

# Performance Improvement Objectives 2025/26

## Consultation Report



## 1. INTRODUCTION

The 6-week Consultation on Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council's **Draft Improvement Objectives** for 2025/26 closed on the **12<sup>th</sup> May 2025**. The Improvement Objectives and associated projects consulted upon were:

Performance Improvement Objective	What will we do in 2025/26?
<b>We will deliver better services that continue to meet people's needs</b>	We will continue to improve the processing times of planning applications by monitoring the implementation of the agreed Planning Service Improvement Programme by the end of the financial year 25/26
	We will improve our prompt payment indicators by reducing the number of days taken to pay suppliers.
	We will increase our staff attendance levels.
	We will reduce the percentage of household waste being disposed of in landfill sites.
<b>We will support our people to thrive in vibrant communities</b>	We will continue to enable our citizens to influence decision making through community conversations in Lisburn South and Downshire West.
	We will improve our engagement methods by developing and implementing a Citizen Consultation Framework
	We will continue to deliver a range of employability programmes that will help our residents to achieve relevant qualifications that will enable them to gain new or better employment. This will also include the delivery of specialist support and advice for those with a disability
	We will support the progression of actions in the Glenavy Village Plan in partnership with new and established groups.

## 2. CONSULTATION METHODS

An online consultation exercise on the draft improvement objectives and projects was carried out during April and May 2025. Three focus groups were held in various locations within the Council area, at different times of the day to enable as wide a reach and opportunity for feedback as possible. A sign language interpreter was present at the focus groups held in Lagan Valley Island and Lagan Valley Leisureplex as these sessions were promoted as being accessible for the deaf community. Two additional focus groups were held with the Age Friendly Forum and the Youth Council, they were consulted as some of our 'hard to reach' groups.

**56 consultees** participated in the various focus groups across the five days.

The Council made use of social media to promote the consultation, as well as the Council's online survey tool 'Smart Survey'. Furthermore, the Council website provides contact details encouraging individuals or organisations to submit views at any time during the year.

The consultees included; residents, staff and elected members who are also residents, community groups, local businesses, as well as representatives from the statutory and voluntary sector.

The Performance Improvement Objectives and Projects for 25/26 were made available in draft format on the Council's website and promoted through social media during April and May.

Social Media analytics indicate that a total Facebook reach of all posts (10 posts in total) was 22,846 and total Twitter impressions (2 tweets total) was 602. Average reach per Facebook post was 2,285 and average impressions per Tweet was 301.

The most popular Tweet of the consultation was on the 7th April, it saw 384 impressions – 27% higher than the average. The Facebook post on 7th April saw the highest reach with 7,123 – 211% higher than the average.

These social media analytics are lower than the 2024 consultation where we had a reach of 51,725 users via Facebook and 6,753 impressions on Twitter. Twitter was not used as prominently in 2025 due to poor performance of our posts on the platform.

At the close of the consultation a total of **160 responses** were received from the online survey.

### **3. CONSULTATION FINDINGS** - detailed overleaf

The outcome of the consultation was that consultees support the draft performance improvement objectives and associated improvement projects for 2025/26. There were some comments made about the wording of two of the improvement projects to provide more clarity and explanation. These projects have been reworded post consultation and will be included in the Performance Improvement Plan 25/26.







A broad spectrum of responses was received, and the following pages detail the outcome and themes from the consultation. Specific comments will be shared with the relevant Council services and directorates. General comments about Council business were also made and these will be considered when planning future improvement objectives and projects. Comments were also received about issues that are not the responsibility of the Council these were mainly about transport and road issues. As these matters do not pertain to Council they will be shared with the relevant responsible organisation, such as Department of Infrastructure, Transport NI & Department for Communities.

More information on the improvement projects including the measures of success, the key performance indicators and expected outcomes are detailed in the Performance Improvement Plan, which will be published by end June 2025.

The following pages contain a detailed analysis of the online survey.

## DRAFT Performance Improvement Objectives 2025/26 (Consultation)



### 1. Performance Improvement Objectives 2025/26 – proposed approach

1. What is your main interest in responding to this consultation? (Please tick ALL that apply)				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Citizen / Ratepayer		65.63%	105
2	Local business		6.25%	10
3	Community group		9.38%	15
4	Statutory sector		11.25%	18
5	Voluntary sector		10.63%	17
6	Member of staff who is a ratepayer		19.38%	31
			answered	160
			skipped	0

### Improvement Objective 1

**We will deliver better services that continue to meet people's needs.**

The Improvement Projects below will detail how we are going to deliver this Improvement Objective.

Improvement project 1: We will continue to improve the processing times of planning applications by implementing and monitoring the agreed Planning Service Improvement Programme by the end of the financial year 2025/26.				
Have we got this improvement objective and project correct?				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		65.41%	104
2	No		9.43%	15
3	Don't know		25.16%	40
			answered	159
			skipped	1

### Themes from comments on Improvement Project 1

#### Planning Service Performance and Capacity Issues

- Many feel the system is overwhelmed and cannot meet demand.

#### Delays and Inefficiency in Processing

- Frustration with the slow speed of application processing.
- Quicker turnaround times, clearer KPIs, and measurable performance targets.

### Communication, Transparency, and Accountability

- Improved communication with applicants and the public.
- Perceived lack of transparency.

### Environmental and Infrastructure

- Concern about overdevelopment, especially in greenfield and rural areas like Carryduff and Lisburn.
- Negative impacts on infrastructure (roads, health services), biodiversity, green space, and flooding.
- Requests for planning decisions to better consider sustainability, ecosystems, and climate impacts.

### Policy Clarity and Implementation




- Queries over the status of the Planning Improvement Programme – many say it's already implemented, and wording should reflect this.
- Questions around monitoring progress, implementation timelines
- Desire for specific, measurable goals.

### Individual Experiences and Observations

- Some personal anecdotes (e.g., quick approvals in some cases).
- Mixed experiences depending on the case, but overall sentiment is that improvement is needed.

**Improvement project 2: *We will improve our prompt payment indicators by increasing the rate of days taken to pay suppliers.***

**Have we got this improvement objective and project correct?**

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		62.26%	99
2	No		11.32%	18
3	Don't know		26.42%	42
			answered	159
			skipped	1

### **Themes from comments on Improvement Project 2**

#### Support for Prompt Payment Improvement project

- Strong agreement that suppliers should be paid promptly, ideally within 30 days or faster.
- Emphasis on the impact on small and local businesses, especially for cash flow and family-run enterprises.
- Council to lead by example and align with standards expected of others.

#### Wording and Clarity

- Multiple comments say the wording is confusing or overly complicated, especially phrases like “rate of days taken to pay suppliers.”
- Suggestions to reword for clarity and accessibility to the general public.

#### Transparency and Specifics




- Requests for current performance data, KPIs, and how far the Council is from meeting them with clear targets and measurable outcomes

#### Views on Importance

- Several see prompt payment as important, particularly for small businesses and fairness.
- Others feel indifferent, don't see it as relevant to them personally, or feel it's low priority compared to other issues.

### Improvement project 3: *We will increase our staff attendance levels*

#### Have we got this improvement objective and project correct?

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		76.25%	122
2	No		9.38%	15
3	Don't know		14.38%	23
			answered	160
			skipped	0

#### Themes from comments on Improvement Project 3

##### Staff Attendance and Absence




- Uncertainty about actual staff attendance levels and impact.
- Questions about attendance KPIs, trends, and measurable targets.
- Mixed views: some say attendance hasn't affected them, others say it is critical.
- Desire for transparency in data and strategy.
- General comments on actions to ensure good attendance including physical and mental wellbeing actions.

##### Strategy, Data & KPIs

- Need clear goals, targets, and transparency around performance.
- Need for specific, measurable objectives and action plans.

### Improvement project 4: *We will reduce the percentage of household waste being disposed of in landfill sites.*

#### Have we got this improvement objective and project correct?

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		77.50%	124
2	No		11.25%	18
3	Don't know		11.25%	18
			answered	160
			skipped	0

#### Themes from comments on Improvement Project 4



### Support for the Initiative

- Strong agreement that improving recycling and reducing landfill is a high priority.
- Widespread recognition of environmental and economic benefits.
- Desire to be part of a more eco-friendly and responsible community.

### Infrastructure & Bin System

- Requests for larger recycling bins, particularly for families and households with high recycling volumes, but some concern about space for multiple bins and difficulty managing them
- Some frustration with current kerbside box systems (e.g., boxes that blow away, limited capacity).
- Suggestions to standardise recycling bins across the council area.

### Recycling Accessibility & Convenience

- Need for more glass and textile recycling points near residential areas.
- Requests for kerbside glass collection to be expanded beyond current limited areas.
- Frustration over lack of local recycling options.

### Public Awareness & Education

- Repeated emphasis on the need for education campaigns about what can be recycled.
- Some residents are unclear on bin usage and rules, leading to contamination or non-participation with suggestions for clear, updated, and consistent information.

### Community-Led Initiatives & Funding

- Support for community-based reuse and recycling projects, such as: School uniform banks, Repair cafés, Tool and clothing swap events, Refill stores and zero waste groups.
- Requests for sustained council funding to support these efforts and scale their impact.

### Implementation and Targets

- Requests for specific targets and measurable outcomes (e.g., current recycling rates, desired KPIs).
- Questions about waste disposal practices, including materials sent across borders or by commercial users.

### Council Services & Performance

- Mixed feedback on council performance in this area.
- Praise for helpful local site staff.
- Requests for improved services for ratepayers without additional cost (e.g., replacing old bins free of charge).


## Improvement Objective 2

### **We will support our people to thrive in vibrant communities**

*The Improvement Projects below will detail how we are going to deliver this Improvement Objective.*



**Improvement project 1: *We will continue to enable our citizens to influence decision making through community conversations in Lisburn South and Downshire West.***

**Have we got this improvement objective and project correct?**

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		69.18%	110

**Improvement project 1: *We will continue to enable our citizens to influence decision making through community conversations in Lisburn South and Downshire West.***

**Have we got this improvement objective and project correct?**

2	No		12.58%	20
3	Don't know		18.24%	29
			answered	159
			skipped	1

### Themes from comments on Improvement Project 1

#### Inclusivity and Geographic Representation




- Some concern over the focus on only Lisburn South and Downshire West; repeated calls for broader engagement across all DEAs, especially Carryduff, Castlereagh, Dundonald, and Lisburn North.

#### Accessibility and Engagement Methods

- Requests for online consultation options to improve accessibility.
- Suggestions to engage young people via schools and improve promotional efforts using posters or offline methods for those not on social media.
- Preference for frequent, well-publicised events and face-to-face engagement with councillors.

**Improvement project 2: *We will improve our engagement methods by developing and implementing a Community Consultation Strategy.***

**Have we got this improvement objective and project correct?**

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		74.38%	119
2	No		10.63%	17
3	Don't know		15.00%	24
			answered	160
			skipped	0

### Themes from comments on Improvement Project 2

#### Importance of Public Voice and Accountability

- Emphasis that, as the Council is funded by citizens' rates, residents should feel empowered to influence decisions and be appropriately heard.

#### Need for Inclusive and Varied Engagement Methods

- Repeated requests for a wide range of communication and engagement methods, including: Hybrid approaches (online and offline), Leaflets, websites, social media, and in-person sessions, listening to focus groups and working with voluntary organisations, trusts, and nursing homes
- Desire for reasonable adjustments for accessibility and targeted outreach to older residents, young people, and underrepresented groups (per Section 75 of the NI Act 1998).



### Communication and Awareness Gaps




- Need to ensure wide communication of consultation opportunities.

### Need for a Clear, Measurable Strategy

- Need to ensure it is effective with Clear objectives, Time-bound, measurable targets, Transparent reporting on outcomes with action and ongoing engagement.
- Need to ensure public consultation is connected to decisions, to increase trust that feedback will be acted upon.
- Concerns about wasted resources if strategies are poorly implemented or ignored.

**Improvement project 3: *We will continue to deliver a range of employability programmes that will help our residents to achieve relevant qualifications that will enable them to gain employment. This will also include the delivery of specialist support and advice for those with a disability.***

### **Have we got this improvement objective and project correct?**

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		80.38%	127
2	No		8.86%	14
3	Don't know		10.76%	17
			answered	158
			skipped	2

### **Themes from comments on Improvement Project 3**

#### Support for Inclusive Employment Opportunities

- Strong support for employment access for all age groups, especially: Young people, People with disabilities and SEN (Special Educational Needs), Older adults (e.g., requests for IT courses for elderly residents), Non-native English speakers
- Positive comments on efforts to empower people with disabilities, with encouragement to build on previous successes and provide targeted programmes.
- Suggestions for training employers on neurodiversity and improving workplace accessibility.

#### Programme Delivery and Awareness

- Need for better promotion and earlier advertisement of programmes and events.
- Recommendation to deliver programmes in community-based, informal settings to increase uptake, especially among underrepresented groups.
- Suggestion to extend opportunities to those already in employment looking to change careers, noting that some existing schemes exclude them.

#### Engagement with Education Sector




- Requests for stronger links with schools (14–19 strategy) and mainstream post-primary education to support career planning and transition to training/employment.
- Recognition that apprenticeships and links with organisations like Stepping Stones are working well and should be expanded.

#### Local Economy and Job Availability

- General support for improving the local labour market and reducing unemployment, especially among vulnerable populations.

**Improvement project 4: *We will support the progression of actions in the Glenavy Village Plan in partnership with new and established groups.***

**Have we got this improvement objective and project correct?**

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		55.97%	89
2	No		7.55%	12
3	Don't know		36.48%	58
			answered	159
			skipped	1

**Themes from comments on Improvement Project 4**

General Support for Regeneration and Investment

- Broad support for the principle of regenerating Glenavy, with recognition that it is a large, growing area.
- Comments suggest that investment could revitalise the community, encourage new residents, and bring life to the area.
- Some noted they were not local to Glenavy but expressed no objection to the plan being prioritised.
- Some concern as to why this area was chosen when other areas are more in need or would provide better return on investment.

Clarity and Transparency

- Respondents requested: More detail on the Glenavy Village Plan, including its aims, sub-objectives, and timelines. Measurable and timebound actions to assess success. Greater transparency in how and why Glenavy was chosen ahead of other areas.

Social and Cultural

- Some concerns that traditional village identity is being lost, with friction around cultural integration and changing community demographics.
- Requests for inclusive engagement that reflects the diversity of the population, including ethnic minorities and disability/autism advocacy groups.

**SUMMARY OF COMMENTS REGARDING SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS**

City and Town Centre Regeneration

- Requests to revitalise Lisburn City Centre and surrounding towns (e.g., Moira, Carryduff, Castlereagh South) including reoccupation of vacant and derelict buildings, business rates and free parking incentives to attract and retain retailers, a more diverse retail offering, and night-time economy development and encouragement of social vibrancy.

Infrastructure and Maintenance

- Street cleanliness and litter control. Improved lighting and increased number of public bins.

Environmental and Green Infrastructure

- Strong emphasis on protecting and enhancing green spaces, including greenways, parks, and tree planting and ensuring sustainable housing development.
- Improved recycling infrastructure

#### Leisure, Sport, and Community Facilities

- Requests for upgrading existing leisure facilities (e.g., Lough Moss, Leisureplex).
- More 3G pitches, youth centres, and parks.
- Development of community hubs in under-served areas like Moira and Castlereagh South.
- Further Investment in fitness and wellbeing programmes, including those targeted at older adults (50+).

#### Youth Engagement and Services

- Concern about lack of activities and spaces for teenagers with suggestions for youth centres, sports clubs, and arts-based initiatives working towards reducing antisocial behaviour.

#### Community Development and Support

- Better support for voluntary groups, including seconded staff to help avoid volunteer burnout.
- Suggested additional options for council community events.
- Potential for community noticeboards and better promotion of local activities.

#### Business and Economic Development

- Public interest in encouraging small businesses through grants, lower rates, and network events and start-up support.

#### Waste Management and Animal Welfare

- Specific concerns raised about dog fouling and targeted action on animal neglect.

#### Civic Pride and Identity

- Desire for enhanced celebration of Lisburn's history and identity.
- Respect for built heritage and efforts to improve visual appeal for residents and visitors including flower planting and civic pride events.

#### Communication, Transparency & Engagement

- Desire for better communication about council plans and consultations including clearer explanations of objectives and background for those unfamiliar with ongoing initiatives, plain language versions of documents suitable for all age groups and abilities with openness and transparency around these.

#### Strategy, Vision & Delivery

- Need to ensure ambitious objectives, with measurable outcomes, timelines and resources, ensuring a fair distribution of DEA actions.

#### Public Perception & Trust

- Praise for the engagement efforts and that the council was working toward its objectives.