



# Performance Improvement Plan

2026–2027



**Belfast**  
City Council

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# Foreword

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I'm delighted to share Belfast City Council's Performance Improvement Plan 2026-27 which sets out our ongoing commitment to deliver continuous improvement as an organisation and for the people of Belfast.

In the wake of significant challenges facing our society, from geopolitical instability to the cost-of-living crisis, we recognise our role and duty to ensure that we can show leadership and support to people, communities and stakeholders across the city.

As a council, delivering improvement is non-negotiable. From our elected members, corporate management team and throughout our talented workforce, it is the responsibility of everyone to deliver continuous improvement. This is reflected in our new emerging Planning and Performance Management Framework which is a critical tool that will embed a consistent, streamlined approach to planning and performance management throughout the organisation.

I reflect proudly on our performance and what we have achieved over the last 12 months. In relation to our Performance Improvement Plan 2025-26, I am delighted that we were able to achieve our six improvement objectives. Particular highlights include far exceeding our target in terms of customer satisfaction levels with customer hub contacts and the extension of our highly successful Vacant to Vibrant intervention which supported the transformation of 24 previously derelict properties and brought them back into economic use for local businesses across Belfast.

We progressed 220 projects through our Physical Programme, improving existing facilities whilst developing new and transformative facilities within our communities.



In addition, we were delighted to secure Belfast as host of the Comhaltas Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann, the world's biggest celebration of Irish music and culture, for the first time from 2 to 9 August 2026. We look forward to welcoming 800,000 people to the city which will provide huge economic, social and cultural benefits for the city.

Looking ahead, we will continue to focus on ensuring that we can deliver effective and efficient services that demonstrate value for money. We will concentrate on delivering investment within the city and our communities to improve the quality of life for all our residents.

Delivering on our climate commitments remains an important priority for the council as we play our part in protecting the planet. We will also work to ensure that Belfast's economy can grow and prosper through business support and creating more and better jobs.

Finally, we will continue to support those most in need across the city to ensure that Belfast is a safe, inclusive and welcoming place for everyone – ensuring no one is left behind.

*John Walsh, Chief Executive*

# Introduction

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Aligned to our city's refreshed community plan (the Belfast Agenda 2024-2028), Belfast City Council Corporate Plan 2025-2028 and the annual Corporate Delivery Plan 2026-2027, our Performance Improvement Plan 2026-2027 sets out the council's key priorities for improvement over the next 12-month period to ensure that we fulfil our 'Duty to Improve'.

## Duty to improve

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.

## Defining improvement

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.

Our Performance Improvement Plan has been developed against the backdrop of the council's new emerging Planning and Performance Management Framework to embed a consistent, streamlined approach to planning and performance management throughout the organisation. It will also help to build an effective culture of performance management to ensure all members, staff and stakeholders work to achieve the best possible outcomes and value for money for the residents and communities in Belfast. The Framework will also be a crucial tool to support informed decision-making, more effective use of resources and drive improvement across the organisation.

Our medium and longer-term arrangements to ensure continuous improvement are outlined in Figure 1. This plan sets out our performance improvement objectives for 2026–2027 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 2025-26

We will publish our 2025-2026 year-end self-assessment online in September 2026. This is a summary of some key achievements:

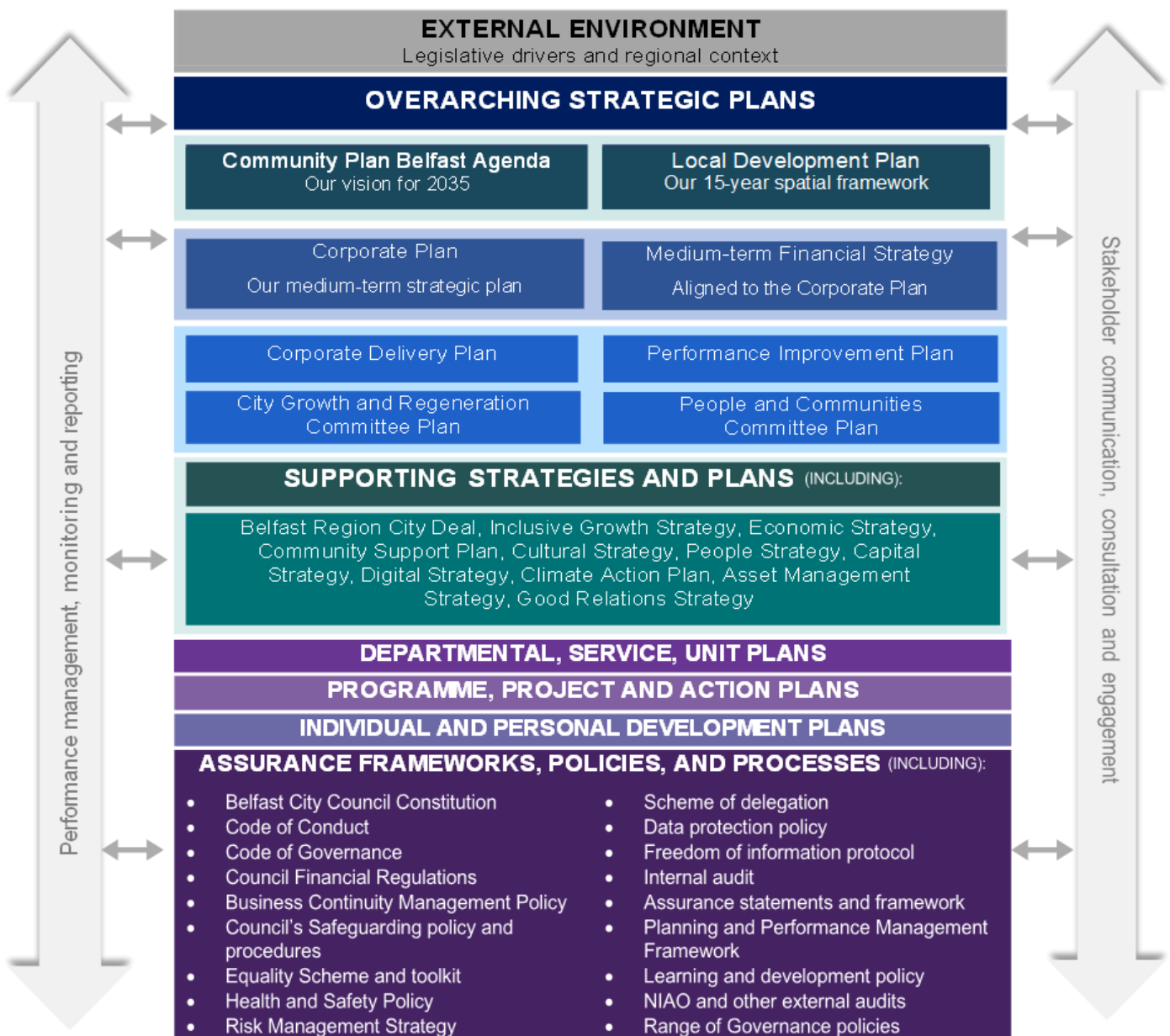


# Our arrangements to ensure continuous improvement

The council has a statutory duty to ensure continuous performance improvement. We are also required to produce an annual Performance Improvement Plan (PIP). However, everything we do in the council is focused on improving the lives of people who live in or visit Belfast.

Figure 1 shows the legal context, plans and strategies that form our strategic framework for improving outcomes for the people of Belfast. It also shows how the council’s corporate objectives are implemented throughout the organisation.

**FIGURE 1: The council’s Strategic Framework**



*The diagram above illustrates the need for connections between all levels. The components listed are illustrative and are not an exhaustive list.*

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:



**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 **what** we are doing and **why**. It provides a clear view of the needs and aspirations of the city and sets out five long-term outcomes. It outlines how partners will work together to support the most vulnerable in our city, grow the economy, regenerate neighbourhoods, support communities, while working to achieve our climate targets. Figure 2 shows the five strategic themes and priorities, the five things people want for Belfast by 2035 (our outcomes) and our ambitions which set out our key targets to make our vision a reality.

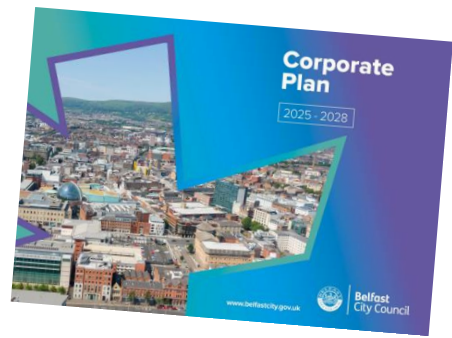


**FIGURE 2: Strategic themes and priorities, The Belfast Agenda 2024-2035**



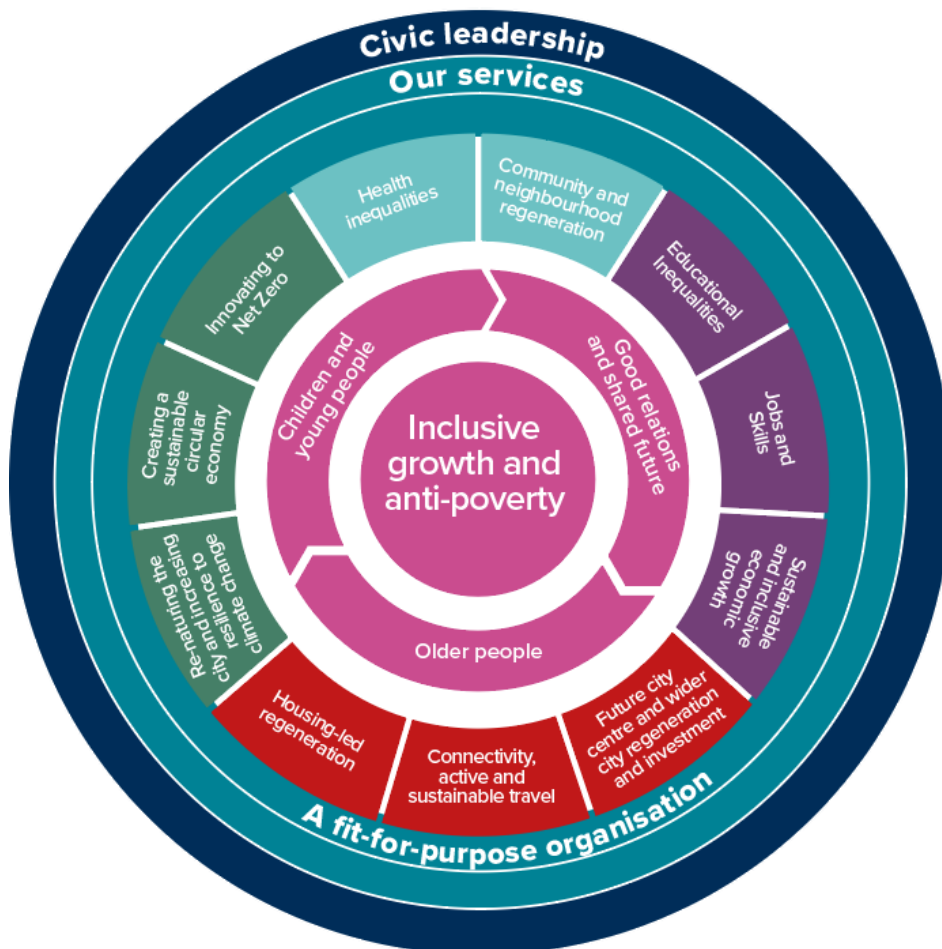
### The Council’s Corporate Plan

2025-2028 sets out our approach to delivering for local people in a time of both significant opportunity and considerable challenges for our city. The Corporate Plan is closely linked to the Belfast Agenda and explains **what** the council will do to contribute to the outcomes set out in Figure 2 as well as outlining the key priorities for us as an organisation. Finally, committee plans, and other departmental and business plans set out **how** this will be delivered.



Our corporate priority themes for three years, up to 2028 are outlined in Figure 3.

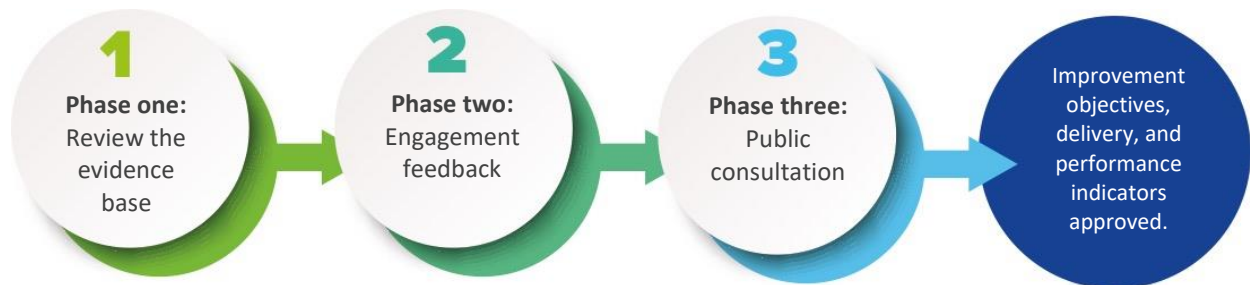
**FIGURE 3:** Corporate Priority Themes – Belfast City Council’s Corporate Plan 2025-28



# Identifying our performance improvement objectives for 2026-27

All our key strategies and plans are informed and developed by listening to our residents, businesses, partners, staff, and elected representatives. Our 2026-2027 performance improvement objectives were developed through a three-phase process. In phase one, we reviewed the evidence base, in phase two, we engaged internally and in phase three, we conducted public consultation. The rich and diverse analysis and feedback we received throughout this process have shaped this refreshed Performance Improvement Plan 2026-2027.

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. These included:

- results and trend data from our 2025-2026 Performance Improvement Assessment report.
- ongoing monitoring and review of 2025-2026 Corporate Delivery Plan (reported quarterly) to identify areas of potential under-performance.
- 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.
- areas for improvement emerging from the internal audit and risk management processes.
- priorities identified during the development of the new Corporate Plan 2025-2028 and rate setting process.
- alignment with key city and council strategies including The Belfast Agenda and the Corporate Plan 2025-2028.
- a review of customer complaints received.
- good practice data benchmarking with other local authorities (regional and UK-wide).

### Phase two: Engagement feedback

Feedback was gathered and approved through a series of internal engagements with members, chief officers, departments and key staff across the council. This included:

- templates completed and initial meetings held with departments to identify priorities and improvement activity.
- regular engagement with departmental teams and key officers, at every phase – ensuring alignment with departmental and service level budget setting and planning processes.
- priorities identified during engagement with party group leaders, elected members and the corporate management team (CMT).
- reports presented and discussed at CMT, Strategic Policy and Resources (SP&R) Committee and the full council.
- approval granted through scheduled meetings with senior management teams, CMT, committee and full council meetings.

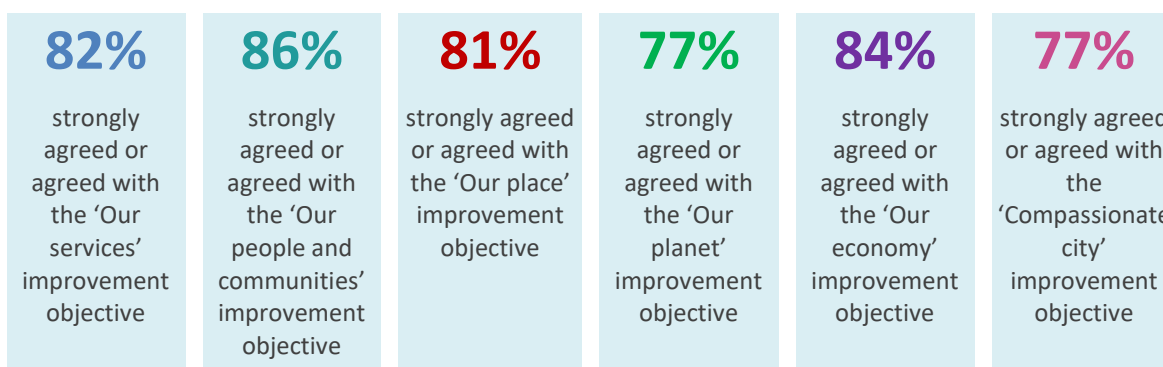
### Phase three: Public consultation

An eight-week public consultation process was carried out to enable residents and stakeholders to inform our improvement objectives 2026-2027. This included an online survey via the council’s Your Say Belfast consultation and engagement website and two targeted focus groups. The survey was promoted using a range of communication methods including social media posts, posters in community buildings, email marketing to existing mailing lists, intranet promotion and websites. As part of phase three, we:

- received 135 survey responses via the Your Say Belfast website.
- facilitated two focus groups with eight young people and nine older people to reflect their priorities and areas for improvement.
- worked closely with departmental teams and key officers to consider consultation feedback and refine the final 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

This is a summary of the consultation results:



The issues or improvements that respondents felt should be considered in relation to the draft 2026-2027 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 being progressed through existing strategies, plans, programmes and practices, and in partnership as part of the Belfast Agenda 2024-2028.

### Survey feedback summary

#### Our services

- ✓ Prioritise the delivery of effective street cleansing across the city.
- ✓ Increase the presence of dog wardens and park wardens in our parks and open spaces to reduce anti-social behaviour and improve cleanliness.
- ✓ Ensure missed bin collections are dealt with efficiently, and food caddy bags are available when requested.
- ✓ Work with partners to address the growing issue of city centre homelessness and progress with proposed plans for safe injecting facility.
- ✓ Focus more on delivering key services and less on areas that are the responsibility of central government.
- ✓ Consider how artificial intelligence (AI) could enhance service delivery and the organisation.

#### Our people and communities

- ✓ Improve parks, facilities and opens spaces.
- ✓ Prioritise additional funding to increase and enhance the availability of sports pitches and facilities.
- ✓ Consider the self-sustainability and income-generating potential of existing facilities and pitches.
- ✓ Improve engagement in local communities to ensure that delivery reflects local need which may vary across the city.
- ✓ Prioritise more investment and facilities for women and girls to ensure equity of access and opportunities.

## Our place

- ✓ Expand and enhance active travel infrastructure to reduce congestion, improve air quality and encourage more people to improve their health and wellbeing.
- ✓ The Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann 2026 represents a significant opportunity to promote arts and culture throughout the city.
- ✓ Increase opportunities for inner city living to enhance city centre vibrancy.
- ✓ Enhance and increase playground provision – make better use of natural resources and consider ways to connect with other infrastructure, for example, greenways or active travel routes.
- ✓ Prioritise more and better-quality housing not only for people experiencing homelessness but also for growing families.
- ✓ Develop an alleys and entries strategy to support inner city communities.
- ✓ Increase visibility of ‘arts and culture’ around the city and more support for our arts.

## Our planet

- ✓ Decarbonisation needs to commence in-house – the council should work to improve the efficiency of its own estate.
- ✓ Important that the council leads the way and sets an example for others in the city, for example ceasing the promotion of single-use cups and plastics in promotional activity.

## Our economy

No specific feedback provided.

## Compassionate city

- ✓ Clear commitment on how the council will lead and support work to End Violence Against Women and Girls.
- ✓ Provide more targeted support for families struggling with the cost-of-living.
- ✓ Ensure that facilities provide warm spaces for people to meet, learn and play.

## Focus group feedback

Two focus groups were carried out with eight young people and nine older people to better understand the needs and priorities of these traditionally under-represented target groups.

A summary of the key feedback from each focus group is set out below:

### Older people focus group

#### **Older People Focus Group with Greater Belfast Seniors Forum (nine older people)**

- Increase the provision of accessible toilet facilities, particularly within city centre, to encourage more older people into the city.
- Improved awareness and access to the council's online grant schemes – older people's groups are often not aware of when grants become available or how to access information.
- Continue to ensure that the views of older people are reflected in strategic decision making so that their needs are continually considered.
- Valued the use of 2 Royal Avenue as a resource and hub to engage in community life.

### Young people focus group

#### **Youth Focus Group @ Hammer Community Centre (eight young people)**

- Improve equipment and the quality of playground facilities within the local area.
- Improve sensory facilities and provide more opportunities, activities and equipment in community centres. Invest in centres to make them more welcoming and attractive for young people.
- Cleaner and safer streets to allow young people to play (do more about dog waste).
- More outdoor green spaces and allotments for play and to allow young people to participate in horticultural activities.

# Looking forward –

## Performance improvement objectives 2026-2027

Our performance improvement objectives, are clearly aligned with the Belfast Agenda 2024-2028 and Corporate Plan 2025-2028. Reflecting on our 2025-2026 performance and feedback from residents and stakeholders, we will continue to progress five out of the six performance objectives identified in the previous year, with refined associated actions. To meet the evolving needs of the city we have broadened the scope of our planet objective:



We are, therefore, committed to the following improvement objectives during 2026-2027:

- 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 create a sustainable, nature-positive city
- 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 most vulnerable people to make Belfast a more caring, safe and inclusive city.

We have assessed each of these objectives and consider that they all meet the following statutory aspects of improvement:

Strategic effectiveness	Service quality, availability, and fairness	Sustainability	Efficiency	Innovation
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

## 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.

<b>Belfast Agenda Outcome</b>	Belfast is a vibrant, attractive, connected and environmentally sustainable city.
<b>Corporate Plan themes and priorities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our services – Delivering effective and efficient services.</li> <li>• Foundations for success - Creating a fit for purpose organisation</li> </ul>
<b>Improvement objective</b>	We will continue to adapt and improve our services to better meet the needs of our residents and stakeholders.
<b>Why is this important?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback from residents focused on improving the delivery of services.</li> <li>• Identified as a priority by elected members.</li> <li>• Aligned to the Corporate Plan.</li> </ul>
<b>What will we do?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to deliver the Customer Focus Programme, to enhance our services and customer experience.</li> <li>• Continue to deliver the Planning Service Improvement Plan.</li> <li>• Deliver a street cleansing programme to create a cleaner and greener city.</li> <li>• Deliver phase three of the kerbside glass expansion programme to enhance customer service and improve recycling rates.</li> </ul>

How we will measure success?					
Measures of success	Cross-cutting themes and objectives				
	Our people and communities	Our place	Our planet	Our economy	Compassionate City
Resolving 65 per cent of corporate complaints within timeframe	✓				
Introducing improvement actions for 80 per cent of corporate complaints	✓				
Submitting one bid to the BRCD AI readiness fund to develop an AI solution that enhances the customer experience	✓				
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 per cent of enforcement cases processed within 39 weeks (statutory indicator)		✓			
Achieving less than 12 week-average processing time for householder applications and advertisement consent applications		✓			
Achieving less than six-week average processing time of tree works applications and Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs)		✓	✓		
Providing 23,000 additional households with kerbside glass collections			✓		
Collecting an additional 650 tonnes of glass			✓		

What is  
our wider  
policy  
impact?

- **Regional:** Waste Legislation NI (various), Waste Management Plan NI, Local Government Finance Act 2011, Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS).
- **Local:** Belfast City Council – Local Development Plan (LDP) 2035, Financial Regulations 2015, Putting You First: Transforming Customer Experience, Belfast City Council Complaints, Comments and Compliments policy, Our People Strategy and Achieving Through People Framework and Digital Strategy.

## 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 residents, by delivering programmes of work and activities contained within the Belfast Agenda 2024-2028, the draft Corporate Plan 2025-2028, committee plans and supporting departmental and business plans.

### Belfast Agenda Outcome

Belfast will be a city where everyone experiences good health and wellbeing.

### Corporate Plan themes and priorities

- Our people and communities – Making life better for all our residents.
- Health inequalities and community and neighbourhood regeneration.

### Improvement objective

We will improve our local areas and provide opportunities to support our residents to become healthier and engaged.

### Why is this important?

- 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.
- Based on resident feedback.
- Aligned to Belfast Agenda and Corporate Plan priorities.

### What will we do?

- Enhance our playgrounds, to ensure that we continue to provide high quality facilities and equipment across the city.
- Increase the number of visits to our leisure centres, to participate in sport and physical activity.
- Deliver animation and outreach activities in community, play and leisure development programmes.
- Deliver improvements to parks and open spaces to improve people’s health and wellbeing as agreed under the Physical Programme.
- Progress the current Leisure Programme to transform the quality of council leisure facilities.
- Progress the development of projects in the Pitches Programme to enhance the quality and availability of sports pitches across the city.

**What will we do?**

- Progress delivery of the £10.28m Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund to help develop facilities that support neighbourhood tourism, improved environmental sustainability and social economy activity within communities.
- Progress the development and delivery of the council's Physical Programme to enable needs led investment across the city, for example, Capital Programme, Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund, Belfast Investment Fund, Local Investment Fund, Social Outcomes Fund, PEACEPLUS, Urban Villages and other initiatives.

How we will measure success?					
Measures of success	Cross-cutting themes and objectives				
	Our Services	Our place	Our planet	Our economy	Compassionate City
Investing £580k and delivering the annual playground improvement programme		✓	✓		
Increasing the number of visits to our leisure centres to 3.4million	✓				
Increasing the number of adult and junior leisure centre monthly prepaid memberships (including swim school) to 31,750					
Increasing the number of community, play and leisure outreach programmes delivered to 250	✓				
Increasing the number of events in our parks to 360	✓				
Increasing the number of people attending events in our parks to 200,000	✓				
Delivering animation programmes in 5 new/ refurbished parks (Páirc an Lonnáin, Lower Shankill Park, Páirc Nua Chollan, Marrowbone and Pitt Park).	✓				
Progressing major improvements to three parks (Ballysillan Playing Fields, Waterworks, Alexandra Park)	✓	✓			
Progressing major improvements to one open space (Cathedral Gardens)	✓	✓			
Progressing three projects under the Leisure Programme.	✓	✓			
Completing 10 projects under the Physical Programme	✓	✓			
Developing 100 projects under the Physical Programme	✓	✓			
Progressing the construction of one pitch and the design development of four pitches	✓	✓			
Supporting 20 organisations under the £10.28million Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF) programme	✓	✓			
Completing two projects under NRF	✓	✓			

What is  
our wider  
policy  
impact?

- **Regional:** Programme for Government (PfG) 2024-2027 'Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most', 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.
- **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.

## 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 2024-2028, the draft Corporate Plan 2025-2028, committee plans and supporting departmental and business plans.

<p><b>Belfast Agenda Outcome</b></p>	<p>Belfast will be a vibrant, attractive, connected and environmentally sustainable city</p>
<p><b>Corporate Plan themes and priorities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our place – Creating a liveable and connected, vibrant and competitive city.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Connectivity, active and sustainable travel.</li> <li>○ City regeneration and investment.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Improvement objective</b></p>	<p>Our Place - we will create a more vibrant, attractive, and connected city (including the city centre).</p>
<p><b>Why is this important?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Based on resident feedback.</li> <li>• Identified as a priority by elected members.</li> <li>• Aligned to Belfast Agenda and Corporate Plan priorities.</li> </ul>
<p><b>What will we do?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertake work to safeguard and enhance the council’s historic, heritage and tourism assets including Belfast Zoo, Historic Cemeteries, Wilmont House, Floral Hall, Fernhill House, and the Assembly Rooms.</li> <li>• Oversee the delivery of the 2026 Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann, the world’s largest annual festival of Irish music, song and dance.</li> <li>• Continue to work with the preferred developer for the leisure led development at Giant’s Park.</li> <li>• Deliver the Greenways and the Access to the Hills Programme to improve the connectivity of the city.</li> <li>• Deliver the Vacant to Vibrant Programme 2026-27 to address city-wide vacancy rates.</li> </ul>

How we will measure success?					
Measures of success	Cross-cutting themes and objectives				
	Our Services	Our People and Communities	Our planet	Our economy	Compassionate City
Delivering improvements to the Belfast Zoo		✓			
Completing condition surveys at three Historic Cemeteries		✓			
Completing the feasibility study for Wilmont House		✓			
Completing the health and safety works at Floral Hall		✓			
Commencing health and safety works at Fernhill House and courtyard		✓			
Installing new stalls in St. George's Market		✓			
Commencing health and safety works at the Assembly Rooms Cluster		✓			
Attracting 700,000 visitors to the Fleadh		✓		✓	✓
Creating 1000 volunteering opportunities to support the hosting of the Fleadh event		✓		✓	✓
Working with the developer to progress planning for Phase 1 Adventure Hub at Giant's Park					
Progressing four greenways to improve the connectivity of the city (Sydenham Greenway, Blackstaff Greenway, West Belfast Greenway and Colin Greenway)		✓	✓		
Progressing four trails including Black Mountain, Glencairn, Ligoniel and Squire's Hill		✓	✓		
Occupying 28 previously vacant citywide properties through the Vacant to Vibrant intervention		✓			
Awarding £700,000 through Vacant to Vibrant funding to citywide traders		✓			

**What is  
our wider  
policy  
impact?**

- **Regional:** Eastern Transport Plan 2035 (under development); Regional Development Strategy 2035, PfG.
- **Local:** Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy (BCCRIS); A Bolder Vision for Belfast; Belfast Resilience Strategy, LDP.

## 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 2024-2028, draft Corporate Plan 2025-2028, committee plans and supporting departmental and business plans.











<p><b>Belfast Agenda Outcome</b></p>	<p>Belfast is a vibrant, attractive, connected and environmentally sustainable city.</p>
<p><b>Corporate Plan themes and priorities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our services, our people and communities, our place, and our planet.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Improvement objective</b></p>	<p>We will create a sustainable, nature-positive city.</p>
<p><b>Why is this important?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Climate change is a global concern. Since we declared a climate emergency in 2019, recognising the serious environmental, social and economic challenges posed by climate change, we have been taking action to transition the city to an inclusive, zero-emissions and climate-resilient economy in a generation.</li> <li>• The council has statutory responsibility.</li> <li>• Identified as a concern by residents and stakeholders.</li> <li>• Aligned to Belfast Agenda and Corporate Plan priorities.</li> </ul>
<p><b>What will we do?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver an effective waste management service across the city.</li> <li>• Continue to deliver Belfast City Council's Tree Strategy and action plan to help manage and improve the tree scape in the city.</li> <li>• Continue to deliver the council's Corporate Climate Action Plan to increase the climate resilience of the council's assets and services and to achieve net zero emissions, and to increase the climate resilience of its assets and services (over 20 actions including a Sustainable Food Policy, energy audits of council buildings and retrofitting of council buildings).</li> <li>• Develop the Local Biodiversity Action Plan to set out our approach to address threatened species and habitats and protect and restore biological systems.</li> </ul>

**What will we do?**

- Progress a potential heat network that aims to decarbonise the heat supply to buildings in the city.
- Protect and enhance our local environment and natural ecosystems.
- Embed sustainable food practices and partnership working in Belfast.
- Enable the city to decarbonise at scale.

**How we will measure success?**

Measures of success	Cross-cutting themes and objectives				
	Our Services	Our People and Communities	Our place	Our economy	Compassionate City
Achieving 40 per cent of council municipal waste sent for recycling	✓	✓	✓		
Reducing the tonnage of biodegradable council collected waste that is landfilled to 1,500 tonnes (statutory indicator)	✓	✓	✓		
Achieving 43 per cent of household waste collected sent for recycling (or prepared for re-use) (statutory indicator)	✓	✓	✓		
Achieving 160,000 tonnage of council collected municipal waste arisings (statutory indicator).	✓	✓	✓		
Delivering four projects as part of the Belfast Tree Strategy		✓	✓		
Completing at least 50 per cent of the council's Corporate Climate Action Plan short-term priorities	✓				
Establishing four new species rich grassland meadows in open spaces across the city		✓	✓		
Undertaking further studies, modelling and market engagement on a potential heat network to explore options to lower the cost of heat and secure grant finance					✓
Undertaking maintenance and monitoring of the demonstrator site and support the replication of co-designed nature-based solutions with communities in at least four satellite sites		✓			

<p>Launching a city-wide Sustainable Food Strategy, to reduce food waste, support community growing and ongoing monitoring of activities.</p>					
<p>Developing and launching a web-portal to increase the take up of rooftop solar across Belfast.</p>					

**What is our wider policy impact?**

- 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, PfG, Second Cycle NI Flood Risk Management Plan 2021-2027, Strategic Planning Policy Statement.
- Local:** 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.

## 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, grow and create opportunities for more and better jobs and employment by delivering our normal programme of work contained within the Belfast Agenda 2024-2028, draft Corporate Plan 2025-2028, committee plans and supporting departmental and business plans.

<p><b>Belfast Agenda Outcome</b></p>	<p>Belfast is a place where everyone benefits from a thriving and prosperous economy.</p>
<p><b>Corporate Plan themes and priorities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our economy – Creating inclusive and sustainable growth, learning and opportunity.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Improvement objective</b></p>	<p>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.</p>
<p><b>Why is this important?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Based on resident feedback.</li> <li>• Identified as a priority by elected members.</li> <li>• Aligned to Belfast Agenda and Corporate Plan priorities.</li> </ul>
<p><b>What will we do?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with the Enterprise Support Service to deliver ‘Go Succeed’ to increase the number of new business starts and help existing businesses to grow.</li> <li>• Deliver employment and upskilling academies in priority sectors in line with industry demand.</li> <li>• Deliver the Smart Belfast urban innovation programme to enhance Belfast’s capacity for digital innovation.</li> <li>• Deliver the Belfast Learning Festival to increase awareness of the opportunities to engage in lifelong learning across the city.</li> <li>• Deliver an enhanced Belfast Business Promise (BBP) programme implementing learning and recommendations from the programme review.</li> <li>• Continue to recruit suitable entry level posts, for example, placement opportunities, and run an annual apprenticeship programme as part of the council’s People Strategy action plan, to support our inclusive growth ambitions.</li> <li>• Support our suppliers by helping business cashflow through the</li> </ul>

How we will measure success?					
Measures of success	Cross-cutting themes and objectives				
	Our Services	Our People and Communities	Our place	Our planet	Compassionate City
Promoting 325 jobs through business start-up activity (this equates to the delivery of 542 completed client-led business plans under business-start activity) (statutory indicator)		✓			
Supporting 712 Belfast individuals and, or entrepreneurs through start-up activity via Go Succeed		✓			
Supporting 323 Belfast businesses through business growth activity via Go Succeed		✓			
Supporting 75 per cent of participants to move into a positive outcome from an employment or upskilling academy		✓			
Supporting 425 small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to engage in digital innovation		✓	✓		
Awarding £600,000 of funding to organisations to engage in digital innovation		✓	✓		
Enabling 70 per cent of festival participants to improve their awareness of lifelong learning opportunities		✓	✓		✓
Supporting 50 organisations to sign up to the Belfast Business Promise (BBP) <sup>1</sup>		✓			✓
Supporting 10 businesses (existing BBP members) to improve their recognition level (reaching Member or Ambassador status)		✓			✓
Producing six good practice case studies to highlight the Belfast Business Promise journey and inclusive growth practice		✓			✓
Increasing the number of work placements created to 60		✓			✓
Paying 90 per cent of invoices within 30 calendar days	✓				
Paying 80 per cent of invoices within 10 working days	✓				

<sup>1</sup> Please note that BBP is undergoing a process of review to transition to refresh the model.

What is  
our wider  
policy  
impact?

- **Regional:** A 10X Economy - Northern Ireland's Decade of Innovation; Innovation Strategy for NI 2014-2025, Draft Circular Economy Strategy for Northern Ireland, Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor Action Plan, PfG.
- **Local:** Belfast LDP, Belfast Economic Strategy 2022-2030, Belfast Inclusive Growth Strategy, Belfast Region City Deal, SMART Belfast - Belfast Urban Innovation Framework 2022-2026, Belfast City Council Social Value Procurement Policy.

## 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 our normal programme of work contained within the Belfast Agenda 2024-2028, the draft Corporate Plan 2025-2028, committee plans and supporting departmental and business plans.

<p><b>Belfast Agenda Outcome</b></p>	<p>Belfast is a place where everyone fulfils their potential.</p>
<p><b>Corporate Plan themes and priorities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compassionate City – Making Belfast a welcoming, caring, and inclusive city – leaving no-one behind.</li> <li>• Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Improvement objective</b></p>	<p>We will support our most vulnerable people to make Belfast a more caring, safe and inclusive city.</p>
<p><b>Why is this important?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Based on resident and stakeholder feedback.</li> <li>• Identified as a priority by elected members.</li> <li>• Part of our statutory duty.</li> <li>• Aligned to Belfast Agenda and Corporate Plan priorities.</li> <li>• Evolution of policy environment (Strategic Framework to End Violence against Women and Girls (EVAWG)).</li> </ul>
<p><b>What will we do?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver local community action plans as part of the PEACEPLUS Programme, to fund community activities and infrastructure project that help build peace and reconciliation in Belfast.</li> <li>• Progress the delivery of the transformational €13.5million PEACE PLUS project Reconnected Belfast: Waterworks and Alexandra Park and up to five capital projects across the city as part of the PEACE PLUS Local Action Plan to promote inclusive and shared spaces across Belfast i.e. Sanctuary Theatre, Distillery Street Redevelopment Project, Annadale Open Space, Access to the Hills and LGBTQIA+ Hub.</li> <li>• Deliver a Community Support Plan to support local communities and residents across the city.</li> </ul>

How we will measure success?					
Measures of success	Cross-cutting themes and objectives				
	Our Services	Our People and Communities	Our place	Our planet	Our economy
Delivering 10 Local Community Programmes		✓	✓		
Awarding £5.4million of Community Support Plan (CSP) funding through the large community support grant		✓			
Progressing five capital projects under the PEACEPLUS Local Action Plan		✓	✓	✓	
Administering £1.2million funding through the Regional Change Funding to EVAWG expert organisations		✓			
Increasing the knowledge of at least 70 per cent of participants about what violence against women and girls is		✓			
Improving the understanding of at least 70 per cent of participants who report a better understanding of the underlying causes of EVAWG		✓			
Increasing the confidence of at least 70 per cent of participants to help EVAWG		✓			

**What is our wider policy impact?**

- **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, NI Act 1998 (Section 75), Race Relations Order 1997, PfG.
- **Local:** Belfast Inclusive Growth Strategy, Belfast City Council Social Value Procurement Policy, Equality Scheme, Good Relations Strategy, PEACEPLUS Programme.

# Performance monitoring and reporting arrangements

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

## Governance arrangements

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

Progress is monitored and reported on a quarterly basis 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. At year end, corporate performance is assessed using the key below on Figure 5.

**FIGURE 5: Performance status and trend key**

Actions/milestones		Performance indicator target		Performance indicator trend	
	Not achieved		Adrift of target (5 per cent or more)	↓	Negative change
	Partially achieved		Slightly adrift of target (between 1 and 5 per cent)	↔	No significant change
	Achieved or completed		On target or exceeded target (within 1 per cent or better)	↑	Positive change

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 the council’s key priority projects are monitored and reported through cross-departmental groups, management teams and boards, and regularly to the relevant committee.

Figure 6 summarises the high-level governance arrangements and the responsibilities for implementing these.

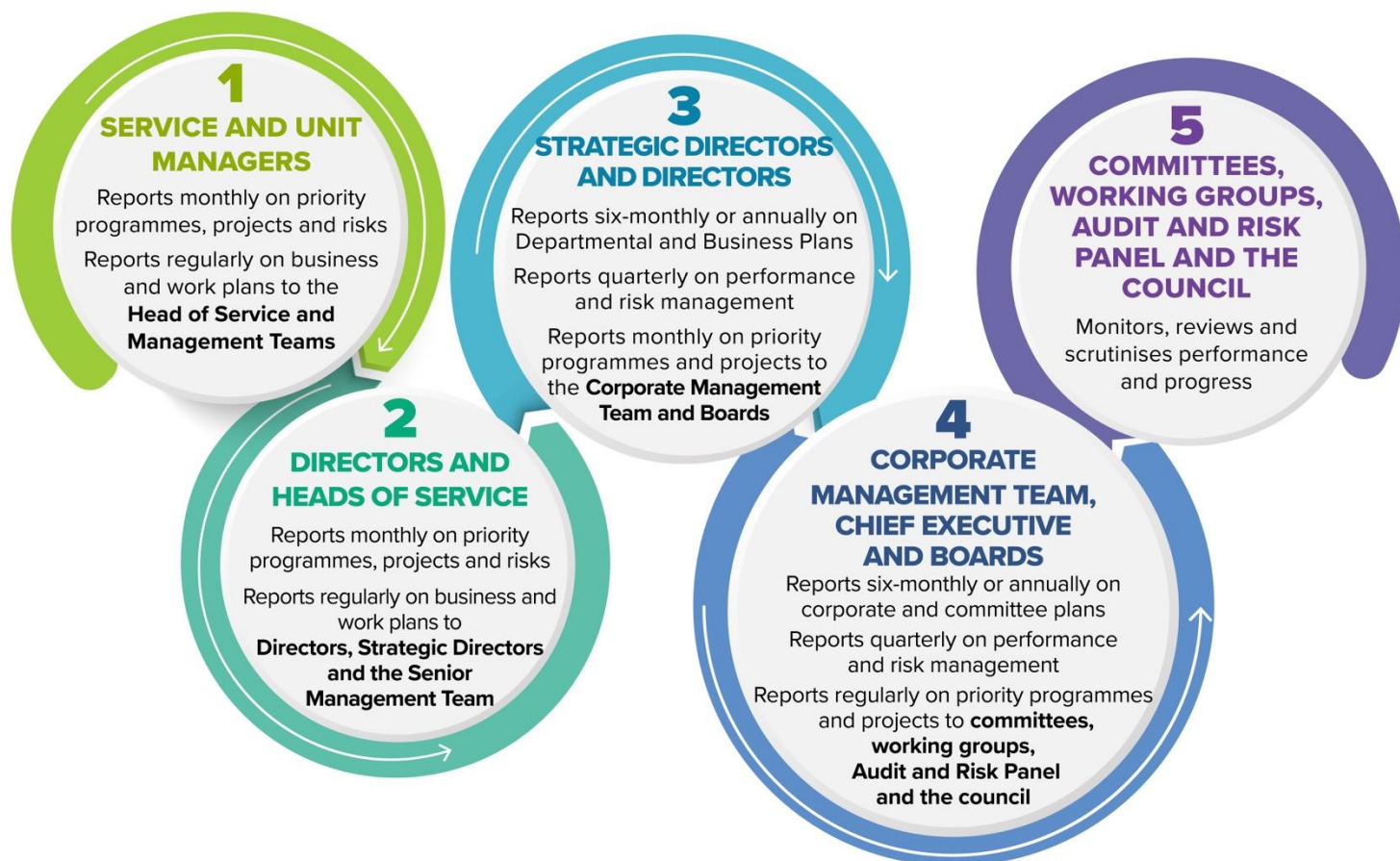
Each year, we publish a self-assessment report, setting out details of how we have performed as a council and benchmarked against other local authorities where possible. The council is a

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.

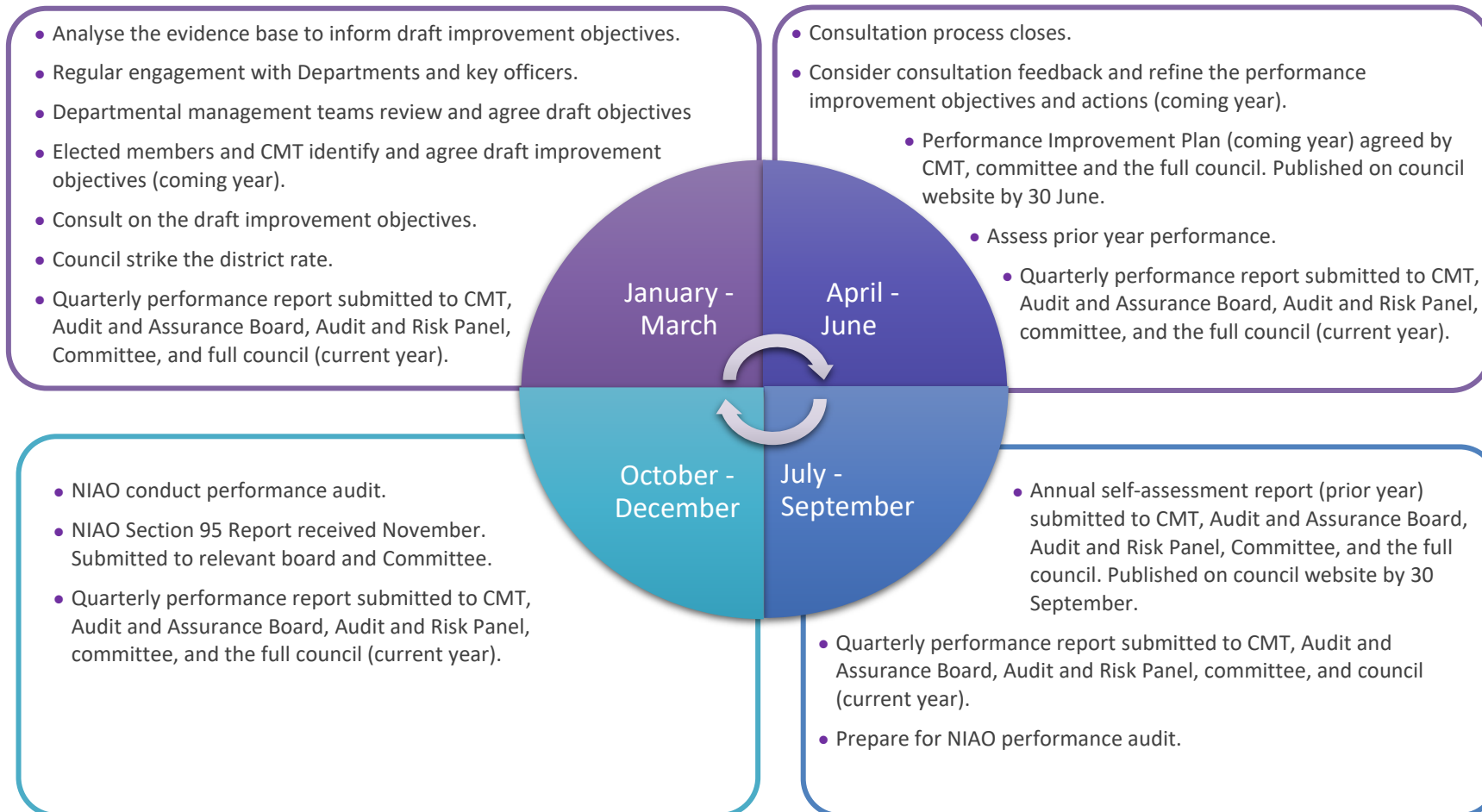
FIGURE 6: High-level governance arrangements



## Annual performance management and improvement cycle

Every year, we review and update our performance improvement objectives and plan to ensure we are continuously improving. Our annual process to develop, monitor, report and review the council’s progress to deliver performance improvement is set out in Figure 7 below.

FIGURE 7: The council’s annual process to develop, monitor, report, and review progress.



# Feedback on areas for improvement

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

## Your feedback matters

You can contact us with your comments or suggestions at any time:

Email: [performance@belfastcity.gov.uk](mailto:performance@belfastcity.gov.uk)

### Write to:

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

To provide your feedback or comments online, by email or telephone, go to our website:  
[www.belfastcity.gov.uk/contact/complaints-comments-compliments](http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/contact/complaints-comments-compliments)

## Alternative formats

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Our Performance Improvement Plan 2026-2027 is available in print and alternative formats. To ask for an alternative format, contact the Strategic Performance Unit. You can:

Email: [performance@belfastcity.gov.uk](mailto:performance@belfastcity.gov.uk)

Write to:

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

You can also read or download a PDF version on our public consultation site - [YourSay Performance Improvement | Your say Belfast](#)

**Contact us:**

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



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