



<b>Subject:</b>	Results from the 2024 Business in the Community, Environmental Benchmarking Survey
<b>Date:</b>	16 <sup>th</sup> January 2024
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Debbie Caldwell, Climate Commissioner, Claire Shortt, Monitoring, Learning and Reporting Officer
<b>Contact Officers:</b>	Claire Shortt

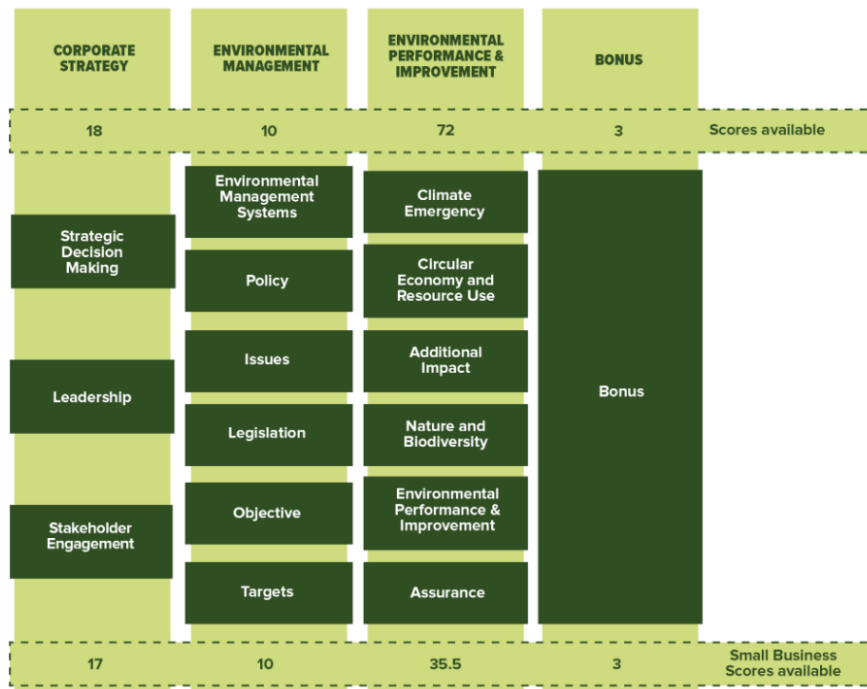
<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
<b>Is this report restricted?</b>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</b>	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Call-in</b>	
<b>Is the decision eligible for Call-in?</b>	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues</b>
1.1	To update members on the recent Gold award to Belfast City Council in the 2024 Business in the Community, Environmental Benchmarking Survey (up from Silver in 2023).
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	The Committee is requested to note the 2024 award and agree to submission to the 2025 survey.
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main report</b>
3.1	<b>Background - 2024 Business in the Community, Environmental Benchmarking Survey</b>
3.2	In July 2023, the Council made it's first annual submission to the Business in the Community, Environmental Benchmarking Survey. The submission was undertaken to

support baselining of environmental activity in the organisation and to benchmark Belfast City Council to other organisations in the region. It also demonstrates publicly our commitments to being environmentally responsible and transparent and helps us to track our progress over time and see how far we have come. Last year Council scored a silver award.

3.3 The Survey is Northern Ireland’s leading environmental benchmarking exercise. It is a free, annual, self-disclosure exercise open to members and non-members of Business in the Community. There are five levels of awards ranging from Platinum at the top through Gold, Silver, Bronze and Green. The Survey is split into the following sections:



3.4 132 organisations took part in the survey this year, a 9% increase from 2023. Belfast City Council scored 79% against an average of 76%. The areas that received full marks this year and therefore helped achieve the gold award were around strategic decision making (for example the inclusion of a large programme of work on climate and environment under the ‘Our Planet’ section in the Belfast Agenda), leadership (the establishment of the Our Planet Board, City Resilience and Climate Committee, and Belfast Climate Commission) and publically reporting to the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP). The staff travel survey also demonstrated the Council’s commitment to measuring scope 3 emissions and the development of the council’s draft Climate Action Plan (CAP) helped move the organisation up a level in the results. Recycling of old laptops, participation in the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan and the recent work around single use plastics also gained positive marks.

3.5 Organisations also receive a Gap Analysis Report that provides feedback on its score in each section, enabling us to identify areas where action can be taken to improve environmental impacts and increase future scores in subsequent Surveys.

3.6 One of the areas that the gap analysis highlighted for improvement was around the council’s use of renewable energy. This year funding secured from the shared island fund will be used to install solar panels on the Donegal Pass community centre (plans for procurement in January 2025).

3.7 There were several changes to the Survey questions this year, scored and unscored, to continue to challenge participants included an increased focus on commitments, policies or actions in place to maintain, enhance and conserve nature and biodiversity.

3.8 There are three other councils that participate in the survey - Mid and East Antrim (platinum), Antrim and Newtownabbey (Gold) and Ards and North Down (Silver) and other organisations such as the Belfast Met (Gold), Ulster University (Platinum) and Visit Belfast (Bronze). Many

	organisations such as the Belfast Harbour Commission, International Airport and George Best City Airport have been participating in the survey for more than 20 years and are now in the platinum category.
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Financial &amp; Resource Implications</b>
4.1	There are no financial and resource implications.
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Implications</b>
5.1	Any good relations or equality implications will be identified as part of the Council's screening process.
<b>6.0</b>	<b>Appendices</b>
6.1	<a href="#">The Results   2024 NI Environmental</a>