

Statement of Priorities 2005-2009

Newry and Mourne District Council

Introduction

This statement provides an outline of the Council's main priorities for the period 2005 - 2009. The intention is that the Council should focus on, and give priority to, a small number of strategic areas whilst remaining flexible enough to respond to unforeseen events as they arise.

Our Strategy

The Council wants to create a District to be proud of, where people feel safe and where there is opportunity to enjoy a good quality of life. In overall terms the Council wants to:

- Encourage an innovative and forward looking approach
- Provide efficient, effective and modern services
- Ensure that Newry and Mourne is a location for sub-regional government.

Our Values

The Council is keen to encourage a corporate culture and value base that is inclusive, community oriented, open and accountable. The particular values highlighted as important to the Council are:

- Partnership working
- Community-orientation
- Continuous improvement
- Sustainable development
- Transparency and accountability
- Innovation
- Quality of services
- Value for money
- Equality.

Strategic Priorities 2005-09

The implication of adopting a Statement of Priorities is that managers will be guided by this as they prioritise resources and develop programmes of work



within their departments and service units. It means that what ever else people are doing, they must make sure that they are giving primacy to these strategic areas, as agreed by Council.

Apart from fulfilling its statutory duties, the two main discretionary priorities for the Council are the development of a new Regional Leisure Village and regeneration of the Albert Basin. The Council will continue to deliver and improve its full range of services; however, in seeking to develop and grow, it will also focus on a range of strategic areas as listed in the table below.

Strategic Area	Priorities	Resource Implications
Regional Leisure Village	<p>To develop a new Regional Leisure Village (to include a major Leisure Centre) for the Newry and Mourne Area</p> <p>We will achieve this by:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Confirming preferred location from existing shortlist of 3 sites. This will require investigating availability of land not in Council ownership, establishing likely acquisition costs and undertaking site specific investigations as necessary. (Completed August 06) ➤ Completing detailed Traffic Impact Assessment of option of locating leisure development at Council owned lands at Newry Swimming Pool. (completed August 06) ➤ Final determination by the Council on preferred location for proposed development and confirmation to proceed to detailed business planning – design stage. Completed August 2006. ➤ Identifying potential sources of funding to include seeking out expressions of interest from private sector partners, exploring funding options including sell/lease back options, leisure trusts etc, meeting with funders. October 06 March 07 Leisure Consultant appointed. 	<p>The immediate development and planning costs in terms of technical assistance may be in the region of £100,000 per annum.</p> <p>The capital cost will be met using funding partnerships that will minimise the cost to ratepayers. The final capital and running costs, when known, will be presented to Council for approval. Council to consider creation of Capital Development Fund to be set aside for this priority.</p> <p>It will be necessary to devote senior staff time to this priority and this can be done with some adjustment to current structures if supported by external technical assistance where specialist expertise is required. (Provision to be made in capital rate estimates for 07/08 for project management.</p>



Strategic Area	Priorities	Resource Implications
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Developing financial models including ppp/pfi options, exploring potential commercial partnerships and options for releasing capital from existing assets. December 06 – May 07. ➤ Presentation of a detailed business plan to the Council based on preferred development and finance options for an agreed project. April 2007 ➤ Council approval to proceed, agreed by June 2007, with project works commencing January 2008. 	<p>Elected members need to be afforded quality time to donate to the project in order to make effective decisions. Special meeting of Council held each month to review progress. Special Economic Development Committee meetings held each month.</p>



Strategic Area	Priorities	Resource Implications
Albert Basin	<p>To initiate the comprehensive development of the Albert Basin as a flagship urban regeneration project</p> <p>We will achieve this by:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Completion of ongoing negotiations and deliberations to resolve all outstanding tenancy and/or legal matters. 06/07 financial year. ➤ Initiating high level discussions with central government to attract support for infrastructure improvements which will enhance the value and potential of the site. October 05 – Ongoing. ➤ Consider options presented by University of Ulster/Harvard for appropriate structures to develop the Albert Basin. (Completed February 06) ➤ Site assessment commissioned June 06 and completed October 06.. ➤ Appointing Planning Consultant with appropriate experience to assist the Council with the formulation of a high quality development brief – design concept for the Albert Basin site. . Braniff Assoc. appointed May 06. First draft development brief presented to Council November 06. ➤ Public advertisement for Expressions of Interest from private sector to redevelop the Albert Basin within the terms of the agreed development brief. Anticipated Jan/Feb 07. ➤ Entering into appropriate commercial relationships with investors to regenerate the Albert Basin on a phased basis. Sept 07 onwards. 	<p>Cost to resolve tenancy issue will be £1.3 million. This is already agreed.</p> <p>The immediate development and planning costs in terms of technical assistance may be in the region of £100,000 per annum.</p> <p>The capital cost will be met using funding partnerships that will minimise the cost to ratepayers. The final capital and running costs, when known, will be presented to Council for approval.</p> <p>It will be necessary to devote senior staff time to this priority and this can be done within current structures if supported by external technical assistance where specialist expertise is required.</p> <p>(Provision to be made in Capital Rate Estimates for 07/08 for project management).</p> <p>Council to consider creation of a capital development fund to be set aside for this priority.</p>



Strategic Area	Priorities	Resource Implications
Waste Management	<p>To reduce, reuse and recycle waste from within our District to meet statutory targets.</p> <p>We will achieve this by the following:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Developing and implementing a Waste Management Plan 2006/07-2009/10. Plan to be completed with the Southern Waste Management Partnership (SWaMP) by June 2006. ➤ The Plan will be subject to review and updated at set periods and assessed on an annual basis. Implementation Action Plans will follow on an annual basis and will identify combined key actions. ➤ The Plan will incorporate appropriate aspects of the Best Practicable Environmental Option (BPEO) and a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). Newry and Mourne District Council will continue to introduce recycling/composting systems, to introduce new technologies to treat waste and to ensure provision of landfill capacity for the longer term needs of the District. ➤ Full consultation will be undertaken through meetings with Council representatives', relevant statutory authorities and environmental groups, including a formal period of public/community consultation. ➤ The Plan will consider increased public awareness, education and participation in waste management through full education and awareness programmes for schools, community, business and public use. ➤ The Plan will be developed to work on a partnership basis with central and local government to resolve planning, procurement, major infrastructure, market development and funding issues and it will examine cross border and inter-regional cooperation and partnerships within waste management. 	<p>The Waste Management Plan will be funded by SWAMP and this allocation is already included within current budget levels.</p> <p>Any requirement for major capital and revenue expenditure arising as a result of the Waste Management Plan will be presented to Council for prior approval.</p>



Strategic Area	Priorities	Resource Implications
Tourism	<p>To develop a series of new tourism development projects with a particular focus on spreading the benefits of tourism across the District.</p> <p>This will be achieved by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Realising the full potential of the AONB and other designations across the District. ➤ Newry Dundalk Twin City document launched May 06 with new concept of Trans National Park. Also conceptual GEO Park initiated Sept 06. ➤ Developing a major tourism/visitor attraction in the Warrenpoint area, starting with an invitation for Expressions of Interest/Development Proposals for the redevelopment of the former Warrenpoint Baths. Sept – Nov 06. Development Brief adopted by Council Oct 06 and advertised in public press Nov 06. ➤ Council contributed £10,000 to St Josephs High School towards cost of completing a needs analysis/feasibility study for proposed school/community leisure facility. July 06. ➤ Council agreed to locate regional play facility for South Armagh at Slieve Gullion Forest Park. Play area design to be commissioned Dec 06. ➤ Developing and building a major leisure and /or play facility in South Armagh by Apr 07 if an acceptable site and funding arrangements can be agreed. 	<p>The Council will need to plan for around £10,000 to support the initial investigation of Warrenpoint Baths and up to £150,000 to fund the development of a new play facility in South Armagh.</p> <p>We will need to revisit Council Policy (and Practice) on new play area development.</p>



Strategic Area	Priorities	Resource Implications
<p>Develop as a Sustainable Community</p>	<p>To play our part in the global drive to reduce the rate of climate change.</p> <p>We will achieve this by example:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Encouraging people and organisations to reduce their energy use and use energy more efficiently. ➤ Promote renewable energy sources. ➤ Assist in the current review of the Air Quality ➤ Reduce greenhouse gas emissions principally by promoting energy efficiency and the use of renewables ➤ The Council will encourage the protection and the enhancement of biodiversity within the district. 	<p>This is aligned to a Sustainable Development Strategy for Northern Ireland.</p> <p>The Council will support the use of sustainable energy and energy efficiency technologies in the planned maintenance of all existing buildings and in new build projects.</p> <p>Appointment of biodiversity Officer (April 2007) This will be funded by Environment and Heritage Service and is already included within current budget levels.</p> <p>At present any action required can be resourced from within existing budget levels.</p> <p>However, future development of this initiative will require additional resources.</p>



Strategic Area	Priorities	Resource Implications
Civic Leadership and Pride	<p>To introduce and promote a programme of initiatives to encourage and develop a sense of civic pride linked to the Council's Civic Leadership Strategy</p> <p>We will achieve this by:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Implementing a pro-active public relations strategy aimed at increasing public awareness of Council services and projects as well as engaging with our citizens ➤ Promoting a series of civic events and receptions ➤ Promoting Good Relations Projects to enhance Civic Pride ➤ Listening to and involving communities by organising regional workshops to ascertain priorities and aspirations of their local communities and developing Civic Leadership Training Initiative for Councillors. ➤ Building Vision and Direction by continual development of Newry and Mourne District Council Social Economic Forum and area Forums. ➤ Make things happen by the Development of Corporate Plan and Departmental Business Plans. ➤ Standing up for communities by utilising Newry and Mourne Social Economic Forum and Area Action Teams to allow local communities a voice in the development of Council prioritising. ➤ Empowering local Communities by providing continual assistance both physical and financial assistance to the Community. ➤ Accountability to Communities by the continual development of Newry and Mourne District Household Panel and Development of Youth Forum. 	<p>This Corporate Communications Strategy can be implemented within current budget levels approved by Council.</p>



Strategic Area	Priorities	Resource Implications
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Using Community Resources effectively through the Development of Policies to ensure projects receiving either physical or financial support meet Council priorities. ➤ Developing the voluntary Contribution programme and develop a 4/5 year Corporate plan. 	
Review of Public Administration	<p>To work towards making Newry and Mourne a sub-regional centre for local government and a location for government offices</p> <p>We will achieve this by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Making and presenting a convincing case to government and the RPA Review Team ➤ Lobbying and campaigning politicians and decision makers on behalf of the citizens of the District. 	There are no immediate, special resource implications for this priority.
Optimise Use of Council Resources	<p>To optimise the use of Council resources in order to provide our citizens with value for money.</p> <p>We will achieve this by:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Development and implementation of a plan to enhance Council assets to meet high quality standards in line with citizens' expectations. ➤ Where appropriate, selling off surplus Council assets (land & buildings) to release liquid funds for use in other areas of Council. ➤ Redistribution of resources to keep the rates at the same or below the average for all other Councils. 	It is planned to fund modernisation and development without major additional cost through the release of cash tied up in assets that are surplus to requirement.



Strategic Area	Priorities	Resource Implications
Service Delivery	<p>To deliver cost effective services in an efficient, economic and equitable manner.</p> <p>We will achieve this by:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Critically reviewing the services we provide in view of the needs of the District through departmental plans ➤ Continually comparing, consulting, challenging and changing our services so that they are competitive and represent value for money. 	<p>As above, the redistribution of assets will allow for modernisation and development without major additional costs.</p>
Building Capacity in the Workforce	<p>To build the capacity of employees and achieve harmonisation across the Council.</p> <p>We will achieve this by:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Reducing absenteeism to 4% by 2007 through an absence programme. ➤ Conducting and acting on a skills needs analysis by 2006. ➤ Completing the harmonisation of terms and conditions in association with trades unions by April 2007. 	<p>Capacity building and action to reduce absenteeism can be completed within current budget allocation.</p> <p>The cost of 'single status' harmonisation will be determined by national agreements.</p>

Performance Management System

It is recognised that the Statement of Priorities will need to be monitored and regularly reviewed to ensure that it is being acted on, consistently, as agreed, across Council. This will require a reliable and effective performance management system and one that provides support for employees as they take on challenging projects and seek to deliver against programmes of work.

This will start with the development and implementation of new Departmental Plans that will set out in more detail the programmes of work and project plans to be implemented across the Council reflecting the Statement of Priorities above.

The Senior Management Team will make quarterly progress reports on the Way Forward Document to Council.



Council Commitment to Change

The Council, at both member and senior management levels, has agreed to this plan as an agenda for action planning over the next four years. This means that officers and members will together, in a corporate way, to ensure that the priorities are given attention and named projects are implemented. This will require consistency or purpose and partnership working across internal departments.

