



Performance Improvement Plan

2024 - 2025



Belfast
City Council

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Foreword

I'm delighted to introduce Belfast City Council's Performance Improvement Plan 2024-25. This year's improvement plan has been developed alongside the city's refreshed community plan, The Belfast Agenda 2024-28 and our draft Corporate Plan 2024-28 which sets out a renewed focus, vision, and energy for what our organisation and our city want to achieve over the next four years. This is an exciting time for the city and as an organisation we remain fully determined to ensure that Belfast fulfils its full potential as an attractive place for people to live, work, visit, learn and invest in.

Whilst we are always determined to look ahead, the significant planning and engagement that took place during the development of our new strategies and plans has also enabled us to look back and reflect on our achievements, of which we can be proud. Notably, we're delighted that we met all our improvement objectives set out in our Performance Improvement Plan 2023-24. This included meeting or exceeding 81% of our key performance indicators whilst 86% of our key performance indicators either maintained or showed improvement on previous years which highlighting the positive impact that the work of council staff continues to have on our residents and stakeholders.

During 2023-24, the number of people using council leisure centres increased by 10.6%, highlighting the role that our facilities have in encouraging people to become more active. We've also worked hard to provide more opportunities for our residents and stakeholders to be more actively engaged in consultation and decision making. We've built on our work in relation to Participatory Budgeting, an approach which allows local people to influence small scale funding decisions. We have also seen a 24% increase in the number of responses to our consultation surveys in the last 12 months.

Through our work on climate and the environment, we're pleased to have been awarded a silver NI environmental benchmarking survey rating. The survey rates the actions that we are implementing to improve our environmental

performance. This is demonstrated through our continued commitment to reducing our organisation's carbon footprint. For instance, in 2024-25 90.2 % of the fuel consumed by our council fleet was Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil ensuring that the majority of our vehicles are using fossil-free paraffinic diesel as an environmentally friendly alternative fuel.

Our economic development team supported 688 local businesses and participants through business start-up and growth support initiatives, which included the production of 263 business plans. We also promoted 165 jobs through the 'Go For It' programme, helping to support more local people into employment.

We have also continued to support our most vulnerable residents through the ongoing cost-of-living crisis with 19,853 people supported through our online cost-of-living support and advice services and a further 2,161 individuals accessing our local warm and welcome spaces.

However, whilst much has been achieved, we remain committed to continually improving to ensure that Belfast is a great place that we can be proud of. Through this year's performance improvement objectives, we will continue to focus on what matters most to you – improving our services; supporting our people and communities; enhancing the quality of our place; protecting our planet; growing our economy and being a compassionate city.

Our dedication to continually improve underpins all of our work as we strive to improve the quality of life for all our communities, as we seek new and innovative ways to build a city that we can all be proud of.



John Walsh, Chief Executive

Introduction

Aligned to our city’s refreshed community plan, the Belfast Agenda 2024-28, Belfast City Council draft Corporate Plan 2024-28 and the annual Corporate Delivery Plan 2024-25, our Performance Improvement Plan 2024-25 sets out a number of priority areas where we intend to deliver improvements for our residents and stakeholders across the city.

Under the Local Government Act (NI) 2014, we have a statutory duty to agree improvement objectives, publish an annual Improvement Plan and ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place to achieve them. This is referred to as our “Duty to Improve”.

In accordance with the Act and accompanying guidance, for us “improvement” is about *enhancing the sustainable quality of life and environment for ratepayers and communities* rather than limited to gains in service output or efficiencies.

This year, the refreshed Belfast Agenda, the development of the draft Corporate Plan 2024-28 and the production of this plan coincided. This allowed us to align priorities and reinforce the link between them, providing a clear narrative and focus for all council improvement based on the areas where you think we could do better.

Our medium and longer-term arrangements to ensure continuous improvement are outlined in Figure 1 below. This plan sets out our performance improvement objectives for 2024 – 25 which are compliant with the requirement for them to be:

- **legitimate** - making a *demonstrable contribution* to at least one (or, probably, more than one) of the aspects of improvement listed in the Local Government Act.
- **clear** - setting out the *visible improvement* that citizens can expect.
- **robust** - with defined *terms of success* (whether *quantitative or qualitative*).
- **deliverable** - with established *links to individual service programmes and budgets*.
- **demonstrable** - capable of being supported by *objective (but not necessarily measured or quantitative) evidence*.



Looking back - performance improvement summary achievements 2023-24

Our 2023-24 year-end self-assessment will be published on our website in September 2024 and some key achievements are summarised below:



Arrangements to ensure continuous improvement

The council has a statutory duty to put arrangements in place to secure continuous improvement. Each year we are required to develop a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP). The PIP identifies objectives for the year ahead and the council’s actions to meet these objectives.

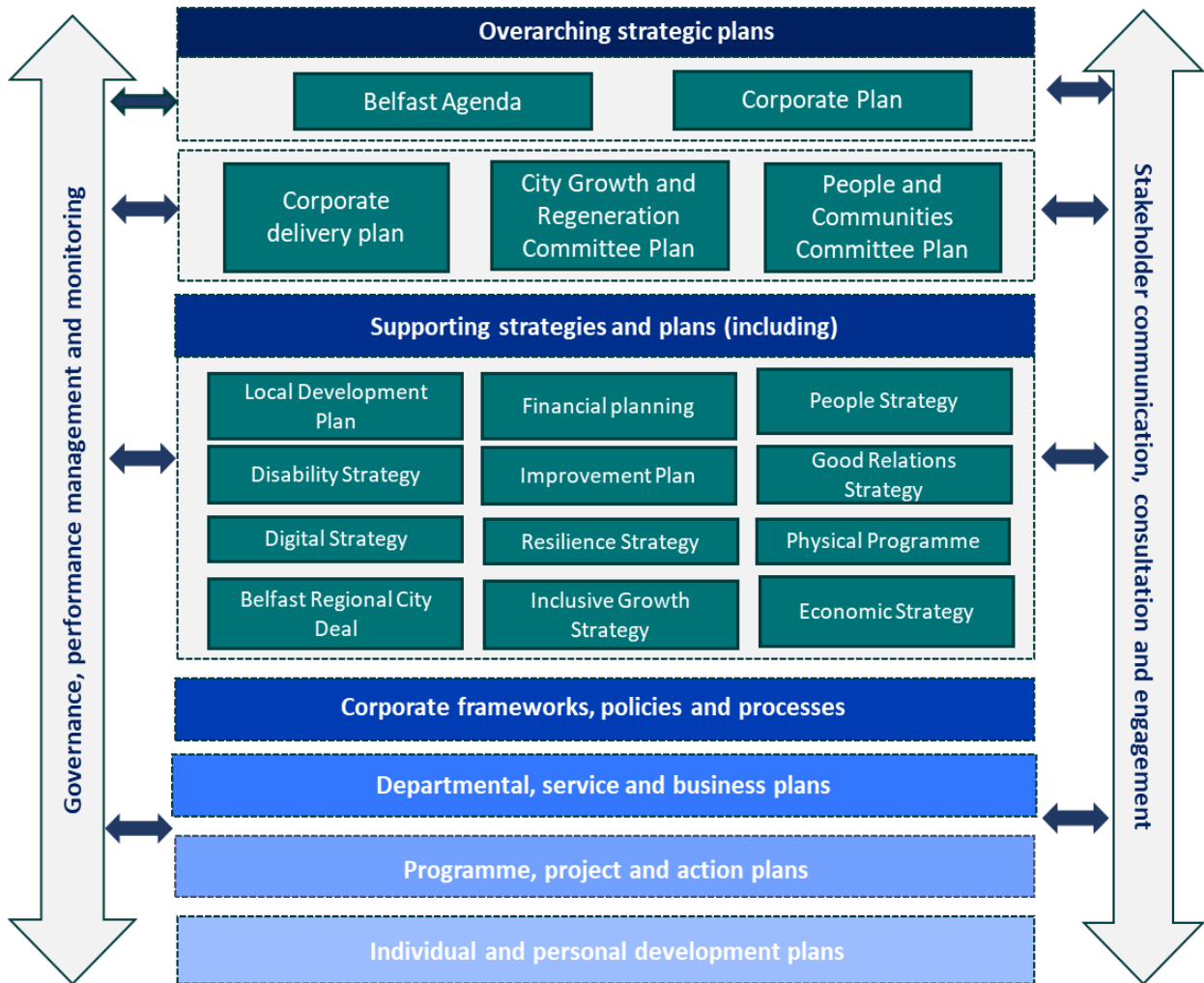
Everything we do in council is focused on improving the lives of people who live in or visit Belfast. The PIP is aligned to the Belfast Agenda outcomes and draft corporate plan priorities and is subject to, and informed by, public consultation. The council has well-established, robust, and comprehensive arrangements in place to ensure continuous improvement, summarised in figure 1 below. These arrangements are in accordance with Part 12 (Section 84 (2)) of the Local Government Act which states that they should improve our functions in terms of:



Council’s improvement framework

The council’s improvement framework sets out the various components of how the council works, bringing together the specific priorities, ambitions, and outcomes for the city of Belfast. It links the overarching strategic outcomes, ambitions and priorities of key strategies and plans to the annual individual works plans of our employees, making clear the contribution that individuals make towards achieving city and strategic outcomes. It provides a mechanism to establish and implement an integrated way of communicating and delivering objectives throughout council so that all plans, frameworks, and processes are clear and ‘joined up’, known as the ‘golden thread’.

FIGURE 1: Council’s improvement framework.



Strategic context

Our community plan, the Belfast Agenda was updated in 2024, with input from partners, residents, and other stakeholders to reflect the city’s current priorities. The overarching strategic plan explains the WHY of what we are doing, providing a holistic view of the needs and aspirations of the city, and articulating this in five long-term outcomes. It outlines how partners will work collectively to support the most vulnerable in our city while growing the economy, regenerating neighbourhoods, supporting communities, and achieving our climate targets. Figure 2 depicts the five strategic themes and priorities, the five things’ people want for Belfast by 2035 (our outcomes) and our ambitions which outline our key targets to make our vision a reality.



FIGURE 2: The Belfast Agenda 2024-28

The council’s draft Corporate Plan 2024-28 sets out our approach to delivering for local people in a time of both significant opportunity and considerable challenges for our city. The draft corporate plan is inextricably linked to the Belfast Agenda and explains WHAT the council will do to contribute to the outcomes above as well as outlining any other key priorities for us as an organisation. And finally, committee plans, and other departmental and business plans detail the HOW. Our corporate priority themes for the next four years are outlined on figure 3.

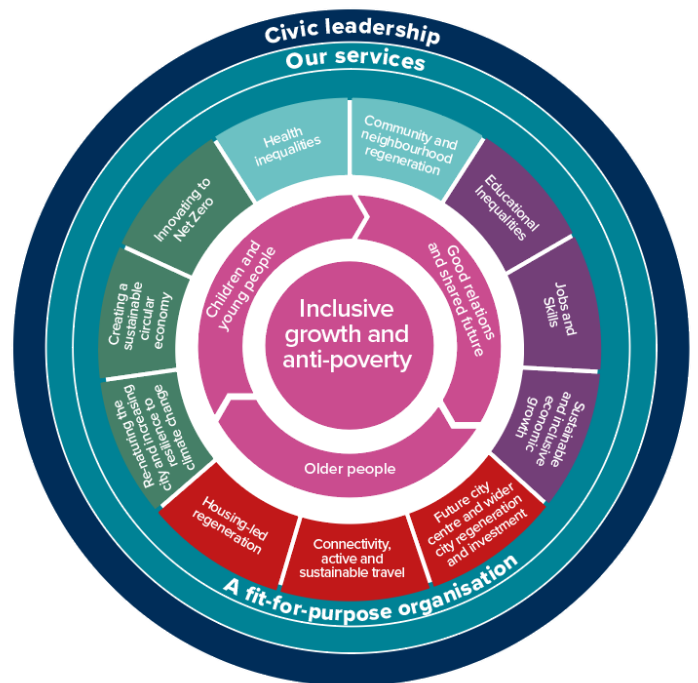
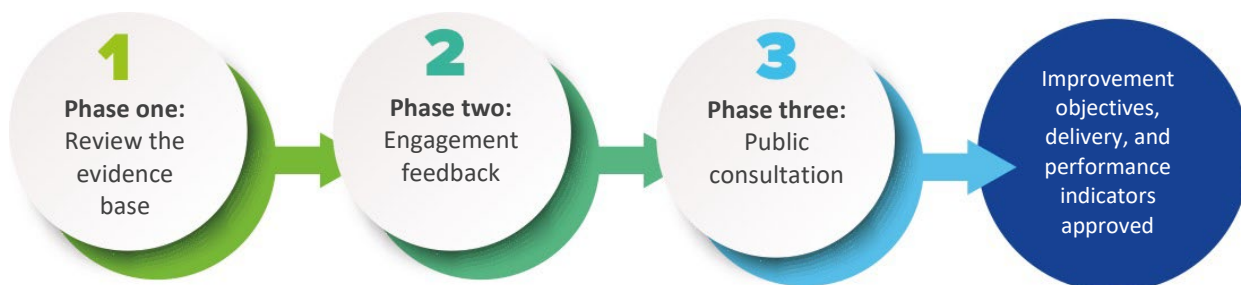


FIGURE 3: Council’s draft Corporate Plan 2024-28

Identifying our performance improvement objectives for 2024-25

All our key strategies and plans are informed and developed by listening to our residents, businesses, partners, staff, and elected representatives. Our 2024-25 performance improvement objectives were developed by rolling out a three-phase process. In phase one we reviewed the evidence base, in phase two, we engaged internally and in phase three, we carried out public consultation. The rich and diverse analysis and feedback we received throughout this process has been shaped into this revitalised Performance Improvement Plan 2024-25.

FIGURE 4: Three-phase process



Phase one: Reviewing the evidence base

Understanding the needs of users, citizens and the internal and external environment is critically important. We analysed baseline evidence drawn from existing engagement findings, survey results, performance data and a review of relevant strategies and plans, including:

- Results and trend data from our 2023-24 Performance Improvement Assessment report.
- Feedback gleaned from partners, residents, and other stakeholders as part of the consultation and engagement process for the Belfast Agenda’s refresh.
- Inclusion of guidance issued by the Department for Communities and recommendations provided by the NI auditor (including the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) Section 95 report).
- Evidence and issues arising from committee and meetings of the full council.
- Priorities identified during the rate setting process.
- Areas for improvement emerging from the internal audit and risk management processes.
- Results and trend data identified from the Residents Survey 2023.
- Good practice data benchmarking with other local authorities.
- Good practice research and a review of relevant strategies and plans, to ensure alignment to outcomes and ambitions and avoid duplication of effort, for example the Belfast Agenda, draft corporate plan, and annual corporate delivery plan.

Phase two: Engagement feedback

Feedback was gleaned and approval granted from engagement sessions including workshops and meetings, including:

- Priorities identified during corporate planning workshops with elected members, committee chairs and the Corporate Management Team (CMT).
- Planned service improvements identified during engagement with key officers from different council services.
- Regular engagement with departmental teams and key officers, at every phase – ensuring alignment to departmental and service level budget setting and planning processes.
- Meetings with Directors, Heads of Service and relevant managers to review draft content.
- Approval granted via scheduled meetings with senior management teams, CMT, committee and full council meetings.

Phase three: Public consultation

We carried out public consultation for eight weeks on the council’s Your Say Belfast consultation and engagement website (yoursay.belfastcity.gov.uk). We promoted the consultation using a range of communication methods including social media posts, posters in community buildings, email marketing to existing mailing lists, newsletters, news articles, staff memos, intranet promotion and websites. We used the analysis of the feedback to finalise the plan. As part of phase three, we:

- Carried out public consultation on the performance improvement objectives and proposed actions, with 92 responses received via the Your Say Belfast website. This represents an increase of 130% compared to the number of consultation responses that helped to inform the 2023-24 Performance Improvement Plan.
- Worked closely with departmental teams and key officers to consider consultation feedback and refine the Performance Improvement Plan.
- Secured approval of the final objectives through the normal council governance cycle (CMT, the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee and the full council meeting).

Consultation feedback summary

A summary of the consultation results is set out below:



The issues or improvements that respondents felt should be considered in relation to the draft 2024-25 improvement objectives are thematically summarised below. It is important to note that some of the areas highlighted as part of the public consultation process are already being progressed through existing strategies, plans and structures including, for example the Belfast Agenda 2024-28.

Active travel infrastructure and opportunities

work with relevant partners to improve and enhance the cycling, walking and public transport infrastructure to encourage more people towards active travel.

City centre improvements and interventions

improve the attractiveness, cleanliness, and appeal of the city centre. Focusing on delivering high quality cleansing services, improving our streetscapes, and reducing dereliction.

Focus on core services

ensure residents and ratepayers receive value for money and access to high quality core services. Delivery of more efficient waste collection and street cleansing should be prioritised. Increase community engagement and education to try to change attitudes and behaviours on litter.

Prioritise action on climate

champion and promote action on climate. Consider increasing EV charging points, delivering ground source and district heating schemes in all new developments and the retrofitting of existing buildings.

Economic growth and circular economy

ongoing support and advice to encourage more business startups and grow existing businesses. Focus on growing a circular economy for sustainability. Better support for businesses in specialised areas such as cyber security.

Greater support for VCSE organisations

consider how to better support VCSE delivering vital services to address key issues across the city, including advice, homelessness, and addiction support.

Looking forward – performance improvement objectives 2024-25

This year we have refocused our performance improvement objectives, to align better with the strategic themes and priorities outlined within the new Belfast Agenda 2024-28 and draft Corporate Plan 2024-28. We have set clear performance improvement objectives and improved the alignment with improvement activity and performance targets. Our Performance Improvement Plan sets out six performance improvement objectives for the period 2024-25.

Our services
We will continue to adapt and improve our services to better meet the needs of our residents and stakeholders.
Our people and communities
We will improve our local areas and provide opportunities to support our residents to become healthier and engaged.
Our place
We will create a more vibrant, attractive, and connected city (including the city centre).
Our planet
We will champion climate action; protect the environment and improve the sustainability of Belfast.
Our economy
We will stimulate inclusive growth and innovation, help businesses to start-up and grow and create opportunities for more and better jobs and employment.
Compassionate city
We will support our residents through the cost-of-living crisis.

The tables on the following pages set out the expected improvement (improvement objectives), how they link to relevant regional and local strategies and plans, the Belfast Agenda 2024-28, and the draft Corporate Plan 2024-28. For each improvement we state:

- what we hope to achieve;
- why we chose it;
- how it aligns to the seven aspects of improvement.
- how we plan to do it; and
- how we will measure success.

Improvement objective 1: Our services

In addition to the specific improvement activities set out below, we will implement our regular programme of service redesign and adjustments to ways of working through the implementation of risk and audit actions to continually adapt and improve our services.

Improvement objective 1	We will continue to adapt and improve our services to better meet the needs of our residents and stakeholders.				
Why is this an improvement objective?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Residents told us to focus on improving the services we deliver. ▪ Members identified the service areas as key priorities during a party group leader (PGL) corporate planning session. ▪ Delivering effective and efficient services is identified as a key priority within our draft corporate plan. ▪ Improving customer care and providing best value for money are ongoing commitments. 				
Relevant strategies, plans and evidence at regional and local level	<p>Regional: Waste Legislation NI (various), Waste Management Plan NI, Local Government Finance Act 2011, Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS).</p> <p>Local: Belfast City Council Resilience Strategy, Local Development Plan (LDP) 2035, Belfast Open Spaces Strategy (BOSS), Belfast City Council Financial Regulations 2015, Putting You First: Transforming Customer Experience, Belfast City Council Complaints, Comments and Compliments Policy.</p>				
Belfast Agenda outcome(s) and corporate plan theme	<p>Belfast Agenda outcome: Belfast is a vibrant, attractive, connected and environmentally sustainable city.</p> <p>Corporate plan theme: Our services – Delivering effective and efficient services.</p>				
Statutory aspect of improvement	Strategic effectiveness	Service quality, availability, and fairness	Sustainability	Efficiency	Innovation
	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

We will:	Our measures of success for 2025 include:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop phase 3 of our Customer Focus Programme to enhance our services and customer experience. ▪ Enhance street cleanliness by delivering a dedicated street cleansing programme for 17,065 streets across the city. ▪ Deliver the Planning Service’s Improvement Plan to include a review of planning processes and charges. ▪ Complete an improvement plan for a range of parks and open spaces to create a standardised approach to monitor quality and operational standards. ▪ Pilot the introduction of smaller refuse collection vehicles to improve collection services to narrow and congested streets. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Achieving at least 80% customer satisfaction levels (with customer hub contacts¹). ▪ Achieving 80% customer contact service level (people answered within 120 secs). ▪ Resolving 75% of corporate complaints within timeframe. ▪ Introducing improvement actions for 90% of corporate complaints. ▪ Achieving 65% cleansing index score. ▪ Facilitating at least 120 community clean ups with volunteers. ▪ Achieving the 30-week target for average processing time for major planning applications (statutory indicator). ▪ Achieving the 15-week target for average processing time for local planning applications (statutory indicator). ▪ Processing 70% of enforcement cases within 39 weeks (statutory indicator). ▪ Completing 85% of service requests for missed bins within 5 working days.

¹ The Customer Hub handles approximately 70% of all calls to the council and approximately 60% of all customer contacts including email and web forms. It’s the main point of contact for the following services: Resources and Fleet Waste Collections, Resources and Fleet Waste Management, Open Spaces and Street Scene, Complaints, General Enquiries, Switchboard.

Improvement objective 2: Our people and communities

In addition to the specifics set out below, we will improve our local areas and improve health and wellbeing for our resident, by delivering programmes of work and activities contained within the Belfast Agenda 2024-28, the draft Corporate Plan 2024-28, committee plans and supporting departmental and business plans.

Improvement objective 2:	We will improve our local areas and provide opportunities to support our residents to become healthier and engaged.				
Why is this an improvement objective?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Recent health data shows that life expectancy overall has stopped increasing and there is a growing need to tackle obesity and increase the levels of physical activity across Belfast. ▪ Objective is aligned to the outcomes, priorities, strategic intents, and actions identified withing the Belfast Agenda 2024-28 and draft Corporate Plan 2024-28. ▪ Results from our residents’ survey showed the need to focus on improving our neighbourhoods, providing more or better facilities, such as enhancing our parks and leisure facilities and enhancing how we engage with, and involve residents in decision-making. ▪ Feedback from the Belfast Agenda engagement process and residents’ survey highlighted improving health and wellbeing as one of the highest-ranking priorities for our citizens. ▪ Enables us to identify the specific areas that the council can do to improve the health of our residents. 				
Relevant strategies, plan, and evidence at regional and local level	<p>Regional: Active Living the Sport and Physical Activity Strategy for NI (2022), Marking Life Better – Strategic Framework for public health, Whole Systems Approach to Obesity Prevention, Regional Development Strategy (2035), SPPS.</p> <p>Local: The Department of Health’s Annual Health Inequalities report, The World Health Organisation’s Belfast Healthy Cities Strategy, LDP, BOSS, Get Active Belfast – A framework for physical activity – Active Belfast Partnership.</p>				
Alignment to the Belfast Agenda (BA) and corporate plan	<p>BA outcome: Belfast will be a city where everyone experiences good health and wellbeing.</p> <p>BA and corporate plan theme: Our people and communities – Making life better for all our residents.</p> <p>BA and corporate plan priority: Health inequalities and community and neighbourhood regeneration.</p>				
Statutory aspect of improvement	Strategic effectiveness	Service quality, availability, and fairness	Sustainability	Efficiency	Innovation
	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

We will:	Our measures of success for 2025 include:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Deliver improvements to parks and open spaces to improve people’s health and wellbeing. ▪ Enhance our playgrounds to encourage people to be more active. ▪ Complete Peace IV projects to enhance community assets and the availability of shared and inclusive spaces. ▪ Increase the number of people using our leisure centres, to participate in sport and physical activity. ▪ Enhance and improve how we engage and involve our residents in decision making. ▪ Deliver animation and outreach activities to encourage and engage people to participate in our community, play, leisure development and park programmes. ▪ Develop the Belfast Physical Activity and Sport Development strategy and action plan to create a more active city. ▪ Develop the Belfast Pitches Strategy and action plan to maximise provision and usage of outdoor pitches. ▪ Complete a parks and open spaces improvement action plan to achieve the vision of the Belfast Open Spaces Strategy (BOSS). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Completing major improvements to one park (Pitt Park) by securing £1.7m external funding. ▪ Progressing major improvements to one park (Ballysillan Playing Fields). ▪ Progressing major improvements to one open space (Cathedral Gardens). ▪ Investing £580k and completing the annual playground improvement programme (based on new play value and accessibility criteria). ▪ Investing over €12m in two Peace IV projects - Shankill Shared Women’s Centre and Black Mountain Shared Space. ▪ Increasing the number of people using our leisure centres to 3.3 million. ▪ Increasing the number of adult and junior leisure centre monthly memberships (including swim school) to 31,250. ▪ Delivering at least two Participatory Budgeting (PB) processes. ▪ Delivering at least 100 programmes across our community, play, leisure development and park programmes.

Improvement objective 3: Our place

In addition to the improvement action below, we will create a more attractive, vibrant, and connected city by delivering programmes of work and activities contained within the Belfast Agenda 2024-28, the draft Corporate Plan 2024-28, committee plans and supporting departmental and business plans.

Improvement objective 3:	We will create a more vibrant, attractive, and connected city (including the city centre).				
Why is this an improvement objective?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improvement objective aligned to the outcomes, priorities, strategic intents, and actions identified within the Belfast Agenda 2024-28 and draft Corporate Plan 2024-28. ▪ Feedback from elected members during planning workshops highlighted the need to prioritise and enhance the appeal of our city centre for residents, visitors, and businesses alike. ▪ We are committed to enhancing the connectivity of the city and ensuring that we can work with partners to increase opportunities for active and sustainable travel through the Belfast Agenda. ▪ Residents have told us that they want the city centre to be vibrant, safe, and welcoming. 				
Relevant strategies, plans and evidence at regional and local level	<p>Regional: Eastern Transport Plan 2035 (under development); Regional Development Strategy 2035.</p> <p>Local: Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy (BCCRIS); A Bolder Vision for Belfast; Belfast Resilience Strategy, LDP.</p>				
Alignment to the Belfast Agenda and corporate plan	<p>BA outcome: Belfast will be a vibrant, attractive, connected and environmentally sustainable city.</p> <p>BA and corporate plan theme: Our place – Creating a liveable and connected, vibrant and competitive city.</p> <p>BA and corporate plan priorities: Connectivity, active and sustainable travel; Future City Centre and wider regeneration and investment.</p>				
Statutory aspect of improvement	Strategic effectiveness	Service quality, availability and fairness	Sustainability	Efficiency	Innovation
	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

We will:	Our measures of success for 2025 include:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Deliver the Vacant to Vibrant programme to the end of the pilot period to support work to reduce city centre vacancy rates. ▪ Create a more connected city by progressing the delivery of the Greenways Programme. ▪ Deliver the Physical Programme including the Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund (NRF), Local Investment Fund (LIF), Belfast Investment Fund (BIF), Social Outcomes Fund (SOF) and other initiatives to support regeneration and place shaping across the city. ▪ Progress infrastructure works at the North Foreshore to support the development of the site. ▪ Work with the developer on emerging development specifications for the 250-acre Giant’s Park site through a Master Development Agreement. ▪ Complete a review of litter bin provision to ensure adequate resourcing and arrangements for waste disposal across the city. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Occupying 26 previously vacant city centre properties as a result of the Vacant to Vibrant intervention. ▪ Awarding £420,000 (in total) through Vacant to Vibrant funding to city centre traders to address vacancy. ▪ Progressing four greenways to improve the connectivity of the city (Black Mountain Greenway, Access to the Hills, Sydenham Greenway, and Colin Greenway). ▪ Completing 10 projects under the Physical Programme. ▪ Developing 100 emerging projects under the Physical Programme. ▪ Supporting 23 organisations under the £10.28m NRF programme.

Improvement objective 4: Our planet

In addition to the specific improvement actions set out below, we will champion climate action; protect the environment and improve the sustainability of Belfast by delivering our normal programme of work contained within the Belfast Agenda 2024-28, draft Corporate Plan 2024-28, committee plans and supporting departmental and business plans.

Improvement objective 4	We will champion climate action; protect the environment and improve the sustainability of Belfast.				
Why is this an improvement objective?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Climate change is a global concern. Since we declared a climate emergency in 2019 and launched our Resilience Strategy in 2020, we have been taking action to transition the city to an inclusive, zero-emissions and climate-resilient economy in a generation. ▪ Therefore, this objective has been retained and refocused from the 2023-24 improvement plan as it remains a priority at a regional and local level, and we have statutory responsibilities to address climate change. ▪ Creating an environmentally sustainable city was identified as a key outcome and priority in consultation undertaken with partners, residents, and stakeholders in the process of refreshing the Belfast Agenda. 				
Relevant strategies, plans and evidence at regional and local level	<p>Global: COP21, UN Sustainable Development Goals</p> <p>Regional: The Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland)2022, Northern Ireland Climate Change Adaptation Programme 2019-2024, Energy Strategy –The Path to Net Zero Energy, Draft Green Growth Strategy, Programme for Government, Second Cycle NI Flood Risk Management Plan 2021-2027, Strategic Planning Policy Statement</p> <p>Local: Belfast Resilience Strategy, A Net Zero Carbon Roadmap for Belfast, A Bolder Vision for Belfast, Belfast Local Development Plan (LDP), Belfast Open Spaces Strategy, Belfast Air Quality Action Plan, Belfast Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan, Belfast (Draft) Economic Strategy, Belfast (Draft) Adaptation Strategy, Belfast Local Area Energy Plan.</p>				
Alignment to the Belfast Agenda (BA) and corporate plan	<p>Belfast Agenda outcome: Belfast is a vibrant, attractive, connected and environmentally sustainable city.</p> <p>BA and corporate plan themes: Our services, Our people and communities, Our place, and Our planet.</p>				
Statutory aspect of improvement	Strategic effectiveness	Service quality, availability and fairness	Sustainability	Efficiency	Innovation
	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

We will:	Our measures of success for 2025 include:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Enhance the resilience of our assets and services and progress towards net-zero through delivery of our operational Climate Action Plan – including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ adoption of our low emission vehicles strategy. ○ approval for a council single use plastics policy for the council. ○ publication of a council climate investment plan. ○ Deliver neighbourhood recycling pilot. ▪ Develop an evidence base to enable a cost-effective transition to net-zero by commencing the delivery of the Belfast Local Area Energy Plan. ▪ Improve and restore woodland by delivering year two of the Belfast Tree Strategy and Action Plan. ▪ Test nature-based solutions through the Horizon 2020 EU ‘UPSURGE’ Project. ▪ Embed net-zero in urban planning by progressing the Horizon Europe funded UP2030 project. ▪ Promote access to sustainable and healthy food for all through the development of a sustainable food strategy. ▪ Promote and educate young people on the reduce, reuse, and recycle message to improve environmental awareness on waste management. ▪ Deliver an effective waste management service across the city. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maintaining Carbon Disclosure “A” Status ▪ Maintaining silver NI environmental benchmarking survey rating. ▪ Improving the percentage of council municipal waste arisings that is sent for recycling to 38.5%. ▪ Reducing the tonnage of biodegradable council collected waste that is landfilled to 15,000 tonnes (statutory indicator). ▪ Increasing the % of household waste collected that is sent for recycling to 42% (or prepared for re-use) (statutory indicator). ▪ Achieving 160,000 tonnage of council collected municipal waste arisings (statutory indicator). ▪ Visiting a minimum of 150 schools to deliver a curriculum-linked environment workshop on anti-litter and reduce, reuse, recycle message. ▪ Planting trees as part of the One Million Trees Programme (target to be confirmed – subject to internal approval).

Improvement objective 5: Our economy

In addition to the specifics set out below, we will stimulate inclusive growth and innovation, help businesses to start-up and grow and create opportunities for more and better jobs and employment by delivering our normal programme of work contained within the Belfast Agenda 2024-28, draft Corporate Plan 2024-28, committee plans and supporting departmental and business plans.

Improvement objective 5:	We will stimulate inclusive growth and innovation, help businesses to start-up and grow and create opportunities for more and better jobs and employment.				
Why is this an improvement objective?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Aligned to the outcomes, priorities, strategic intents, and actions identified within the Belfast Agenda 2024-28 and draft Corporate Plan 2024-28. ▪ Council is committed to ensuring that Belfast has a thriving and prosperous economy that is a hub for businesses and provides diverse employment opportunities for our population. ▪ Supporting innovation at all levels will help deliver the promise of Belfast’s economic potential and position it as a driver for prosperity and growth across the region. ▪ Delivering inclusive growth is a core principle of our organisation as we strive to ensure that the success of the city reaches every citizen. 				
Relevant strategies, plans and evidence at regional and local level	<p>Regional: A 10X Economy - Northern Ireland’s Decade of Innovation; Innovation Strategy for NI 2014-25, Draft Circular Economy Strategy for Northern Ireland, Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor Action Plan.</p> <p>Local: Belfast Economic Strategy 2022-30, Belfast Inclusive Growth Strategy, Belfast Region City Deal, SMART Belfast - Belfast Urban Innovation Framework 2022 – 26, Belfast City Council Social Value Procurement Policy.</p>				
Alignment to the Belfast Agenda and corporate plan	<p>Belfast Agenda outcome: Belfast is a place where everyone benefits from a thriving and prosperous economy.</p> <p>Belfast Agenda and corporate plan theme: Our Economy – Creating inclusive and sustainable growth, learning and opportunity.</p> <p>Belfast Agenda and corporate plan priorities: Jobs and skills; Sustainable and inclusive economic growth.</p>				
Statutory aspect of improvement	Strategic effectiveness	Service quality, availability and fairness	Sustainability	Efficiency	Innovation
	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

We will:	Our measures of success for 2025 include:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Procure goods and services in accordance with our Social Value Procurement Policy (SVPP) to maximise the economic, social, and environmental impact of our expenditure. ▪ Implement a new finance system to reduce costs, improve compliance and support suppliers. ▪ Work with partners to identify and deliver employment and upskilling academies in priority sectors in line with industry demand. ▪ Extend commitment from businesses to the Belfast Business Promise (BBP) to increase the number of businesses committed to implementing inclusive business practices. ▪ Work with the Enterprise Support Service to deliver ‘Go Succeed’ to increase the number of new business starts. ▪ Support digital innovation by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Delivering the Augment the City SME challenge competition. ○ Developing Innovation Driven Enterprises (IDE) Grants projects with UU and QUB University Centres of Excellence. ○ Developing a regional Small Business Research Initiative (SBRI) challenge competition programme. ○ Delivering the Belfast Region 5G Innovation Regions programme. ○ Supporting the Belfast Sejong Innovation Twins programme. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increasing the % of council contracts (over £30k value) where SVPP has been applied to 40%. ▪ Paying 95% of invoices within 30 calendar days. ▪ Paying 80% of invoices within 10 working days. ▪ Supporting 75% of participants to move into a positive outcome from an Employment or Upskilling Academy. ▪ Signing up a minimum of 50 companies to the BBP pledge. ▪ Promoting jobs through business start-up activity, i.e., completing 325 business plans (statutory indicator). ▪ Engaging 425 small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to support digital innovation. ▪ Issuing £100,000 of funding to up to 10 companies to develop ideas, proof of concepts and prototypes using immersive technologies such as augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR) and mixed reality to enhance visitor attractions. ▪ Investing over £1,500,000 to accelerate the development of innovative 5G solutions.

Improvement objective 6: Compassionate city

In addition to the specific actions set out below, we will support our residents through the cost-of-living crisis by delivering of our normal programme of work contained within the Belfast Agenda 2024-28, the draft Corporate Plan 2024-28, committee plans and supporting departmental and business plans.

Improvement objective 6:	We will support our residents through the cost-of-living crisis.				
Why is this an improvement objective?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Aligned to the outcomes, priorities, strategic intent and actions within the Belfast Agenda 2024-28 and draft Corporate Plan 2024-28. ▪ Elected members identified the cost-of-living crisis as a key priority during corporate planning engagement sessions. ▪ We understand the pressures that the cost-of-living crisis is having on citizens and households. ▪ As part of community planning, we will also continue to work collaboratively with a range of stakeholders to provide the most needed support for children and young people, families, and individuals across the city. 				
Relevant strategies, plans and evidence at regional and local level	<p>Regional: The Executive’s Child Poverty Strategy, NI Audit Office Child Poverty in Northern Ireland Report, The Trussell Trust State of Hunger Report, DfC Poverty, and Income Inequality (PII) Report</p> <p>Local: Belfast Inclusive Growth Strategy, Belfast City Council Social Value Procurement Policy,</p>				
Alignment to the Belfast Agenda and corporate plan	<p>Belfast Agenda outcome: Belfast is a place where everyone fulfils their potential.</p> <p>Belfast Agenda and corporate plan theme: Compassionate City – Making Belfast a welcoming, caring, and inclusive city – leaving no-one behind.</p> <p>Belfast Agenda and corporate plan priority: Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty.</p>				
Statutory aspect of improvement	Strategic effectiveness	Service quality, availability and fairness	Sustainability	Efficiency	Innovation
	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

We will:	Our measures of success for 2025 include:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In partnership, promote support and advice services across the city to help with the high cost of living and anti-poverty. ▪ Develop a funding commissioning framework to support the implementation of a Hardship Programme for 2024-25, to ensure that support is available for those most impacted by poverty and the cost-of-living crisis. ▪ Deliver cost of living and anti-poverty interventions for example Social Supermarkets, to provide support for those most in need. ▪ Provide funding and support to community-based advice services across the city to provide dedicated and tailored support to individuals. ▪ Implement the recommendations of the review of Belfast City Council Funded advice services. ▪ Provide funding and support to the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector to enable them to deliver capacity support and local services. ▪ Develop and agree a new four-year community support plan (2025-29) to improve how we provide support to our local communities and residents across the city. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Supporting 27,500 people through accessing online and cost of living support guides. ▪ Hosting at least one marketplace event in City Hall to enhance awareness of available local support services and associated referral pathways. ▪ Supporting 21 Social Supermarkets with up to £50k per project to provide food support, alongside wraparound services. ▪ Providing up to £1.3m funding to 14 Advice Organisations, who are supported by 5 advice consortia, providing advice services to at least 20k clients across the city. ▪ Establishing a new partnership agreement with defined KPI's with 5 advice consortia. ▪ Providing and managing £1.9m of funding through the capacity building grant programme to support 43 organisations.

Performance monitoring and reporting arrangements

To ensure that we continuously improve and meet the needs and outcomes of our city and residents, we have put in place established governance arrangements in relation to corporate performance management, summarised and set out in figure 5 below.

Governance arrangements

Monitoring and regular reporting of performance is essential to ensure that priorities are being achieved, and that the information that was collected informed decision making and plans.

Progress is monitored and reported regularly to the Corporate Management Team (CMT), on a quarterly basis to the Audit Assurance Board and the Audit and Risk Panel, and regularly to relevant working groups, relevant committees, and the full council meeting.

Corporate, committee and departmental business plans and strategies containing statutory or self-imposed performance indicators, are monitored, and reported both internally to departmental and the Corporate Management Team and formally to the relevant committee.

In addition, action plans and programme plans relating to council's key priority projects are monitored and reported through cross-departmental groups, management teams and boards, and regularly to the relevant committee.

Figure 5 summarises the high-level governance arrangements and the responsibilities for implementing these.

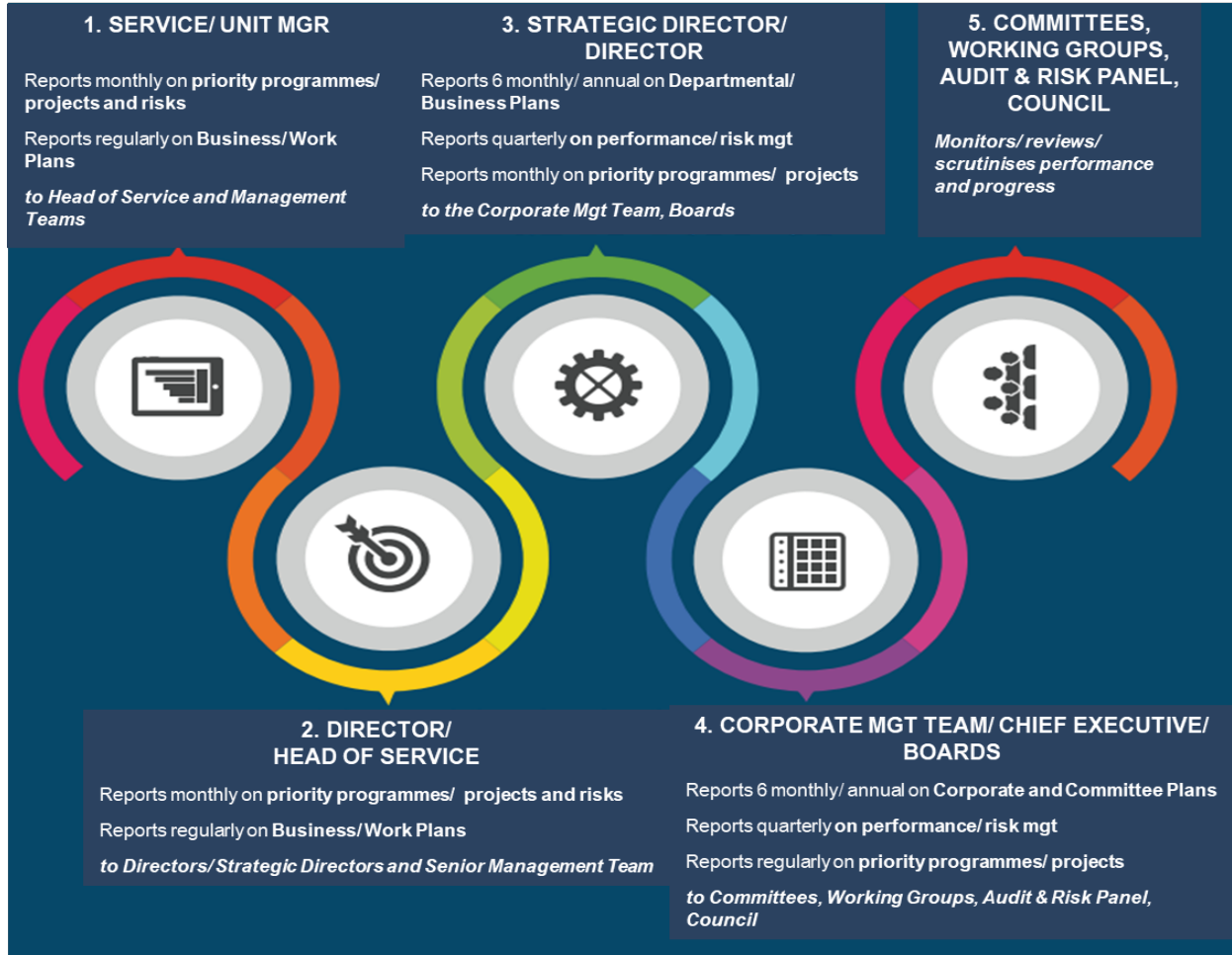
Each year, we publish a self-assessment report, setting out details of how we have performed as a council and benchmarked against other local authorities where possible. The council is a member of the Association of Public Sector Excellence (APSE), which is a public sector benchmarking organisation. This enables us to compare and improve our performance across a range of services and activities, with other comparable councils.

The council's internal audit team regularly review the improvement framework, and this is reported to the Audit and Risk Panel. Annually the NIAO reviews the processes and arrangements as part of the annual performance improvement audit and publicly publishes this.

A new planning and performance management framework is currently being developed which will refresh the current arrangements, provide a co-ordinated focus and a robust framework to enhance our continuous improvement journey. This new framework will enable us to deliver our collective responsibility with community planning partners, as well as supporting us to carry

out our statutory duty to improve, deliver best value and achieve the best possible impact for the people of Belfast.

FIGURE 5: High-level governance arrangements



* Please note these arrangements are subject to review as part of the development of the corporate planning and performance framework.

Annual timeline

Every year, we review and update our performance improvement objectives and plan to ensure we are delivering continuous improvement. Our annual process to develop, monitor, report and review the council’s progress to deliver performance improvement is set out in table 1 below.

Table 1: Annual review timeline.

<p>January – March 2024</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to review and analyse the evidence base (continuous improvement). • Planning workshops with elected members alongside the Corporate Management Team (CMT) to identify draft improvement priorities for 2024-25 • Draft performance improvement objectives for 2024-25 presented and agreed by CMT, committee and the full council. • Council strikes the rate. • Quarterly performance report presented to CMT, Audit and Assurance Board, Audit and Risk Panel, committee, and the full council.
<p>April – June - 2024</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation process on the draft performance improvement objectives and proposed actions starts and ends. • Consultation responses collated and analysed, and a report summarising feedback developed. • Quarterly performance and year end reports presented to CMT, Audit and Assurance Board, Audit and Risk Panel, committee, and the full council. • Performance Improvement Plan 2024-25 agreed by CMT, committee and the full council. • Performance Improvement Plan 2024-25 published on the Council’s website by 30 June. • Carry out the annual self-assessment review of the prior year’s performance.
<p>July – September 2024</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation for NIAO performance improvement fieldwork. • Annual self-assessment report brought to CMT, Audit and Assurance Board, Audit and Risk Panel, committee, and the full council. • Quarterly performance report brought to CMT, Audit and Assurance Board, Audit and Risk Panel, committee, and the full council. • Annual self-assessment report published on the Council’s website by 30 September.
<p>October – December 2024</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quarterly performance report to CMT, Audit and Assurance Board, Audit and Risk Panel, committee, and the full council. • Ongoing support and liaison with the NIAO and departments on performance audit. • Final NIAO Section 95 Report on Audit issued in November – presented to the relevant board and committee. • Annual self-assessment report published on the council’s website by 30 September. • Desktop analysis of all evidence. • Ongoing engagement on the planning, estimates and performance improvement process.

Feedback on areas for improvement

We welcome ongoing feedback, comments, and suggestions on how we might improve our services and performance.

Your feedback matters

Please use one of the following methods to provide your comments or suggestions at any time of the year:

Email: performance@belfastcity.gov.uk

In writing to the:

Strategic Performance Unit
City Organisational and Strategy Department
Belfast City Council
Belfast City Hall
Room 212
BT1 5GS




You can also provide us with feedback or comments at any time via our website:
www.belfastcity.gov.uk/contact/complaints-comments-compliments

Alternative formats

This document is also available in hard copy format and can be provided in alternative formats by contacting the Strategic Performance Unit using the contact details above.

Contact us:

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-  performance@belfastcity.gov.uk
-  028 9032 0202
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