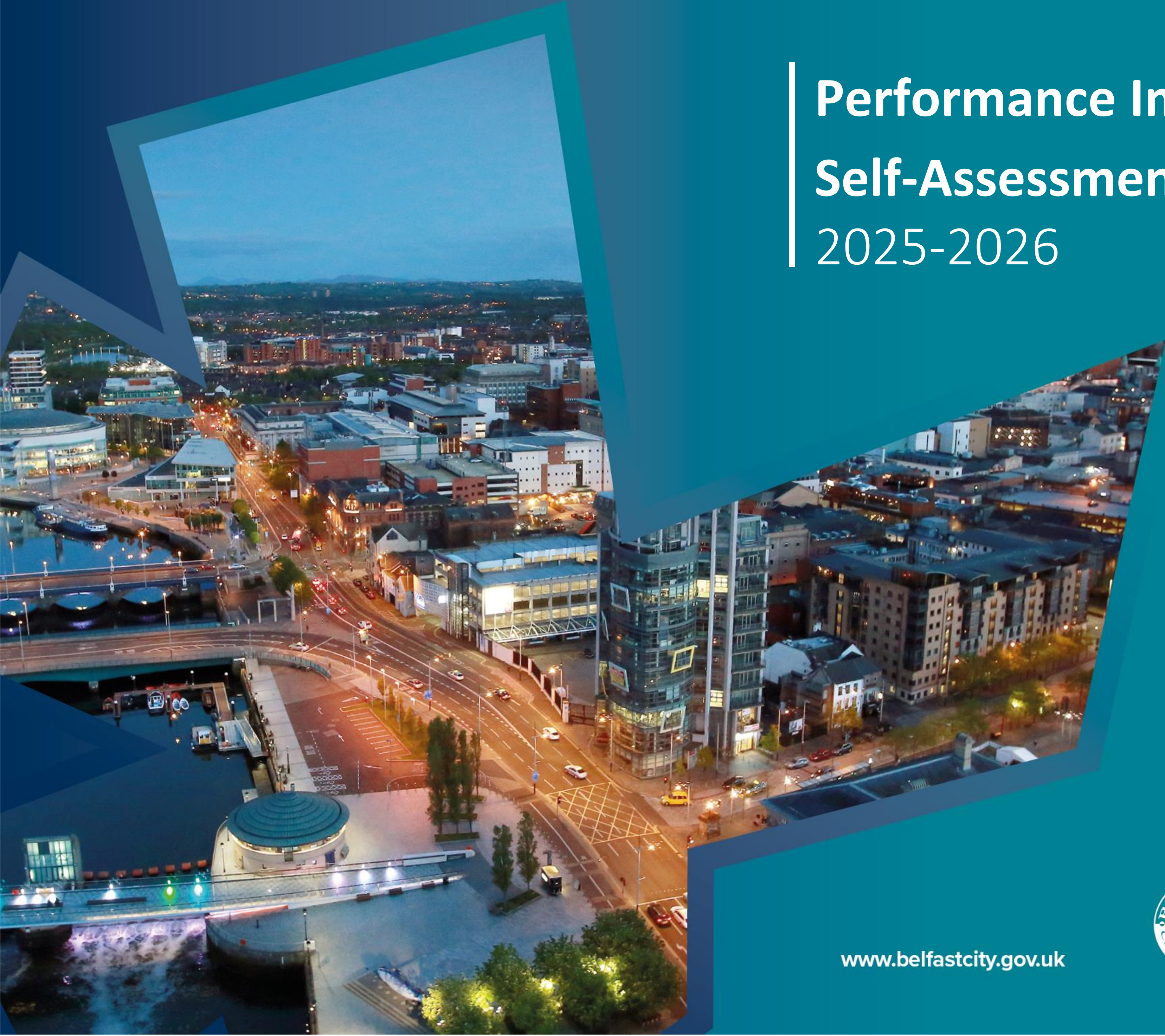

Performance Improvement Self-Assessment Report

2025-2026

www.belfastcity.gov.uk

Belfast City Council

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1. Foreword

Welcome to our Performance Improvement Self-Assessment

I am pleased to present Belfast City Council's Performance Improvement Self-Assessment Report for 2025-2026. The report explains how we have improved our services and delivered better outcomes for the people of Belfast. It highlights what we achieved during the year and shows how we measured our performance against the objectives set out in our Performance Improvement Plan.

We continue to work in a challenging environment. Rising living costs, increasing demand for services and wider economic uncertainty continue to affect our residents, businesses and communities. Despite these challenges, we remain committed to providing high-quality services and delivering value for our ratepayers.

This year, we launched our Corporate Plan 2025-2028. The plan reflects on our recent achievements, sets out our priorities and explains how we will continue improving services over the coming years. It also supports the long-term ambitions of the Belfast Agenda, our community plan for the city.

I am delighted to report that we achieved all six of our improvement objectives during 2025-2026. All improvement actions were either completed or progressed, and 88% of our performance indicators met or exceeded their targets

Some highlights from the year include:

- More than **3.6 million visits** to our leisure centres, helping more people to be active and improve their health.
- The extension of **kerbside glass collection to 23,000 additional households**, making recycling easier for residents.
- Engagement with **7,297 children and young people** through our Ending Violence Against Women and Girls programme.
- **Progressed 220 and completed 39 capital projects** across the city, including community facilities, cultural venues and visitor attractions that benefit residents and support the local economy.

These achievements demonstrate our commitment to improving services, supporting communities and investing in the future of Belfast.

We will continue to place improvement at the heart of everything we do. We welcome feedback and ideas from residents, businesses and community groups. If you have suggestions on how we can improve, please contact us at performance@belfastcity.gov.uk or visit our Performance and Improvement YourSay page.

John Walsh, Chief Executive

2. Performance improvement duty

Performance improvement under the Local Government Act 2014

Part 12 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 provides the framework to support continuous improvement for all councils. The Act requires councils to measure how well services perform and publish an annual report showing progress against agreed self-imposed and statutory targets.

The Act also requires the council to keep improving the way it delivers services. This is known as our 'Duty to Improve' and is set out within our annual Improvement Plan. The Act states that council must publish an annual Self-Assessment Report by 30 September each year and include:

1. **An assessment of its performance during a financial year:**
    - In discharging its duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement;
    - In meeting its improvement objectives which are applicable to that year; and
    - By reference to the statutory performance indicators and self-imposed indicators which are applicable to that year.
2. **An assessment of its performance in exercising its functions during a financial year as compared with:**
    - Its performance in previous financial years; and
    - So far as reasonably practicable, the performance during that and previous financial years of other councils.

What is improvement?

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

We regularly review our improvement objectives to make sure they reflect local needs, priorities, and available resources. We align our improvement objectives to bring about improvement in at least one of the specified aspects of improvement as defined in section 86 of the Act:

Arrangements to secure continuous improvement

Council's improvement framework

The council has clear processes in place to help us improve services and monitor performance, summarised in figure 1.

The council's improvement framework sets out the various components of how the council works, bringing together the specific priorities, ambitions, and outcomes for 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 helps ensure that all parts of the council work toward the same priorities and goals, known as the 'golden thread'. Our improvement framework is kept under review to support our 'Duty to improve'.

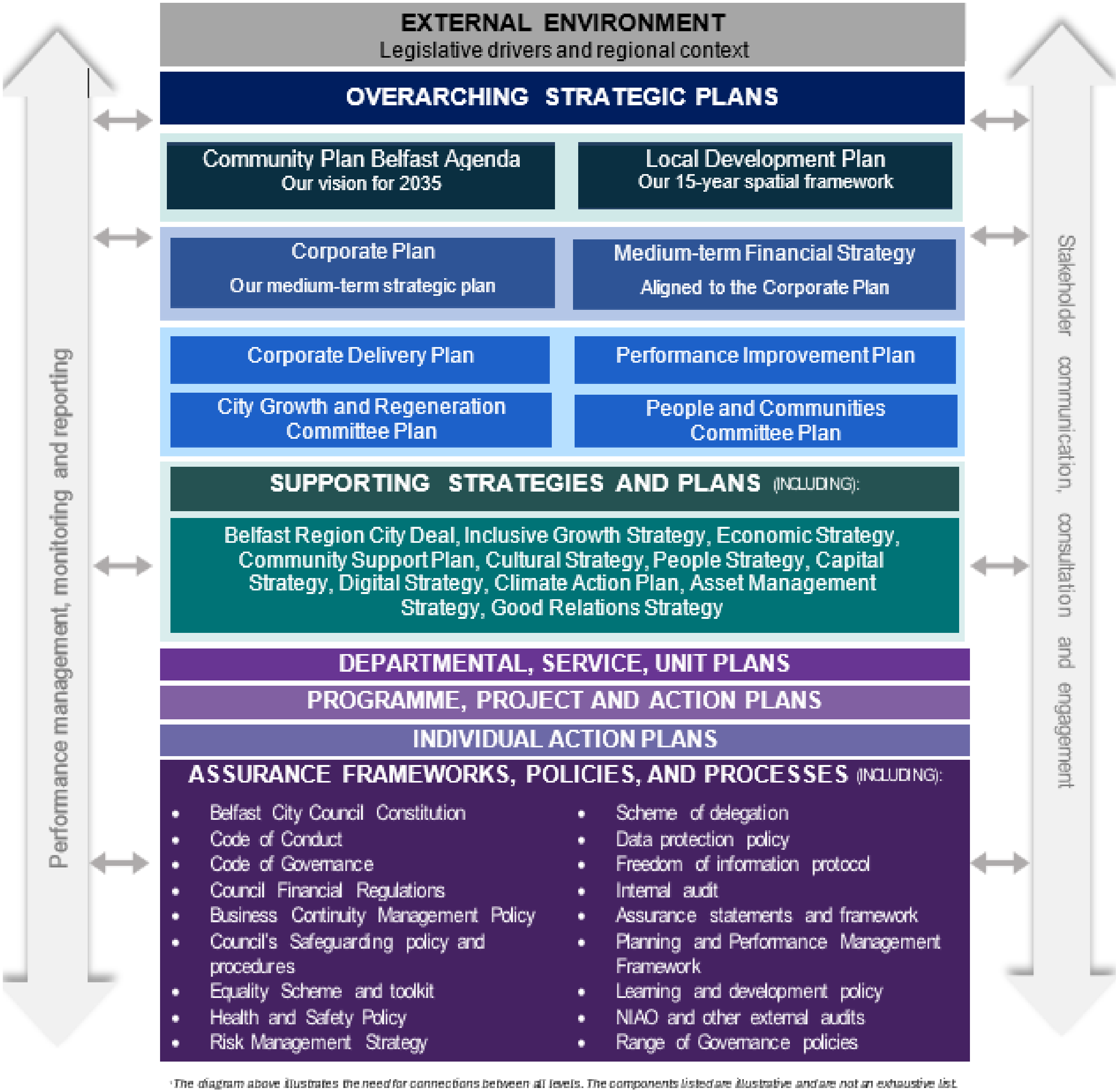
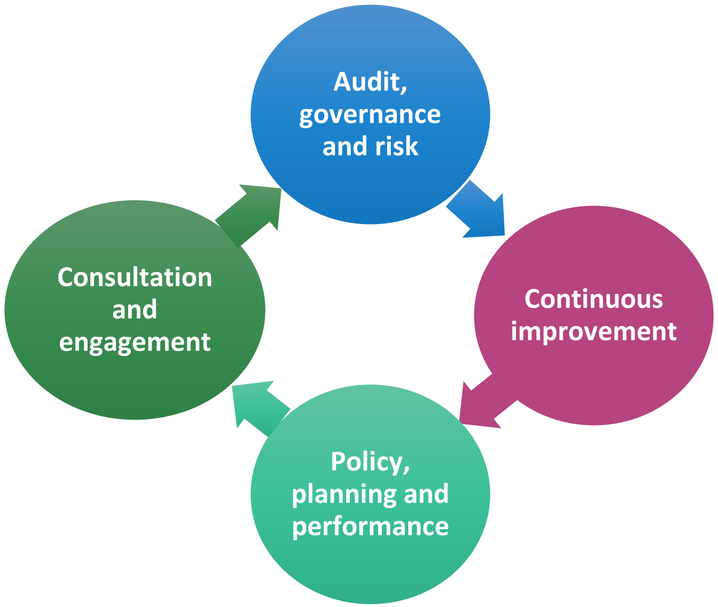


Figure 1: Council's improvement framework.

Measuring performance and improvement

The council continues to enhance, implement, and embed arrangements to secure continuous improvement, in the exercise of our functions, through:

Figure 2: Performance and improvement arrangements



Audit governance and risk

Our performance is audited externally by the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) and proposals for improvement implemented. Performance is also monitored by the council's Corporate Management Team (CMT), Audit Assurance Board and Audit and Risk Panel as well as being considered by our own internal audit service, committee, and the full council.

An annual council audit plan is agreed and actions arising to improve our internal control environment are monitored through the Audit and Risk Panel.

Risks that could impact on the delivery of our objectives are monitored and managed through the council Risk Management Strategy. Risks are monitored at a strategic, operational and project level and we act as necessary to amend ways of working and ensure continued service delivery.

Continuous improvement

We have a dedicated continuous improvement team who lead and support improvement projects and programmes as well as wider organisational change and service re-design.

Policy, planning and performance

Corporate policies and programmes are developed across the organisation in response to emerging priorities. These are monitored and reported through cross-departmental groups, management teams and boards, and regularly to the relevant committee.

Progress against our key strategies and plans is monitored through regular reports to CMT and to relevant committees. Our performance is assessed and evaluated in the form of published documents such as the Annual Accounts, Annual Audit Letter, Annual Performance Assessment and Annual Statement of Governance.

We are in the process of finalising our corporate planning and performance management framework to enhance our continuous improvement journey.

Stakeholder communication, consultation, and engagement

The council uses multiple communication methods to engage with our stakeholders, to seek views on our key plans and priorities and keep them informed about our services and initiatives.

Monitoring, reporting and governance arrangements

Our monitoring and reporting arrangements help us manage performance, make informed decisions, and remain accountable, providing our management teams and elected members with assurances that our governance arrangements are robust. This helps us remain open, accountable, and focused on improving services. The council's governance framework is a traditional committee structure with full council and eight standing committees. The full council, which consists of all 60 elected representatives, is the overarching decision-making body, overseeing the work of the council. In addition to the committee structure a range of working groups, forums and boards have also been established to ensure the effective monitoring and reporting of performance and drive continuous improvement. A new planning and performance management framework is currently being developed which will refresh the current arrangements, provide a co-ordinated focus and a clear framework to enhance our continuous improvement journey.

1. Community Plan (The Belfast Agenda)

Reports to:	Frequency:
Delivery boards	Quarterly
Community Planning Partnership	Bi-annually
Strategy, Policy and Resources (SP&R) committee & full council	As appropriate
Department for Communities (DfC)	Every two years and four years

2. Corporate plan (2025-2028) and Annual Corporate Delivery Plan

Reports to:	Frequency:
Corporate Management Team (CMT)	Quarterly (from Q2 onwards)
SP&R committee	Annual
Full council	Annual

3. Committee plans

Reports to:	Frequency:
CMT	Bi-annual and annual
Relevant committee	Bi-annual and annual
Full council	Bi-annual and annual

4. Performance Improvement Plan

Reports to:	Frequency:
CMT	Quarterly (from Q2 onwards)
Audit and Assurance Board and Audit and Risk Panel	Quarterly
SP&R committee	Quarterly
Full council	Quarterly
DfC	Bi-annually

5. Supporting strategies and plans

Reports to:	Frequency:
Corporate, departmental and service management teams	As appropriate
Working groups and boards	As appropriate
Relevant committee	As appropriate
Full council	As appropriate

6. Departmental and business plans

Reports to:	Frequency:
Service management teams (SMT)	Monthly
Department management teams (DMT)	Quarterly
Working groups and boards	As appropriate

3. Identifying our 2025-2026 improvement objectives

Three-phase process

All our key strategies and plans are informed and developed by listening to our residents, businesses, partners, staff, and elected members. Our 2025-2026 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 carried out public consultation. The rich and diverse analysis and feedback we received throughout the process was shaped into the Performance Improvement Plan 2025-2026. The objectives agreed were aligned to the priorities of the draft Community Plan (the Belfast Agenda).

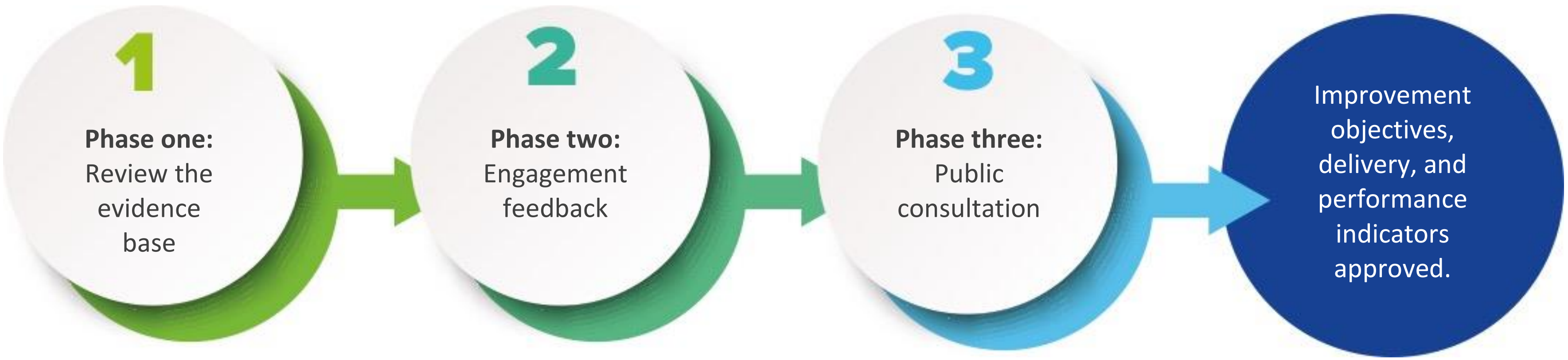


Figure 3: Three-phase process

Our Improvement Objectives 2025-2026

The council published its Improvement Plan for 2025-2026, which contained six improvement objectives, as set out below:

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 most vulnerable people to make Belfast a more caring, safe and inclusive city.

4. How we have performed – review of performance

The Performance Improvement Plan 2025-2026 does not detail every improvement we intended to make but focused on some of the key areas identified for improvement through our community and corporate planning processes, stakeholder engagement and research analysis.

We use a wide variety of actions, key performance indicators (KPIs) and targets to measure and monitor the progress and delivery of all our plans, as well as comparing our performance in relation to other councils and relevant organisations where data is available. The following sections will set out how the council has performed in 2025-2026 in four key areas, providing a holistic review of council performance:

i. Overall performance of the Improvement Plan 2025-2026.
ii. Self-assessment of improvement objectives – Improvement Plan 2025-2026.
iii. Corporate performance 2025-2026; and
iv. Financial performance 2025-2026.

We have outlined our progress using the following self-assessment key:

Year-end reporting - PI and action progress status and trend key					
Actions		**Performance indicator target**		**Performance indicator trend**	
R	Not achieved	R	Adrift of target (5% or more)	⬇	Worsening trend
A	Partially achieved*	A	Slightly adrift of target (between 1% and 5%)	⬄	No significant change
G	Achieved/completed	G	On target or exceeded target (within 1% or better)	⬆	Improving trend
	Data not available		Data not available		Data not available

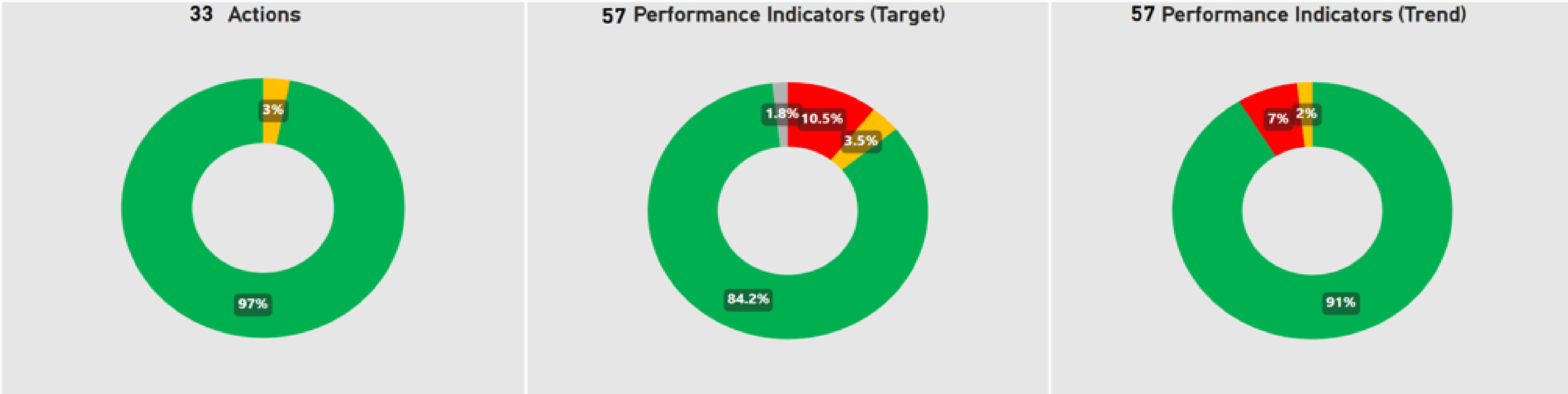
**Actions where work commenced or was progressed but the project or activity spans more than one financial year.*

5. Overall performance of the improvement plan 2025-2026

For each of our six 2025-2026 improvement objectives, we identified improvement actions which set out what we wanted to deliver, as well as KPIs and targets, which would enable us to measure our success. This section provides an overall performance assessment and a summary of key achievements from our Performance Improvement Plan 2025-2026.

Performance Improvement Plan 2025-2026 self-assessment

Our overall annual performance against achieving our improvement objectives 2025-2026 is summarised below. We have outlined our progress against our 33 actions and 57 performance indicators (seven statutory and 50 self-imposed).



100% of actions were either achieved/completed or partially achieved **32 (97%)** were achieved/complete* **1 (3%)** was partially achieved	**48 (84.2%)** were on target or exceeded target (within 1% or better) (4 statutory, 44 self-imposed) **2 (3.5%)** were slightly adrift of target (between 1% and 5%) (1 statutory, 1 self-imposed)) **6 (10.5%)** were adrift of target (more than 5%) (2 statutory, 4 self-imposed) **1 (1.8%)** had no data available.	**52 (91%)** showed positive change (5 statutory and 47 self-imposed) **1 (2%)** showed no significant change (1 self-imposed) **4 (7%)** showed negative change (2 statutory, 2 self-imposed)

Actions were *partially achieved when work commenced or was progressed during 2025-2026 but the project or activity spans more than one financial year. A rationale and detailed analysis have been provided in Section 5 where targets (both actions and KPIs) have not been achieved and this broadly includes regional issues and delays, council resource constraints as well as dependency on external factors including market forces and regulatory changes.

Summary of key achievements from our Performance Improvement Plan 2025-2026

A snapshot of some of the key achievements and performance improvement across all six improvement objectives, is illustrated below.

76%
of **corporate complaints resolved within timeframe.**
(target 65%)

97%
of closed missed bin **service completed** within 5 working days.
(target 92%)

96%
of **invoices paid** within 30 calendar days.
(target 90%)

23,000
additional households supported through kerbside glass collection.

39
physical programme projects completed.
(target 10)

87%
planning enforcement cases processed within 39 weeks.
(target 70%)

18
short-term council **Corporate Climate Action Plan** priorities progressed.
(target 19)

7,297
children and young people engaged on **Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG) programmes.**
(target 2000)

3,620,303
visits to our leisure centres.
(target 3,350,000)

£1.1m
of **Hardship Programme** funding distributed.
(target £1.1m)

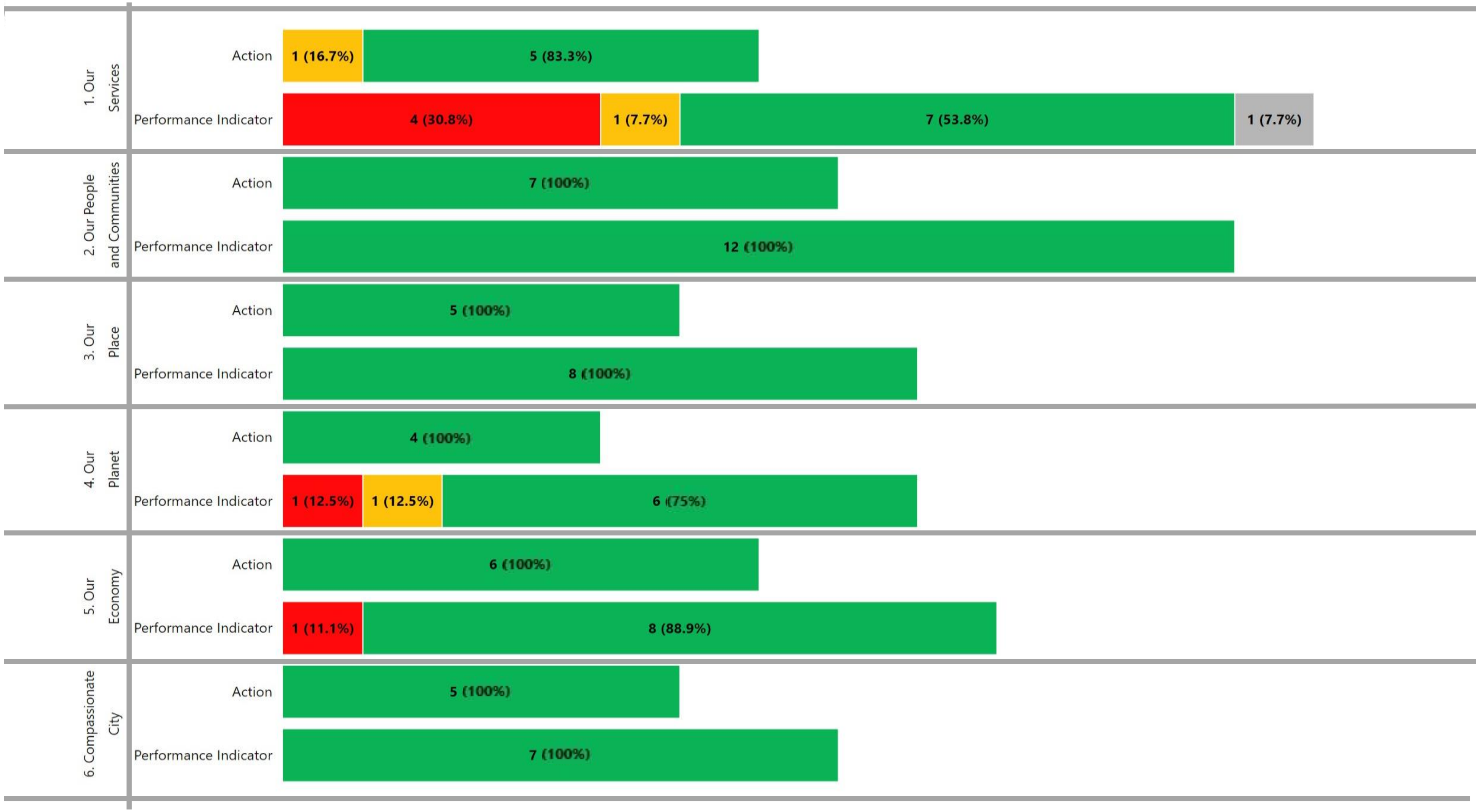
430
small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) supported to engage in **digital innovation.**
(target 425)

42
Belfast Business Promise businesses supported to improve their recognition level (reaching Member or Ambassador status).
(target 10)

6. Self-assessment of improvement objectives

When agreeing the six improvement objectives for 2025-2026, council identified actions and associated KPIs to ensure achievement of the objectives and improvements that benefit residents, businesses, and other stakeholders. This section of the report firstly provides a summary of performance across the six improvement objectives, in figure 4 below.

Figure 4: Summary of performance across the six improvement objectives.



This is followed by a self-assessment of each improvement objective providing a progress update on the following areas:

i. the achievement of the improvement objective.
ii. the achievement of improvement actions.
iii. how we performed – KPIs (self-imposed and statutory), target and trends.
iv. how we compared – performance benchmarking (where relevant and available).
v. additional evidence of performance improvement, including impact reports; and
vi. next steps.

We have assessed each of the 2025-2026 improvement objectives and consider that they all met the following statutory aspects of improvement:

General duty/ continuous improvement	Strategic effectiveness	Service quality and availability	Fairness	Sustainability	Efficiency	Innovation
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Self-assessment through our community plan (the Belfast Agenda)

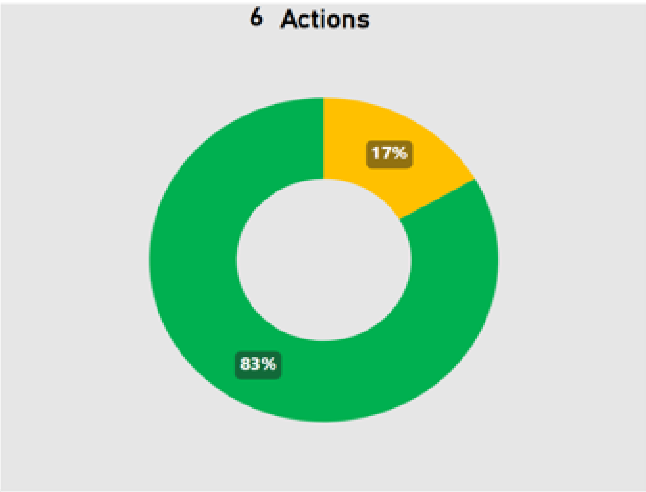
Our community plan (the Belfast Agenda) sets out long-term outcomes and ambitions for improving the long-term social, economic, and environmental wellbeing of Belfast as well as immediate priorities. Progress against the Belfast Agenda is monitored and reported through regular reports to Community Planning Partnership Boards and the Strategic Policy and Resources committee (SP&R). council publishes a report every two years, assessing progress towards achieving outcomes and demonstrating the impact on the outcomes for citizens. Progress reports can be accessed online: Belfast Agenda Progress Reports | Your say Belfast (belfastcity.gov.uk). In doing so, we provided evidence of meeting the general duty to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of our functions and addressing multiple complex community needs. Our role in leading the community planning process in Belfast has been pivotal in demonstrating improvement by contributing to working collaboratively with cross-sector partners to understand and improve the sustainability of our areas[1].

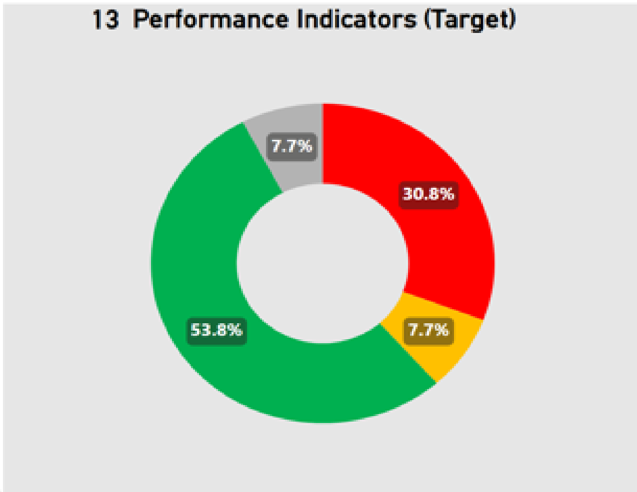
[1] *Section 16 Circular LG 26/15 - Guidance for local government performance improvement | Department for Communities (communities-ni.gov.uk)*

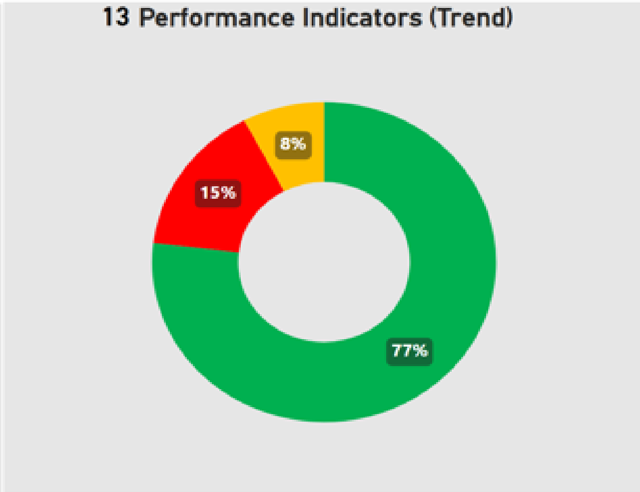
Objective 1: Our services

Achievement of improvement objective

Did we achieve this objective?	**Achieved** – we continued to adapt and improve our services to better meet the needs of our residents and stakeholders.
Belfast Agenda outcome	Belfast is a vibrant, attractive, connected and environmentally sustainable city.
Corporate Plan themes and priorities	• Our services – Delivering effective and efficient services. • Foundations for success - Creating a fit for purpose organisation







100% of actions were either achieved/completed or partially achieved

5 (83%) were achieved/complete

1 (17%) was partially achieved

7 (53.8%) were on target or exceeded target (within 1% or better)

1 (7.7%) was slightly adrift of target (between 1% and 5%)

4 (30.8%) were adrift of target (more than 5%)

1 (7.7%) had no data available.

10 (76.9%) showed positive change

1 (7.7%) showed no significant change

2 (15.4%) showed negative change

What did we do?

- ✓ Delivered the **Customer Focus Programme** to build organisational capacity to enhance our services and customer experience.
- ✓ Continued to **deliver the Planning Service Improvement Plan**.
- ✓ Delivered a **street cleansing programme** to create a cleaner and greener city.
- ✓ **Operated daily bin collections of household and commercial waste** through the deployment of adequate and efficient resources.
- ✓ Delivered **phase two of the kerbside glass expansion programme** to enhance customer service and improve recycling rates.
- ✓ Initiated the development of an **overarching Asset Management Strategy** to set out how council owned and managed land and property assets will be used to support service delivery and the delivery of objectives in the Corporate Plan and the Belfast Agenda.

How much did we do?

Measures of success	2021-2022 year-end actual	2022-2023 year-end actual	2023-2024 year-end actual	2024-2025 year-end actual	2025-2026 year-end target	2025-2026 year-end actual	Trend (since baseline year)	Commentary (including rationale if red or amber)
Resolving 65% of corporate complaints within timeframe.	72%	72%	65%	64%	65%	76%	↑	Exceeded target by 16.92% and resolved more corporate complaints within timeframe than previous year.
Introducing improvement actions for 80% of corporate complaints.	N/A	N/A	64%	72%	80%	82%	↑	Exceeded target by 2.5% and introduced more improvement actions for corporate complaints than previous year.
Deliver Customer Service Training qualification to a cohort of staff.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1 cohort	1	↑	Successfully completed the Customer Engagement and Design training cohort in quarter 3, with four members of the Customer Focus Team achieving the ICS qualification.

Achieving the 30-week target for average processing time for major planning applications (statutory indicator).	31.0	57.2	64.4	53.2	30 weeks	53		This has been affected by a large number of "legacy" cases of two years or greater, the quality of applications, delays from consultees and the new Section 76 planning agreements not taking effect until February 2025 with a lag time until their benefits are fully felt. Also, the Planning Service’s commitment to working with customers to achieve a planning permission with quality outcomes, rather than refusing permission within the 30-week target Note, these are provisional year-end figures - the verified figures will be provided over the Summer.
Achieving the 15-week target for average processing time for local planning applications (statutory indicator).	31.0	19.8	20.6	17.3	15 weeks	18.2		This has been adversely affected by resourcing over Summer 2025 as well as variability in the timeliness and quality of consultee responses. Note, these are provisional year-end figures - the verified figures will be provided over the Summer.
Processing 70% of enforcement cases processed within 39 weeks (statutory indicator).	83%	88.8%	88.6%	76.8%	70%	87%		Exceeded target by 24.29% and processed more enforcement cases within 39 weeks than same quarter last year. This is despite a significant increase in

<table>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>complaints received relating to short-term lets.

Note, these are provisional year-end figures - the verified figures will be provided over Summer.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="9">Work continues at a regional level to improve the NI planning system and to develop a new Regional Performance Framework. It is believed that Belfast is the first council to introduce its own performance framework based on this regional work. The council took a lead role in the Regional Planning Improvement Programme (PIP), and this is now moving to “Phase 2”. The NI Audit Office and NI Assembly Public Accounts committee are aware of the systemic issues with the operation of the NI planning system. Performance continued to be impacted by the backlog of legacy applications, the Section 76 process where process improvements are not expected to take effect until 2026-2027, as well as delayed consultation responses from statutory consultees.

At a local level we:
• Introduced new procedures in February 2025 to streamline the Section 76 process.
• Published the council’s new “Planning Application Validation Checklist” in April 2025, which sets mandatory information requirements for planning applications on submission as well as continuing the roll-out of the Planning Service’s new streamlined Pre-Application Discussion process – both of which are expected to have a positive impact on the quality of planning applications received.

For 2026-2027, we are:
• Implementing our new Planning Service Performance Framework.
• Rolling out a new and comprehensive approach to staff training and development.
• Publishing a new internal “Development Management Manual” to capture complex processes and procedures.
• Reviewing our Planning Service Improvement Plan.
• Implementing further process improvements following formal reporting on the lean systems redesign experimentation undertake between 2022 and 2024.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Achieving less than 12 weeks average processing time for householder applications and advertisement consent applications.</td><td>31</td><td>19.8</td><td>20.6</td><td>17.3</td><td>12 weeks</td><td>17.8 weeks</td><td></td><td>Performance for year end is an average processing time of 17.75 weeks, substantially below the 12-week target. This has been adversely affected by resourcing over Summer 2025.</td></tr>
</table>

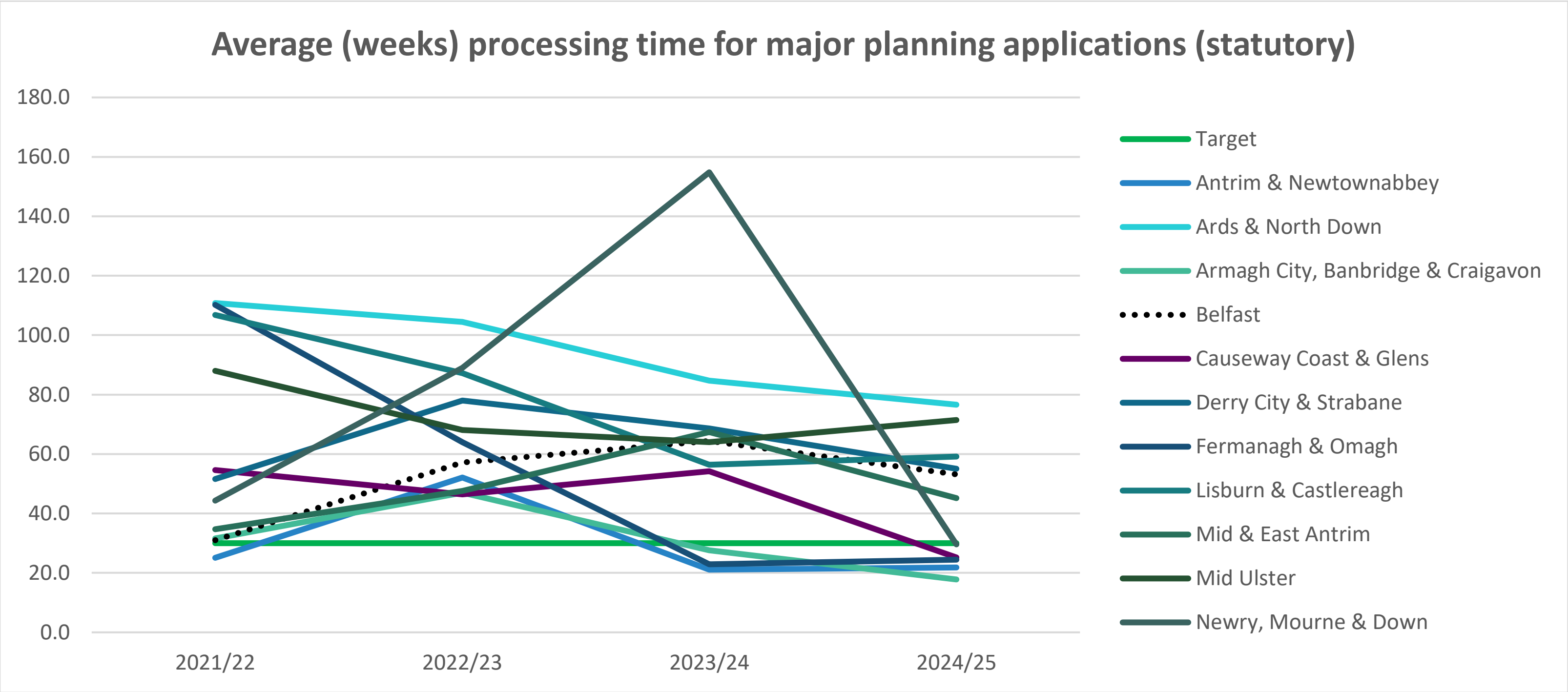
Achieving less than six weeks average processing time of tree works applications and Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs).	-	2.04	7.70	3.07	6 weeks	**3.3 weeks**	↓	Target exceeded by 45%
Completing 75% of service requests for open spaces and street scene within five working days.	59%	57%	62.41%	TBC	75%	73%	↑	Target missed by 2.73%. The handling and closure of service requests is being reviewed.
Completing 92% of service requests for missed bins within five working days.	89%	79%	92%	91.93%	92%	97%	↑	Target exceeded by 4.97% Increase on previous year.
Providing 23,000 additional households with kerbside glass collections.	N/A	N/A	N/A	23,000	23,000	23,000	↑	23,000 households provided with kerbside glass collections.
Collecting an additional 650 tonnes of glass.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	650		↑	619 tonnes of kerbside glass were collected during Phase 1 which was delivered during 2025-2026. Phase 2 kerbside glass collection commenced March/April 2026 so tonnage will be reported next year.
Completing the Asset Management Strategy.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	0	↔	Work is ongoing on development of a Strategy. A new single integrated Asset Management System linked to the Strategy is being procured to better facilitate management of various assets.

How do we compare?

The volume of all planning applications processed by all councils in 2024-2025 was the lowest since Local Government Reform in 2015-2016 and from records began in 2002-2003. Belfast processed 13.34% (1,296) of all Northern Ireland planning applications in 2024-2025 and 14.02% (1,302) of all planning decisions across Northern Ireland. Our performance in relation to other councils is set out on the following page.

Major planning applications

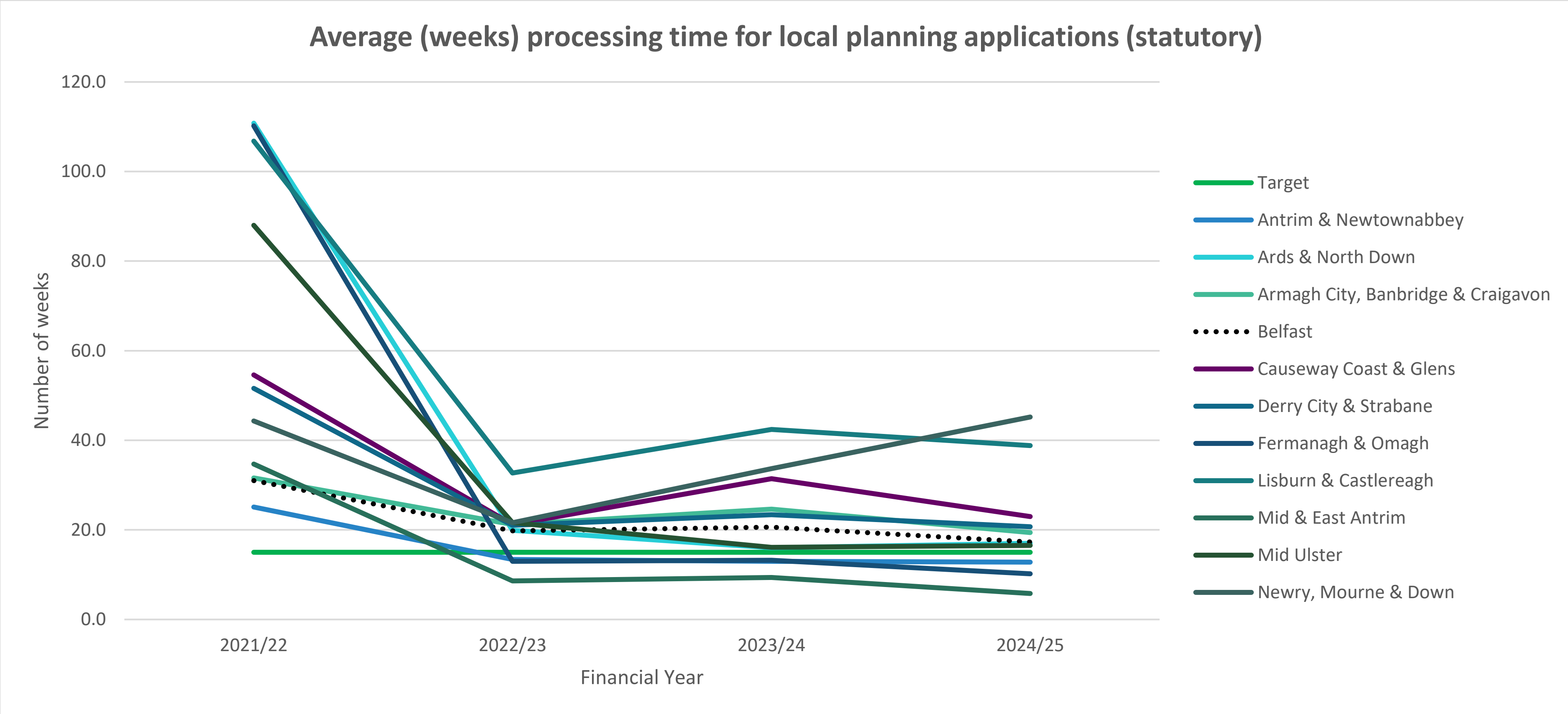
Major planning applications are of economic, environmental, and social importance. Since 2017-2018, Belfast has processed on average 30 major planning applications a year. In 2024-2025, the majority (6 out of 11) of councils did not meet 30-week target, including Belfast who ranked seventh out of 11 councils.



Source: DfI Planning Statistics, [Planning activity statistics | Department for Infrastructure (infrastructure-ni.gov.uk)](), Table 3.2.6 - Major development applications processing times by council

Local planning applications

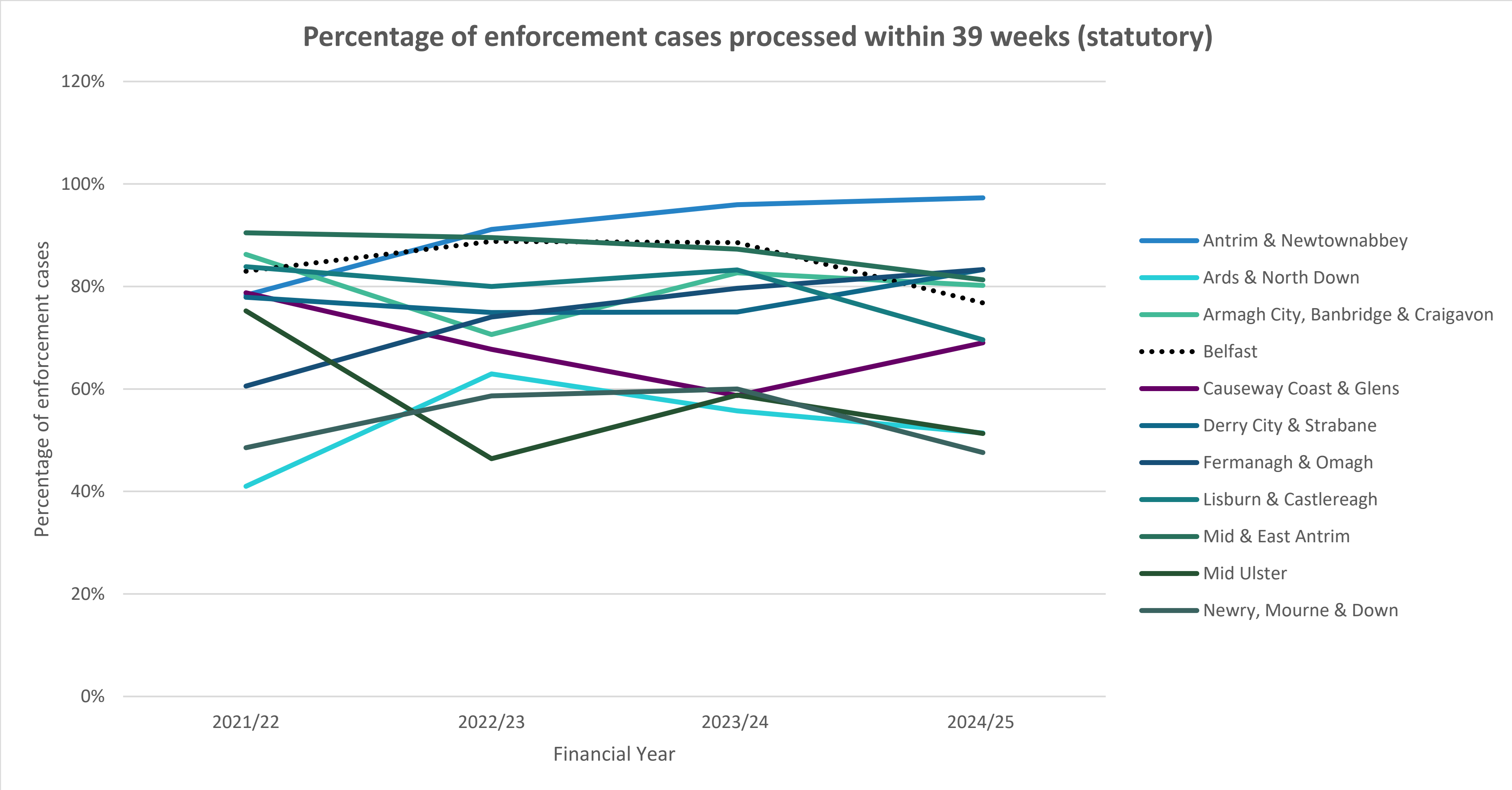
Local planning applications are normally residential and smaller commercial applications. In 2024-2025, the majority (10 out of 11) of councils did not meet the 15-week target, including Belfast who ranked third out of 11 councils. We processed local planning applications more quickly in 2024-2025 than in 2023-2024. We have improved in the sense that we have more than halved the average number of weeks it takes to process local planning applications since 2018-2019, despite the ongoing issues with the Regional Planning IT systems outlined earlier.



Source: DfI Planning Statistics, [Planning activity statistics | Department for Infrastructure (infrastructure-ni.gov.uk),](https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk) Table 4.2.6 - Local development applications processing times by council

Planning enforcement

The number of enforcement cases opened and closed during 2024-2025 across Northern Ireland was the lowest since 2015-2016. Most councils exceeded the 70% target in 2024-2025, with Belfast ranked sixth out of 11 councils.



Source: DfI Planning Statistics, [Planning activity statistics | Department for Infrastructure (infrastructure-ni.gov.uk),](#) Table 6.2.5 - Enforcement cases conclusion times by planning authority.

What else did we do?

Through our Corporate Plan 2025-2028 and supporting Corporate Delivery Plan 2025-2026 we also:

- ✓ Achieved **81% customer satisfaction** with the (Customer Hub*).
- ✓ Achieved a **4.2 overall customer satisfaction rate** (out of five) in Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL) customer satisfaction survey and won the **Excellence in Contribution to the Community** at the Belfast Business Awards.
- ✓ Achieved the **UK Quality Accreditation for Sport and Leisure (Quest)** in 14 leisure centres.
- ✓ Managed more than **4,000 community safety issues** across the city via the newly launched Community Safety Report It App, supporting a coordinated response to a wide range of community safety issues, including drug misuse, antisocial behaviour and welfare check for some of the city's most vulnerable residents.
- ✓ **Embraced AI** to modernise service delivery by:
    - Agreeing our **Generative AI Policy**
    - Progressing **the £5 million AI adoption programme** for the six Belfast Regional City Deal (BRCD) councils.
- ✓ **Invested £75,000 to introduce Belfast Zoo's new hop-on, hop-off accessible train** to improve inclusivity at the venue.
- ✓ Commenced a **Transformation and Efficiency Programme** to ensure the most efficient use of council resources, minimise the rates burden on householders and businesses and create a sustainable medium term financial strategy.
- ✓ Implemented numerous **customer service improvements** as a result of customer complaints.
- ✓ Identified and implemented several **risk actions and audit recommendations** to mitigate the impact or likelihood of risks transpiring that may interrupt delivery.
- ✓ Delivered a range of **service and human resources (HR) improvement projects** through our dedicated Continuous Improvement Unit.
- ✓ Undertook a **variety of consultations** via the council's engagement platform Your Say Belfast to establish areas for action and improvement, including tackling dog fouling and transforming alleyways.

**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 and switchboard.*

What impact did we have?

Our Services

Reliable services, delivered daily.

99.8%
bin collection rate

10 million
bin and box collections

62,000+ tonnes
of materials recycled

564 tonnes
of waste landfilled - our lowest level to date

97%
closed missed bin service requests completed within 5 working days (up from 92% in 2024/25)

13 smart compactor bins installed across the city that hold up to five times more waste, alert staff when bins are full, boosts recycling, and cuts fuel use and emissions by reducing collection journeys by over 80%.

- Secured funding for **two additional narrow access vehicles to improve access** to areas that standard vehicles cannot reach
- Approved a **Single Use Plastic Policy** and action plan to support the avoidance, reduction and replacement of single-use plastics
- Rolled out a **city-wide bin tagging system** to help households use the right bins and prevent overflowing
- Piloted a **dog-fouling** hotspot project that saw a reduction in reports of dog fouling
- Secured **£757,522** for enhanced power-washing
- **Four additional Resource Advisors** to be recruited to assist residents with managing their waste and improve recycling

ISO9001, 14001 and 45001 integrated management systems for waste management maintained

66% city centre cleanliness index

> Overall, the process of implementing improvement actions arising from complaints is driving real benefits. It is helping to reduce repeat complaints, tackle recurring service issues, and embed more sustainable long-term improvement. It is also strengthening governance, audit assurance, and operational efficiency by helping services learn from customer feedback and act on it. *Customer Focus Programme*

> Our team who collect from us in BT9 are brilliant - a really friendly crew. We can't fault them in any way, so thank you to our bin collection team. *Customer*

What next?

This improvement objective is included in the Performance Improvement Plan 2026-2027 as:

- We will continue to adapt and improve our services to better meet the needs of our residents and stakeholders.

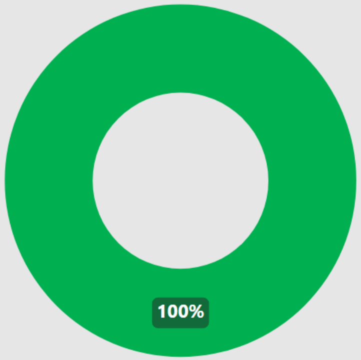
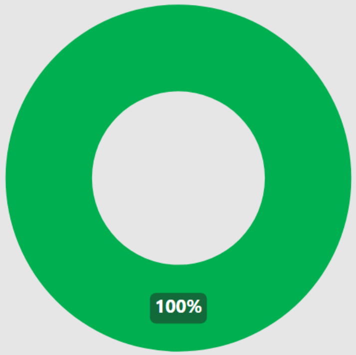
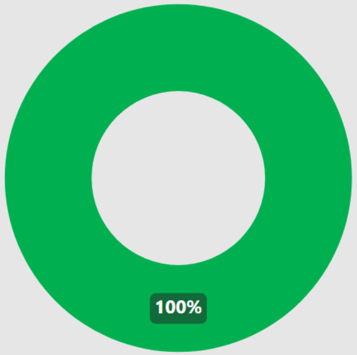
Improving our services is identified as a key priority in the 2025 – 2028 Corporate Plan as:

- Our services – Delivering effective and efficient services.
- Foundations for success - creating a fit for purpose organisation.

Objective 2: Our people and communities

Achievement of improvement objective

Did we achieve this objective?	**Achieved** – we improved our local areas and provide opportunities to support our residents to become healthier and engaged.
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

7 Actions	**12 Performance Indicators (Target)**	**12 Performance Indicators (Trend)**
		
100% of actions were achieved/completed	**12 (100%)** were on target or exceeded target (within 1% or better)	**12 (100%)** showed positive change

What did we do?

- ✓ **Enhanced our playgrounds,** to ensure that we continue to provide high-quality facilities and equipment across the city.
- ✓ **Increased the number of people using our leisure centres**, to participate in sport and physical activity.
- ✓ **Delivered animation and outreach activities** in community, play and leisure development programmes.
- ✓ **Delivered and facilitated a range of events and community programmes** within our parks and open spaces.
- ✓ **Delivered improvements to parks and open spaces** to improve people's health and wellbeing through multimillion pound transformational schemes.
- ✓ **Progressed the development of capital projects** aligned to the Physical Activity and Sports Development Strategy and Pitches Strategy to enhance the quality and accessibility of sports and physical activity provision in Belfast.
- ✓ **Progressed the development and delivery of the council's Physical Programme** to enable needs led investment across the city.

How much did we do?

Measures of success	2021-2022 year-end actual	2022-2023 year-end actual	2023-2024 year-end actual	2024-2025 year-end actual	2025-2026 year-end target	2025-2026 year-end actual	Trend (since baseline year)	Commentary (including rationale if red or amber)
Investing £580k and delivering the annual playground improvement programme.	N/A	N/A	£580,000	£580,000	£580,000	**£580,000**	⬆	White Rise, and Ohio Street Playgrounds complete. Finroy Street nearly complete. Fencing work has commenced at Rodden Crescent and playground refurbishment to commence on site in Q1 2026-2027.
Increasing the number of people to our leisure centres to 3.35million.	2,810,202	3,100,000	3,108,894	3,168,967	3,350,000	**3,620,303**	⬆	Target exceeded by 8%. 451,336 more leisure centre visits than previous year.
Increasing the number of community, play and leisure outreach programmes delivered to 200.	-	-	-	-	200	**266**	⬆	Target exceeded by 33%. Provisional data.
Increasing the number of outdoor leisure bookings (pitches, bowling greens) to 16,000.	8,876	10,859	14,470	16,153	16,000	**18,190**	⬆	Target exceeded by 13.69% 2,676 more bookings than previous year.
Increasing the numbers attending events in our parks to 180,000.	16,755	195,640	175,620	203,654	180,000	**181,665**	⬆	Target exceeded by 0.93%. Hosted 413 events in our parks.
Progressing major improvements to three parks (Ballysillan Playing Fields, Waterworks and Alexandra Park).	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	3	**3**	⬆	Improvement works to all three parks continue to progress.
Progressing major improvements to one open space (Cathedral Gardens).	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	**1**	⬆	Progressing well on site and due to complete winter/spring 2027.

Commencing development work on three selected sites (aligned to the Leisure Programme, Physical Activity and Sports Development Strategy and Pitches Strategy).	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	3	**3**		Prioritised list agreed - Shankill, Whiterock and Girdwood. Pitches Strategy presented to SP&R Committee in April 2026.
Completing 10 projects under the Physical Programme.	N/A	N/A	N/A	26	10	**39**		Target was achieved in Q3. Additional 29 projects completed.
Developing 100 projects under the Physical Programme.	N/A	N/A	N/A	128	100	**220**		Exceeded target. 220 live projects at various stages reported in Physical Programme Dashboard. 26 projects on ground i.e. on site or contractor appointed. 70 underway - design stage, planning. Remainder at different stages e.g. development work ongoing, surveys etc.
Supporting 20 organisations under the £10.28m Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund (NRF) programme.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	20	**20**		Continuing to support 20 organisations at Stage 3. Four projects on site. One building purchase complete in 2025-2026 and funding expended - Market Heritage Hub project.
Completing one project under NRF.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	**1**		One building purchase complete in 2025-2026 and funding expended - Market Heritage Hub project. Four other projects on site and due to complete in 2026-2027 - Belfast Orange Hall refurb, Michael Davitt's Community Heritage Centre, ACT Visitor Centre, Solas. NRF funded element of Michael Davitt's completed in March 2026, Heritage funded aspect being delivered by group and to complete by summer 2026.

What else did we do?

Through our Corporate Plan 2025-2028 and supporting Corporate Delivery Plan 2025-2026 we also:

- ✓ Opened a **new Dog Park at Ormeau Park**, providing a safe and welcoming space for dogs and their owners.
- ✓ **Supported 135 people who are impacted by, or at risk of, chronic homelessness (target 50)** through the Complex Lives Programme.
- ✓ Invested £170k to install **98 communication boards at all playgrounds** across the city.
- ✓ Supported **23 schools and 20 youth organisations to achieve Take 5 accreditation** which recognizes the steps that they take to support positive mental health.
- ✓ Engaged over **1500 older people** in activities to help enhance the quality of life for people as they age.
- ✓ Delivered a **Living Library event** to promote good relations, inclusion and community understanding across the city.
- ✓ Unveiled the **first legal street art wall** at Little Patrick Street which supports local artists and help deter graffiti and tagging.
- ✓ Delivered the **Belfast Canvas programme**, which has transformed over 130 utility and junction boxes across the city into vibrant public artworks created by local, national and international artists.
- ✓ Funded a range of creative community projects across the whole city through our **'Bank of Ideas' participatory budgeting** initiative.
- ✓ Provided a range of opportunities for our residents to become healthier and engaged through our extensive **city and park events, leisure centre holiday schemes, community centre programmes**.
- ✓ Delivered key programmes such as the **Equality Action Plan 2020 – 2024**, **Disability Action Plan 2022 – 2025**, **Age Friendly Belfast Plan 2022 – 2026 and our Language Action Plan 2023-26**.
- ✓ Ensured our programmes and policies are inclusive by fulfilling our obligations under the S75 NI act through **equality screening**.
- ✓ Engaged extensively through our **ongoing engagement mechanisms** (Your Say Belfast and established staff and public forums).

What next?

This improvement objective features in the Performance Improvement Plan 2026-2027 as:

- ✓ We will improve our local areas and provide opportunities to support our residents to become healthier and engaged.
- ✓ Our people and communities continue to feature as a strategic theme of the refreshed Belfast Agenda and is a key priority in the 2025 – 2028 Corporate Plan.

What impact did we have?

Our People and Communities

Active lives, sporting pride

31,145
Memberships
(up from 30,485 in 2024/25).

£800K
invested to upgrade and expand 3 sports pitch facilities.

1460
people supported through the 12 week Healthwise programme.

£800K
invested in gym refurbishments and the creation of party spaces.

Celebrated **10 years of partnership with GLL**

Announced as a **European City of Sport for 2026**

Hosted the **17th Belfast Sports Awards**

Presenting **14 awards across 7 categories**

*"The Healthwise programme gave me the **confidence** and opened the door to make me **more aware of my health** and everything involved. I would have been lost without that support — the **support was fantastic**."*
Neelima Drawid

*"The successful European City of Sport bid gives the city an opportunity to showcase the **excellent sports and leisure facilities** provided by Belfast City Council along with the **city's rich sporting heritage**."*
Jim Girvan, Director Neighbourhood Services

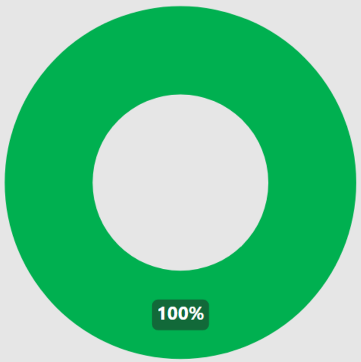
Objective 3: Our place

Achievement of improvement objective

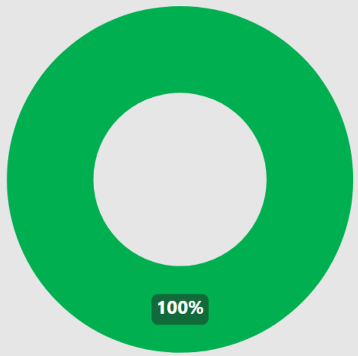
Did we achieve this objective?	**Achieved** – we created a more vibrant, attractive, and connected city (including the city centre).
Belfast Agenda Outcome	Belfast will be a vibrant, attractive, connected and environmentally sustainable city.

Corporate Plan themes and priorities	• Our place – Creating a liveable and connected, vibrant and competitive city.
	  ○ Connectivity, active and sustainable travel.
	  ○ City regeneration and investment.

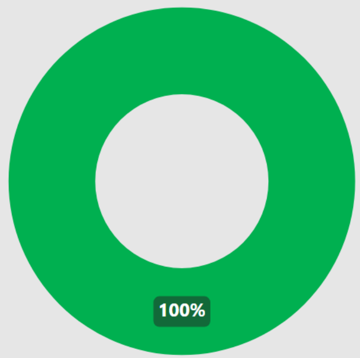
5 Actions



8 Performance Indicators (Target)



8 Performance Indicators (Trend)



100% of actions were achieved/completed

8 (100%) were on target or exceeded target (within 1% or better)

8 (100%) showed positive change

What did we do?

- ✓ Continued to deliver the **Vacant to Vibrant (V2V) Programme 2025-2026** to address city-wide vacancy rates.
- ✓ Progressed the **Greenways and Access to the Hills Programme** to improve the connectivity of the city.
- ✓ Supported and progressed the delivery of **neighbourhood tourism physical projects**, improving the city's local tourism facilities and infrastructure.
- ✓ Progressed **infrastructure works at the North Foreshore** to support the development of the site.
- ✓ Progressed the **Master Development Agreement for the 250-acre Giant's Park site** in accordance with the schedule of works.

How much did we do?

Measures of success	2021-2022 year-end actual	2022-2023 year-end actual	2023-2024 year-end actual	2024-2025 year-end actual	2025-2026 year-end target	2025-2026 year-end actual	Trend (since baseline year)	Commentary (including rationale if red or amber)
Occupying 20 previously vacant city-wide properties as a result of the Vacant to Vibrant intervention.	N/A	N/A	17	46	20	24	⬆	The annual target was achieved and exceeded (by 20%) in Q2 with grant awards to 24 applicants.
Awarding £470,000 through Vacant to Vibrant funding to city-wide traders.	N/A	£92,433	£301,136	£839,204	£470,000	£519,000	⬆	Achieved and exceeded in Q2. Includes underspends from UKSPF.
Progressing two greenways and pathways to improve the connectivity of the city – e.g., Sydenham Greenway, Colin Greenway and Black Mountain Pathway.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2	2	⬆	Continue to progress work on Greenway projects.

Progressing three physical neighbourhood tourism projects - Act Initiative, Titanic People Exhibition Centre and Michael Davitt's Community Heritage Centre.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	3	3	⬆	Successfully progressed work on three tourism projects.
Progressing match funding for three projects from external partners for neighbourhood tourism physical projects.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	3	3	⬆	Working with groups to secure funding for tourism initiatives including Market Heritage Hub. Secured some funding from DfC towards Historic Cemeteries.
Undertaking works with the developer to progress the development phase of the 250-acre Giant's Park site.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	1	⬆	Progressing well and going through Planning re: Phase 1 Adventure Hub.
Progressing the delivery of landfill gas extraction system at the North Foreshore.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	1	⬆	Gas extraction system works progressing. A minor delay saw the contractor demobilise from site in February. They will return to complete the last week of works in late April.
Progressing the delivery of additional Northern Ireland Electricity (NIE) capacity at the North Foreshore.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	1	⬆	NIE continue with these works, anticipated completion date in late 2027. The "phase 2" works from Duncrue to Giant's Park were completed in March 2026. NIE will next proceed to “phase 3” works inside Giant's Park.

What else did we do?

Through our Corporate Plan 2025-2028 and supporting Corporate Delivery Plan 2025-2026 we also:

- ✓ Progressed delivery of the **housing-led regeneration programme**, working in partnership with the Private Sector Partner (PSP) and external partners.
- ✓ **Invested £4.2m in the cultural sector** – supporting 152 organisations through grants and partnerships, and providing 35 creative bursaries, mentorships and commissions.
- ✓ Welcomed the return of **Culture Night** after a six-year hiatus since 2019:
  - **158 events** were delivered across the city by **182 participating organisations, venues and artists**
  - **£49,482** was distributed to **support artists and venues**
  - Estimated **attendance** of approximately **50,000 people** across the city
  - **86%** of audiences rated their overall **experience as good or very good**
  - Estimated total **economic impact of approximately a minimum £1.67 million** for the city.
- ✓ Through our various events and venues hosted:
  - **57,000** people at the **Maritime Festival** and **25,000+** at our **St Patrick's Day** celebrations.
  - **152,878 visitors at Belfast Zoo** and over **273,782 visitors at 2 Royal Avenue**
  - **107,213 visitors our City Hall exhibition and guided tours**.
- ✓ Purchased the historic, listed **Assembly Rooms** building as part of the ongoing city centre regeneration drive.
- ✓ Successfully bid to host the **Comhaltas Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann 2026** and were confirmed as the host city for **Comhaltas Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann** in 2027.
- ✓ Leveraged **$1 million from Bloomberg Philanthropies Mayors Challenge 2025–2026** to help transform Belfast alleyways.
- ✓ Won the **NILGA Engaging Communities Award** for the **Belfast 2024** Programme.

What next?

This improvement objective will feature in the Performance Improvement Plan 2026-2027 as:

- Our place – we will create a more vibrant, attractive, and connected city (including city centre).

Our place continues to feature as a strategic theme of the refreshed Belfast Agenda and is a key priority in the 2025 – 28 Corporate Plan.

What impact did we have?

Our Place

Physical Investment Programme – making Belfast a better place to live, work and invest.

£750m+ investment	**220+** live projects	**450** projects completed	**10** Live Landmark projects (£1m+)	**8** Live transformational projects (£5m+)

URBAN VILLAGES Thriving Places

39 projects were completed in 2025-26, including two Urban Villages projects - one landmark (Sandy Row Arts & Digital Hub) and one transformational (ABC Trust Health & Leisure Hub), Phase 2 of Black Mountain Shared Space Project (DfC, DoJ & IFI) and Castlereagh Presbyterian Church Hall (BIF).


ABC Trust Health and Leisure Hub (£7.3m)

Shared, accessible, and **welcoming** spaces.

Community benefit.

Connecting people from **diverse backgrounds**.

Enriched **physical and social environment**.


Black Mountain Shared Space Community Office Units (£2.4m)


Sandy Row Arts and Digital Hub (£1.5m)

"The **Arts & Digital Hub** is a **major step forward for Sandy Row,** representing a significant investment in local people and transforming a vacant site into a vibrant centre for **creativity, digital learning and opportunity**."

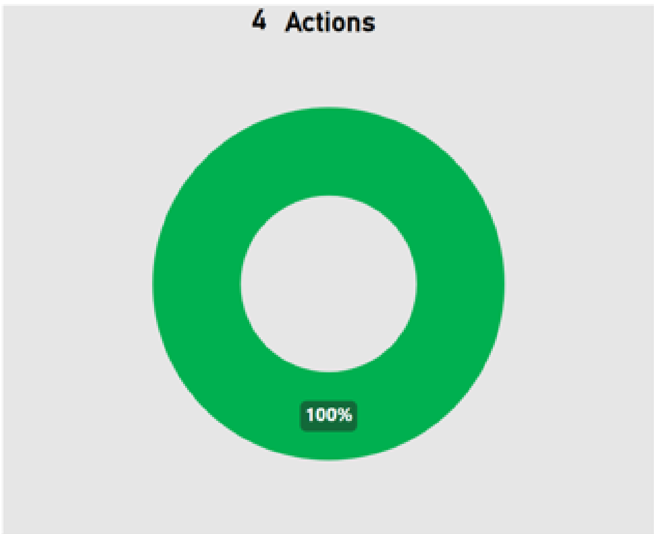
Nikki Johnston, Belfast South Community Resources

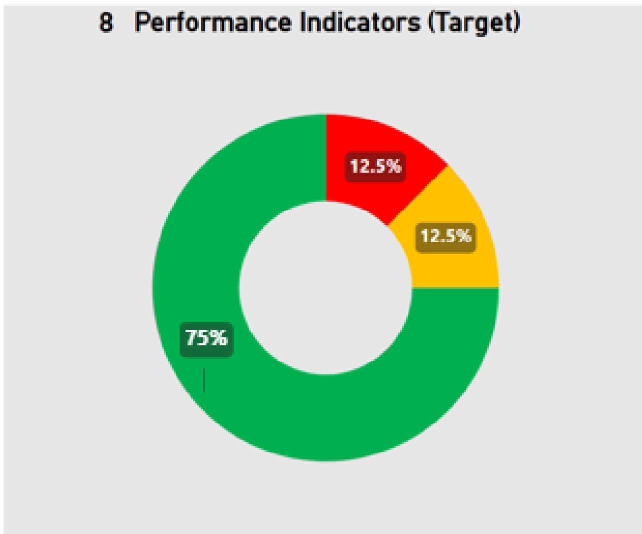

Castlereagh Presbyterian Church Hall (£382k)

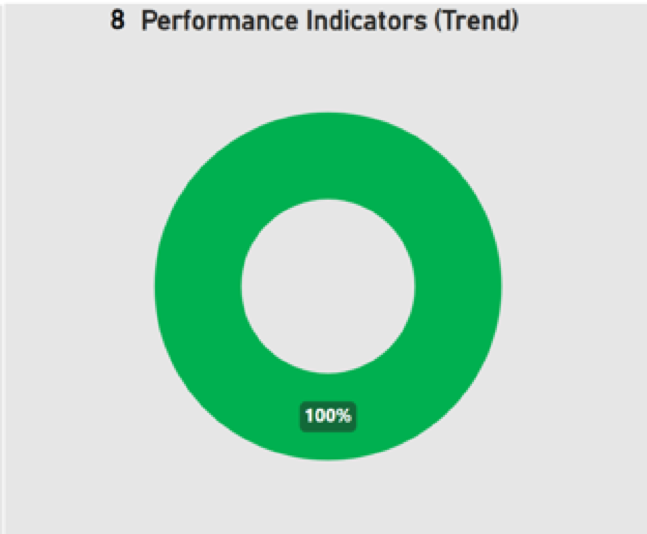
Objective 4: Our planet

Achievement of improvement objective

Did we achieve this objective?	**Achieved** – we championed climate action; protected the environment and improved the sustainability of Belfast.
Belfast Agenda Outcome	Belfast is a vibrant, attractive, connected and environmentally sustainable city.
Corporate Plan themes and priorities	Our services, our people and communities, our place, and our planet.







100% of actions were achieved/completed	**6 (75%)** were on target or exceeded target (within 1% or better) **1 (12.5%)** was slightly adrift of target (between 1% and 5%) **1 (12.5%)** were adrift of target (more than 5%)	**8 (100%)** showed positive change

What did we do?

- ✓ **Progressed the planet section of the Belfast Agenda,** which aims to create a sustainable, nature positive city (including investable local energy projects, an UPSURGE demonstrator site and a neighbourhood retrofit pilot).
- ✓ Commenced delivery of the **council Corporate Climate Action Plan** to increase the climate resilience of council assets and services and progress towards Council net zero emissions, (over 20 priorities including a Sustainable Food Policy, energy audits of council buildings and retrofitting of council buildings.
- ✓ Delivered an **effective waste management service** across the city.
- ✓ Delivered **year three of the Belfast Tree Strategy and action plan** to help manage and improve the tree scape across the city, including the establishment of the woodland management programme.

How much did we do?

Measures of success	2021-2022 year-end actual	2022-2023 year-end actual	2023-2024 year-end actual	2024-2025 year-end actual	2025-2026 year-end target	2025-2026 year-end actual	Trend (since baseline year)	Commentary (including rationale if red or amber)
Progressing three Belfast Agenda Climate Projects (investable local energy projects, UPSURGE demonstrator site, neighbourhood retrofit pilot).	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	3	3	⬆	The UPSURGE and UP2030 work are completed, work is ongoing in relation to the investable local energy projects.
Completing one Belfast Agenda Climate Project (Horizon Europe UP2030).	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	1	⬆	Achieved in Q2.
Progressing 19 short-term council Corporate Climate Action Plan priorities.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	19	18	⬆	Council Corporate Climate Actions are being progressed, 18 were in progress in Q4.

Achieving 38.5% of council municipal waste arisings is sent for recycling.	37.87%	37.06%	38.8%	39.4%	38.5%	**38.9%**	↑	Broadly similar to previous 2 years and improved from baseline year 2021-2022. Provisional figures subject to NIEA validation (normally November/December annually).
Reducing the tonnage of biodegradable council collected waste that is landfilled to 7,000 tonnes (statutory indicator).	35,783	28,444	7,036	899	7,000 tonnes	**375 tonnes**	↑	Improvement on previous year and baseline year of 2021-2022. See below for details.
The amount of biodegradable waste disposed of at landfill fell to the lowest level recorded to date. This was achieved through the interim residual waste treatment contract. No waste sent directly to landfill. The landfill tonnage is a result of contaminated materials and/or fines created during the processing of recyclables. Note - Provisional data subject to review by the regulator (Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) and Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DEARA)) - normally annually in November.								
Maintaining the % of household waste collected that is sent for recycling at 42% (or prepared for re-use) (statutory indicator).	41.0%	40.8%	41.6%	42.4%	42%	41.5%	↑	See below for details.
We have a range of ongoing local and regional programmes to increase opportunities to reuse and recycle such as school education visits, pilot recycling schemes and circular economy projects, as well as change behaviour initiatives and enforcement. We continue to engage at a regional level on the development of a waste management strategy for Northern Ireland Note - Provisional data subject to review by the regulator (NIEA and the DEARA) - normally annually in November.								
Achieving 160,000 tonnage of council collected municipal waste arisings (statutory indicator).	168,037	157,892	161,097	161,320	160,000 tonnes	**160,936**	↑	See below.
Broadly similar figure to previous year. The tonnage of council collected municipal waste arisings has reduced from the baseline year 2021-2022. Note - Provisional data subject to review by the regulator (NIEA and the DEARA) – normally annually in November.								
Planting 500 linear metres of new hedging.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	500 linear metres	**750 linear metres**	↑	Target exceeded by 50%.

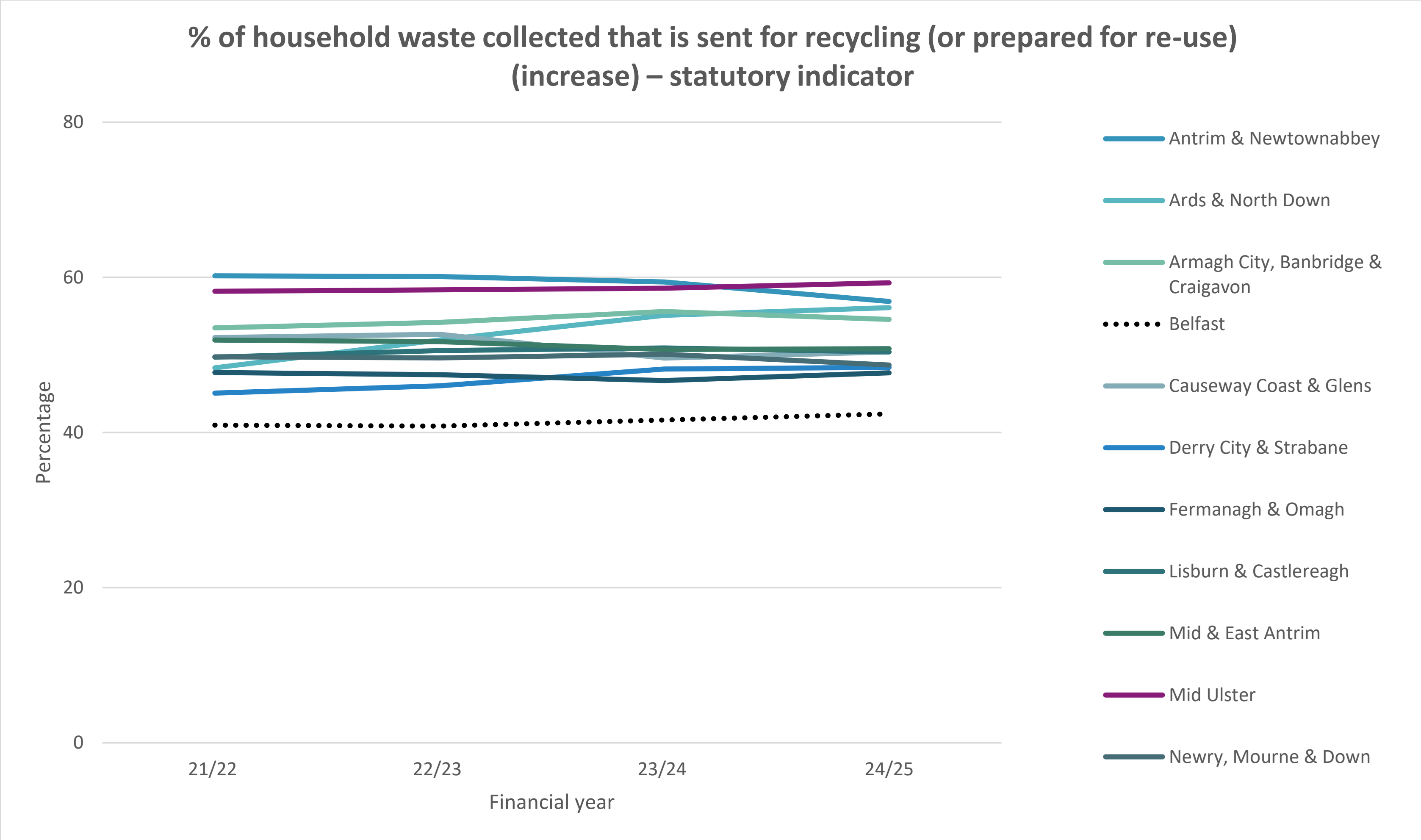
How do we compare?

Excepting Covid-19, councils have been recycling more, sending less waste to landfill, and reducing the amount of waste collected since Local Government Reform in 2015-2016. Collectively, councils have also exponentially increased the amount of waste sent for energy recovery from zero before 2009-10 to approximately 34% in 2024-2025[2]. Belfast is consistent with these regional trends and our performance in relation to the other councils over the preceding four years is as follows. Please note that final 2025-2026 data is not available from DEARA until November 2026.

Household recycling rate

We have maintained a relatively consistent household recycling rate since the reform of Local Government in 2015-2016. There has been an overall reduction in recycling in Belfast since 2018-2019, plateauing at approximately 41% over the last 3 years. However, Belfast's recycling rate improved by just over 0.5% between 2023-2024 and 2024-2025. We have a range of ongoing local and regional programmes to change behaviour and increase opportunities to reuse and recycle such as school education visits, pilot street recycling schemes and circular economy projects.

[2] *Source: DAERA LAC Municipal Waste Timeseries, Northern Ireland local authority collected municipal waste management statistics time series data | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (daera-ni.gov.uk).*

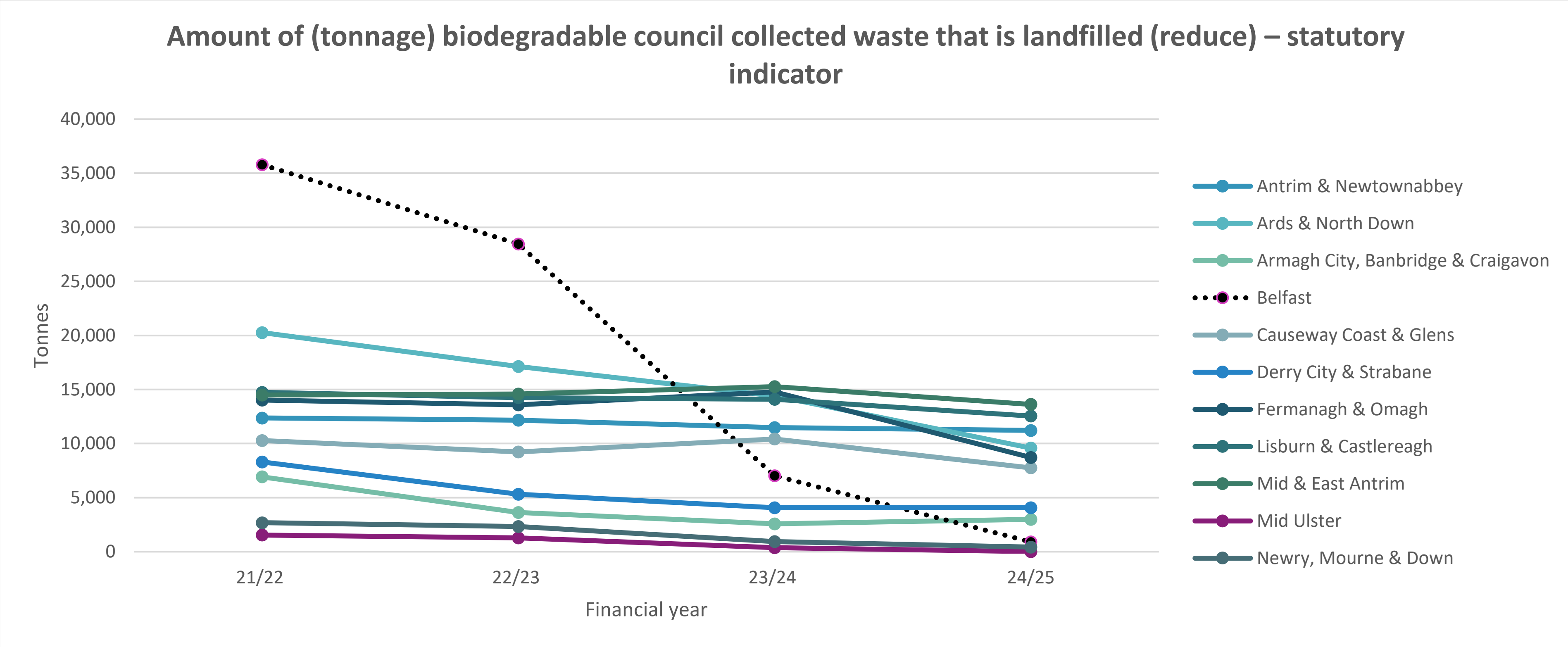


During 2024-2025, the highest recycling rate was recorded in Mid Ulster, with the lowest in Belfast. Seven out of the 11 councils improved their recycling rates compared to the preceding year, including Belfast. Four councils, including Belfast, were below the Northern Ireland recycling rate, and the target that was set in the Northern Ireland Waste Management Strategy to achieve 50% recycling by 2020.

All councils are still some distance from achieving the target set in the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 of recycling at least 70% of waste by 2030.

Biodegradable waste to landfill

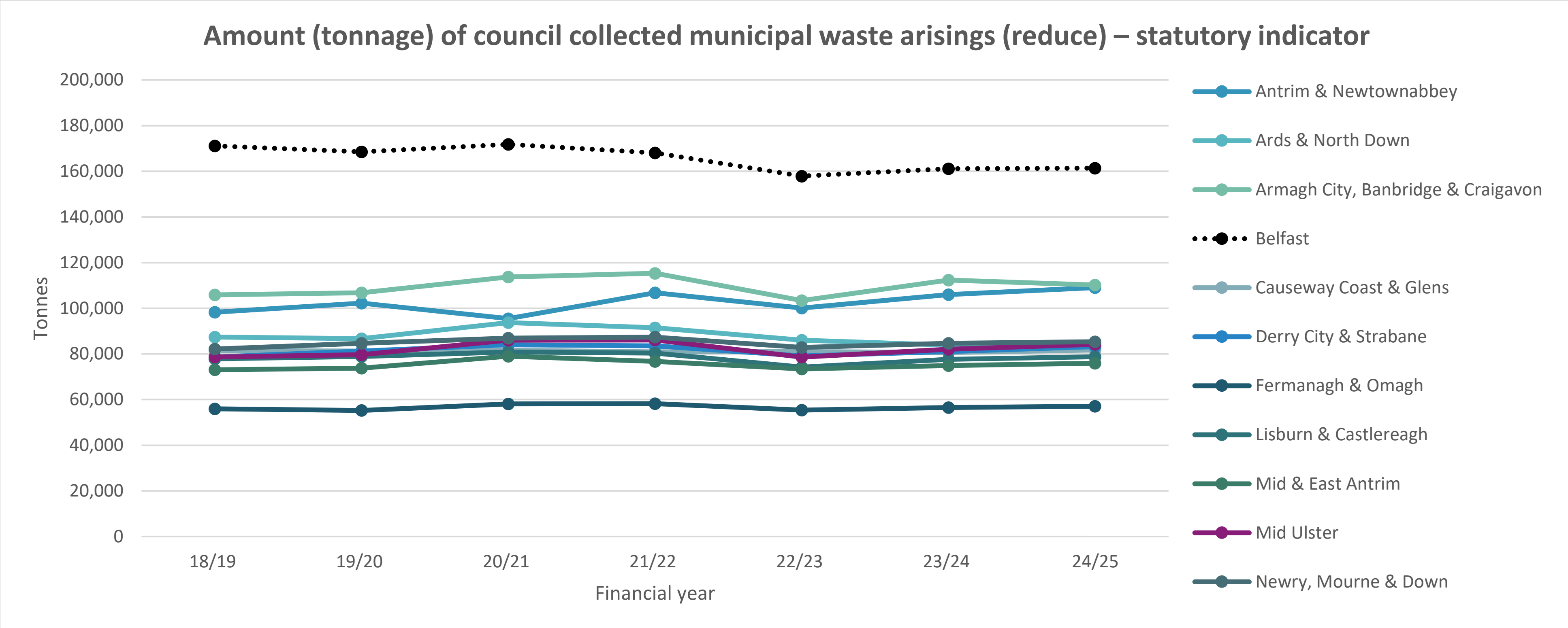
Most councils are reducing the amount of biodegradable waste that is landfilled with a reduction from 218,898 tonnes in 2015-2016 to 71,828 tonnes in 2024-2025[3]. Following the award of the new interim residual waste treatment contract which involves the treatment of all residual waste, and none sent directly to landfill, Belfast showed a distinct improvement by reducing biodegradable waste to landfill from 45,231 tonnes in 2015-2016 to 907 tonnes in 2024-2025 and a further 375 tonnes this year.



[3] *Source DAERA Waste Management Statistics,* [*Northern Ireland local authority collected municipal waste management statistics | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (daera-ni.gov.uk)*]

Council collected waste

The amount of waste collected by each council broadly reflects population levels within their boundaries – Belfast is historically inclined to have the highest, with Fermanagh and Omagh the lowest. Whilst there was a slight increase in our municipal waste arisings during 2024-2025 for the reasons outlined above, there has been an overall reduction in the amount of municipal waste arisings since 2018-19 (consistent with most other councils) and since the reform of Local Government in 2015-2016. This is despite a population increase of 2.3% (7,811 people) in Belfast since 2015[4].



[4] *NISRA Population Estimates 2015-22* [*Population Estimates for Northern Ireland - Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (shinyapps.io)*]

What else did we do?

Through our Corporate Plan 2025-2028 and supporting Corporate Delivery Plan 2025-2026 we also:

- ✓ Used electricity for council properties from **renewable energy sources** thanks to our contract with local energy supplier 3T Power.
- ✓ **Reduced energy consumption** through our GLL Partnership by a further 10% in 2025 compared to 2024.
- ✓ Offered **110 Belfast Bikes free to social enterprises, co-operatives, and charities** across the city.
- ✓ Introduced **100 state-of-the-art public e-bikes** to the Belfast Bikes fleet for the first time, alongside **updated pedal bikes**.
- ✓ Welcomed the births of a number of species at Belfast Zoo, that are endangered in the wild as part of **international breeding programmes** designed to protect the future of wildlife – including a Colombian spider monkey, a rare François' langur and a cotton-top tamarin.
- ✓ Established **five community orchards** across the city, transforming urban spaces into 'edible landscapes'.
- ✓ **Achieved 24 Green Flag accreditations** for our open space sites across the city.
- ✓ Secured **£850,514 in funding from The National Lottery Heritage Fund** to support a major new project aimed at strengthening connections between people and nature across the city.
- ✓ Leveraged **£60k through Making Space for Nature** to deliver enhancements in parks, open spaces, and community green assets.
- ✓ Delivered **2,000 community environmental sessions**, **365 school sessions** and **125 community clean-ups**.

What next?

To meet the evolving needs of the city we have broadened the scope of our planet objective to align with the Belfast Agenda Planet objective. Therefore, this improvement objective will feature in the Performance Improvement Plan 2026-2027 as:

- o We will create a sustainable, nature-positive city.

Our planet continues to feature as a strategic theme of the refreshed Belfast Agenda and is a key priority in the 2025 – 2028 Corporate Plan.

What impact did we have?

Our Planet
UPSURGE Lower Botanic Gardens demonstrator

Delivered by **Belfast City Council, Queen's University Belfast**, and local stakeholders including **Friends of the Field** and **Friends of Botanic**.

£0.73m
UPSURGE investment

1 demonstrator site
Lower Botanic

1,500+ wetland species
planted

4 satellite sites
Agreed for 2026/27

Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation programme

How well did we do it?

- ✓ Community garden planted and education space established
- ✓ 'Living lab' space established as a soil research testing area
- ✓ Grassland and wetland areas created to encourage biodiversity and restore habitats
- ✓ Royal Horticultural Society growing space established
- ✓ Research Garden established by QUB with 2 ongoing trials on the site.
- ✓ Innovative research including monitoring air quality and environmental data
- ✓ New entrance and bus stop installed at the site for better connectivity

Is anyone better off?

- ✓ Enriched urban biodiversity through wildflowers, woodland, and habitat restoration
- ✓ Increased community access to green space and sustainable food growing
- ✓ Enhanced community integration through the transformed, shared urban space
- ✓ Strengthened community skills, learning, and engagement in sustainability
- ✓ Enhanced community resilience to flood risk and heat stress risk.
- ✓ Enhanced health and wellbeing outcomes through greener environment.

Lower Botanic is a real test bed for experimenting and learning about how we adapt our green spaces to make them more resilient as climate change impacts increase across our city.
Mura Quigley, Adaptation and Resilience Advisor

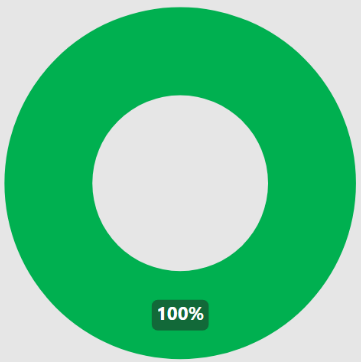
The community garden is much more than a weekend hobby. It will serve as a platform for the public to engage with sustainable food growing, learn about biodiversity and promote environmental protection.
Colin Shaw, Friends of the Field

Objective 5: Our economy

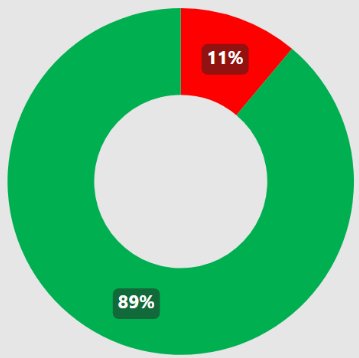
Achievement of improvement objective

Did we achieve this objective?	**Achieved –** stimulated inclusive growth and innovation, helped businesses to start-up, and grow and created opportunities for more and better jobs and employment.
Belfast Agenda Outcome	Belfast is a place where everyone benefits from a thriving and prosperous economy.
Corporate Plan themes and priorities	Our economy – Creating inclusive and sustainable growth, learning and opportunity.

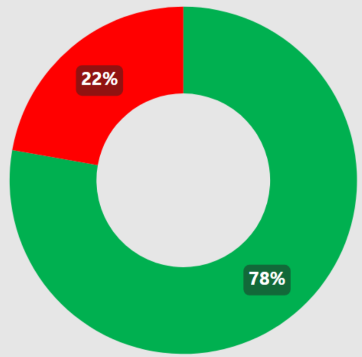
6 Actions



9 Performance Indicators (Target)



9 Performance Indicators (Trend)



100% of actions were achieved/completed	**8 (89%)** were on target or exceeded target (within 1% or better) **1 (11%)** was adrift of target (more than 5%)	**7 (78%)** showed positive change **2 (22%)** showed negative change

What did we do?

- ✓ Worked with the **Enterprise Support Service to deliver 'Go Succeed'** to increase the number of new business starts.
- ✓ Delivered **employment and upskilling academies** in priority sectors in line with industry demand.
- ✓ Delivered the **Smart Belfast urban innovation programme** to enhance Belfast's capacity for digital innovation.
- ✓ Delivered an **enhanced Learning City Festival** to promote and encourage lifelong learning for people of all ages across Belfast
- ✓ Extended the delivery of **Belfast Business Promise (BBP) initiative** to support the provision of good jobs and a sustainable local economy.
- ✓ **Supported our suppliers by** helping business cashflow through the prompt payment of invoices.

How much did we do?

Measures of success	2021-2022 year-end actual	2022-2023 year-end actual	2023-2024 year-end actual	2024-2025 year-end actual	2025-2026 year-end target	2025-2026 year-end actual	Trend (since baseline year)	Commentary (including rationale if red or amber)
Completing 325 business plans to promote business start-up and job promotion (statutory indicator).	514	472	263	196	325	328	⬇	Target exceeded.
Supporting 75% of participants to move into a positive outcome from an Employment or Upskilling Academy.	N/A	79%	75.8%	82%	75%	66%	⬇	In total, 296 of the 448 participants to complete an Academy during the last 12 months have already secured a job/better job (66%). Securing employment is an ongoing process that continues for a period of six months where an aftercare service is provided to participants

								after completing their Academy. This is therefore a 'state of play' and will continually increase over the next six months and we are on track to achieve a minimum of 75% into-work rate.
Supporting 425 small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to engage in digital innovation.	N/A - new for 2024-2025	N/A - new for 2024-2025	N/A - new for 2024-2025	433	425	430	↑	Exceeded target by 1.18%.
Awarding £600,000 of funding to organisations to engage in digital innovation.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	£600,000	£600,000	↑	This funding was attached to two mature programmes that drew to a close in 2026 (Augment the City and (Department for Science, Innovation & Technology (DSIT) 5G). New funding will be issued in 2026-2027 via the £4.3m Contracts for Innovation, £5M adoption programme and the £5M AI Entrepreneurial Fund. These funds will have a staggered launch over 24 months.
% of participants who agreed they felt more aware of the learning providers and opportunities across the city following their attendance at a Learning City festival event	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Establish baseline	73%	↑	Baseline established in Q1 as part of a revised approach to evaluating the programme.

Supporting 10 businesses (existing Belfast Business Promise (BBP) members) to improve their recognition level (reaching Member or Ambassador status).	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	10	42	⬆	Exceeded target. 80 organisations live, 33 Supporters, 29 Members, 13 Ambassadors, 269 pledges awarded.
Producing four good practice 'case studies' to highlight the BBP journey and 'inclusive growth in practice'.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	4	5	⬆	Target exceeded. Good news stories and best practice case studies will be continued to be captured throughout the transitional phase of the programme to highlight further successes of 2025-2026.
Paying 90% of invoices within 30 calendar days.	94%	92%	93%	89.25%	90%	96%	⬆	Target exceeded by 7% and we paid suppliers quicker this year than last.
Paying 80% of invoices within 10 working days.	81.29%	81.31%	81.05%	76.95%	80%	88%	⬆	Target exceeded by 10.4% and we paid suppliers quicker this year than last.

How do we compare?

Business start-up and growth activity [statutory performance indicator]: Number of business plans developed (2025-2026 data is provisional, subject to final verification).

The 'Go Succeed' programme has been delivered in collaboration by all 11 councils since September 2017 (previously Go For It). Together we have supported 13,555 entrepreneurs to produce business plans and in doing so created 8134 jobs. Nine (82%) of the 11 councils met their jobs promotion target during 2025-2026. Since 2018-2019, Belfast City Council have delivered the greatest number of business plans and jobs, representing 15% of all programme business plans and promoted the same proportion of programme jobs. Our performance in relation to our fellow councils is as follows:

Council area	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026	Total
Antrim and Newtownabbey	162	172	91	238	292	955
Ards and North Down	211	166	106	194	298	975
Armagh Banbridge and Craigavon	386	353	173	204	377	1493
Belfast	**514**	**472**	**263**	**269**	**547**	**2065**
Causeway Coast and Glens	256	213	110	220	291	1090
Derry and Strabane	238	240	118	265	314	1175
Fermanagh and Omagh	309	308	147	204	231	1199
Lisburn and Castlereagh	213	187	103	199	268	970
Mid and East Antrim	181	206	110	231	267	995
Mid Ulster	269	278	134	151	308	1140
Newry Mourne and Down	356	305	128	316	393	1498
Total	**3095**	**2900**	**1483**	**2491**	**3586**	**13,555**

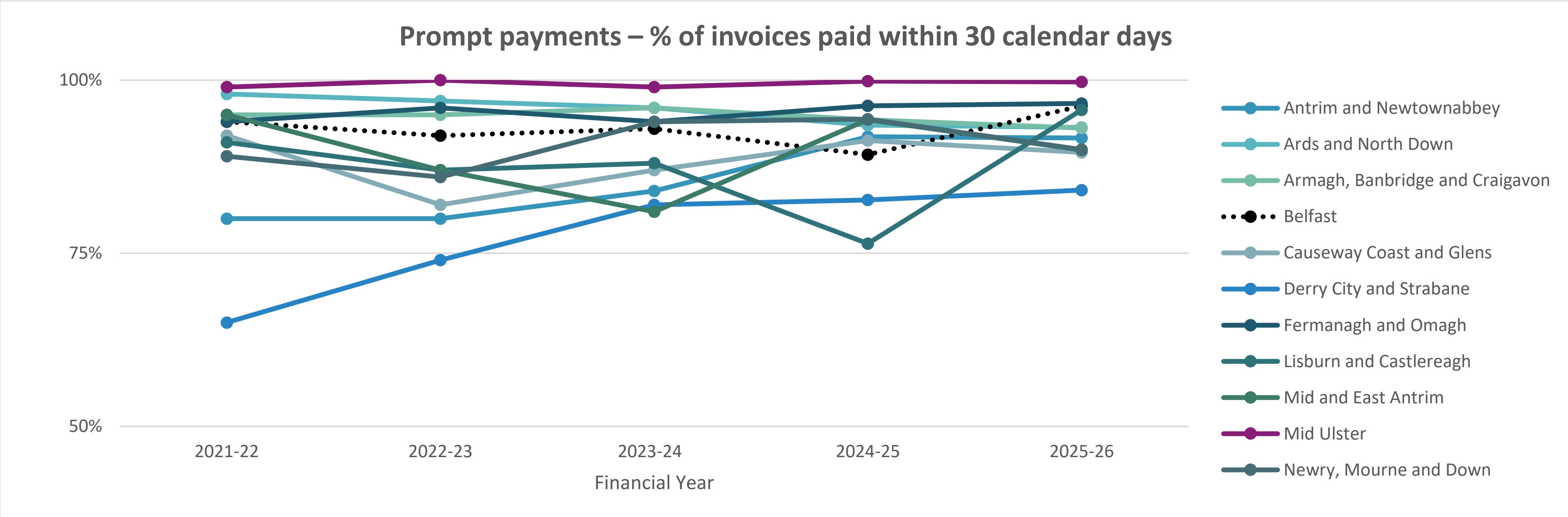
Number of jobs promoted through the Go Succeed programme (formerly Go For It) [statutory performance indicator][5] (provisional data 2025-2026 subject to final verification)						
Council area	**2021-2022**	**2022-2023**	**2023-2024**	**2024-2025**	**2025-2026**	**Total**
Antrim and Newtownabbey	97	103	55	143	175	573
Ards and North Down	127	100	64	116	179	586
Armagh Banbridge and Craigavon	232	212	104	122	226	896
Belfast	**308**	**283**	**158**	**161**	**328**	**1238**
Causeway Coast and Glens	154	128	66	132	175	655
Derry and Strabane	143	144	71	159	188	705

[5] *2018-19 to 2022-24 supplied by Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council for the Go For It Programme. The 'Go For It' programme finished in Q3 of 2023-24.*

Fermanagh and Omagh	185	185	88	122	139	719
Lisburn and Castlereagh	128	112	62	119	161	582
Mid and East Antrim	109	124	66	139	160	598
Mid Ulster	161	167	80	91	185	684
Newry Mourne and Down	214	183	77	190	236	900
Total	**1857**	**1740**	**890**	**1495**	**2152**	**8134**

Performance benchmarking – prompt payments

Prompt payment of invoices is an indicator of a healthy organisation with effective internal controls and corporate governance. However, prompt payment of invoices is also important to support the cash-flow of small and medium sized enterprises. Therefore, in 2025-2026, we continued to use this as an indicator of how well we are helping small businesses, including social enterprises and co-operatives, to develop and grow.



What else did we do?

Through our Corporate Plan 2025-2028 and supporting Corporate Delivery Plan 2025-2026 we also:

- ✓ Delivered the **NI Enterprise Support Service (NIESS)** on behalf of all 11 councils.
- ✓ Enabled **test trading opportunities for 48 new businesses** through our dedicated start up space at St George's Market
- ✓ **Enabled 928** people to successfully start an **Employment or Upskilling Academy**:
  - **519 people** started an Employment Academy and of those completing, **153** have already **secured employment**.
  - **409** have started an **Upskilling Academy** and of this total, **143** have already **secured a better job**.
  - In addition, **218** participants are still participating on an **Employment Academy** and **262** on an **Upskilling Academy**.
- ✓ Delivered the **Belfast Learning Festival** to promote inclusive access to lifelong learning for people of all ages and backgrounds:
  - 65 partners delivered **119 free learning events**
  - Awarded **£23,548 small grant funding** to not for profit organisations.
- ✓ Supported the delivery of the 4th year of the **Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) programme,** including the following during 2025-2026:
  - Dispersing **over £45m to partners** to progress the various projects across the 4 investment pillars.
  - Gaining approval for a **£2m BRCD Innovation Centre Collaborative Grants Programme** (supported by Invest NI) to encourage Small and Medium sized Enterprises (SMEs) to engage and collaborate with the BRCD Innovation Centres.
  - Progressing **Belfast Stories**, a landmark major tourism anchor in the city centre, to Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) design stage 3a.
  - Progressing the £48m **Belfast Rapid Transport Phase 2 project** a major public transport initiative to expand the Glider network.
  - Delivering the **Belfast Region City Deal Innovation Challenge Fund** to stimulate innovation.
- ✓ Delivered the **Belfast Business Promise**:
  - 80 organisations live (38 Supporters, 29 Members, 13 Ambassadors), with 269 pledges awarded.
- ✓ **Generated £47m in Social Value** in 2025 through our leisure partners Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL).
- ✓ Applied our **social value procurement policy** to 61% of awarded council contracts.
- ✓ **Extended Sunday trading hours** during the Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann.

What next?

We will continue to progress this improvement objective in the Performance Improvement Plan 2026-2027:

- We will stimulate inclusive growth and innovation, help businesses to start-up and grow and create opportunities for more and better jobs and employment.

Our economy continues to feature as a strategic theme of the refreshed Belfast Agenda and is a key priority in the 2025 – 2028 Corporate Plan.

What impact did we have?

Our Economy

Go Succeed, NI Business Support

£9.2 million
UK Shared Prosperity Fund secured to deliver the NI Enterprise Support Service

10,000+ hours
of 1-1 mentoring support

£4.53m
secured for future delivery

Go Succeed
NI Business Support

- **873** Belfast individuals/ entrepreneurs supported through **start-up activity**.
- **434** Belfast businesses supported through **business growth activity**.
- **54** organisations supported to **start or grow social enterprises and co-operatives** via our dedicated Go Social support.
- **1258** individuals engaged through a range of **community outreach activities** providing them with tools to overcome barriers to take positive steps to starting a business.

- **£285k+** Go Succeed grants awarded to 27 Belfast businesses to **remove barriers to growth**.
- **£90k** Social Incentive Fund awarded to 17 social enterprises to **support growth goals**.
- **31 SMEs** supported to access the Digital Transformation Flexible Fund to help **stimulate digital innovation.**

55% of participants were female.

"Through Go Succeed, we received some incredible mentorship providing a real crash course in business. Having that guidance helped us to realise some of the mistakes that we were making and better understand our structures and have a more solid foundation for the business for the years ahead."

Sean McDonnell, 1620 Audio

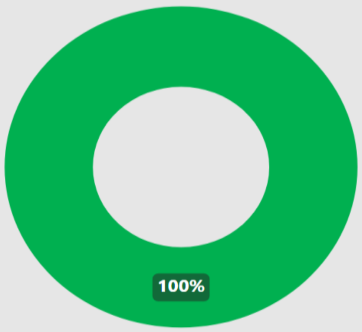
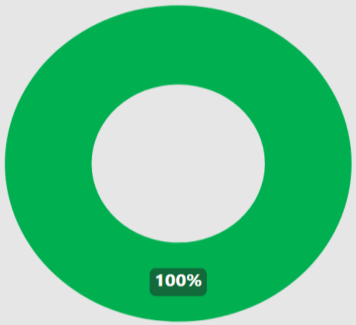
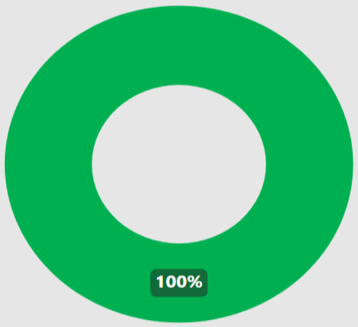
"Participating in Go Succeed has been a valuable experience for our company. We have felt really supported by the entire team... it will help us to create a new website and develop our product further."

Nicole O'Connor, Understanding Me – a Learning Me App

Objective 6: Compassionate city

Achievement of improvement objective

Did we achieve this objective?	**Achieved** – we supported our most vulnerable people to make Belfast a more caring, safe, and inclusive city.
Belfast Agenda Outcome	Belfast is a place where everyone fulfils their potential.
Corporate Plan themes and priorities	• Compassionate City – Making Belfast a welcoming, caring, and inclusive city – leaving no-one behind. • Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty.

5 Actions	7 Performance Indicators (Target)	7 Performance Indicators (Trend)
		
100% of actions were achieved/completed	**7 (100%)** were on target or exceeded target (within 1% or better)	**7 (100%)** showed positive change

What did we do?

- ✓ Delivered **local community actions plans** as part of the PEACEPLUS programme, to fund community activities and infrastructure project that help build peace and reconciliation in Belfast.
- ✓ Established an **Anti-Poverty Network** in Belfast to support and facilitate a co-ordinated approach to tackling poverty across the city.
- ✓ Extended delivery of the **Hardship Programme** to ensure that support is available for those most impacted by poverty and the cost-of-living crisis.
- ✓ Delivered a **programme to help end violence against women and girls (EVAWG).**
- ✓ Progressed delivery of up to **five capital projects across the city as part of the PEACEPLUS Local Action Plan** to promote inclusive and shared spaces across Belfast.

How much did we do?

Measures of success	2021-2022 year-end actual	2022-2023 year-end actual	2023-2024 year-end actual	2024-2025 year-end actual	2025-2026 year-end target	2025-2026 year-end actual	Trend (since baseline year)	Commentary (including rationale if red or amber)
Delivering 10 local community action plans (including relevant peace monitoring information).	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	10	16	⇧	Target achieved in Q2 and exceeded by 60%. 16 local community action plans delivered linked to PEACEPLUS under three thematic themes: Local Community Regeneration and Transformation (CRT) Thriving and Peaceful Communities (TPC) Includes Action Plans (TPC) Celebrating Cultures and Diversity (CCD).

Establishing the Anti-Poverty Network	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	1		Held on 5 February 2026 with 100+attendees. There is a commitment to hold at least one event per year going forward.
Delivering £1.1m of Hardship Programme funding	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1,100,000	£1,100,000		£1.1m paid, supporting over 56,000 people.
Awarding and delivering £255k as part of an open call small grants programme as part of the Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG) programme.	N/A new for 2025-2026	N/A new for 2025-2026	N/A new for 2025-2026	N/A new for 2025-2026	£255,000	£592,537		Target exceeded as The Executive Office (TEO) provided additional funding as follows: Tranche 1 £82,726 (19 awards) Tranche 2: £236,580 (18 awards) Tranche 3: £273,231 (13 awards) Total: £592.537 (50 awards).
Administering £1.2m of Regional Change Funding to 8 EVAWG expert organisations.	N/A new for 2025-2026	N/A new for 2025-2026	N/A new for 2025-2026	N/A new for 2025-2026	£1,200,000	£1,200,000		£1.2m awarded in Q2.
Engaging a minimum of 2,000 children and young people as part of the EVAWG programme	N/A new for 2025-2026	N/A new for 2025-2026	N/A new for 2025-2026	N/A new for 2025-2026	2000	7,297		Target exceeded. EVAWG engaged 7,297 children and young people from 1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026 (8,833 over full 15-month programme).

Progressing up to five capital projects under PEACEPLUS Local Action Plan (Sanctuary Theatre, Distillery Street Redevelopment Project, Annadale Open Space, Reconnected Belfast and LGBTQIA+ Hub)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	5	5	⬆	Five capital projects progressed as follows: • Design teams appointed for all projects. • Site meetings have taken place including initial discussions with project stakeholders/clients. • Project steering group and stakeholder engagement is ongoing. Continuing to work on detailed design for all projects.

What else did we do?

Through our Corporate Plan 2025-2028 and supporting Corporate Delivery Plan 2025-2026 we also:

- ✓ Supported inclusive growth by creating **63 work placements and 6 apprenticeships (including inclusive apprenticeships), as well as facilitating 27 pre-recruitment training programme placements**.
- ✓ Our leisure partners GLL were highly commended in the **Social Value category** at the Belfast Business Awards.
- ✓ City Hall was awarded an **'Autism Impact Award'** from Autism NI in recognition of the work that has been undertaken to make the venue more autism-friendly environments for our visitors.
- ✓ Agreed an approach towards **Area Based Community Planning**, including **a £1.5m Community Ownership Fund** and **£500k to support community partners** in developing area-based community plans.

What next?

- We will continue to progress this improvement objective in the Performance Improvement Plan 2026-2027:
  - We will support our most vulnerable people to make Belfast a more caring, safe and inclusive city.
- ‘Compassionate City’ continues to feature as a strategic theme of the refreshed Belfast Agenda and is a key priority in the 2025 – 28 Corporate Plan.

What impact did we have?

Compassionate City
Building peace and good relations

PEACEPLUS: Local Community Action Plan and Reconnected Belfast

£15.1 million secured to deliver the Belfast PEACEPLUS Local Community Action Plan

16 projects across 3 strategic themes

5 capital projects progressed

3,020 participants

62% of participants are women / girls

62% of participants are ethnic minorities

75% increased understanding of other cultures, identities or opinions

76% made new connections with different identities

"We are delighted to deliver this important programme on behalf of Belfast City Council as part of their Local Community Action Plan. At its heart, the Community Empowerment Programme is about **enabling people to lead, to respond to challenges in their areas, strengthen connections between communities, and bring about lasting, positive change." - NICVA**

£11.8 million secured for Reconnected Belfast to regenerate Waterworks and Alexandra Park.

Good Relations

48 projects supported through open call / small grants

£688,562 allocated to Good Relations programmes

6,039 participants engaged

69% felt they had a better attitude to different religious backgrounds

66% felt they a better attitude towards those from a different ethnic or racial background

"Belfast has given me so much - friends, a community, a purpose. I love working with different organisations to support people here. But I've also faced challenges as a refugee. Some people judge before they know me, assuming I don't belong. That's why I support the "This is Me" campaign" – **Participant, This is Me project, delivered by Donegall Pass Community Enterprises.**

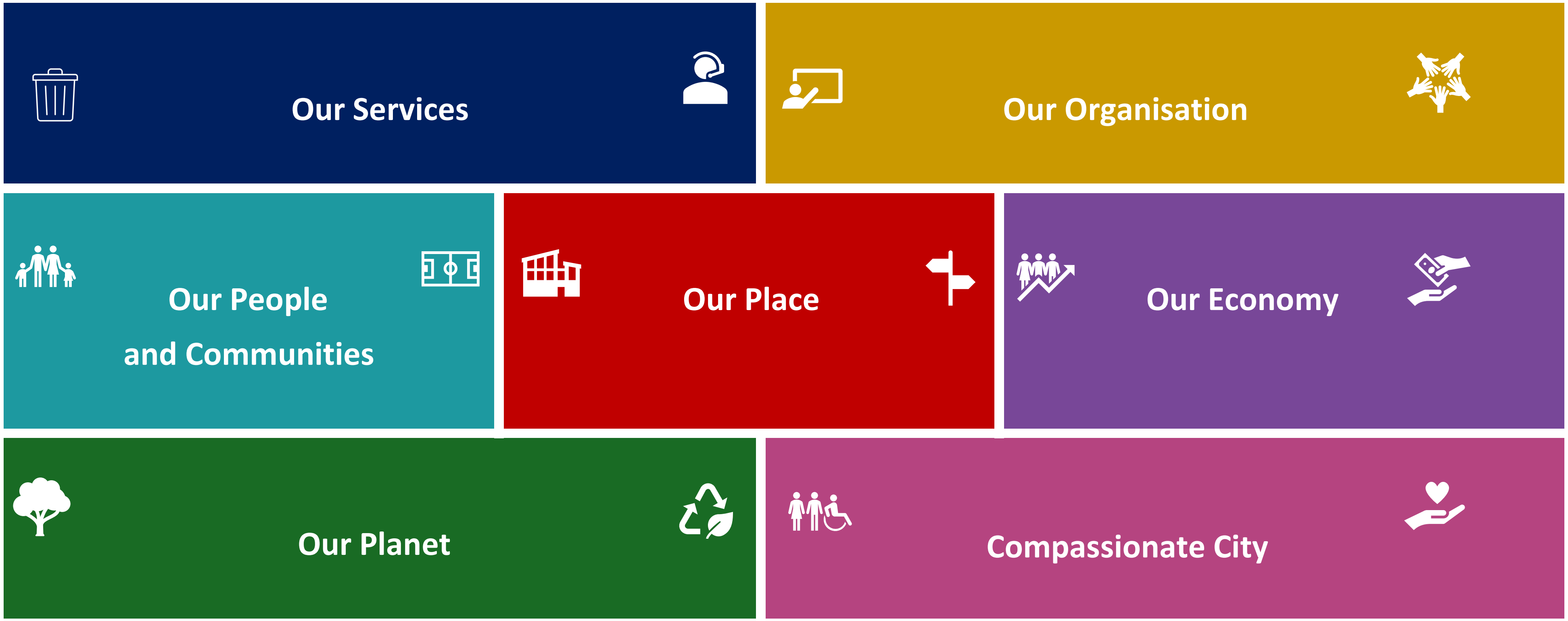
7. Corporate performance 2025-2026

Corporate Delivery Plan 2025-2026

This section of the report provides a high-level performance summary of the council's annual Corporate Delivery Plan 2025-2026. Our annual Corporate Delivery Plan sets out council's key deliverables, actions and KPIs for the 12-month period. This section considers the extent to which our wider corporate actions and priorities have been achieved to demonstrate our commitment to ongoing and continuous improvement across the organisation.

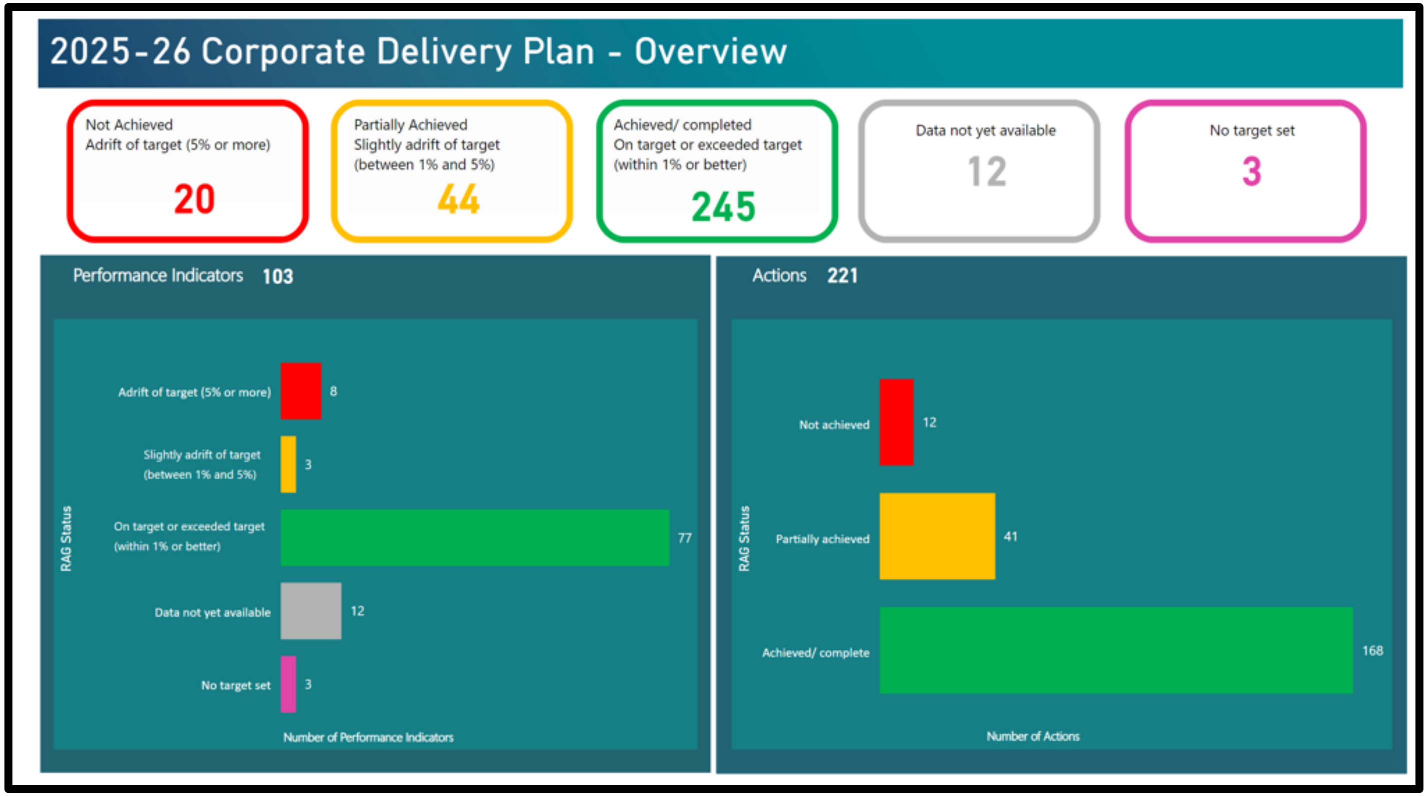
N.B. This is in addition to the statutory and self-imposed KPIs and delivery already outlined in this report.

The seven themes of council's Corporate Delivery Plan 2025-2026 are outlined below:



Corporate Delivery Plan performance overview

The dashboard below presents a snapshot of council's overall performance in relation to the actions and KPIs outlined within its Corporate Delivery Plan.

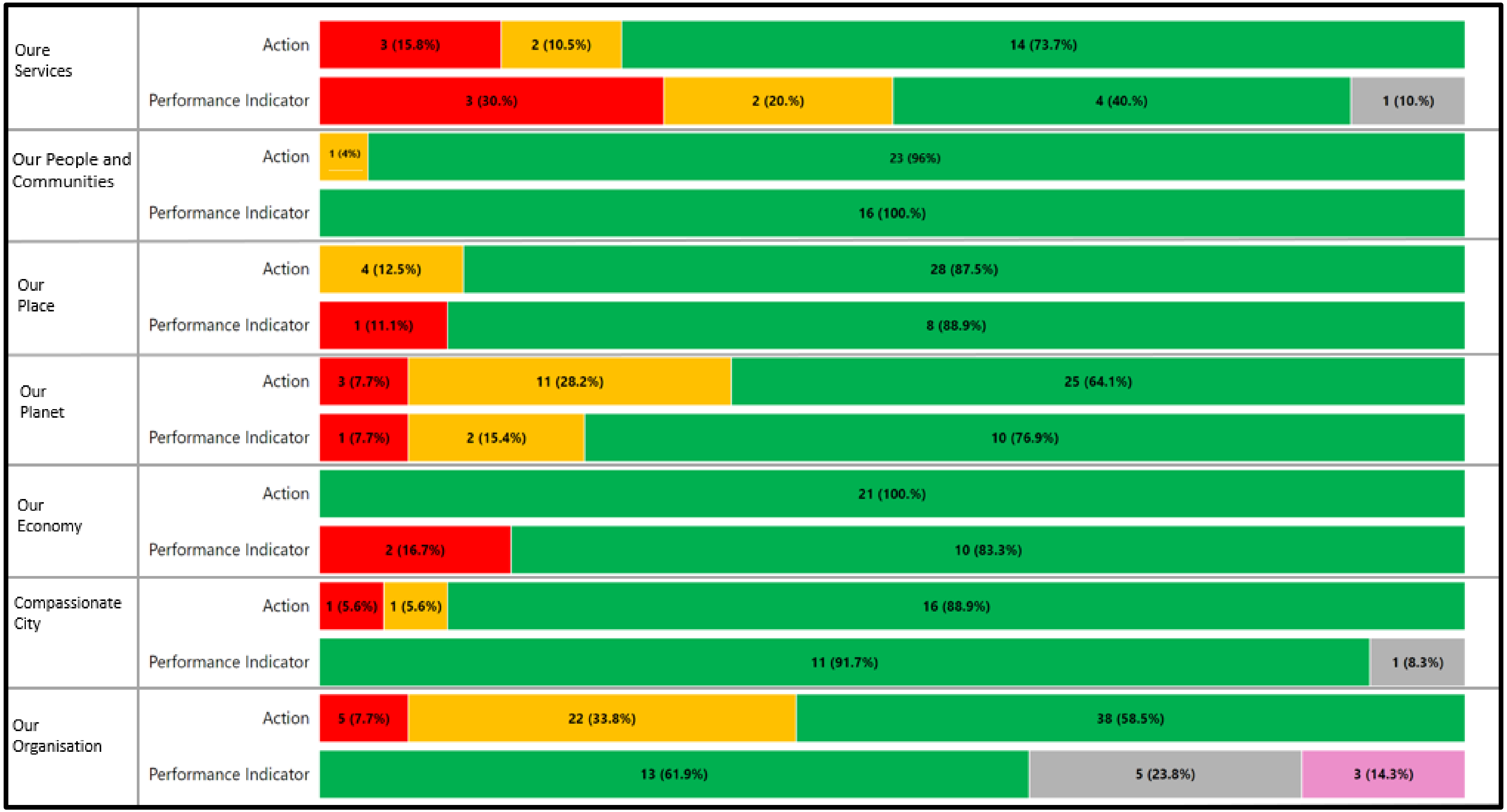


Of the 324 actions and KPIs included in our Corporate Delivery Plan:

- **75.6% were achieved, completed, on target or exceeded target**
- **13.6% were partially achieved or slightly adrift of target (between 1-5%)**
- **6.2% were not achieved or adrift of target (by 5% or more)**
- **Data wasn't currently available for 3.7% of indicators**
- **0.9% had no target set**

Corporate Delivery Plan Thematic review

A high-level review of our corporate performance is presented per theme below. A selection of our key achievements has been captured throughout the preceding report.



Performance benchmarking – staff attendance and service availability

Our staff are our greatest asset in ensuring service continuity and availability as well as the delivery of our corporate objectives. Our performance in relation to the other councils is set out below. Councils' individual remits and staffing profiles vary which can impact upon absence levels and should be considered when comparing performance.

Staff sickness absence (average number of days lost per full time equivalent (FTE))[6]							
Council area or organisation	**2021-2022**	**2022-2023**	**2023-2024**	**2024-2025**	**2025-2026 target**	**2025-2026 Actual[7]**	**Trend (since baseline year)**
Antrim and Newtownabbey	19.7	13.3	13.57				
Ards and North Down	14.2	15.7	16.4				
Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon	20.5	19.9	18.81				
Belfast	**16.3**	**17.1**	**17.00**	**16.23**	**14.58**	**15.29[8]**	
Causeway Coast and Glens	19.2	17.0	18.06				
Derry City and Strabane	16.8	16.5	18.7				
Fermanagh and Omagh	13.1	11.9	12.8				
Lisburn and Castlereagh	13.6	15.8	18.37				
Mid and East Antrim	15.2	17.9	17.04				
Mid Ulster	12.1	13.1	13.22				

6 All other council data was obtained from the NIAO Local Government Auditor Report 2023 2017-2018 to 2021-2022 – 2022-2023. 2023-2024 onwards is obtained directly from the NIAO.
7 2025-2026 data for all other councils not available from NIAO until Autumn 2026.
8 'Absence Rates - Quarter 4 – 2024-2025' Report to Audit and Risk Panel 09-06-2026.

Newry, Mourne and Down	20.7	23.3	23.86	
Northern Ireland average	**16.5**	**16.5**	**17.07**	

Through the Belfast Agenda, we're committed to making Belfast a place where everyone experiences good health and wellbeing. This commitment is as valid for our own staff as it is for the communities we serve. Just over 50% of our employees are Belfast ratepayers so our Health and Wellbeing Strategy has the potential to have a positive impact, across the city and contribute to the delivery of the Belfast Agenda goals for improved health throughout Belfast.

The general levels of sickness absence in the council during 2025-2026 and the reasons for absence are commensurate with the wider national trend. Whilst some residual impacts of Covid-19 remain evident, sickness absence correlates with an aging population, poorer overall health, and ongoing NHS waiting list pressures[9].

Sickness absence was 4.87% more than the target for the year. There was a slight increase in sickness absence of 0.71 days from 14.58 days in 2024-2025 to 15.29 days in 2025-2026. An increased number of staff had no sickness absence this year (43.3%), compared to last year (42.68%). Depression/anxiety/stress and musculoskeletal continue to be the top two reasons for absence. With this in mind, the Health and Wellbeing programme offered a range of health initiatives delivering 92 events during 2025-2026 attended by 1606 staff, including:

- Alcohol, drugs and gambling awareness
- Suicide awareness and prevention
- Awareness of stress and mental health, grief and loss as well as menopause.

[9] *UUEPC, December 2023, Sickness Absence: Lessons for Northern Ireland Businesses and Managers: https://www.ulster.ac.uk/epc/pdf/2023/sickness-absence-lessons-for-northern-ireland-businesses-and-managers/Sickness-Absence-Dec-23-Final.pdf*

8. Financial performance 2025-2026

The Statement of Accounts sets out our annual financial performance. These accounts are audited and scrutinised by the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO). Despite the challenging financial position faced by the council going into 2025-2026 we worked to deliver the financial strategy for 2025-2026. We reported a £1.77 million underspend[10] in service delivery at the end of 2025-2026, in comparison to a £2.55m underspend at the end of 2024-2025. Going forward, savings realised have been reallocated to meet priorities in 2026-27.

Key achievements and improvements include:

- Maintained proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency, and effectiveness in the use of our resources for at least the preceding four years (NIAO Annual Audit Letter).
- Produced financial statements which were certified without qualification for at least the last four years (Belfast City Council Financial Reports).
- Maintained an adequate and effective framework of governance, risk management and control for the preceding four years (Annual Governance Statement).
- Achieved a Certificate of Compliance from the NIAO in recognition of our performance improvement and reporting duties.

[10] *The Statement of Accounts is normally available on our website by 30 September annually.*

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Belfast City Council