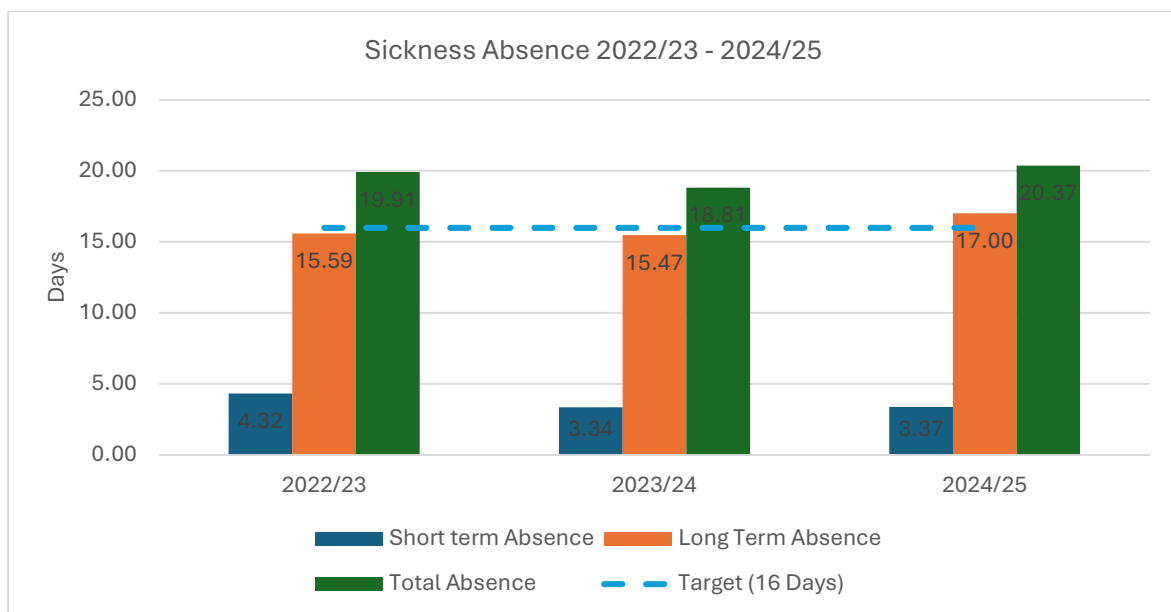
HOW DID WE PERFORM?

Staff absence

The annual performance against 2024/25 targets for staff absences compared to the previous two years is as follows:

Year	2024/25 (Target)	2024/25 (Actual)	2023/24 (Actual)	2022/23 (Actual)
Average Days Lost per Employee	16.00	20.37	18.81	19.91

This is split between short (less than or equivalent to 20days/4 weeks) - and long-term absence (greater than 20days/4weeks) compared to the previous two years is as follows:



Comparing the year end position at 204/25 with the 202/24 position the average days lost, the short-term and long-term absence rates have increased. The Human Resources &

Organisational Development Department continues to closely monitor and manage staff absence, providing dedicated support to line managers. Ongoing training equips managers to effectively handle absence issues, with the QMS platform enabling Directors, Heads of Department, and Managers to review departmental absence data. A further review of the Attendance Management Policy has been completed and implemented in April 2025. Equipped with these tools, the Council's Lead Officer is working with line managers and occupational health to resolve long-term absences of more than 12 months.

During 2024/25, Stress/ Depression/ Mental Health/ Fatigue (non-work-related), Stress/ Depression/ Mental Health/Fatigue (work-related) and Musculoskeletal issues remain the top three causes of absence.






Health and Wellbeing


54 activities have been delivered under the 2024-2025 Council's Health & Wellbeing Action Plan, with participation from over 400 employees.

The Council has organised various Health and Wellbeing workshops, aligned with its themes of Body, Mind, Connect, and Growth. These workshops and campaigns have addressed topics such as cancer awareness, planning for retirement, physical activity, mental health, nutrition and support for carers. Feedback from staff continues to guide the development of health and wellbeing programmes, ensuring they address the primary reasons for absence.

The 2024/2025 Health and Wellbeing Action Plan was completed with a further plan in place for 2025/2025. Progress is reported quarterly to the Health and Wellbeing Committee. Additionally, Council has sustained a network of 40 trained mental health first aiders across the organisation.

Improvement Objective 2: *We will improve the processing times for planning applications.*

 <p>Why</p>	<p>This objective has been revised and carried forward from 2023/24.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It relates to improvement of the application processes, with the aim of improving customer satisfaction as well as processing times. - Acknowledgement ABC Council fall below meeting the statutory processing times of local planning applications.
 <p>What Action will we take</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regular internal monitoring and reporting on statistics against Statutory targets, in advance of verified data. - Report on performance against the 3 Statutory Targets using statistical information provided by Department for Infrastructure quarterly bulletin (DfI) - Actively manage staff absenteeism and vacancies within the department during the course of the year. - Continue to contribute as a partner, to the delivery of Cross Government Planning Improvement Programme which is aimed at making the Planning system in Northern Ireland more effective and efficient.
 <p>How we will measure progress</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Average processing time for Major planning applications 30 weeks - The Average processing time for Local planning applications 15 weeks - 70% of all planning enforcement cases progressed to conclusion within 39 weeks. - Target of 16 days or lower, for the sickness absence lost per employee.
<p>Status at Year End</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 17.8 weeks average processing time for major planning applications (unofficial figure) - 19.4 weeks average processing time for local planning applications (unofficial figure) - 80.2% of all planning enforcement cases progressed to conclusion within 39 weeks (unofficial figure) - 16.02 days lost per employee at year end for the planning department. - Council Planning Department continuing to contribute to the Cross Government Planning Improvement Programme
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improved processing times for planning applications - Improved understanding of the processes involved. - Improved Customer Satisfaction with the processes involved in planning applications.

Benefits to you	
 <p>Who is responsible?</p>	<p>The Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) for this objective in conjunction with Planning Department is the</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Director of Regulatory Services, Facilities & Assets

HOW DID WE PERFORM?




Official statistics in relation to planning performance against the three statutory targets for 2024/25 have not yet been released. Internal monitoring indicates the targets for Major planning applications and Enforcement cases were met, whilst the target for Local planning applications was not met. This was primarily due to a high number of “live” cases at the start of 2024/25 business year and a change in priorities during Q4 with key staff being redeployed from Development Management to the Development Plan. However, progress has been made in reducing the number of live cases within the system over the past 12 months.



The target for staff absences of 16 days lost per employee, with the planning department achieving a year-end figure of 16.02 days lost per employee. This is a significant improvement on the previous year which was 17.31 days lost per employee.

An action plan is in place to deliver the Cross-Government Planning Improvement Programme. Governance arrangements. The Planning Department has already implemented several “Business as Usual” recommendations from the programme, demonstrating progress and commitment to improvement.

As this is a statutory indicator the planning processing times will continue to be reported as part of the overall performance self-assessment report and was removed as a performance improvement objective for 2025/26.

Improvement Objective 3: *We will reduce Council's environmental impact through the implementation of a Net Zero Roadmap Analysis and associated action plan.*

 <p>Why</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This objective has been retained and revised for 2024/25 - Work has been undertaken in the development of the Net Zero Roadmap to date ensuring that it is fit for purpose and relevant to the organisation. - Council acknowledges this is a long-term objective and that there is still a significant amount of work to be carried out to ensure successful delivery of the Net Zero Roadmap. - The new Corporate Plan has committed to 'Actively respond to the climate crisis and support others to do likewise'
 <p>What Action will we take</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Compile a Net Zero Carbon Roadmap. - Develop a cross departmental comprehensive action plan looking at internal and external mitigating measures to reduce carbon emissions. - Identify areas of improvement in terms of energy usage and cost savings. - Reduce energy consumption over 4 identified sites. - Engagement with other sectors in the Borough.
 <p>How we will measure progress</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Net Zero Carbon Roadmap finalised by the end of September 2024. - Approved Action plan developed including objectives responsibilities and timelines by end of September 2024. - Quarterly monitoring and progress reviewed. - Specific Feasibility studies and associated business cases commenced for identified areas of improvement by the end of March 2025. - 3% of Energy Consumption reduction across 4 sites by March 2025.
<p>Status at Year End</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Net Zero Carbon Roadmap Analysis was approved by Council in December 2024. - Draft Climate & Sustainability Action Plan 2025-2030 has been developed. - Quarterly monitoring and progress review is undertaken as part of the business planning process - Specific Feasibility studies and associated business cases commenced for identified areas of improvement by the end of March 2025 – these will be quantified when the Action Plan is agreed and published - At year end 2% reduction in energy Consumption across 4 nominated sites.

 <p>Benefits to you</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There will be a clear plan in place to move Council towards Net Zero by 2050. - Help set meaningful targets for the reduction of energy and resource consumption from 2024 onwards. - In the long term there will be a positive impact on the health and well-being of our citizens.
 <p>Who is responsible?</p>	<p>The Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) for this Objective in conjunction with the Climate, Sustainability & Parks Services Department is the</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Director of Environmental Services & Sustainability

HOW DID WE PERFORM?

The Net Zero Carbon Roadmap Analysis has been approved by Council, and the learning has contributed towards the Draft Climate and Sustainability Action Plan 2025 – 2030. The draft action plan has been circulated for consultation internally with a view to being finalised in Autumn 2025. The action plan will inform the regulatory reporting deadline of 31 October 2025.

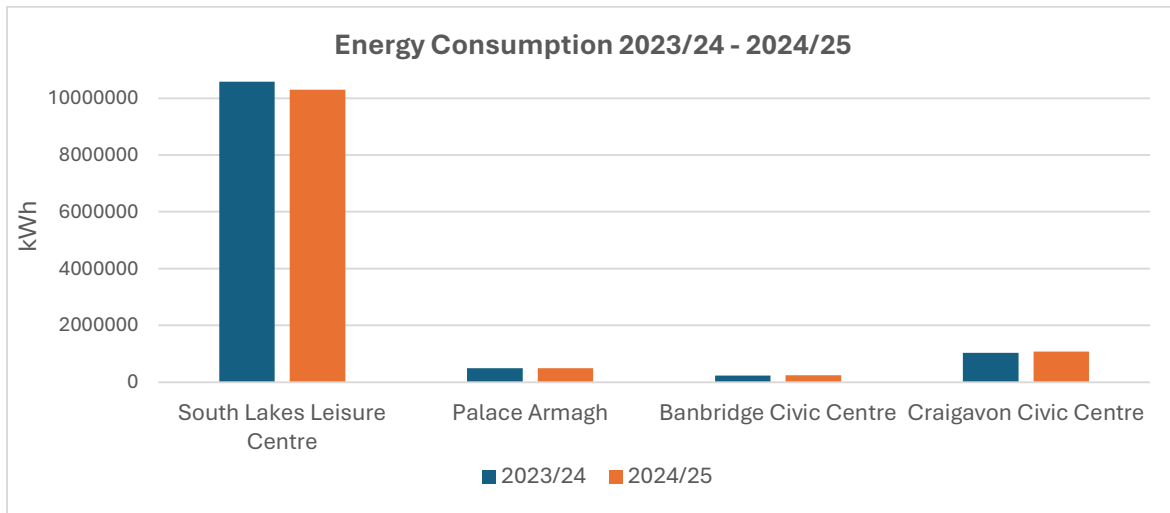
The Climate and Sustainability Action Plan will outline potential environmental initiatives. Specific feasibility studies and associated business cases for those initiatives and projects will be quantified when the action plan is agreed and published.

To strengthen staff engagement and raise awareness about climate change, the Climate Team has been rebranded and the Climate section on the intranet has been refreshed. These updates were promoted through the intranet and featured in the staff newsletter. Climate and environmental awareness training is now mandatory for all employees, supported by a new e-learning module that launched in February 2025.

Energy Consumption

The year-end position at the four nominated facilities and associated energy consumption is as follows:

Facility	2023/24	2024/25	Change	
South Lakes Leisure Centre	10583840	10296977	-3%	↓
Palace Armagh	492701	489765	-1%	↓
Banbridge Civic Centre	234086	243285	4%	↑
Craigavon Civic Centre	1034660	1079597	4%	↑
Total kWh	12345287	12109623	-2%	↓



The table illustrates that there has been a 2% reduction in energy consumption across the 4 nominated facilities from 2023/24 – 2024/25, narrowly missing the target of 3%. Energy consumption includes oil, electricity and gas consumption where applicable.

Engagement



During the reporting period, the Council has actively engaged with the business and education sectors through the Mid South West Driving Net Zero initiative and through the Conservation Education Programme.




As part of the Peatlands Restoration Project, the Conservation team has partnered with the University of Ulster, the National Parks Service (Republic of Ireland), and the Ulster Wildlife Trust to advance environmental restoration efforts.

The Recycling and Environmental Education Team have worked with Community Development Officers providing advice and guidance on waste and recycling providing talks and workshops to various groups including summer schemes, community and church groups.

Given the complexity and importance of climate-related issues, Council recognises that this will remain a long-term priority requiring significant resources. As such, this performance improvement objective continues to be a key area of focus for 2025/26.

Improvement Objective 4: *We will continue to improve our Communications to our customers on Waste Management Services.*

 <p>Why</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Our improvement objectives are based on understanding our customer’s needs. - This objective has been carried over and revised for 2024/25. - Analysis of a number of sources of data including Info@ analysis / Social Media /Council’s Consultation Hub etc suggest that there is still an opportunity for improving communications on waste management.
 <p>What Action will we take</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implement an in cab digital data information system as part of the Environmental Services improvement project. - Continue to review and update the Waste Management section of the Council’s website. - Provide standardisation of relevant, accurate and up to date information on appropriate communication channels - Undertake regular Analysis of Customer communication methods including Contact Us/ complaints@/ ES reports/ Website hits/ ABC Council App Usage/social media. - Develop and implement an annual Environmental Services Communication Plan - Environmental Services to undertake a customer satisfaction survey
 <p>How we will measure progress</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 80% of waste collection service using in- cab technology - Ongoing review and update of Waste Management section on website, including Frequently Asked Questions - Quarterly review of customer communications. - Customer satisfaction survey completed, and feedback reviewed by 31 March 2025. - 11,000 customers using ABC Council Residents App - Quarterly review of Departmental communications plan - Quarterly Analysis of customer enquiries from a number of communication channels

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quarterly review/monitoring number of hits on website section - Regular Review of waste management service requests reports
<p>Status at Year End</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The implementation of in-cab software has been delayed and is hoped to be progressed in Autumn 2025. - The Corporate Website undergoes regular reviews and updates to align with service requirements. - Customer Engagement/Analysis carried out - Customer satisfaction survey has not been conducted. - 26,119 customers using the ABC Council Resident App
 <p>Benefits to you</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increased customer satisfaction with information about Waste Management services. - Providing customers with improved accessible information on Waste Management Services on a range of channels. - Expedite response to customer enquiries as relevant information is more easily navigated on Council's website.
 <p>Who is responsible</p>	<p>The Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) for this Objective in conjunction with the Head of Environmental Services and Communications Team is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Director of Environmental Services & Sustainability

HOW DID WE PERFORM?

Progress has been made toward achieving the performance improvement objective during the reporting period, as detailed below.

Regular departmental meetings have effectively coordinated communications, resulting in a clear and actionable plan to drive ongoing improvements. The Communications Officer (Environmental Services and Environmental Health Departments) has strengthened team collaboration, fostering enhanced information flow to customers, and increasing public awareness through targeted campaigns. Innovative methods such as videos, reels, and coordinated campaigns have been utilized for maximum audience reach.

The Environmental Services Communication Action Plan continues to guide the department, emphasizing positive news stories, addressing operational challenges, and improving communication and service awareness both internally and externally. This plan is integrated into the Communication and Branding Business Plan and undergoes quarterly reviews.

The implementation of in-cab software has been delayed, with plans to progress in Autumn 2025. This delay is linked to ongoing work on staff terms and conditions. A re-implementation strategy for the technology is being developed.





The seven-week Industrial Action over during Summer 2024 posed significant challenges, including heightened customer frustration and restricted communication. However, both Communications and Environmental Services teams worked closely to deliver daily messaging to residents, Elected Members, and other stakeholders. A dedicated section on the Council's website was updated daily during this period, providing key information on industrial action, mitigation strategies, and an FAQ section.

During the reporting period 192 messages were received via social media for the Environmental Services Department with 140 related to industrial action and missed bins. Analysis showed that across all communication channels Council received 2116 waste related enquiries. Additional data is also included in PIO5, illustrating social media messages per department and category of enquiry.

Recorded usage of the ABC Council Residents App, during the reporting period totalled 26,119 app users.

The Department remains committed to progressing key initiatives, including in-cab software implementation and their customer satisfaction survey, while continuing to enhance communication strategies and address customer concerns effectively. Given the importance of waste communication to our stakeholders this performance improvement objective remains an area of focus for 2025/26.

Improvement Objective 5: *We will improve Communications with our customers on Council services and responsibilities.*

 <p>Why</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This is a new improvement objective for 2024/25. - From analysis of email communication there is an opportunity for improvement on communications around Council Services and responsibilities.
 <p>What Action will we take</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review Council's main website and include a section clearly outlining Council services and responsibilities. - Provide contact/links to external organisations for services which customers often confuse with Council services. - Provide generic email addresses for Council Departments and functions - Use social media channels to send out communications at prescribed times in relation to Council Services and responsibilities.
 <p>How we will measure progress</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop a section on the Council' s website by 31 March 2025. - 5% reduction in email enquiries via the Council mailboxes and JotForm in relation to Council & non-council services - Quarterly monitoring of the number of hits on website section - Quarterly monitoring of the Social Media Posts
<p>Progress at Year End</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Council's website is overseen, refreshed, and monitored by the Web Developer and Multimedia Officer. User data can be viewed in Appendix 5. - Over the period: April – March 2025 there has been a 5% increase in enquiries compared to same period last year. - Regular analysis ongoing, reviewing frequent customer enquiries relating to external organisations. - An internal review of existing generic email addresses for Departments was conducted in December 2024, with recommendations presented to Heads of Department. - The Communications and Branding team have appointed dedicated Communication Officers responsible for specific departments and a Digital Communications & Engagement Officer who monitors and updates all social media channels on a daily basis, this includes private messages, liaising with teams to action responses.
 <p>Benefits to you</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide customers with more direct access to the correct Council Department in relation to their enquiry. - Provide clarity to customers on the range of services for which Council provides. - Provide customers with contact details of non – Council services and other relevant organisations. - Increased efficiency on addressing customer requests/ enquires. - Improved customers understanding of the range of Council Services and Responsibilities

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Providing customers with improved accessible information on council services and responsibilities.
 <p>Who is responsible</p>	<p>The Senior Responsible Officers (SRO) for this Objective in conjunction with Communication Team are.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Deputy Chief Executive - Director of Environmental Services & Sustainability - Director Of Regulatory Services, Facilities & Assets - Director of Development, Community & Well Being

HOW DID WE PERFORM?

Progress on this performance improvement objective has continued throughout the year, although at a slower pace than expected. This has primarily been due to the limited resources within the two lead teams.

Over the past year, as the Communications and Branding Team’s new structure has become more established, the coordination and updating of communication messages have significantly improved. Stronger connections have been forged between them and departmental teams, with dedicated department monthly meetings emphasizing enhanced communication for users of Council services.

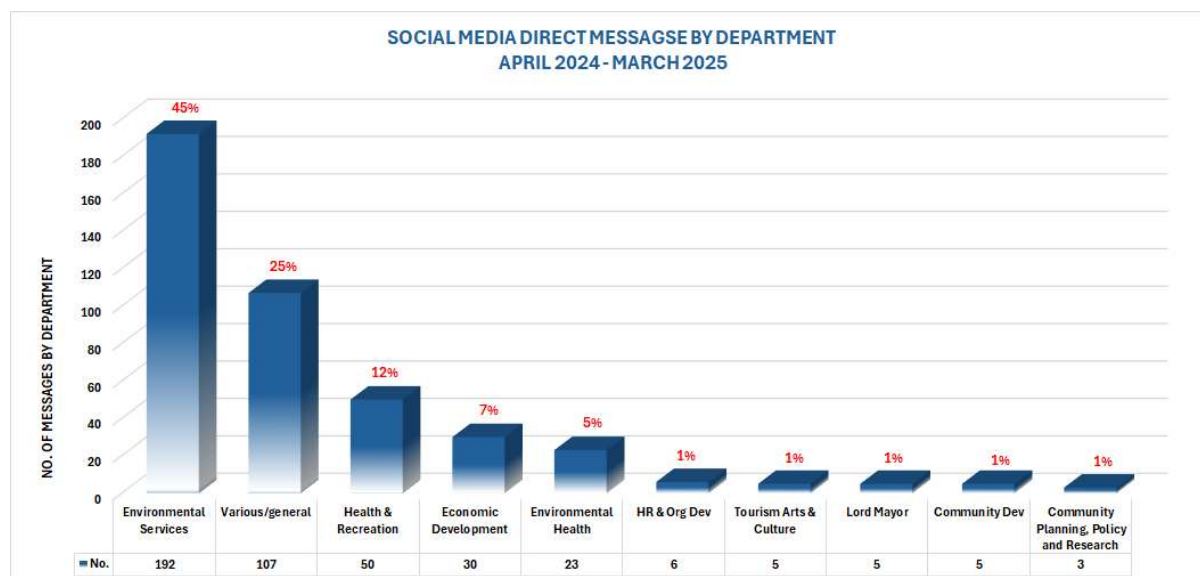
Council’s Website homepage, from April 2024 to March 2025, had 119,877 sessions, with 75,107 active users and 64,093 new users. Traffic was steady from April to August, then increased from mid-September, with a peak of 1,127 visits on 23rd January during Storm Eowyn. After that, traffic stayed higher than earlier months. Visits were highest on Mondays, gradually dropping off toward the weekend. Smaller spikes were seen on 27th December and 6th January, likely due to people checking bin collections and recycling centre hours after the holidays. (Appendix 5: Landing page analytics)

The average session lasted 47 seconds, which is typical for a homepage where users often come for quick information or are sign posted to different pages. Over half of all sessions were from new users, showing strong outreach as well as returning visitors.

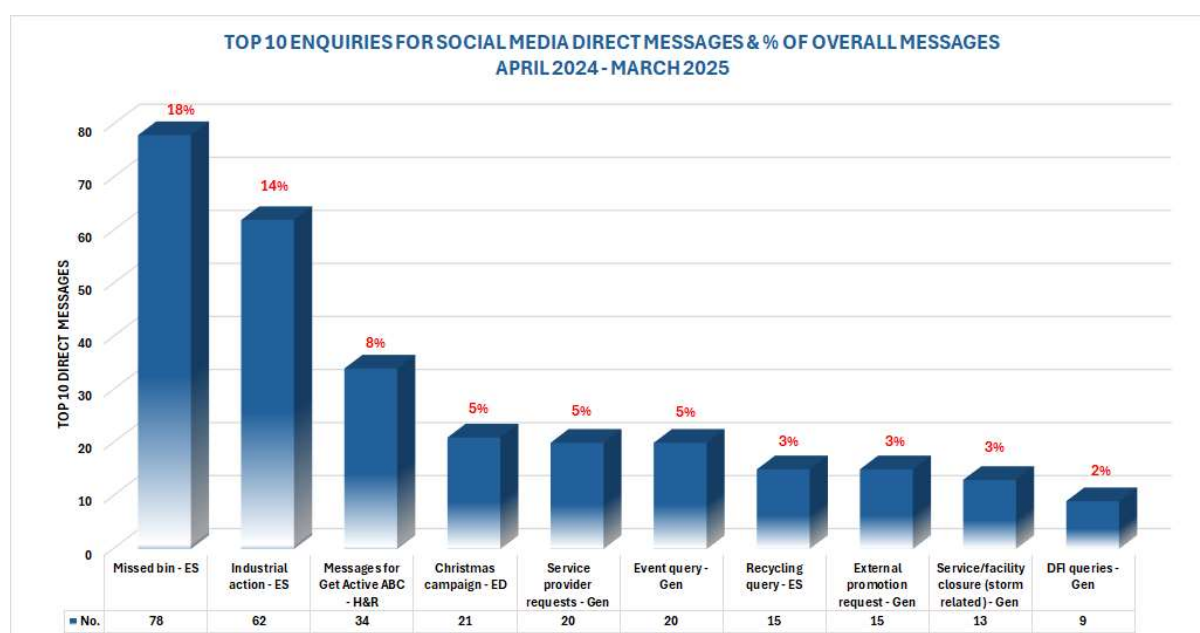
In relation to the Council’s website, updates outlined in the Communication and Branding Action Plans for each department are swiftly executed by the Web Developer and Multimedia Officer. Furthermore, dedicated pages with unique URLs are increasingly created to support social media and general communication efforts. These pages streamline access to specific information and boost online engagement, as seen with the Industrial Action and Halloween Events pages.

Social media Direct Messages are a convenient way for residents and customers to contact Council. A total of 467 direct messages were received from April 2024 – March 2025, over 40% of which were for the Environmental Services Department. See graphs below.

Social Direct Messages by Department –1 April 2024 - 31 March 2025



Top 10 Social Media Direct Messages by Department – 1 April -31 March 2025



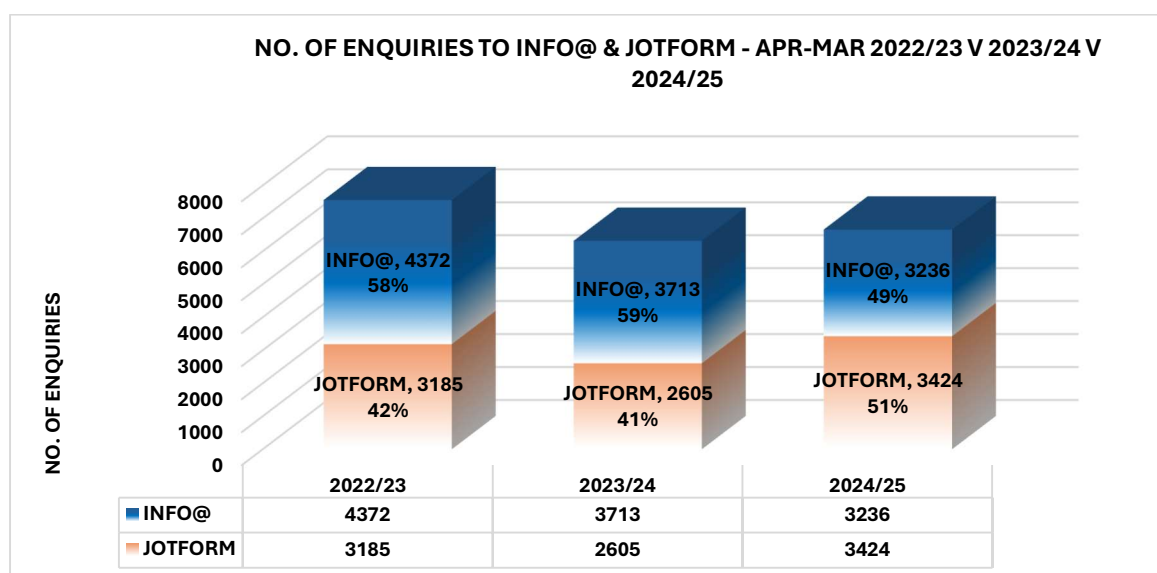
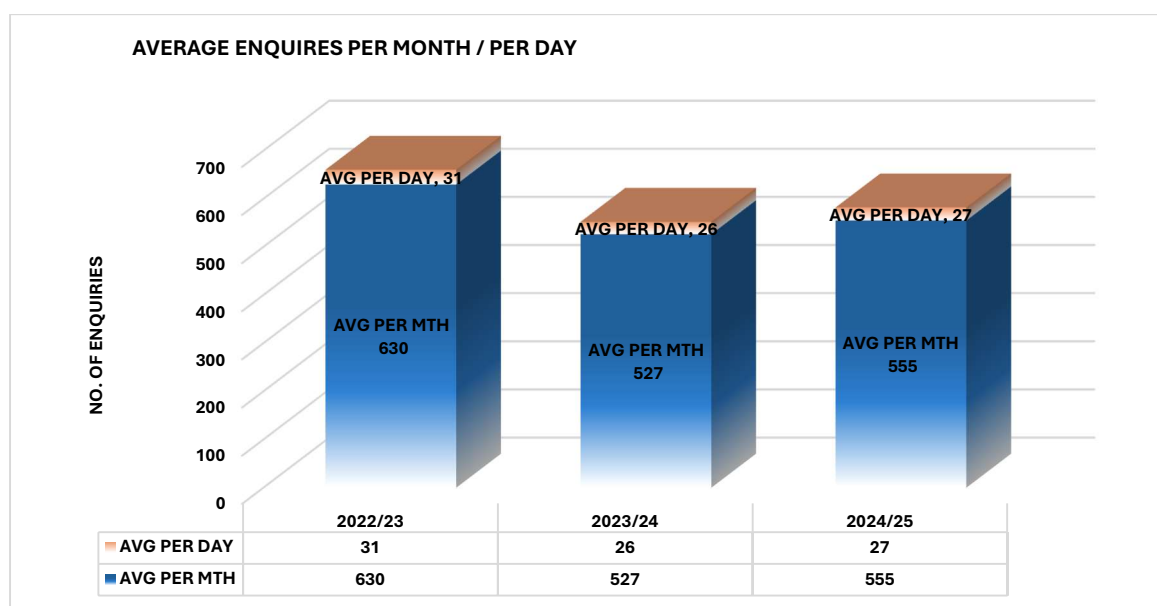
Another large proportion of messages received via the corporate social media channels relate to departments which host their own social media platforms, i.e. GetActive ABC and Visit Armagh. This would suggest that additional promotion is required to highlight the most appropriate department/social media channel to contact with a specific query. It is an ongoing area of improvement that will be co-ordinated through the dedicated Communication Officers responsible for specific departments and the Digital Communications & Engagement Officer who monitors and updates all social media channels daily. This includes private messages, liaising with specific teams and departments to action responses.

During Summer period, the Strategy & Performance Department conducted recruitment campaigns for two key officer positions: a part-time Business & Customer Relations Support Officer and a full-time Customer Relations Officer. Both campaigns were successful, and the

new postholders commenced their roles in September and October, respectively. These positions played a crucial role in the ongoing implementation and advancement of actions relating to this Performance Improvement Objective.

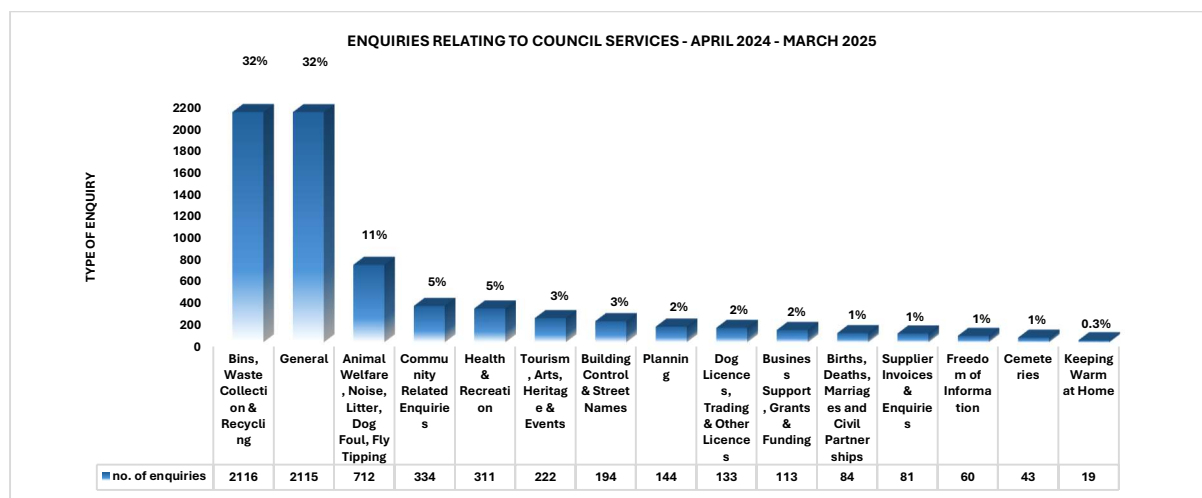
From April to March 2025, data has been analysed monthly through high-level desktop reviews. This data primarily originated from two main sources: the Council’s primary email inbox (info@) and online JotForms.

It is important to note that additional enquiries received directly by departments have not been centrally analysed. Therefore, potentially several resources across different departments are responding to similar enquiries from the public on a recurring basis. There is recognition that this represents inefficiencies in terms of resources and highlights the need for improved communications with customers or potential need for a centralised Customer Relations Management System.



During the period from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025, customer enquiries received via info@ and JotForms increased by 5% compared to the same timeframe in the previous year. This equates to, on average 27 enquires received per day.

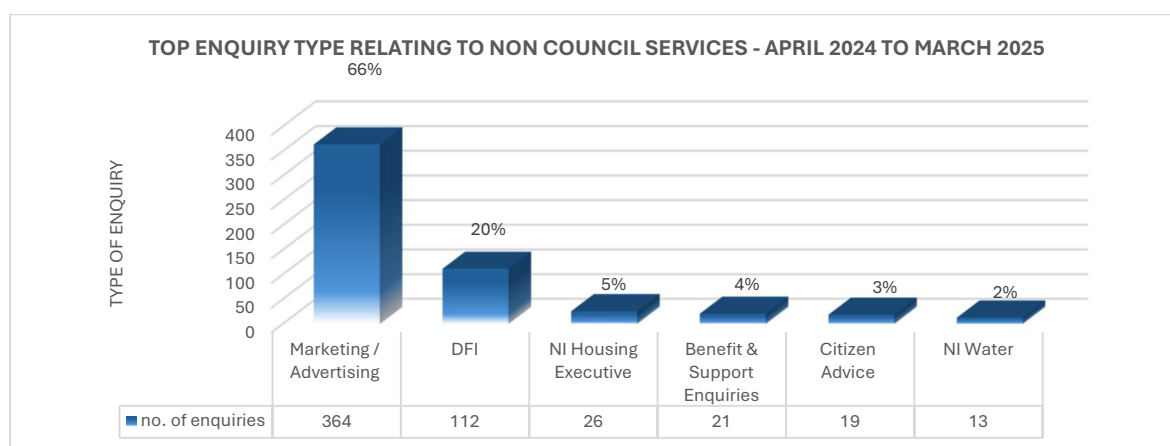
Over the year, the enquiry types (via info@Jotforms) relating to **Council services**, can be categorised as follows:



General enquiries and Bins, Waste Collection and Recycling account for 64% of total enquiry type. This represents a high level of enquiries from the public on this section and therefore in 2025/ 2026, Council is committed to improving communications specifically in this area.

It is acknowledged that Council’s website needs a refresh and review. Included in Communications & Branding Business Plan is a commitment to enhance the corporate council website. This will include analysis of available data and evidence, frequently asked questions, user engagement metrics and partnership working between Website Design and the Performance team to implement improvements on the website from both a customer relations and business continuity perspective.

Over the year, the top enquiry types relating to **non - Council services**, can be categorised as follows:



From the data above 66% of enquiries received were in relation to marketing and advertising with the remaining 34% of enquiries related to non-council services and responsibilities.

The data above outlines common, recurrent enquiries Council receive that do not relate to services/ functions provided by Council Departments. This analysis helps identify the key external organizations that residents and customers frequently seek to contact. Whilst the existing Council website does contain contact details of external organisations, more

improvements can be made. The findings will guide the future development, design, and accessibility of relevant information on the Council's website.

As we approached the Christmas holiday period in 2024, a review of business continuity arrangements was undertaken to ensure a high standard of customer services and a consistent and effective response to internal and external customer enquiries. This included an internal review of existing generic email addresses for departments, and to provide assurances that all public facing emails were operational and covered throughout the Christmas period.

Council has a number of generic emails on the Council website: [Key Contacts - Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council](#), however the findings of the exercise identified inconsistencies and room for improvement. Recommendations included relevant departments review those specific email addresses to determine if they are still required and appropriately managed.

This review will also contribute to an ongoing assessment of the Council's website, enabling more direct access for customers to the appropriate Council department or service for their enquiries. Recommendations from the exercise aim to improve the efficiency and responsiveness in handling customer requests and enquiries.

Therefore, improving Communications with our customers on Council services and responsibilities, will continue to be a focus for the organisation and has been carried over into the Performance Improvement Plan for 2025/26.

6.0 FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

During the 2024/25 financial year, Council agreed a significant efficiency programme and continued to make budget reductions and exercise robust budgetary control to protect services and to ensure the financial stability of the organisation. Council's risk management, business planning and budgetary processes have been adapted as necessary to ensure that the on-going issues related to financial risks are captured and managed.

During the annual Estimates Process each year the Council is obligated to ensure that it has adequate resources to deliver the services expected by the local community, both business and non-business alike. To this end in 2024/25 Council projected a requirement of net funding in the amount of £88.0m of which £81.0m was to be raised by way of Rates Income along with total projected Central Government grant funding of approximately £7.0m (i.e. Rates Support Grant, Transferred Functions Grants and De-Rating Grant).

Following the rates setting process in February 2024, budgets for the 2024/25 financial year were aligned with an organisational internal restructuring exercise and were allocated to four new directorates as follows:

- Development Community & Wellbeing: - £17.3m
- Deputy CEO & CEO: - £13.4m
- Regulatory Services, Facilities & Assets: - £11.9m
- Environmental Services & Sustainability: - £33.0m
- Other Services: - £0.3m

Council also budgeted for various capital projects across Council and set aside approximately £12.1m capital financing to support these.

Based on these figures, Council set the District Rate and combined with the Central Government Regional rate, are used to calculate the Borough Rates bills.

Council recognises the importance of identifying and managing the impact of external pressures whilst protecting the organisation's financial integrity and stability. In the current operating environment issues include ongoing inflationary pressures in relation to goods, services and wages, as well as impact of a tight regional budget settlement and its impact on central government funding to local government, along with the uncertainty globally and the impact on the financial markets. Therefore, there will be a continual process of review, reporting and revisions where necessary, to business plans, business continuity plans, budgets and financial plans as Council moves forward through this volatile period. In order to support economic growth and capital investment in the borough the Council has made successful bids for other external funding opportunities, including Levelling Up Funds, Shared Island funding and Growth Deal Funding. Council will continue to seek to maximise its potential to avail of any future external funding opportunities.

At the end of each financial year Council publish their Statement of Accounts outlining how we have used public money throughout the year. They are prepared on an accruals basis and are intended to present to readers a true and fair view of financial activity during the 2024/25 financial year. They demonstrate to ratepayers how the funding available to the Council (i.e. government grants, domestic and business rates) for the year, has been used in providing services in comparison with those resources consumed or earned by councils.

More detailed information on Council's Income & Expenditure is presented within the Annual Statement of Accounts: <https://www.armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk/council/finance-information>

7.0 COMPLAINTS HANDLING

A Model Complaints Handling Procedure (MCHP) for Local Government came into effect on 1 January 2024. As part of the new procedure, councils are required to publish an annual complaints report including any learning from complaints received and action to prevent them reoccurring. Appendix 6 provides a comprehensive report with further detail on lessons learned, and continuous improvement as a result of complaints received.

During the 2024/25 financial year, 229 complaints were received.

- 18 were escalated from Stage 1 to Stage 2
- Of the 229 complaints received, 198 were resolved, 4 upheld, none partially upheld and 27 not upheld, at stages 1, 2 and after escalation to stage 2.

Council consistently met target complaint handling response times throughout 2024/25:

- On average Stage 1 complaints were responded to within 4.1 days against a target of 5 working days.
- On average Stage 2 complaints were responded to within 11.7 days against a target of 20 working days.

8.0 BENCHMARKING

Understanding current levels of performance is a prerequisite to understanding what improvements might be possible in the future. Benchmarking is one approach that can be used to identify both efficient and inefficient activities in the public sector. Understandably given the changing priorities, need for recovery and challenging circumstances local and central government have faced throughout the last few years, the proposed work to explore the development of an NI Regional benchmarking framework has been delayed.

Council are currently members of the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE), a networking community that assist local authorities who are striving to improve their frontline services. Membership allows us to engage with and learn from other councils and provides insights into our performance in relation to other member councils.

In compliance with the Statutory Guidance on the General Duty, benchmarking information forms part of our assessment report and we have included comparisons with other councils in relation to prompt payment and staff absenteeism data. These are attached in accompanying Appendices 7 - 8.

9.0 RURAL NEEDS MONITORING 2024-25

The Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 (The Act) came into operation for government departments and district Councils on 1 June 2017. The Act requires policy makers and public authorities to have due regard to rural needs when developing and implementing policies and when designing and delivering public services.

In order to fulfil its obligations under section 1 of the Act, policy makers within the Council completed 22 Rural Needs Impact Assessments for the year 2024/25. This information is attached in Appendix 9.

During this period, the Council provided further training on the Rural Needs Duty to Senior Managers and relevant policy makers. This training includes some of the training materials that were provided by DAERA. Officials from DAERA also provided an online awareness session during the year.

Guidance for developing Council policy and the Framework for developing a Strategy includes advice for Officers on the Rural Needs Act and the duty to rural needs impact assess policies/strategies. These guides together with relevant rural statistics and the Guide to the Rural Needs Act provided by DAERA are made available on the Council's Intranet. Rural Needs Impact Assessments are placed on the policy section of the website alongside the equality screening exercises.

During this period 6 Council policies were relevant to rural needs and evidence of the due regard duty was detailed in the rural needs impact assessment. This information is summarised in the template attached.

The Council's Statistical Data Analysis Officer has assisted policy makers in collating relevant rural statistics to complete the Rural Needs Impact Assessments.

10.0 COMMITTED TO CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT AND GENERAL DUTY TO IMPROVE

The Council wants to assure all residents, businesses, and all other stakeholders that it is fully committed to delivering services that are efficient, economical and of an exemplary standard. Council looks forward to working with residents, local businesses, our statutory partners, and all other stakeholders to ensure that this happens.

Every year presents many challenges for Council and residents, and it is vital we provide the right services in the right way to meet the needs of our customers and to improve customer experience and satisfaction.

In terms of continuous improvement and our General Duty to improve, Council acknowledges the importance of setting meaningful performance measures, realistic but ambitious targets. This will be integral and taken on board as part of our annual Business Planning processes.

Officers continue to develop the ways in which performance and quality management data is collated and monitored internally by Senior Managers; and presented to Elected Members, helping us identify how it can be used to focus resources where needed to ensure continuous improvement.

Council performance related documents are also available to view on our website using the following link:

<https://www.armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk/council/performance-improvement/>

11.0 HOW TO CONTACT US

We welcome your ongoing feedback, comments and suggestions on how we might improve any of our Council services.

Please use one of the following ways to contact us:

Website: <https://www.armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk/contact-us/>

Email: performance@armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk

Telephone: 0300 0300 900

In writing: Strategy & Performance Department
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council
Armagh Old City Hospital
Abbey Street
Armagh
BT61 7DY

Elected Members:

Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council has 41 democratically elected members, representing 7 District Electrical Areas.

Further details on each elected member can be found at:

www.armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk

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

Progress on Corporate Plan Actions 2024-25

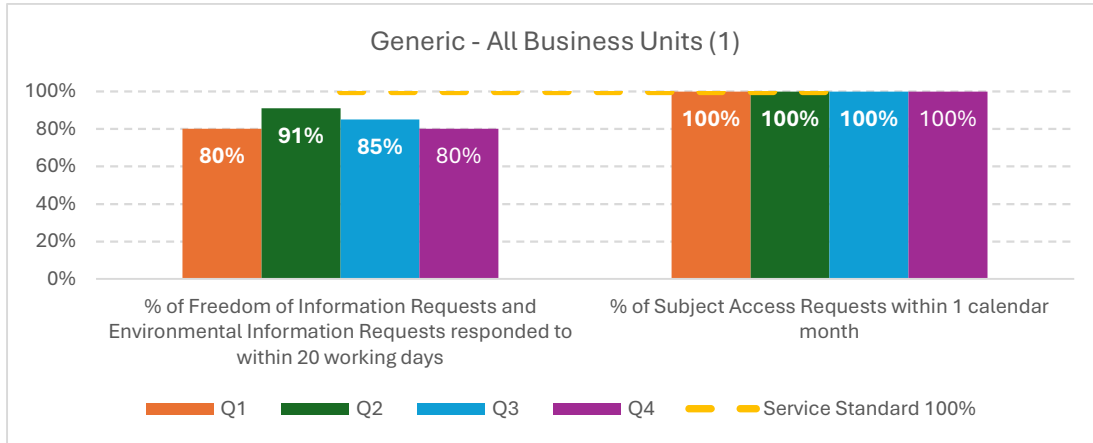
ENVIRONMENT AND PLACE PRIORITY ACTIONS	Update at year end 2024/25
Develop a Council Climate Action Plan with KPI's	Action plan drafted and will be considered by Council in Autumn 2025.
Create a community and business climate toolkit and develop associated green initiatives	Energy Security and Decarbonising Our Economy is identified as a key theme in the Economic Growth Delivery Plan 2025-2035 (under development).
Work in partnership with the other Royal Sites of Ireland and partners in progressing World Heritage for Navan and support Armagh Observatory and Planetarium in their bid for World Heritage status	The Royal Sites is progressing with monthly operational meetings and quarterly strategic meetings. Plan to submit formal bid by 2031. Observatory bid continues to progress with MOU signed between the sites.
Secure investment for development of our city and town centres including opportunity to support the heritage led regeneration agenda	The Townscape Heritage Schemes in Armagh and Lurgan are coming towards a close and have resulted in significant enhancements in both places. Funding has been received from DfC for phase 1 of the Lurgan linkages scheme to regenerate Black's Court Laneway.
Develop place plans for six urban centres by 2027	Place plans have been developed for Armagh, Banbridge and Dromore with work commenced in 2025 on the plans for Craigavon, Lurgan and Portadown.
Develop a Blueway and Greenway (Blue/Green) Plan and Active Travel Master Plan	Under the draft Climate and Sustainability Action Plan targets have been set for the establishment of an active travel team and development of an Active Travel Strategy for the Borough.
COMMUNITY WELLBEING PRIORITY ACTIONS	Update at year end 2024/25
Extend F.E McWilliam Gallery and Studio by 2026	The contractors are now onsite with work due to be completed by Autumn 2026
Provide a programme of high quality, nurturing opportunities to participate in arts, culture and heritage activities, which will help improve physical, mental and social wellbeing. With 200 participants per annum of which 90% will testify that participation had benefited their mental health and/or wellbeing	We are making good progress on this action across our venues and through our community outreach programme. We have secured funding through 'Going Places' to enhance this offering over the next 2-3 years.
Establish a measure of Quality of Life in our Borough and seek to improve this baseline	The QoL measures have been agreed under the revised Community Plan with a set of indicators identified relating to Connected, Healthy and Welcoming Community.
Increase the range of programmes for people least likely to participate in sport and physical activity by 9% by 2027	This is a focus of the departmental business plan developed through the Get Active ABC framework. Officers believe we are still on track to meet this target.

Use Participatory Budgeting (PB) as an opportunity for everyone to engage in community life and shape decisions by continuing our PB Grants process and trialling a mainstream PB project by 2027	A fourth successful PB grants process was undertaken in 2025.
Work with the community and voluntary sector to develop sustainable initiatives which support people to improve their quality of life	A recruitment drive for the Community and Voluntary Sector Panel was successful in bringing in new groups and the panel were supported to review and refresh their steering group. We have delivered a wide range of capacity-building programmes for the community and voluntary sector and supported delivery through over £1m funding of 457 projects. We have facilitated a partnership and co-design approach to addressing poverty through the ABC Crisis Support Network, benefitting 14,887 individuals this year.
ECONOMIC GROWTH PRIORITY ACTIONS	Update at year end 2024/25
Through MSW develop business cases for investment of reinvigoration in Armagh Gaol, Green Energy District in Carn - Seagoe and an Agri Bio Innovation Centre by 2030	Outline business case development is underway for all projects.
Develop an Inclusive Growth Strategy and Plan by 2025. Deliver opportunities in growth and investment	The Strategy has evolved into an Economic Growth Delivery Plan for 2025-2035 which is under development. It will focus on delivering results by harnessing inclusive, sustainable economic growth across five themes.
Increase the value of the Borough's tourism economy by 10% annually	Due to the fluctuations in the updating of the regional statistic this was to be based on, officers will instead track holiday visits and website visitors in which we aim to see an annual increase. This year numbers in these areas increased by 4% and 9% respectively.
Deliver the Agriculture Strategy by 2027	Delivery of the Agriculture Strategy continues across a wide range of departments in collaboration with key stakeholders, local farms and businesses. Events, engagement and profiling the importance of the Borough's agrifood sector continues as part of the Food Heartland.
Develop an Infrastructure Strategy to evidence the need, priority and deliverability of critical infrastructure across the Borough	Initial evidence gathering is being undertaken in late 2025 and into 2026. Individual elements such as the rail strategy are underway.
Facilitate and seek the delivery of schemes that will increase access to sustainable and active transport, providing links to key local amenities and improving connections between settlements	Individual schemes are being progressed through the capital plan process. Under the draft Climate and Sustainability Action Plan targets have been set for the establishment of an active travel team and development of an Active Travel Strategy for the Borough.
SERVICE DELIVERY PRIORITY ACTIONS	Update at year end 2024/25

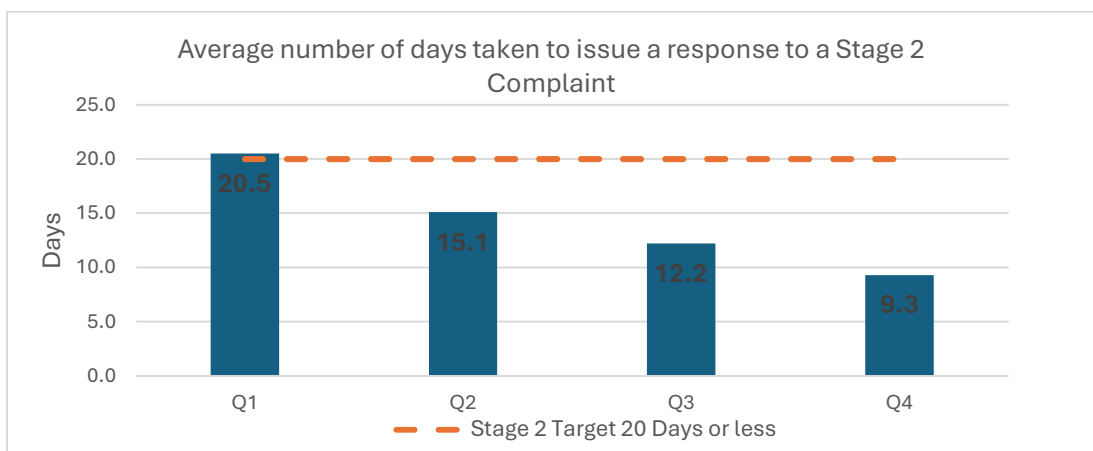
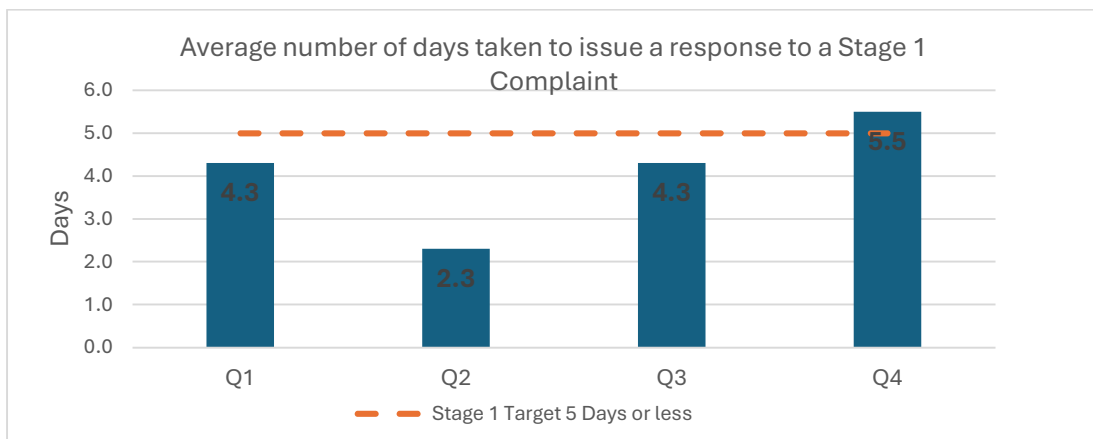
Progress service improvements as identified by a review of Environmental Services	Work on service improvements are ongoing with positive engagement with staff and trade unions to date.
Fully embed our Quality Management System (QMS) across council to improve our services by usage of data and evidence	A new Working Group has been established are putting in place a project plan to embed and grow the next phases of QMS.
Publish our annual Performance Self-Assessment Report	Council's Annual Self – Assessment Performance Report is published on 30 September each year. This is a statutory requirement and will be achieved in year as in all previous years.
Publish the Community Planning Biennial Statement of Progress	The next statement is due in the 25/26 financial year
Ensure all new or updated strategies and policies adhere to our standards for public consultation	Directors and Heads of Department are responsible for ensuring that any new strategies or policies comply with our Public Consultation Policy as new strategies and policies are developed.
Provide training for staff on communication, consultation and engagement.	Training is and will be provided as required and identified with managers for example during PDC's
STAFF, LEADERSHIP & RESOURCES PRIORITY ACTIONS	Update at year end 2024/25
Develop a People and Culture Strategy by 2027	Our People Programme, the initial step in developing our Strategy, was established in June 2024 and is delivered through a Steering Group and a number of workstreams. Its focus is to enhance current people management practices and improve our workplace culture.
Retain Elected Member Development Charter Plus status	Arrangements made for Charter Plus reassessment to take to take place in December 2025.
Ensure all staff receive at least two Personal Development Conversations a year	Target % completion and timeframes are included within departmental business plans to help achieve this. Progress is regularly monitored.
Issue a regular E-Zine to staff containing corporate information updates, news and acknowledgements	Inside line e-zine is circulated monthly to all staff (excluding July).
Harmonise terms and conditions and HR policies	Management has identified and scoped all outstanding terms and conditions that need harmonisation. Negotiations have begun, with weekly meetings scheduled to facilitate discussions. These negotiations will only affect certain sections of the organisation, and contractual and policy arrangements will be considered. Negotiations regarding Environmental Services Transformation are at the point of unions preparing to ballot on this issue.
Conduct an asset review by 2027	Stage 1 of the review is complete with stage two now underway.

Service Standards Charts

Freedom of Information and Subject Access Requests – All Departments



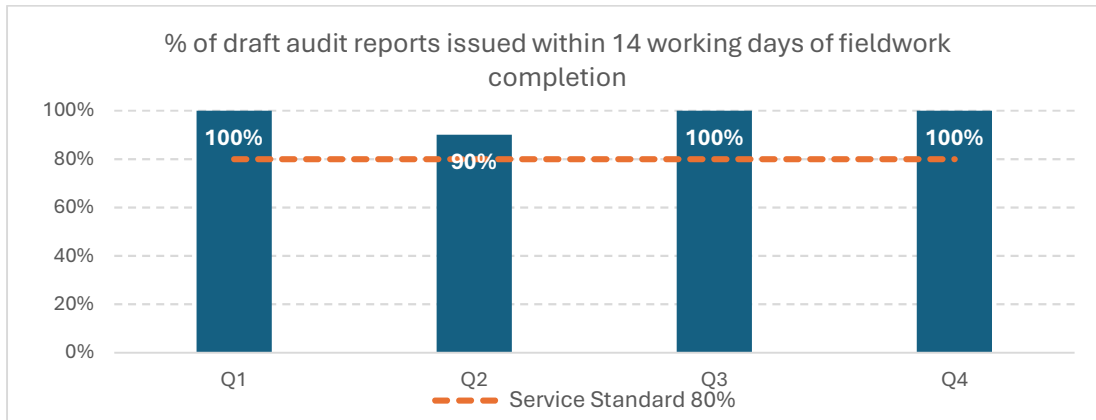
Complaints



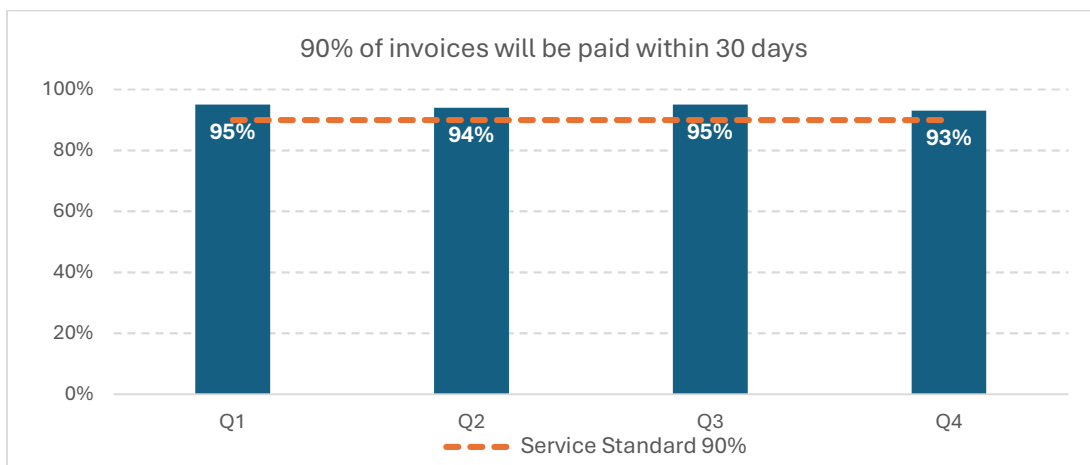
Equality Complaints

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Service Standard
% of Equality Complaints acknowledged within 3 working days	None received	None received	None received	None received	100%
% Equality Complaints responded to within 20 working days	None received	None received	None received	None received	100%

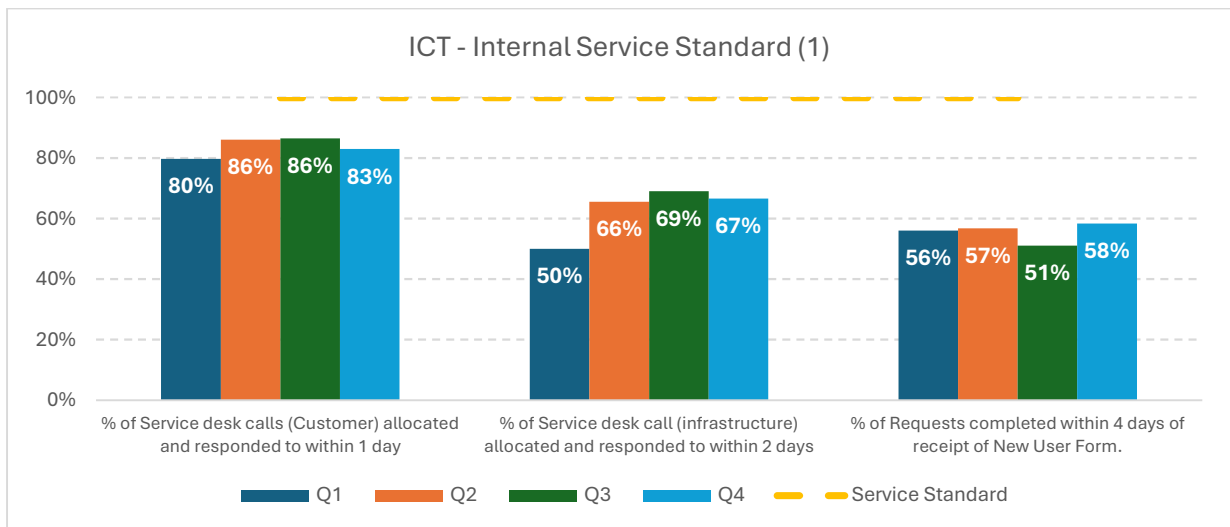
Draft Internal Audit Reports



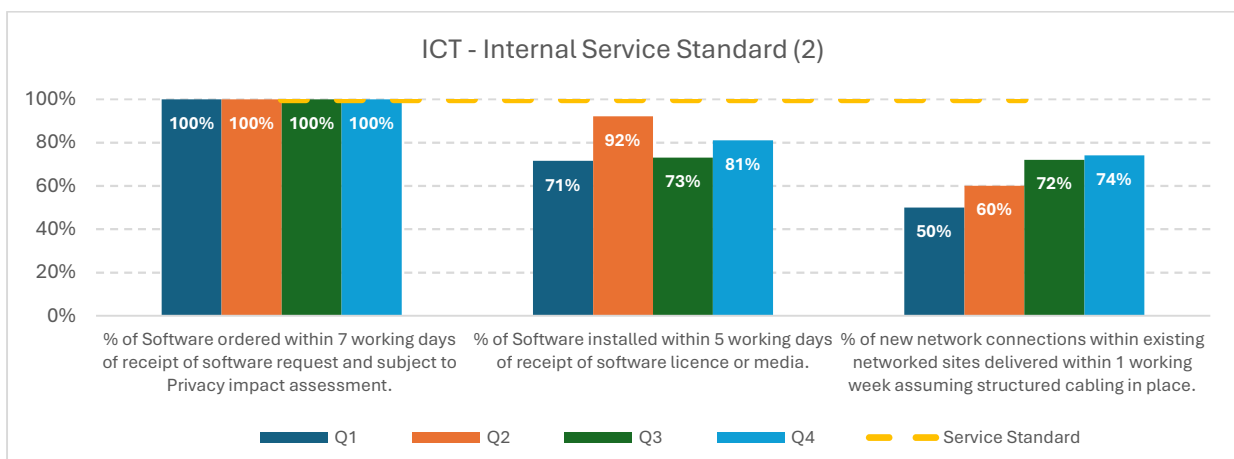
Payment of Invoices



Service Desk Calls

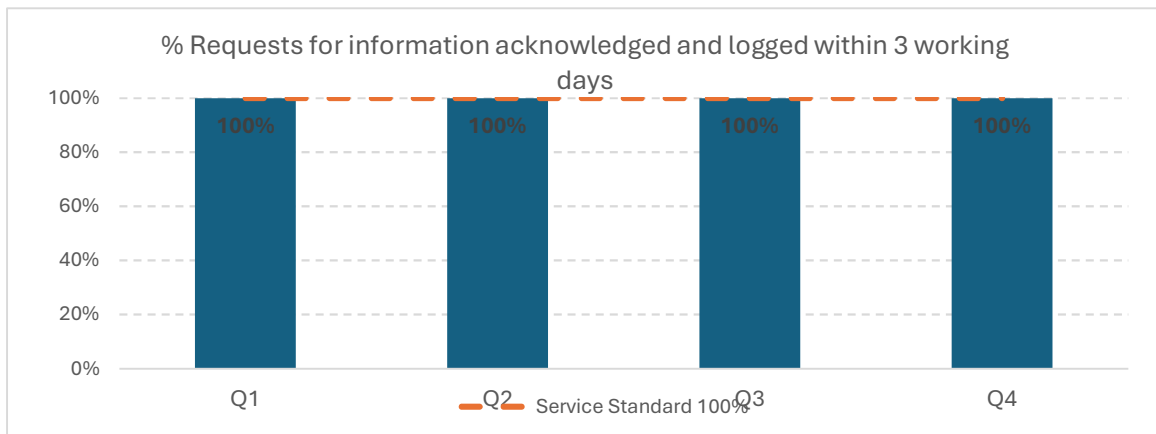
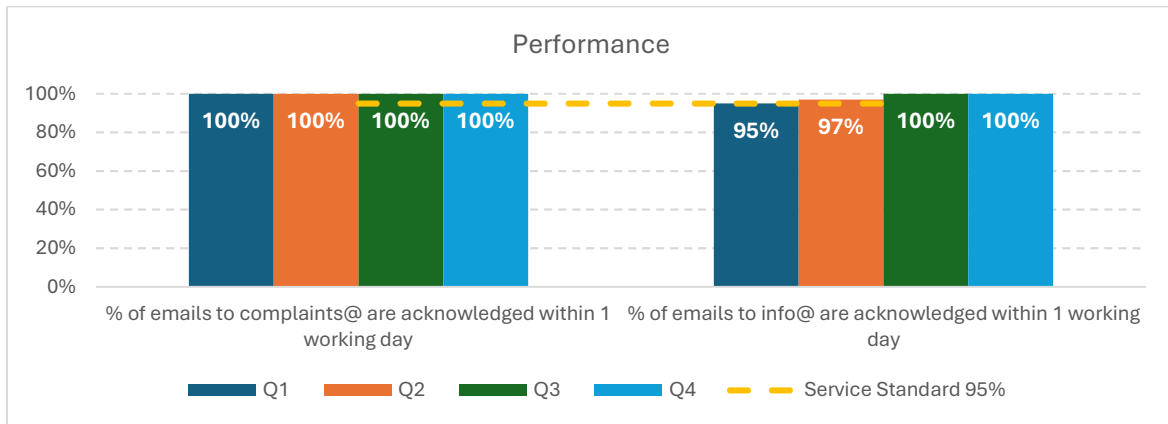


Performance in relation to % of service desk calls (infrastructure) and % of requests completed within 4 days of receipt was impacted by staff absence, software installations and network connections.

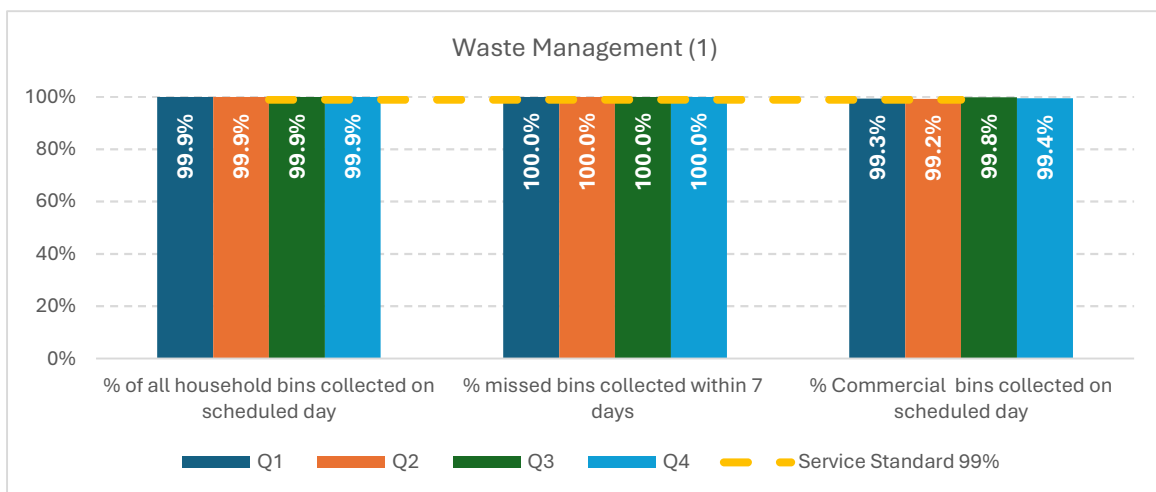


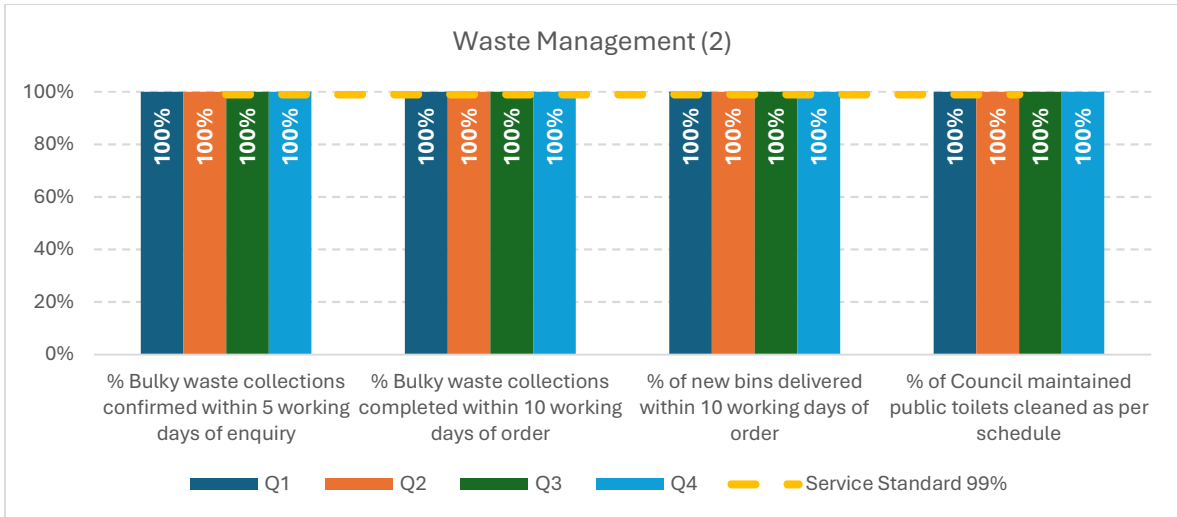
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Service Standard
100% on User Start Date or date request by Line Manger*	100.00%	100.00%	100%	100%	100%

Email Acknowledgements

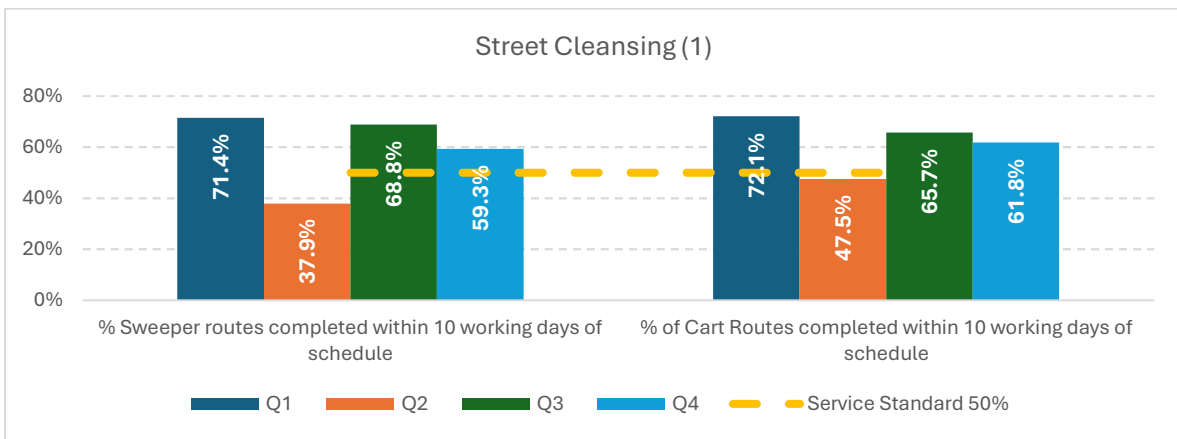


Waste Collection

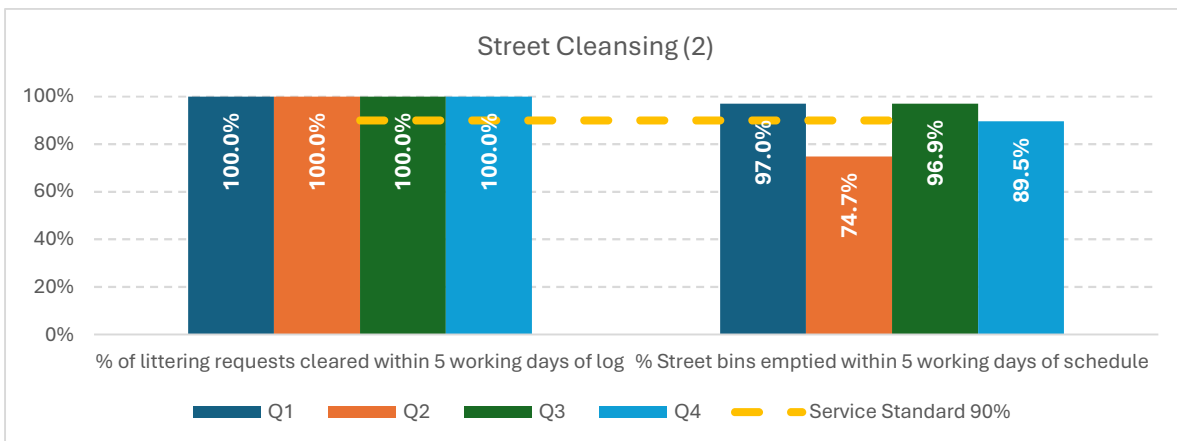




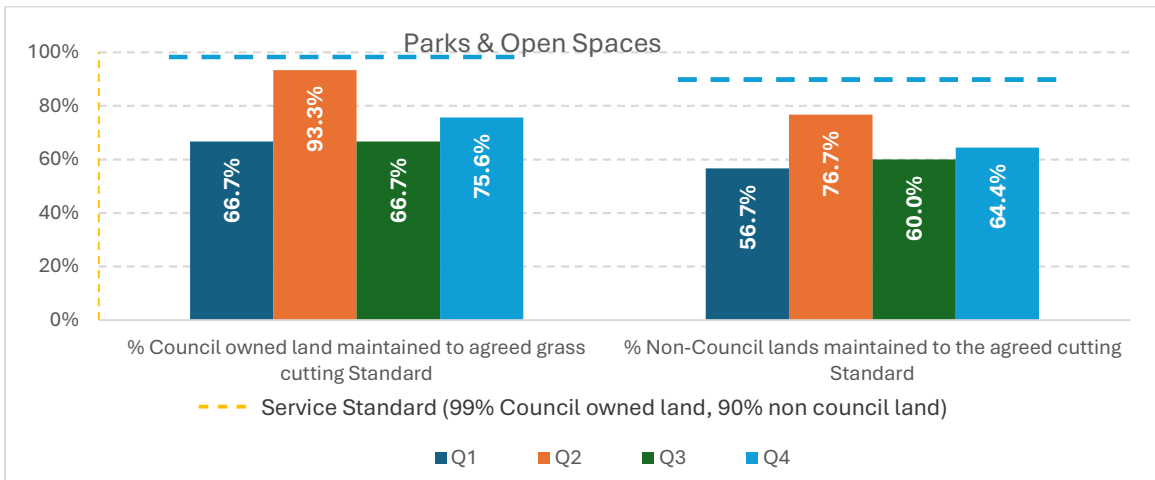
Street Cleansing



Street cleansing operations were impacted by the prolonged period of industrial action.

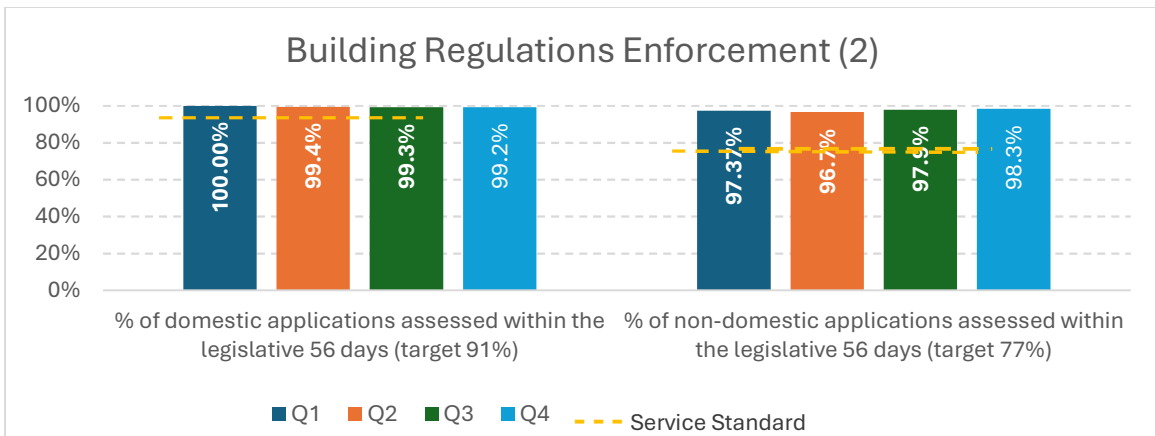
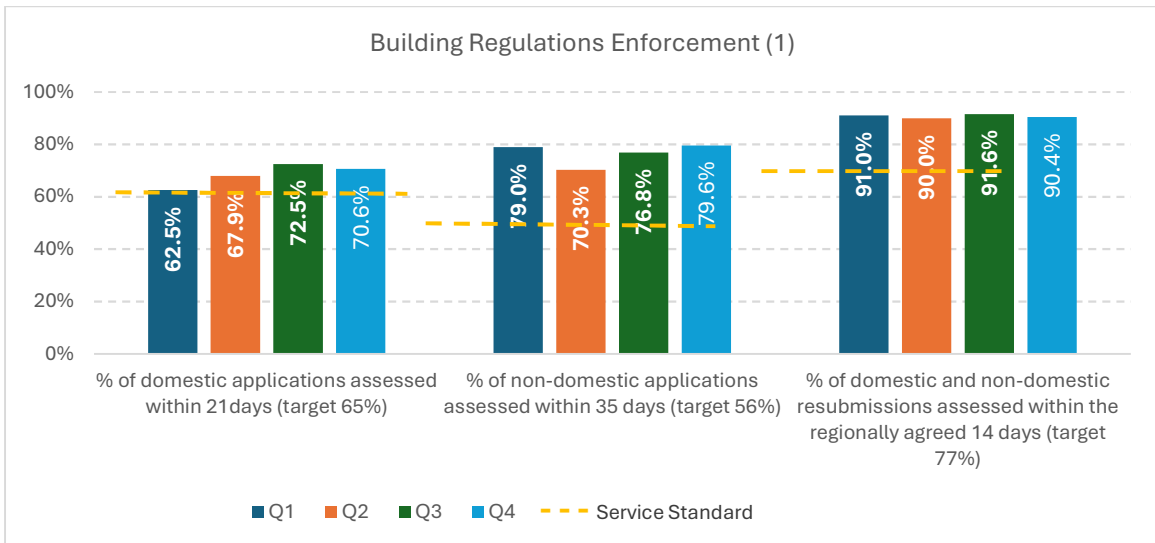


Parks and Open Spaces

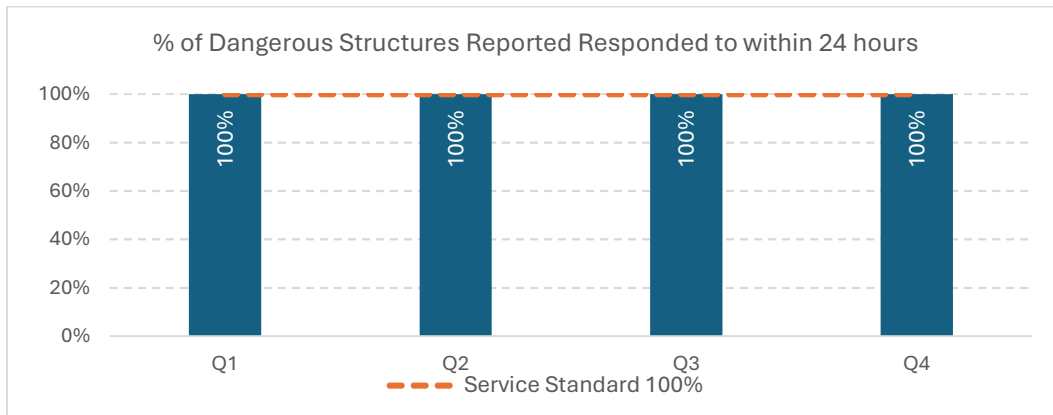


Grass-cutting performance has been affected by staffing challenges and weather conditions. During peak periods, parks staff are reassigned to waste collection duties, which disrupts regular grass-cutting schedules.

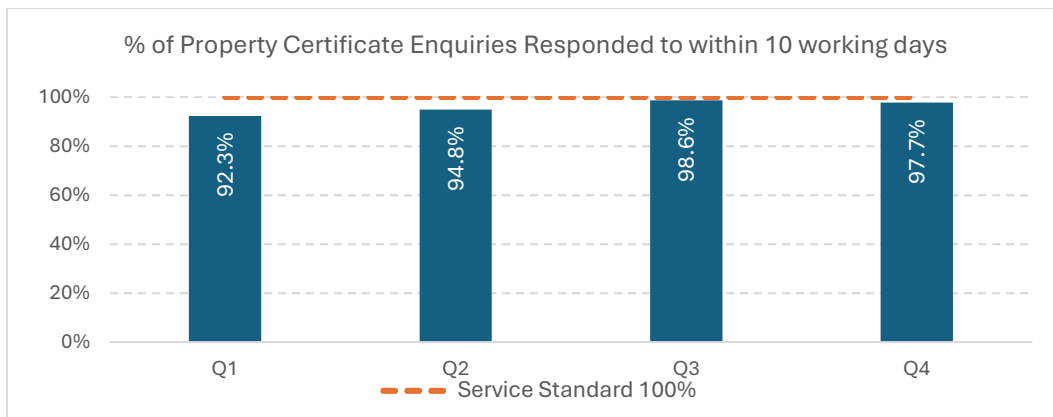
Building Control Enforcement



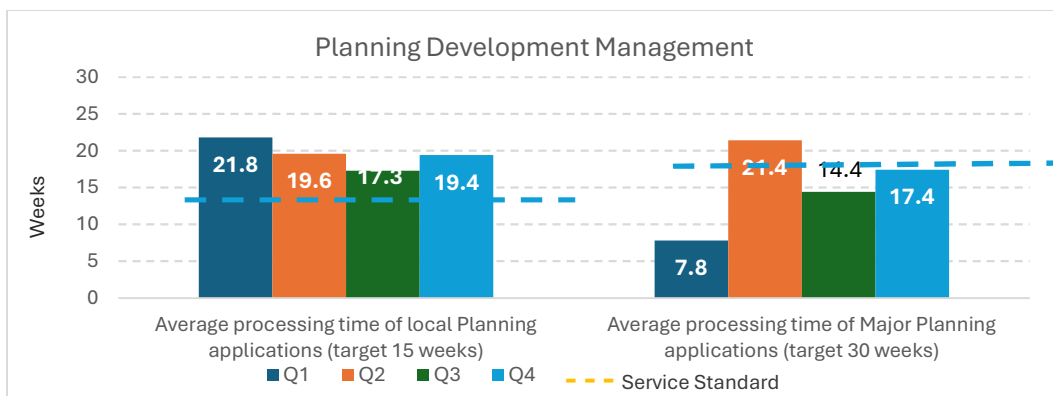
Dangerous Structures Enforcement Legislation



Council Property Certificates Function

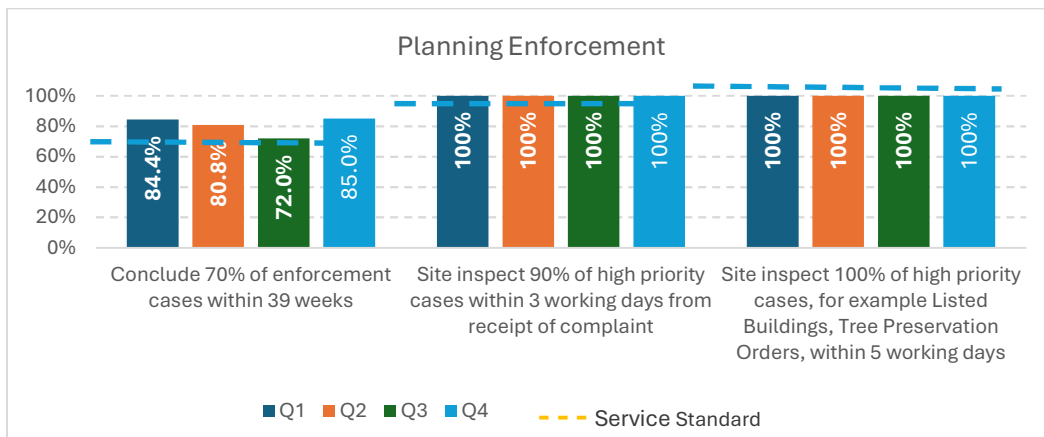


Planning Development Management

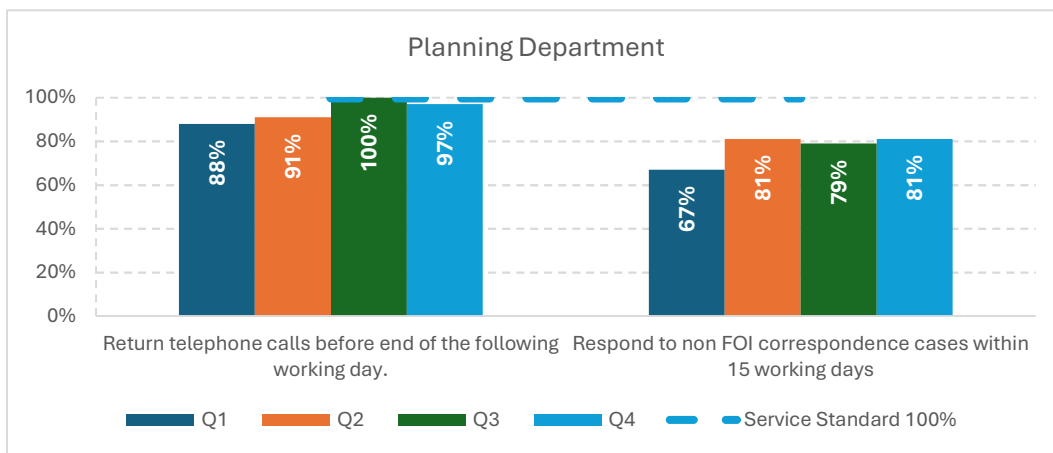


The target for local applications was missed primarily due to a high number of “live” cases at the start of 2024/25 business year and a change in priorities during Q4 with key staff being redeployed from Development Management to Development Plan

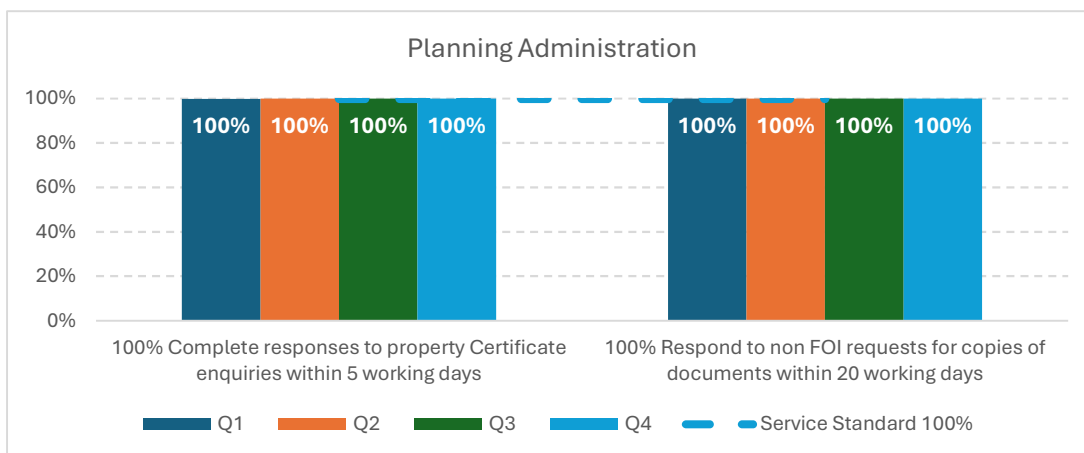
Planning Enforcement



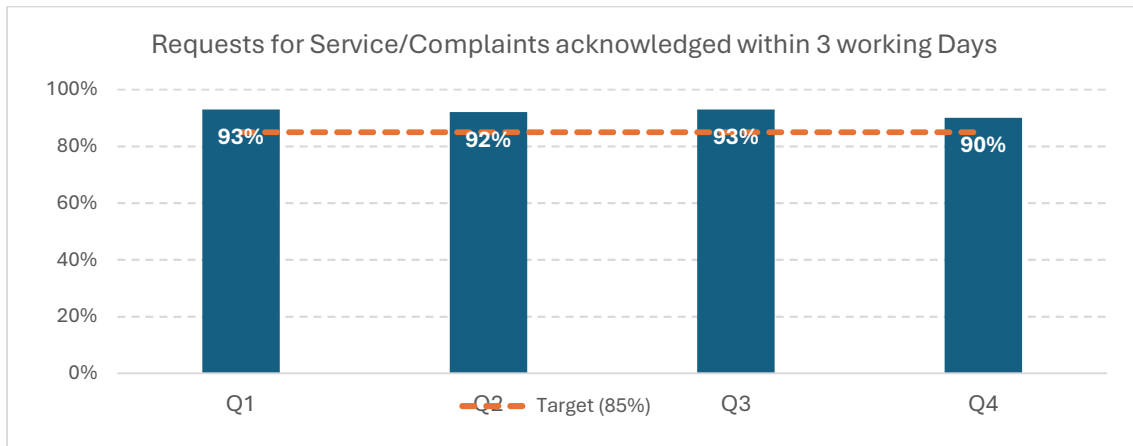
Telephone and non-FOI Correspondence Responses



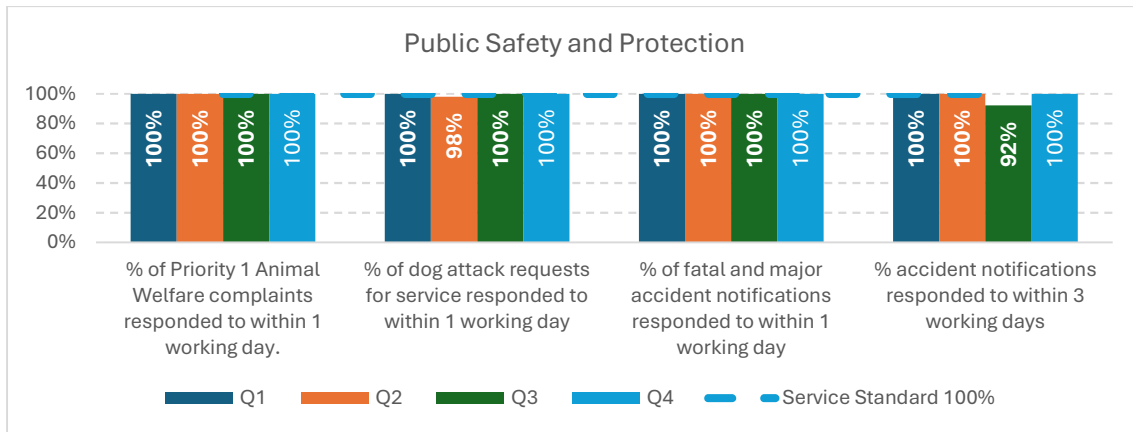
Property Certificate and non-FOI requests for documentation



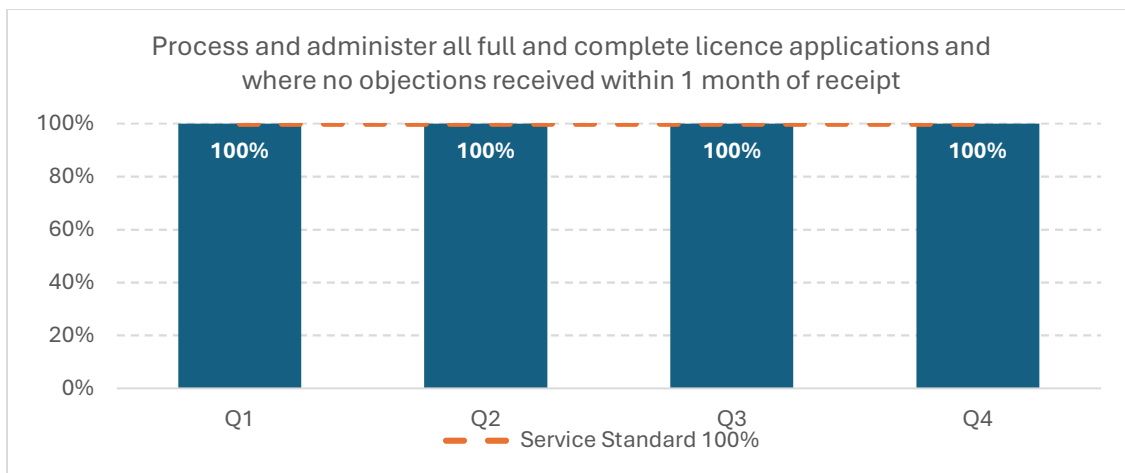
Environmental Health



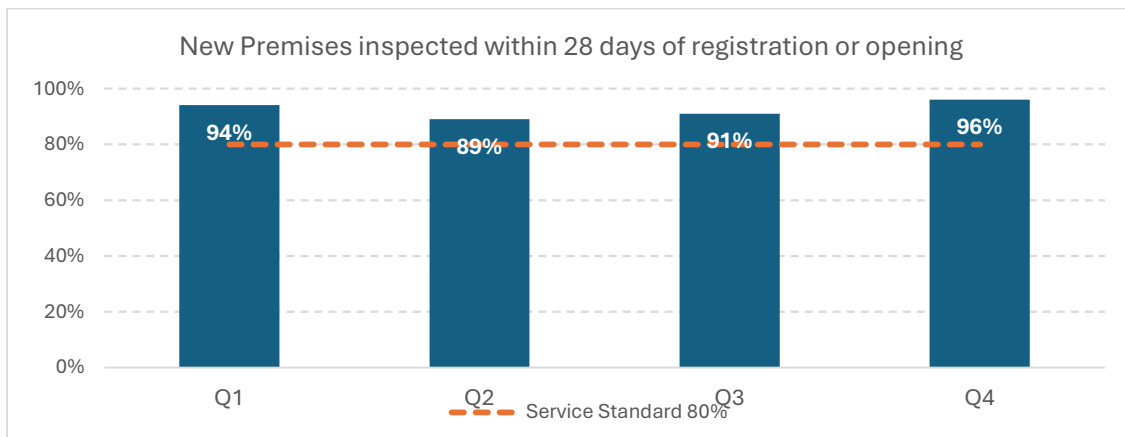
Public Safety and Protection



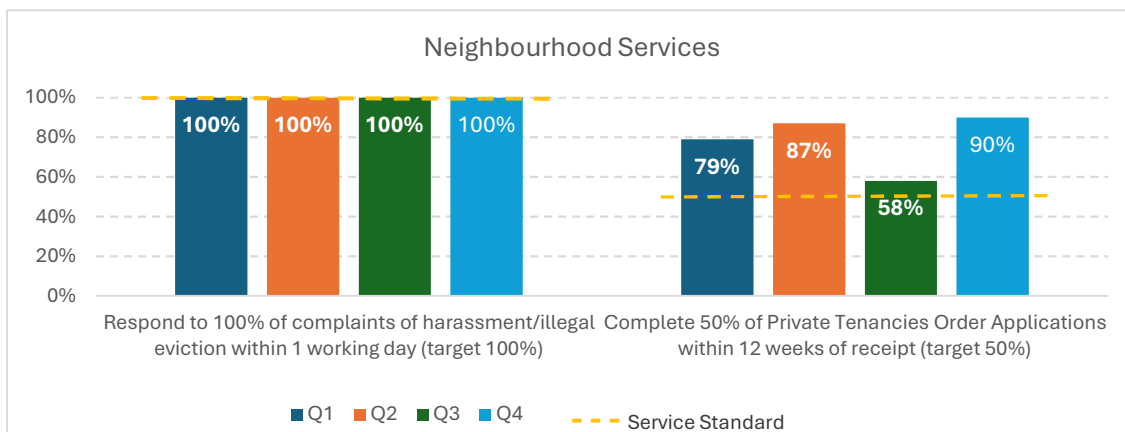
Licence Applications



Food Control New Premises Inspection



Neighbourhood Services – Complaint Response









Economic Development

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Service Standard
Make initial contact with 100% of businesses by the end of next working day of receipt of notification from Invest NI.	No requests received	No requests received	No requests received	No requests received	100%

Appendix 3

Summary Table: Statutory performance improvement indicators and standards for the functions of Economic Development, Planning and Waste.

Ref.	Statutory Performance Indicators	Standards/ Targets set for 2024/25	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
ED1	Number of jobs promoted through business start-up activity.	Target from 2023/24 182	232	185	221	229	190	233	216	140	137 
P1	Average processing time of major planning applications.	Major applications processed from date valid to decision or withdrawn within an average of 30 weeks .	52.8 weeks	36.4 weeks	23.6 weeks	45.2 weeks	54.4 weeks	33 weeks	47 weeks	27.6 weeks	17.8 Weeks 
P2	Average processing time of local planning applications	Local applications processed from date valid to decision or withdrawn within an average of 15 weeks .	14 weeks	14 weeks	14.6 weeks	14.6 weeks	26.4 weeks	24.8 weeks	21.2 weeks	24.6 weeks	19.4 weeks 
P3	Percentage of planning enforcement cases processed within 39 weeks.	70% of all enforcement cases progressed to target conclusion within 39 weeks of receipt of complaint.	82.2%	82.5%	80%	85.9%	77.7%	86.3%	70.6%	82.7%	80.2% 
W1	Percentage of household waste collected by district councils that is sent for recycling (including waste prepared for reuse).	NI Landfill Allowance Scheme (50% by 2020) Non-Statutory Targets: (i) by 2025, the preparing for re-use and the recycling of municipal waste	48.8%	50.5%	51.6%	54.7%	54.3 %	54.4%	54.2%	55.5%	54.6%* 

		shall be increased to at least 55% (ii)by 2030, the preparing for re-use and the recycling of municipal waste shall be increased to at least 60% (70% in Circular Economy Package) (iii)by 2035, the preparing for re-use and the recycling of municipal waste shall be increased to at least 65%										
W2	Amount (tonnage) of biodegradable Local Authority Collected Municipal Waste that is landfilled.	NI Landfill Allowance Scheme No statutory standard has been set for 2024/25.	11,107 tonnes	9,401 tonnes	8,771 tonnes	6,104 tonnes	4340 tonnes	6,830 tonnes	3641 tonnes	2580 tonnes	2979* tonnes 	
W3	Amount (tonnage) of Local Authority Collected Municipal Waste arising.	No statutory standard has been set for 2024/25	104,342 tonnes	105,778 tonnes	105,828 tonnes	106,742 tonnes	113,712 tonnes	115,324 tonnes	103,422 tonnes	112,334 tonnes	110,210* Tonnes 	

* Unverified figures

Economic Development

Armagh City Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council unverified figure for job creation in 2024/25 is 137 against a target of 182

UNVERIFIED FIGURES	Actual BPA	Actual Jobs	Total BP Target	Statutory Target (2023 order)	Variance BP	Variance Jobs
Antrim & Newtownabbey	247	148	128	80	119	68
Ards & North Down	206	124	197	123	9	1
Armagh Banbridge & Craigavon	228	137	291	182	-63	-45
Belfast	326	196	520	325	-194	-129
Causeway Coast & Glens	240	144	205	128	35	16
Derry & Strabane	292	175	224	140	68	35
Fermanagh & Omagh	228	137	272	170	-44	-33
Lisburn & Castlereagh	213	128	186	116	27	12
Mid & East Antrim	241	145	178	111	63	34
Mid Ulster	165	99	245	153	-80	-54
Newry Mourne & Down	341	205	277	173	64	32
Totals	2727	1636	2721	1701	6	-65

Council's Website Landing Page Analytics



Complaints Handling Annual Report

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council is committed to providing excellent services to all our residents, businesses and visitors to the Borough, or to anyone with whom we engage. There may, however, be times when customers feel that our services have fallen below the standard they might expect.

We welcome this feedback about our services and will use it to continually improve service delivery and customer satisfaction. Good customer service and effective handling of complaints are key to ensuring that we capture issues and concerns in order to learn lessons and make improvements where necessary.

Overseen by the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO), a Model Complaints Handling Procedure (MCHP) for Local Government was developed and came into effect on 1 January 2024. The new model complaints procedures now sees all local government bodies including councils in Northern Ireland work under a two-stage complaints procedure. In October 2023 Council revised the existing Complaints Policy and Complaints procedures in line with NIPSO Model Complaint Handling Procedure (MCHP).

The new Model aimed to:

- Bring consistency to how councils in Northern Ireland handle complaints.
- Make it easier for customers to communicate when things go wrong.
- Help all of us learn and make improvements to our service, faster.

Where a customer has taken the time to make a complaint, we will respond as promptly as possible to ensure a resolution and if they are still dissatisfied, we have a process in place to ensure that the complaint can be further investigated.

Local Government bodies are also required to regularly report on and publish an annual report showing that we have learned from complaints and taken action to prevent them happening again.

NIPSO sets out the complaints information to be reported on and published annually by Local Government public bodies. This report details Council's complaints information for 2024/25, including the period 1 January 2024 – 31 March 2025 as the new procedures were introduced on 1 January 2024.

Further information on Council's Complaints Procedure can be found on the website:

[Complaints - Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council](#)

2.0 OUR COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

The Council's Complaints Handling Procedure (CHP) is based on a two-stage process. The first stage is frontline resolution and the second is investigation.

Frontline resolution, Stage 1, is for issues that are more straightforward and easily resolved, requiring little or no investigation. This means 'on the spot' apology, explanation or other action to resolve the complaint within five working days or less. Complaints are addressed by staff or referred to the appropriate supervisor/manager for resolution. Complaint details, outcome and action taken are recorded and used for service improvement, as appropriate.

Stage 2 investigations are for issues that have not been resolved at the first stage or that are complex, serious or 'high risk'. The response time set for Stage 2 complaint is within 20 working days.

Following investigation, if customers are still dissatisfied with the outcome, they refer it to NIPSO cannot normally consider a complaint that has not been through the Council's complaints procedure first.

Each Department has nominated Complaint Administrator(s) and Complaint Handler(s), and a Complaint Handling Working Group is in place with each department represented. At a regional level, a Local Government Best Practice Network has been established which Council officers participate in, in conjunction with NIPSO so that Local Government bodies including councils can share good practice and common queries.

3.0 COMPLAINTS SUMMARY & STATISTICS

It is important to note, Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough has a resident population of 218,656. This accounts for 11.5% of the Northern Ireland population. (Source: *Census Day: 21st March 2021*). This figure puts into context the comparatively small number of complaints received by Council.

1st January – 31 March 2024

During this initial 3 months of implementation, Council received 41 complaints, 5 of these were escalated from Stage 1 to Stage 2.

77 % of Stage 1 complaints were closed within the target of 5 working days, with 83 % stage 2 complaints were responded to within the target of 20 working days.

33 complaints of the 41 were resolved, 3 upheld, 1 partially upheld and 4 not upheld, at stages 1, 2 and after escalation to stage 2.

3 complaints were escalated from stage 1 to stage 2 within the required timescales.

4 complaints were closed in full at Stage 2 within 20 working days.

An extension to timelines was given on 1 complaint in the Planning Department due to its complexity.

On average, during this period, Council responded to stage 1 complaints within 4.3 days and stage 2 complaints within 20.5 days.

Complaints escalated from stage 1 to stage 2 were responded to within 20.5 days.

1 April 2024– 31 March 2025

During 2024/25, 229 complaints were received, 18 of these were escalated from stage 1 to stage 2.

- 88% of stage 1 complaints were closed within the target of 5 working days.
- 67% stage 2 complaints were responded to within the target of 20 working days.
- 13 complaints were escalated from stage 1 to stage 2 within timescales.
- 16 complaints were closed in full at stage 2 within 20 working days.

Of the 229 complaints:

- 198 complaints resolved,
- 4 upheld,
- 0 partially upheld,
- 27 not upheld, at stages 1, 2 and after escalation to stage 2.

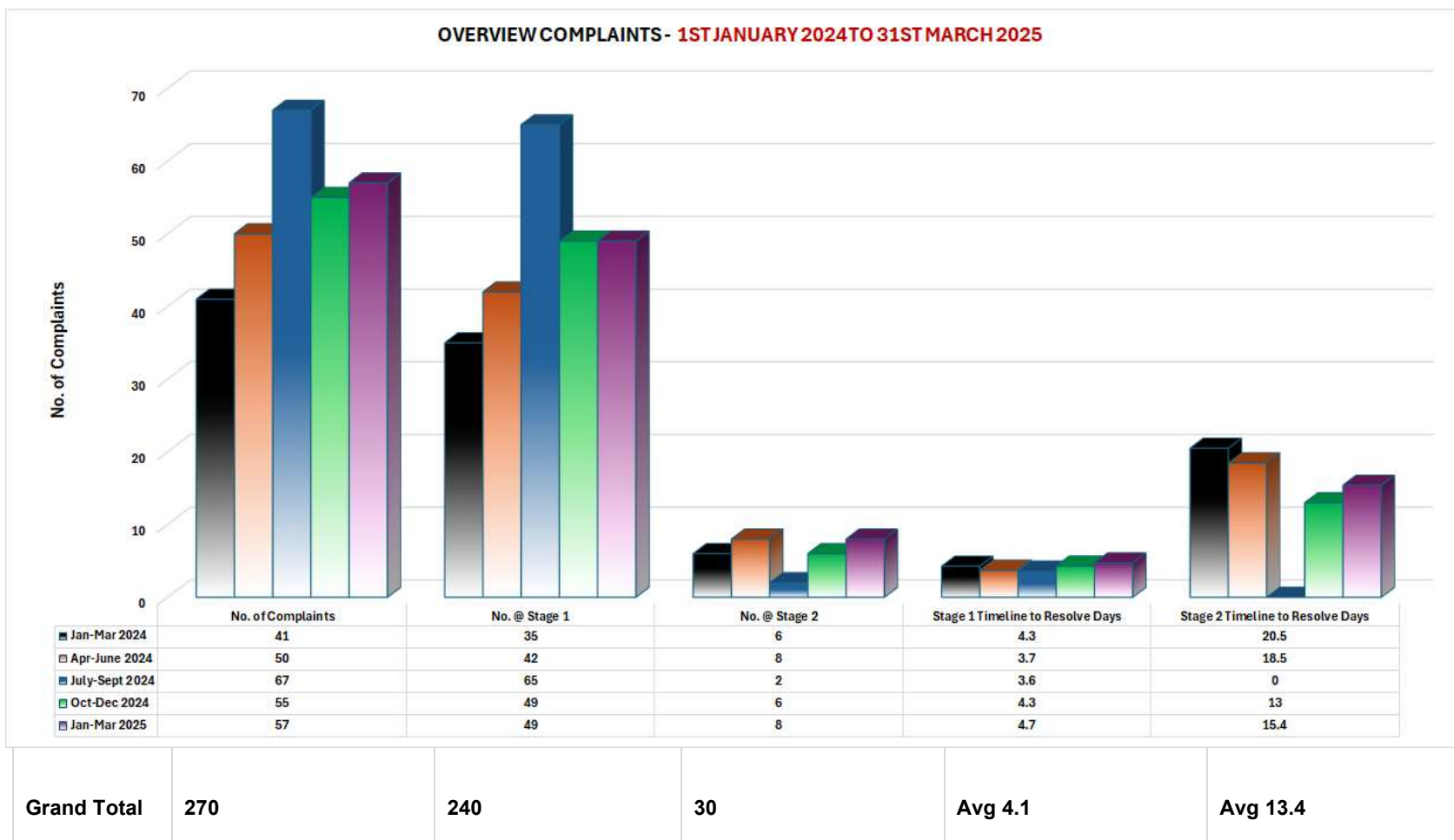
The complaints escalated to stage 2 related to more complex issues within the Environmental Health, Environmental Services, Health & Recreation, Planning and Economic Services departments.

On average we responded to stage 1 complaints within 4.1 days and stage 2 complaints within 11.7 days.

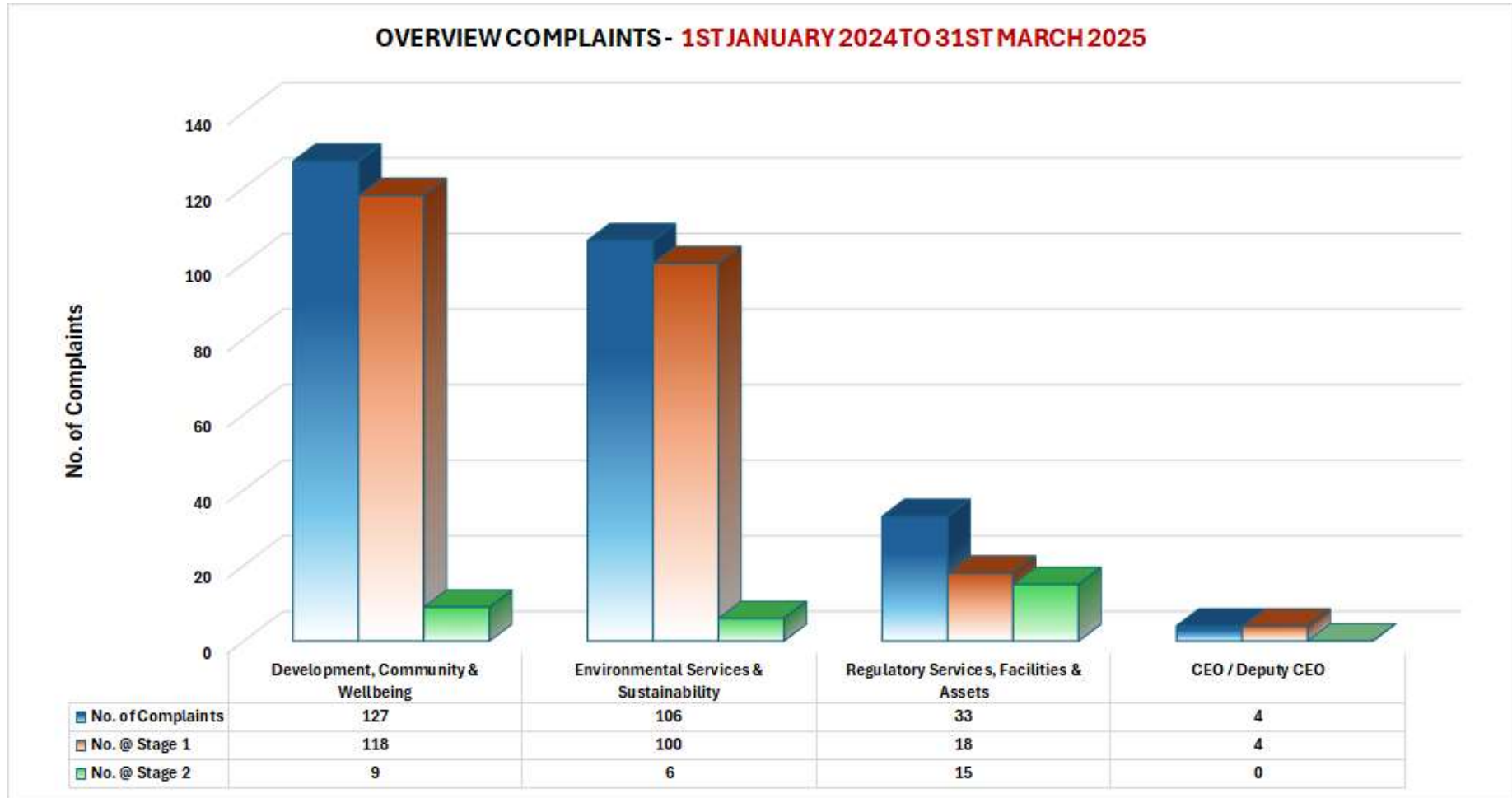
Complaints escalated from stage 1 to stage 2 were responded to within 10.6 days.

Council therefore consistently met target response times throughout 1st April – 31 March 2025.

The following graphs present complaints data for the following period: 1 January 2024- 31 March 2024, and 1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025 and per Directorate.



OVERVIEW COMPLAINTS BY DIRECTORATE



4.0 COMPLAINT OUTCOMES

There are 4 outcome categories:

1. **Resolved:** complaints are where Council has taken action without reaching any conclusions about whether there were any failings (for example, because the organisation agreed a solution with the complainant before it looked into/investigated the complaint).
2. **Upheld:** complaints can be considered “upheld” where an investigation found evidence to support the complaint. In other words, *a complaint where we investigated and found that something went wrong.*
3. **Partially Upheld:** if a complaint is made about several issues of complaint and one or more, but not all, of the issues of complaint are upheld then the complaint can be considered as “partially upheld”. In other words, *a complaint where we investigated and found some parts of the process had gone wrong.*
4. **Not Upheld:** a complaint can be considered “not upheld” in cases where an investigation has been undertaken and found no fault on the part of the organisation being complained about. In other words, when there is no evidence to support any aspects of the complaint.

During 1st January 2024 - 31 March 2024

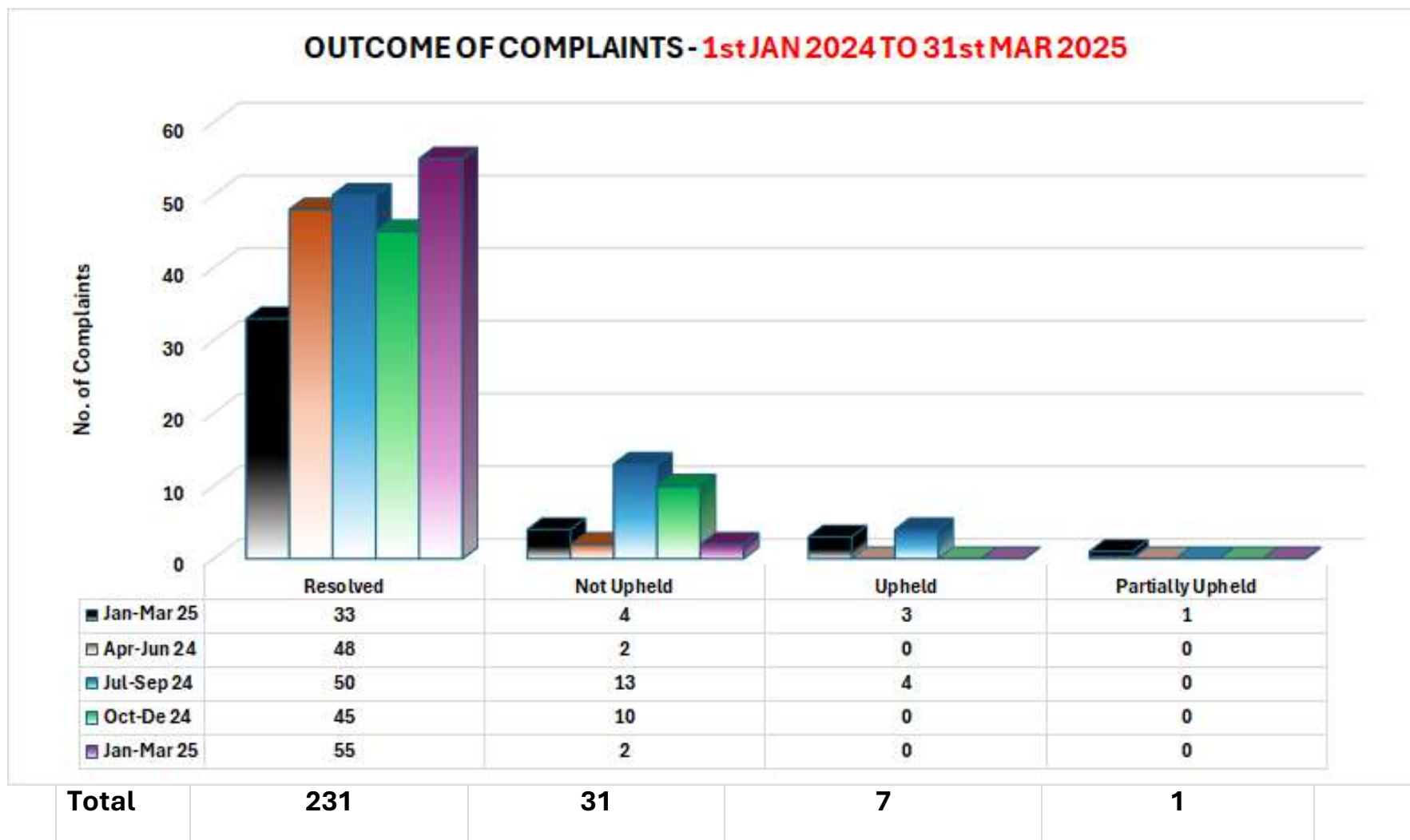
- 33 complaints were resolved,
- 3 upheld,
- 1 partially upheld and
- 4 not upheld, at stages 1, 2 and after escalation to stage 2.

During 1 April 2024 -31 March 2025:

- 198 complaints resolved,
- 4 upheld,
- 0 partially upheld and
- 27 not upheld, at stages 1, 2 and after escalation to stage 2.

Note: It should be noted Complaints received towards the end of each month may not be fully closed until the start of the following month, which may result in variance of reported monthly/quarterly data.

The graphs below help illustrate this data.



4.1 ACTIONS TAKEN TO IMPROVE SERVICES

On a regular basis, internally departments / services / teams have discussions to review feedback and complaints received, identify any trends, implement service improvements and ultimately strive to improve customer satisfaction.

Some examples of action taken to improve customer satisfaction and prevent reoccurrence of complaints received are set out below.

ANNUAL COMPLAINT PERFORMANCE REPORT: 1st JANUARY 2024 – 31 MARCH 2025

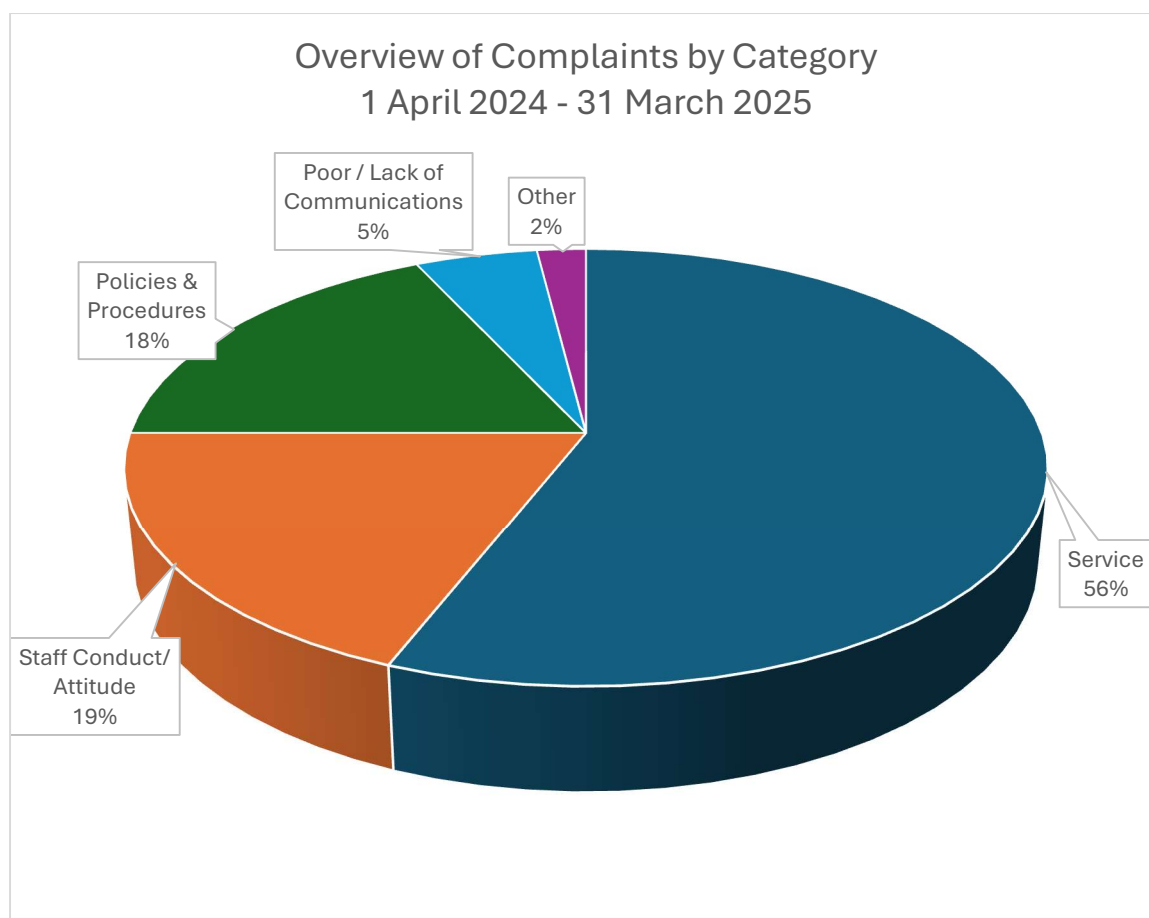
DIRECTORATE	Service/ Department	Complaints Analysis	Service Improvement Action(s)
DEVELOPMENT, COMMUNITY & WELL BEING	Health & Recreation	Customer complained that the Multi activity day did not provide the advertised activities.	Customer contacted and apology provided. The customer was provided with a free day pass for child and friend.
		Customer complained of the number of running events taking place on site preventing cyclists and walkers from using the cycle routes/footpaths.	Customer was contacted and provided with assurances the Health & Recreation Department will ensure when events are taking place in the relevant areas, that there is improved communication /signage to all customers advising them of the events taking place.
	Community Development	Customer /school complained that on a number of occasions, despite community centre having been booked, when they arrived the centre has been closed.	Customer was contacted and advised upon review of records and speaking with the relevant staff, a booking was recorded for 1 specific date, but no booking recorded for the 2 nd date. To prevent future occurrences, the service will review booking procedures to ensure clear communication and proper documentation of all bookings and also take steps to verify any discrepancies promptly.
DIRECTORATE	Service/ Department	Complaints Analysis	Service Improvement Action(s)
DEVELOPMENT, COMMUNITY & WELL BEING	Tourism, Arts & Culture	Customer complained that information provided on app was unclear and misleading regarding exact dates and times of markets.	Customer was contacted and apology given for inconvenience caused. Quality check was undertaken to ensure the Visit Armagh site is as user friendly as possible, so that event details can be accessed easily.
	Economic Development	Customer complained about their experience and staff conduct.	Customer contacted and provided with an outcome of the meeting held with staff about the complaint. They were advised that the employee has agreed to attend relevant training courses on customer care and dealing with customers.

ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES & SUSTAINABILITY	Environmental Services	Customer complained that the Recycling centre closed, and gates locked with no explanation as to why.	Contacted Resident to advise centre closed for staff training, apologised for inconvenience
		Customer complained that when emptied their bin has been constantly left in the middle of their driveway	Customer was contacted and apology given for inconvenience caused. They were advised that the crews would be given a reminder on the day of collection to return bin to collection point. Supervisors will carry out inspections when crews in the area emptying bins to ensure they are left back to correct collection points.
	Climate, Sustainability & Parks	Customer complained that there is a lack of useable public toilet facilities in council park.	Customer contacted and acknowledged that whilst Portaloos were not ideal, unfortunately at the time the main public toilets were closed for repairs, therefore temporary toilet provision was provided. The main toilets have re-opened. Furthermore, the customer was advised we are currently hoping to upgrade the toilet facilities in the park and was encouraged to participate in future consultation.
DIRECTORATE	Service/ Department	Complaints Analysis	Service Improvement Action(s)
ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES & SUSTAINABILITY	Climate, Sustainability & Parks	Customer complained about a person being locked in a Council owned Park.	Customer contacted and lock up procedure explained –park areas are locked up first then the main park. Attendant reminded about Lock up Protocol, Staff also reminded about engagement and checking areas prior to lock up.
REGULATORY SERVICES, FACILITIES & ASSETS	Planning	Customer complained that the planning process was taking too long, and they had received no communication confirming expected timeline.	Customer contacted and provided with an update. A briefing was delivered by the service manager to all staff on the expected standards of good customer service in carrying out duties as part of their monthly team meeting.
	Estates & Asset Management	Customer complained that facility was closed at short notice during mid-term break.	The customer was contacted and apology issued for any inconvenience. It was explained that the facility was closed due to staffing issues, at the time.
CHIEF EXECUTIVE/ DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE	Human Resources & Organisational Development	Customer complained that Human Resources did not provide feedback after shortlisting to external candidates.	The customer was contacted and provided with an explanation regarding Council Recruitment Procedures. In addition, a feedback letter was provided. A review of the procedure was conducted; as at July 2025 procedure has been amended.

4.2 COMPLAINT TRENDS AND LESSONS LEARNED FROM COMPLAINTS

Previously complaint categories had not been identified by Council, however over the last 15 months, analysis has identified the following complaint categories:

Category	2024/25	Departmental breakdown analysis
Service Provision / (including Quality of Service provision)	56%	Health & Recreation: 35% Environmental Services: 29% Climate, Sustainability & Parks: 18% Other Depts: 18%
Staff Conduct/Attitude	19%	Health & Recreation: 28% Environmental Services: 44% Climate, Sustainability & Parks: 14% Other Depts: 14%
Policies & Procedures	18%	Health & Recreation: 29% Tourism, Arts & Culture: 39% Planning: 12% Other Depts: 20%
Poor /lack of Communications	5%	Health & Recreation: 25% Environmental Services: 50% Other Depts: 25%
Other	2%	



We can see that the majority of complaints received have fallen into the category of Service Provision/Quality of Service Provision. This included for example, complaints raised by customers on cancellations of classes, cleanliness of facilities, opening hours and maintenance of /broken equipment etc. Where complaints of this nature were raised management are reviewing cancellation processes for indoor leisure, cleaning of facilities and have communicated to staff to ensure both the cleaning rota is enforced schedule for regular reviews of equipment is carried out.

Where complaints were about Staff Conduct/Attitude the complaint has been addressed directly with the employee, so they are aware of the impact on their customers. Corporately a programme of Customer Relations training has been developed and will be targeted at customer facing roles during 2025/26 and beyond.

As part of Council's Our People Programme, a Workstream to address Values, Behaviours and Customer Care was established in June 2024. The aim of the cross departmental workstream is to build on our existing people management practices and staff feedback, to define and improve our workplace culture: where staff feel effectively led, managed, developed, supported, included, valued and engaged, to give their best. This included the development of a Framework of expected behaviours and an associated implementation plan. The framework will underpin Council's values in line with our Corporate Plan, Customer Care Behaviours and Customer Care Charter. Work is progressing at pace, with an agreed Values and Behavioural Framework to be approved in 2025/26.

Corporately, 18% of complaints received within 2024/25, have been categorised as relating to Policies & Procedures. It is acknowledged that the majority (2/3rds) of these related to complaints received regarding an event held in a Council-owned facility. The event did proceed, and the complaints were not upheld. Council advised, as with all performances, the views expressed by artists presenting their work are the artists' views alone and do not represent the views of Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council. Throughout the year, the venue hosts many performances and exhibitions that reflect a range of creative and cultural viewpoints. Whilst the presentation and subject matter may not have appealed to some people, Council does not undermine the right to freedom of expression and, as such, the production proceeded as booked. The remaining 1/3rd of the 18% of complaints relating to Policies and Procedures included for example: refund issues, how managers dealt with customer behaviours and staff uniforms.

Complaints were also raised around poor Communications. As part of Council's Performance Improvement Plan 2024/25, two areas for improvement identified are '*to continue to improve our Communications to our customers on Waste Management Services and to improve Communications with our customers on Council services and responsibilities*'. Actions linked to these performance improvement objectives include a review of Council's website, to ensure accurate and up to date information is communicated to customers and to develop and implement an annual Environmental Services Communication Plan.

The Council has a clear commitment to listen to our customers and act on their feedback. Our learning from complaints will be a continuous process that helps the council to resolve common complaints and further improve the services that are provided. The next section of the report provides a sample of case studies and the service improvements and importantly the learnings taken from customer complaints/feedback.

4.2 CASE STUDIES

Development, Community & Wellbeing Directorate

During the year the Indoor Leisure Team within Health & Recreation department has received a number of complaints relating to Service provision including, difficulty of accessing services and cancellations.

As part of reviewing and acknowledging the complaints raised, the department is proactively looking at management of classes and delivery model options to ensure that cancellations are reduced in the future, including an ongoing recruitment campaign for additional staff.

In terms of processes and how they are applied, Indoor Leisure now allows for time to be built in to booking schedules between private and public sessions and increased communication with staff on duty regarding booking processes.

In November 2024, Tourism, Arts & Culture Department received a complaint regarding the level of catering and cleanliness at one of their facilities. The complaint handler undertook investigation and was able to provide the customer with an apology that our service fell far short of expectations and of Council's usual high standard of service. The customer was also thanked for bringing this matter to the facility's attention.

The complaint handler shared with the customer the difficulties currently being experienced with staffing and recruitment. As a result, the menu on offer has been reduced, offering only light refreshments rather than the full menu for the foreseeable future. The complaint handler also provided assurances that Council would deliver a clearer message and more consistent offering for our customers.

In communicating with the customer, the department was clear highlighting that the explanation of the current circumstances in the facility does not excuse poor cleanliness or service and provided assurances to act on their complaint and will continue to work hard to improve delivery for all our customers.

Environmental Services & Sustainability Directorate

During the year, both the Climate Sustainability & Parks and Environmental Services departments received a number of complaints from customers in relation to Staff Attitude/ Staff Conduct. Where complaints were about the actions of employees (e.g. behaviour, conduct, process / procedure not followed etc.) apologies have been offered to the customer and the complaint has been addressed directly with staff, so they are aware of the impact on their customers.

The importance of all staff to undertake the Complaints Handling General Awareness training has been further communicated to these departments to ensure the knowledge of how complaints are handled and is in place. In addition, all Heads of Departments have been advised and encouraged to ensure staff participation in future Customer Care/ Customer Service Training programme.

The aforementioned Values & Behavioural Framework will further enhance and embed the management of expected behaviours.

The departments have also learned the importance of good communication. Early responses to enquiries and complaints can prevent further escalation and will ensure customers are satisfied with the service we provide.

Regulatory Services, Facilities & Assets Directorate

During the year, a number of complaints were received within this Directorate relating to Policies & Procedures.

As part of identifying improvements from the complaints received, the Planning and Estates & Asset Management departments responded with the decision to include improved communication on Council's website on Protocol for Operation at Planning Committee and Instructions on How to Use the new Car Parking App.

Complaints relating to Other Public Authorities

During 2024/25, Council received 21 complaints that fell outside the remit of Council responsibilities. Specifically recurring complaints (71%) have been received relating to matters relating to Department for infrastructure. (DfI). Other complaints raised related to services provided by NI Water Service, Citizen Advice Services, NI Housing Executive and PSNI. Council responded to these customers signposting them to the correct authority and provided customers with contact details for that authority.

Actions in Council's Performance Improvement Plans for 2025 /2026 include 'a review of the website including a section clearly outlining Council services and responsibilities, and to provide contact/links to external organisations for services which customers often confuse with Council services. The aim is to provide customers with more direct access to the correct Government Departments and other public bodies in relation to their enquiry /complaint and increase efficiency on addressing customer complaints/enquiries.

Cross Departmental complaints - lessons learned:

Through the period of implementation and roll out of the new procedure Council received a number of complaints that were cross departmental in nature. The Complaints Handling Procedure outlines the process for cross departmental complaints. However, there were examples of departments continuing to work in isolation, addressing and resolving only their 'element' of the complaint. Consequently, this led to 'unresolved' complaints, whereby the customer returned to Council on a number of occasions for answers on the remaining elements of their complaint.

As part of the established Complaint Handling Working Group, the correct process has been highlighted with all departments, reminding them to initiate a co-ordinated approach when dealing with complaints of a cross-departmental nature.

5.0 NORTHERN IRELAND PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN NIPSO

There has been continued engagement with NIPSO throughout the implementation of the New Complaints Handling Model. NIPSO has been working to develop and provide resources to organisations that support best practice in complaints handling and implementation of Complaint Standards and the Model Complaints Handling Procedure (MCHP). A new suite of Complaints Standards training videos and guidance resource package will be available for release in 2025/26. These resources will be shared and made available to all Council departments. An option once the Council's complaints 2 stage have been exhausted is that the complainant may refer their complaint to the NIPSO. Currently NIPSO have no referred complaints regarding this Council.

6.0 CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT/ FUTURE ACTIONS

We aim to increase the knowledge and skill of all employees on allocating, handling and where required, escalating complaints. This will ensure we can provide solutions to our customers quickly and efficiently. As part of Council's continuous improvement journey, there are a number of ongoing initiatives being delivered; these are detailed below.

Continued roll out of the General Awareness Training and Stage 2 Investigation training on Complaints Handling Procedure is ongoing throughout 2025/26. Participation and completion rates are regularly reviewed, with follow up with those relevant departments to ensure all staff/ relevant officers that require the training participate.

Council's Corporate Induction Training Programme now includes a designated Customer Care section. All new employees are provided with an overview of Council's Customer Charter, Values & Behaviours, acceptable / nonacceptable behaviours and how Council handles complaints.

As previously mentioned, an in-house Customer Relations / Customer Care Training Programme has been developed. The programme will offer a suite of modules /sessions, which Heads of Department/ Managers can select based on their identified need. The programme is to be piloted with a number of departments/ services early 2025/ 26, with the anticipation of commencing wider roll out across the organisation from Autumn/ Winter 2025.

Work will also continue on Council's Our People Programme, specifically the implementation of a Values & Behaviour Framework.

Scheduled meetings with all Heads of Department and Tier 4 Managers, commenced in January 2025 and will continue to be held throughout 2025/26. This provides an opportunity for management to have in depth discussions on all Customer Relations areas of work, including identification of their customer base, communications with consumers, business continuity, training needs, handling complaints, upcoming consultations and the importance of shared learning across the organisation.

The designated Customer Relations Officer continues to provide a lead advisory role for supporting departments with customer feedback, complaints handling and training. They assist also with customer surveys to further service improvement and performance.

7.0 COMPLIMENTS

Whilst this report has illustrated the data captured on complaints, service improvements made, and lessons learnt; it is equally important to recognise Customer Compliments.

Compliments can be a strong indicator of service quality and customer satisfaction. They reflect the positive impact that Council employees and services have on the community, reinforcing trust and confidence in the delivery of our public services.

Compliments not only boost staff morale and motivation but also highlight effective practices that can be replicated across departments. Positive feedback serves as a reminder that public service can meet and exceed expectations, contributing to a culture of excellence, accountability, and continuous improvement.

The following compliments were received from customers relating services within the Environmental Services and Health & Recreation departments.

“The staff at Newline not only guide you to the proper area, but they do it with a smile. Their attitude and demeanour are welcoming and helpful. 10 out of 10 for service”

“I just want to let you know that you have a superstar of a lady that works in the bins/recycling dept for Banbridge. I am an assisted lift resident and any ‘hiccups’ that have occurred from day 1 has always been sorted out with such as pleasant and approachable manner.”

“I would love me to commend employee who works in Dromore amenity centre for his hard work and excellent customer service. He is always willing to give assistance before you have to ask. He is very approachable and deserves to be praised”

“I personally spoke to the guy when he was there last week and thanked him for his work on this. He appears to be a humble guy, who takes pride in his work and just wants to get the job done with minimum fuss. He has made a brilliant job of the laneway, and he is a real asset to ABC Council”

“I just wanted to thank your staff at the front reception desk today, for the way they dealt with my membership update. They were all very professional in a very busy environment.... she was just amazing, so friendly to me my son and his friend. She made it so easy to update our membership. She was absolutely enthusiastic and displayed a kind approach to us all. We all love attending the gym and facilities and it’s lovely to see such friendly people”.

“Today’s Pilateswhat an amazing class, what an amazing person, everyone was bubbling with excitement at the end of the class, we congregated in the car park still exclaiming how good the class was, how good the instructor was”

Appendix 7

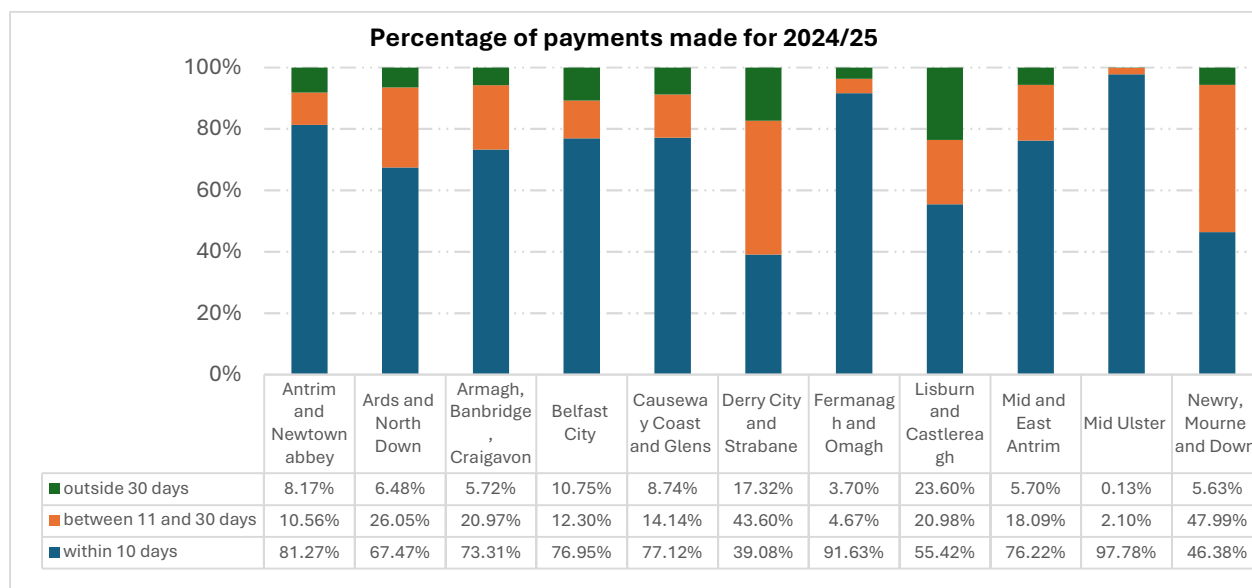
PROMPT PAYMENTS

Council Name	19/20			20/21			21/22			22/23			23/24			24/25		
	within 10 days	within 30 days	outside 30 days	within 10 days	within 30 days	outside 30 days	within 10 days	within 30 days	outside 30 days	within 10 days	within 30 days	outside 30 days	within 10 days	within 30 days	outside 30 days	within 10 days	within 30 days	outside 30 days
<i>Antrim and Newtownabbey</i>	18390	22760	3810	12,792	15,284	1,817	13,855	17,101	4,232	12,999	17,938	4,625	18,300	22,083	4,315	17,912	20,239	1,801
<i>Ards and North Down</i>	14560	20174	1414	10,576	12,706	549	13,649	15,826	329	13,997	17,468	626	12,702	16,842	634	14,558	20,179	1,398
<i>Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council</i>	5,713	20,105	10,120	9,272	17,204	1,766	11,957	20,659	1,053	15,408	21,457	1,209	18,850	22,706	885	17,390	22,365	1,357
<i>Belfast City</i>	50885	63385	4425	39,959	48,218	3,375	57,882	66,649	4,553	72,656	79,378	7,081	61,301	70,456	5,173	53,191	61,691	7,433
<i>Causeway Coast and Glens</i>	12066	23786	6216	14,614	18,361	2,705	17,823	23,839	2,117	17,367	23,220	2,421	20,126	24,146	3,507	21,660	25,631	2,454
<i>Derry City and Strabane</i>	12078	21643	4979	6,305	13,894	3,755	5,375	13,311	7,273	7,881	16,838	6,066	8,390	18,074	3,897	8,733	18,476	3,870
<i>Fermanagh and Omagh</i>	15332	17715	1111	14,888	16,183	1,048	14,553	16,077	1,095	15,431	16,957	751	14,615	15,548	901	14,369	15,101	581
<i>Lisburn and Castlereagh</i>	13957	19570	1888	9,842	12,045	1,768	13,898	16,006	1,491	13,338	15,380	2,247	11,478	15,826	2,012	9,771	13,470	4,162
<i>Mid and East Antrim</i>	13082	22550	3609	16,368	23,808	4,660	27,210	38,164	2,120	29,230	34,130	5,171	17,093	21,250	4,843	18,147	22,454	1,356
<i>Mid Ulster</i>	15148	17141	1025	10,931	12,873	635	18,790	19,953	284	17,668	18,024	100	16,673	16,827	37	17,144	17,512	22
<i>Newry, Mourne and Down</i>	8320	21647	2447	1,676	13,098	2,125	3,042	15,442	1,998	6,730	13,746	2,243	8,832	16,812	887	7,559	15,380	917
	179531	270476	41044	147,223	203,674	24,203	198,034	263,027	26,545	222,705	274,536	32,540	208,360	260,570	27,091	200,434	252,498	25,351
		311,520			227,877			289,572			307,076			287,661			277,849	

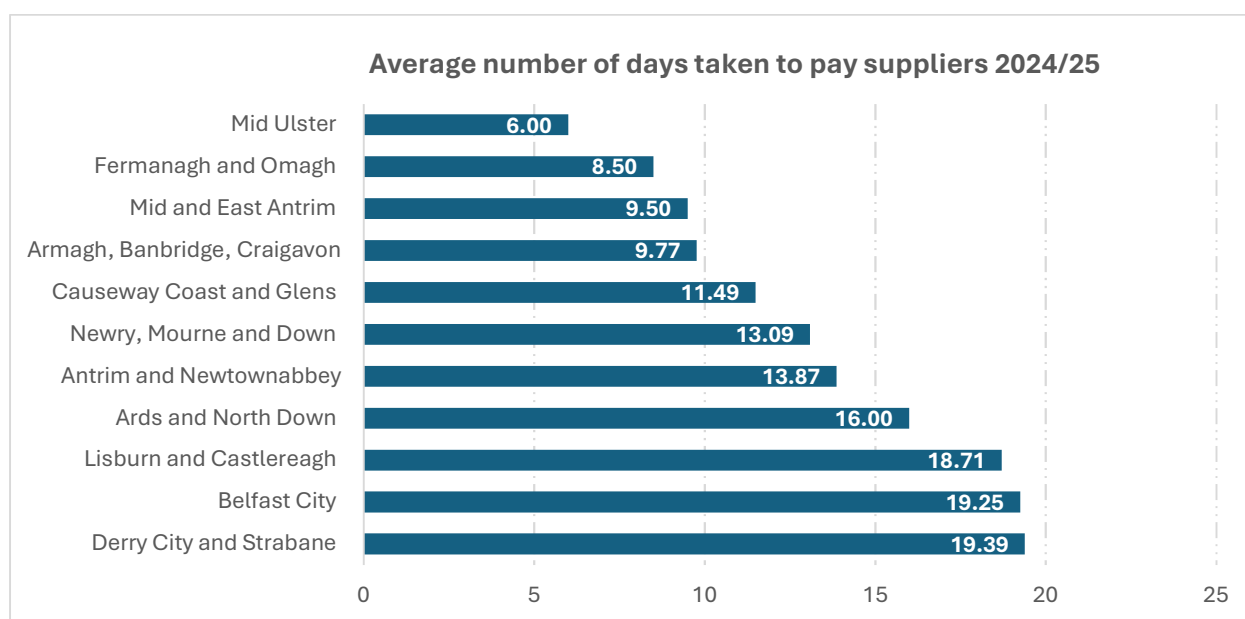
Council Name	19/20			2020/21			2021/22			2022/23			2023/24			2024/24		
	within 10 days	within 30 days	outside 30 days	within 10 days	within 30 days	outside 30 days	within 10 days	within 30 days	outside 30 days	within 10 days	within 30 days	outside 30 days	within 10 days	within 30 days	outside 30 days	within 10 days	within 30 days	outside 30 days
<i>Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council</i>	5,713	20,105	10,120	9,272	17,204	1,766	11,957	20,659	1,053	15,408	21,457	1,209	18,850	22,706	885	17,390	22,365	1,357
			35,938			28,242			21,712			22,666			23,591			23,722
	15.9%	55.9%	28.2%	32.8%	60.9%	6.3%	55.1%	95.2%	4.8%	68.0%	94.7%	5.3%	79.9%	96.2%	3.8%	73.7%	94.8%	5.8%

PROMPT PAYMENTS 2024/25

During 2024/25 Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon processed and paid 73.31% of their invoices within 10 days with just 5.72% of the payments being made outside of 30 days.



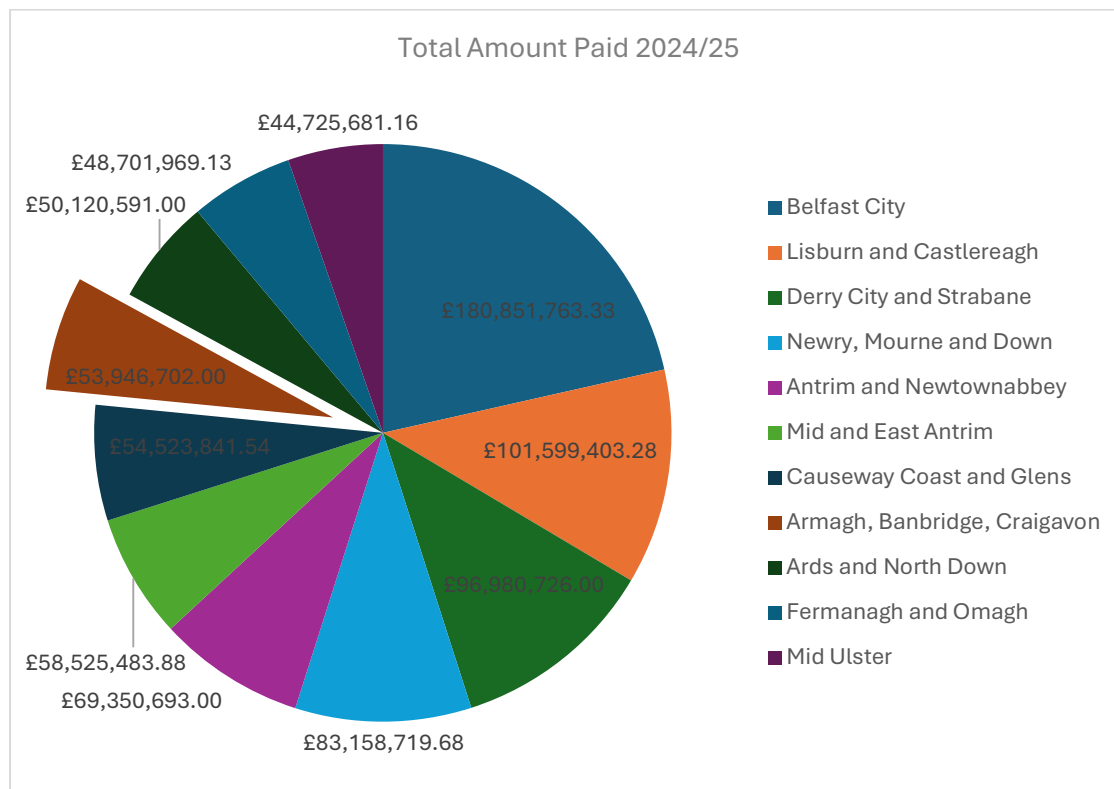
Average number of days taken to pay suppliers 2024/25



During 2024/25, the average number of days taken to pay suppliers ranged from 6 days in Mid Ulster to 19.39 days in Derry City and Strabane. Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon took an average of 9.77 days.

Total amount paid 2023/24

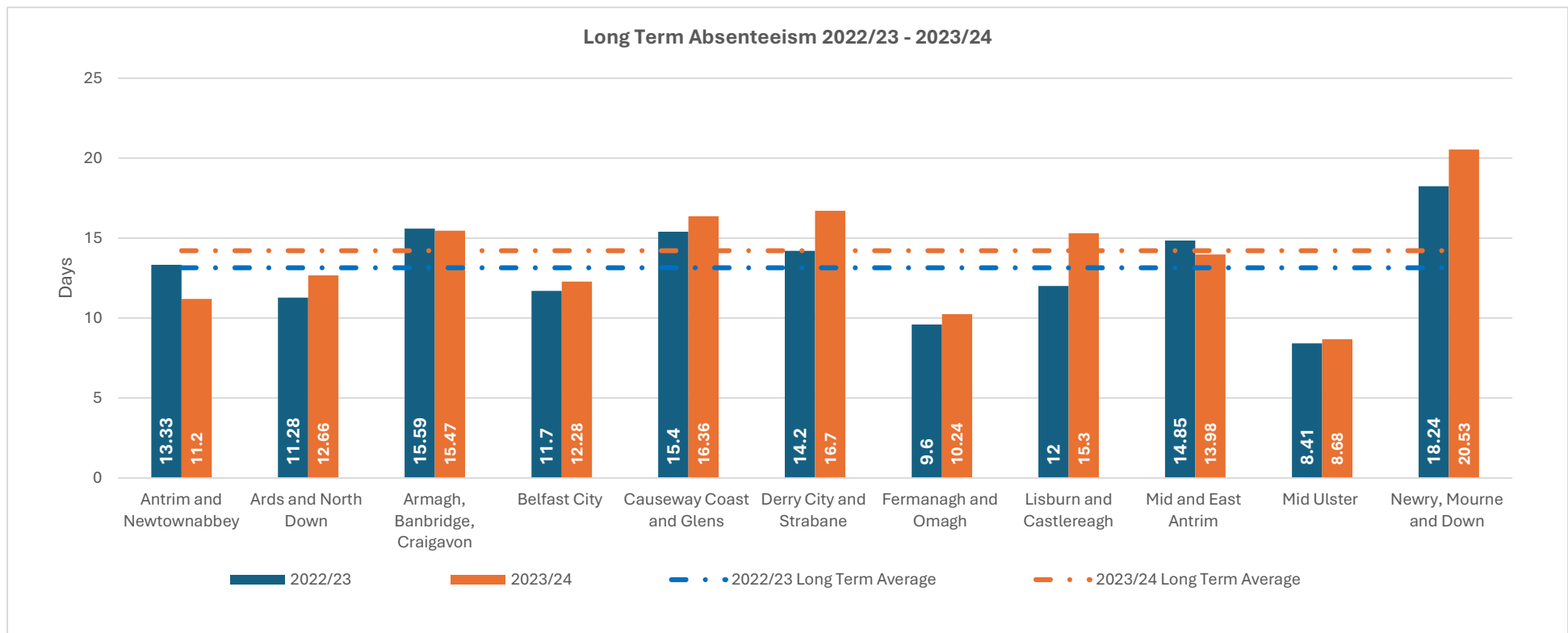
The total amount paid per council area in 2024/25 is presented in the pie chart below. Belfast City council made payments to the value of £180.8m compared to Mid Ulster who paid out the least amount at approximately £44.7m. Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon had the fourth lowest total amount of payments at £53.9m during 2024/25.



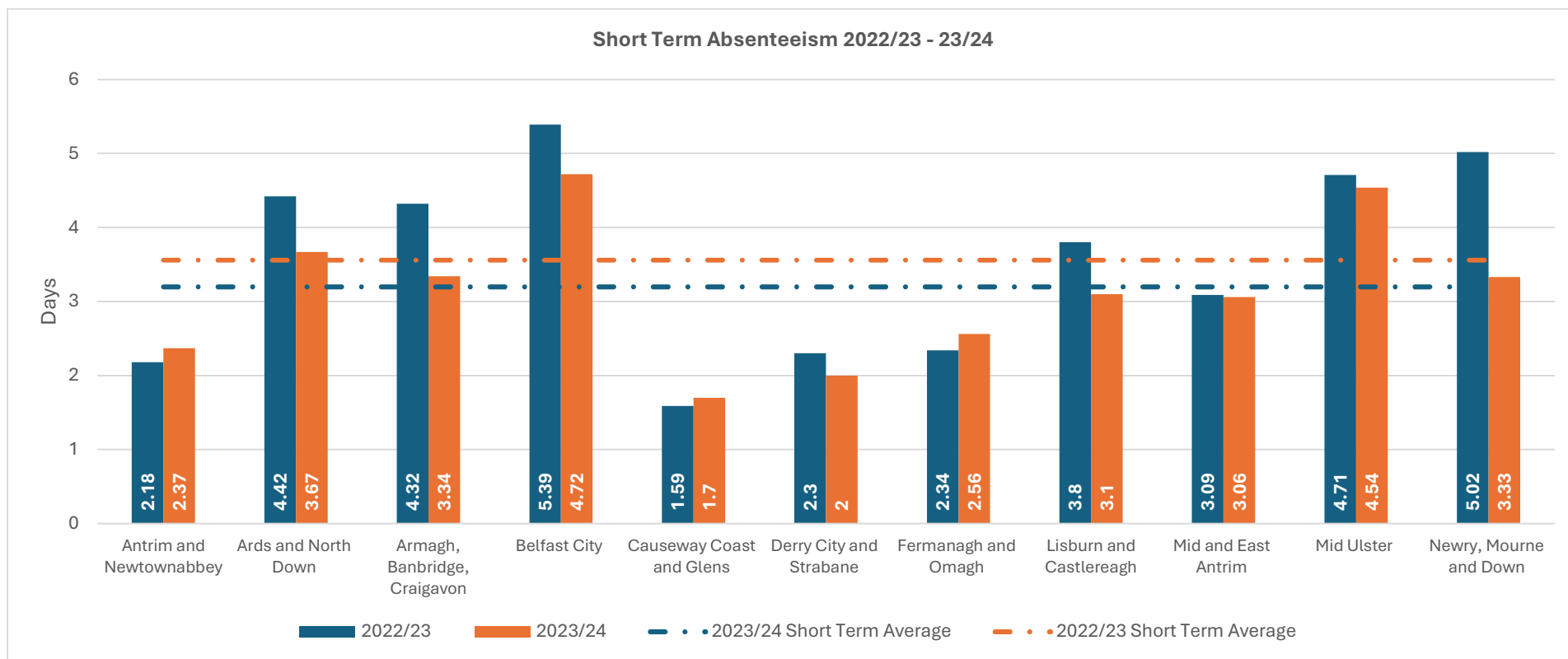
STAFF ABSENCE

Data for other ten councils in 2023/24. Data for 2024/25 is not currently available for all Councils.

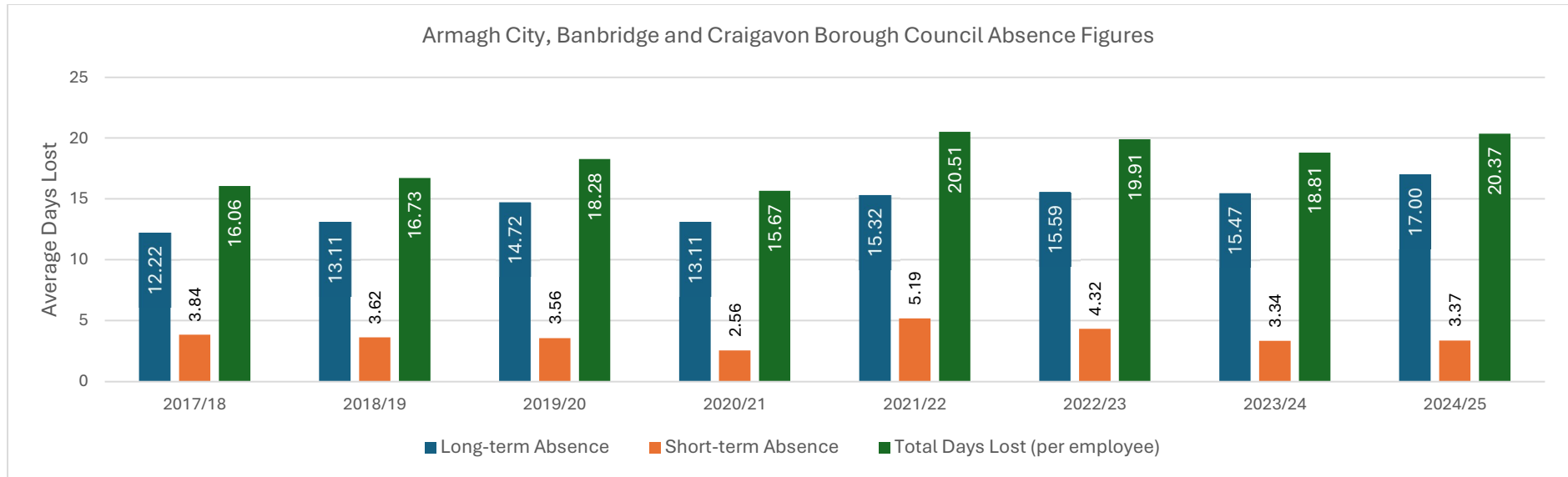
Council	2023/24			2022/23			2021/22			2020/21			2019/20			2018-19			2017-18		
	Long-term	Short-term	Total	Long-term	Short-term	Total	Long-term	Short-term	Total	Long-term	Short-term	Total	Long-term	Short-term	Total	Long-term	Short-term	Total	Long-term	Short-term	Total
<i>Antrim and Newtownabbey</i>	11.20	2.37	13.59	13.33	2.18	15.51	12.85	1.85	14.7	7.15	0.72	7.87	9.56	2.85	12.41	11	2.73	13.73	8.89	2.99	11.88
<i>Ards and North Down</i>	12.66	3.67	16.33	11.28	4.42	15.7	10.94	3.23	14.17	8.87	1.71	10.59	10.48	3.71	14.19	10.53	3.7	14.23	12.16	4	16.16
<i>Armagh, Banbridge, Craigavon</i>	15.47	3.34	18.81	15.59	4.32	19.91	15.32	5.19	20.51	13.11	2.56	15.67	14.72	3.56	18.28	13.11	3.62	16.73	12.22	3.84	16.06
<i>Belfast City</i>	12.28	4.72	17	11.7	5.39	17.09	11.19	5.14	16.33	8.28	2.58	10.86	8.95	4.63	13.58	9.25	4.46	13.71	8.81	4.91	13.72
<i>Causeway Coast and Glens</i>	16.36	1.7	18.06	15.4	1.59	16.99	15.38	1.65	17.03	10.17	1.17	11.34	15.11	2.55	17.66	14.91	2.22	17.13	12.92	2.87	15.79
<i>Derry City and Strabane</i>	16.7	2	18.7	14.2	2.3	16.5	14	2.8	16.8	8.10	2.27	10.37	9.40	5.1	14.5	9.1	3.2	12.3	11.3	2.7	14
<i>Fermanagh and Omagh</i>	10.24	2.56	12.8	9.6	2.34	11.94	9.6	3.55	13.15	7.84	1.85	9.69	10.47	3.3	13.77	7.41	3.03	10.44	8.88	3.99	12.87
<i>Lisburn and Castlereagh</i>	15.3	3.1	18.4	12	3.8	15.8	10.1	3.5	13.6	10.30	1.2	11.50	11.60	2.2	13.8	11.2	2.1	13.3	14.2	2.5	16.7
<i>Mid and East Antrim</i>	13.98	3.06	17.04	14.85	3.09	17.95	12.83	2.38	15.21	1.19	3.49	4.68	8.11	2.53	10.64	10.87	3.18	14.05	13.96	3.12	17.08
<i>Mid Ulster</i>	8.68	4.54	13.22	8.41	4.71	13.12	7.85	4.24	12.09	7.15	2.57	9.72	7.84	3.86	11.7	8.73	4.17	12.9	8.1	4.27	12.37
<i>Newry, Mourne and Down</i>	20.53	3.33	23.86	18.24	5.02	23.26	15.62	5.04	20.66	11.20	2.40	13.60	11.70	4.1	15.8	10.97	3.73	14.7	12.58	4.58	17.16
Average sickness absence	14.22	3.20	17.07	13.15	3.56	16.71	12.33	3.51	15.84	10.99	2.14	13.13	12.60	3.67	13.87	10.22	3.29	13.93	11.27	3.62	14.89



Between 2022/23 and 2023/24, long-term absenteeism has increased for 8 out of 11 councils. Whilst long-term absenteeism remains a significant issue for Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council there has been a slight improvement from 15.59 in 2022/23 to an average of 15.47 days in 2023/24. Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council is the 4th highest for long term absenteeism and is 1.25 days per employee above the Northern Ireland average of 14.22 for 2023/24. Newry, Mourne and Down has the highest rate of long-term absenteeism at 20.53 days per employee and Mid Ulster has the lowest at 8.68 days per employee.



In terms of short-term absenteeism, the number of days lost has fallen in 8 of the 11 councils between 2022/23 and 2023/24. In Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon, the number of days lost due to short-term absenteeism has fallen from 4.32 in 2022/23 to an average of 3.34 days in 2023/24 leaving the Borough with the fourth highest rate of short-term absenteeism of all councils in 2022/23. Nonetheless, short-term absenteeism in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough remains above the Northern Ireland average of 3.2 days per employee in 2023/24. Belfast now has the highest rate of short-term absenteeism at 4.72 days per employee while Causeway Coast and Glens has the lowest at 1.7 days per employee.



Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council showed a downward trend in days lost for long-term absenteeism and short-term absenteeism from 2021/22 to 2023/24 resulting in an overall decrease in the total days lost per employee from 20.51 in 2021-22 to 18.81 days per employee in 2023-24. In 2024/25 council has seen an increase of 1.56 days from 18.81 to 20.37. However, it is important to note that at the time of reporting, 2023/24 figures had not yet been verified by NIAO.

Information to be compiled by Public Authorities under Section 3(1)(a) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.

(To be completed and included in public authorities' own annual reports and submitted to DAERA for inclusion in the Rural Needs Annual Monitoring Report).

Name of Public Authority:

Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council

Reporting Period:

April 20 24 to March 20 25

The following information should be compiled in respect of each policy, strategy and plan which has been developed, adopted, implemented, or revised and each public service which has been designed or delivered by the public authority during the reporting period.

<i>Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016¹.</i>	<i>The rural policy area(s) which the activity relates to².</i>	<i>Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service³.</i>
Development of a Business Continuity Policy.	Internal Policy	No rural needs were identified.
Request to hold a Charity Music Concert in Lurgan Park.	Other	No rural needs were identified.
Revision of a Corporate Health and Safety Policy.	Internal Policy	No rural needs were identified.

<p>Development of a Corporate Plan.</p>	<p>Cross Cutting – rural businesses, tourism, housing, jobs or employment, broadband, transport services, poverty, deprivation, rural crime, rural development, agri - environment</p>	<p>The Corporate Plan will have a positive impact on people in rural areas, as the council will deliver services and activities across the following five main priorities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Wellbeing. • Economic Growth. • Environment & Place. • Service Delivery; and • Staff, Leadership and Resources. <p>Services and activities relating to the five main priorities will be delivered across the entire borough, including villages, small towns and rural areas.</p> <p>The Access to Services domain is particularly relevant to rural areas; this measures the extent to which people have poor physical and online access to key services. The borough has nine Super Output Areas (10% of the total 87 Super Output Areas in the borough) in the top 100 most deprived in Northern Ireland on the Access to Services domain, each of these are defined as rural on the default Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency classification.</p> <p>The Access to Services domain consists of three indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service-weighted fastest travel time by private transport. • Service-weighted fastest travel time by public transport; and • Proportion of properties with broadband speed below 10Mb/s <p>The borough has areas within the top 100 most deprived in Northern Ireland in relation to each of these three indicators. For example, Bannside Super Output Area in the borough is the second most deprived Super Output Area in Northern Ireland in terms of proportion of properties with broadband speed below 10Mb/s.</p>
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		<p>Our Corporate Plan highlights social and economic key statistics relevant to the entire borough inclusive of both rural and urban areas. These statistics have been referenced under each priority.</p> <p>All strategies, plans, projects, and services detailed in the council's departmental business plans will need to be rural needs impact assessed in order to ensure that the council's statutory duty to promote rural needs is fully considered.</p>
Request to hold a Cultural Event in Solitude Park.	Other	No rural needs were identified.
Revision of the Disability Action Plan.	Other	To ensure our plan has fully considered the needs of the rural community we involved those living in rural areas during the consultation process and received responses regarding the impact on disabled people living in rural areas. Many of these comments related to areas beyond the council's remit. Others were shared with the Community Planning Team.
Revision of the Dog Control Enforcement Policy.	Other	No rural needs were identified.
Revision of the Equality Action Plan.	Other	We involved those living in rural areas during the consultation process to ensure our plan has fully considered the needs of the rural community. There were comments on community transport affecting disabled people living in rural areas and these were shared with the Community Planning Team.
Revision of the Environmental Health Quality Management Policy.	Internal Policy	No rural needs were identified.
Implementation of the Environmental Improvement Scheme – Gilford.	Cross Cutting – Rural Businesses, Rural Tourism, Transport Services or Infrastructure in Rural Areas	Access to and within Gilford is critical to all town users, rural and urban. The improvements will make the town more welcoming and user friendly and in return enhance the social and economic well-being of those who live in this rural area.
Implementation of the Environmental Improvement Scheme – Markethill.	Cross Cutting – Rural Businesses, Rural Tourism, Transport Services or Infrastructure in Rural Areas	Access to and within Markethill is critical to all town users, rural and urban. The improvements will make the town more

		welcoming and user friendly and in return enhance the social and economic well-being of those who live in this rural area.
Implementation of the Environmental Improvement Scheme – Rathfriland.	Cross Cutting – Rural Businesses, Rural Tourism, Transport Services or Infrastructure in Rural Areas	Access to and within Rathfriland is critical to all town users, rural and urban. The improvements will make the town more welcoming and user friendly and in return enhance the social and economic well-being of those who live in this rural area.
Implementation of the FE McWilliams Refurbishment.	Other	It has been recognised that there is a need for more integrated transport provision to the gallery. However, the provision of public transport and linkage of the gallery to rural locations is the responsibility of Translink, provider of public transport in the region.
Revision of the General Enforcement Policy.	Other	No rural needs were identified.
Development of the Legal Fees Policy.	Internal Policy	No rural needs were identified.
Development of the Northern Ireland Centenary Stones Policy.	Other	The Northern Ireland Centenary Stones commemorate 100 years of Northern Ireland. No rural needs were identified.
Development of the Performance Improvement Plan 2024-2025.	Internal	No rural needs were identified.
Revision of the Remote Meetings Protocol.	Broadband or Mobile Communications in Rural Areas	Members, officers and residents living in rural areas will benefit from being able to access meetings online.
Revision of the Risk Management Policy.	Internal	No rural needs were identified.
Revision of the Smoking Policy.	Internal	No rural needs were identified.
Revision of the Street Trading Policy and Procedure.	Internal	No rural needs were identified.
Implementation of the Tak£500+ Participatory Budgeting Project 2023-24.	Cross Cutting – Broadband or Mobile Communications in Rural Areas, Transport Services or Infrastructure in Rural Areas	Tak£500+ is the name the community planning partnership working group selected for the Participatory Budgeting Project. In considering the social and economic needs of people living in rural areas it was acknowledged that access to the digital infrastructure and public transport can be more

		<p>challenging for those living in rural areas. As a result, the following mitigations were implemented.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One of the three voting events is held in a rural setting. • The names and numbers of the Participatory Budgeting Working Group are published in all promotional documents; and • An online event was also held for those who could not travel to the in-person events. <p>The project evaluation for the previous Tak£500+ process in 2022-23 mapped the addresses of voters and project applications. The definition of rural used was anywhere outside the main urban centres of Craigavon, Portadown, Lurgan, Banbridge, Armagh and Dromore. The report highlighted that the overall rural/urban split of voters was 64% rural and 36% urban.</p> <p>Across all applications (successful, unsuccessful and withdrawn) there was a slightly higher percentage from urban areas (55%) compared to rural (45%).</p>
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Links to Rural Needs Impact Assessments

[Equality - Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council](#)

[Policies - Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council](#)

NOTES

1. This information should normally be contained in section 1B of the RNIA Template completed in respect of the activity.
2. This information should normally be contained in section 2D of the RNIA Template completed in respect of the activity.
3. The information contained in sections 3D, 4A & 5B of the RNIA Template should be considered when completing this section.