

Performance Improvement Objectives 2026/27

Consultation Report



1. INTRODUCTION

The 6-week Consultation on Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council's **Draft Improvement Objectives** – click here to view: [Performance Improvement Objectives 2026/27 – Proposed approach - lisburncastlereagh.gov.uk](#) for 2026/27 closed on the **11th May 2026**.

The Improvement Objectives and associated projects consulted upon were:

| Performance Improvement Objective | What will we do in 2026/27? |
|---|--|
| We will deliver better services that continue to meet people's needs | We will continue to improve the processing times of planning applications |
| | We will deliver enhanced digitised services |
| | We will deliver new improved facilities at Aghalee Sports Pavillion and SEYCON as standard design concepts |
| We will support our people to thrive in vibrant communities | We will launch a volunteering scheme engaging people of all backgrounds and increasing the level of residents who play an active role in civic society |
| | Our communities have engaged with expanded Council-supported safety initiatives which protect the most vulnerable in our society |
| | We will provide additional opportunities and widen the Health & Wellbeing programme through the PARS initiative |
| | We will engage with community groups to improve community resilience across the Council area |

2. CONSULTATION METHODS – At a glance

April–May 2026 | Online + in-person engagement across the Council area

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| 67 Focus group participants | 128 Online survey responses |
| +9% Facebook reach up on | +22% X impressions up on 2025 |

| What We Did | Who We Reached | Accessible Approach | Digital Reach | Traffic Snapshot |
|---|---|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online consultation • Three focus groups • Social media promotion • Smart Survey • Council website | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents • Staff • Elected members • Community groups • Local businesses • Statutory and voluntary sector representatives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sign language interpreter at two venues • Easy Read version provided <i>click this link:</i> Our plans for the next year • Youth Council engaged online • Social Café focus group • Age Friendly Forum members included | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facebook average reach: 2,487 • X average impressions: 368 • Top Facebook post: 8,399 views 5,370 reached 30 clicks • Top X post: 769 impressions 4 clicks | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most visits came from direct traffic • Likely through website search or the news article • Facebook drove the strongest external traffic • 10x more traffic than X to the news article • 20x+ more traffic than X to the objectives page |

3. CONSULTATION FINDINGS - *detailed overleaf*

The outcome of the consultation was that consultees support the draft performance improvement objectives and associated improvement projects for 2026/27.







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 2026.

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

Draft Performance Improvement Objectives 2026/27 (Consultation)




1. Performance Improvement Objectives 2026/27 – 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 |  | 70.31% | 90 |
| 2 | Local business |  | 6.25% | 8 |
| 3 | Community group |  | 19.53% | 25 |
| 4 | Statutory sector |  | 7.03% | 9 |
| 5 | Voluntary sector |  | 15.63% | 20 |
| 6 | Member of staff who is a ratepayer |  | 14.84% | 19 |
| | | | answered | 128 |
| | | | skipped | 0 |

Improvement Objective 1

We will deliver better services that 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. Have we got this improvement objective and project correct? | | | | |
|--|------------|---|------------------|----------------|
| Answer Choices | | | Response Percent | Response Total |
| 1 | Yes |  | 57.03% | 73 |
| 2 | No |  | 7.03% | 9 |
| 3 | Don't know |  | 35.94% | 46 |
| | | | answered | 128 |
| | | | skipped | 0 |

Themes from comments on Improvement Project 1

A major theme is low public confidence in how planning decisions are made. Several respondents suggest that residents are disadvantaged compared with large developers and businesses. There is also scepticism that engagement exercises are meaningful, with some describing consultation as “box-ticking.”

Many comments call for faster processing times, noting that improvements are either unclear or insufficient. Respondents want:

Improvement project 1: *We will continue to improve the processing times of planning applications.*

Have we got this improvement objective and project correct?

- firmer, more specific targets,
 - visibility of backlog numbers, and
 - clearer explanation of how the process will be made easier and quicker.
- One response also notes that performance measures should account for delays caused by external consultees (e.g., NI Water, Rivers Agency) and suggests defining timelines in a way that allows fair tracking.

Respondents stress that planning decisions must include proper community consultation, with enough time allocated to ensure residents are genuinely heard. Some want clearer communication about proposals—particularly in rural/countryside areas—and more detail on current timeframes and planned improvements.

A recurring concern is that new housing is being approved without adequate supporting infrastructure and public services. Specific pressure points raised include:

- sewage, waste and water capacity,
- roads and local facilities, and
- public transport, especially in villages and rural areas.

The view is that growth should not proceed unless essential services can cope.




Several comments link planning and development to wider economic issues, especially in Lisburn town centre. Key concerns include:

- vacant and derelict buildings,
- lack of landlord maintenance creating safety risks and visual decline, and
- high business rates contributing to shop closures and reduced vitality.

Some respondents argue there is little point increasing population through planning if town-centre services and retail cannot survive.

Improvement project 2: *We will deliver enhanced digitised services. Within Waste Management these improvements will streamline processes and automate tasks to enhance operational efficiency. Improvements will also be made to the Digital Sculpture Trail App at Hillsborough Forest Park, to include Royal Hillsborough village. It will include routes, attractions and visitor information.*

Have we got this improvement objective and project correct?

| Answer Choices | | | Response Percent | Response Total |
|----------------|------------|---|------------------|----------------|
| 1 | Yes |  | 63.78% | 81 |
| 2 | No |  | 14.96% | 19 |
| 3 | Don't know |  | 21.26% | 27 |
| | | | answered | 127 |
| | | | skipped | 1 |




Themes from comments on Improvement Project 2

- **Protect the forest experience:** Strong pushback against the digital sculpture trail as intrusive to natural beauty (some support, but conditional).

Improvement project 2: We will deliver enhanced digitised services. Within Waste Management these improvements will streamline processes and automate tasks to enhance operational efficiency. Improvements will also be made to the Digital Sculpture Trail App at Hillsborough Forest Park, to include Royal Hillsborough village. It will include routes, attractions and visitor information. Have we got this improvement objective and project correct?

- **Don't exclude offline residents:** Concerns about older/less tech-savvy people; need non-digital options.
- **Fix waste services first:** Frustration that recycling/collections haven't improved; issues with last-minute schedule changes and unclear communications.
- **Fair funding & practical priorities:** Worries about value for money and Hillsborough receiving disproportionate investment.

Improvement project 3: We will deliver new improved facilities at Aghalee Sports Pavillion and Seycon Park, Seymour Hill as standard design concepts. New changing rooms will be built and accessible public toilets will be added. Have we got this improvement objective and project correct?

| Answer Choices | | Response Percent | Response Total |
|----------------|------------|---|----------------|
| 1 | Yes |  | 72.66% 93 |
| 2 | No |  | 4.69% 6 |
| 3 | Don't know |  | 22.66% 29 |
| | | answered | 128 |
| | | skipped | 0 |

Themes from comments on Improvement Project 3

- **Demand for wider, fairer investment:** Castlereagh (and Moira) are seen as lacking public space and sports facilities, with perceptions of bias toward Lisburn/Hillsborough; calls to roll improvements out across the whole council area.
- **Basic facility gaps for young users:** Need for proper changing rooms (young people currently changing in open areas) and better-quality, comfortable facilities across the council area.
- **Accessibility & inclusivity requirements:** Requests for disabled access (ramps), accessible toilets that stay open, and engagement with disability organisations (e.g. Mae Murray Foundation, Disability Action) to ensure good practice.
- **Toilets, family needs & design considerations:** Desire for publicly accessible toilets, baby-changing, clear views on toilet provision (including concern about “all-gender” toilets), and suggestions for re-wilding/landscaping benefits at these facilities.
- **Transparency, prioritisation & maintenance:** Questions about why Aghalee & Seycon were prioritised, who can hire/use pitches, and urgency due to health & safety issues at Seycon; strong emphasis on long-term upkeep (caretakers/supervision, cleaning contracts).




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 launch a volunteering scheme engaging people of all backgrounds and increasing the level of residents who play an active role in civic society.




Have we got this improvement objective and project correct?

| Answer Choices | | Response Percent | Response Total |
|----------------|------------|--|----------------|
| 1 | Yes |  | 80.47% 103 |
| 2 | No |  | 5.47% 7 |
| 3 | Don't know |  | 14.06% 18 |
| | | answered | 128 |
| | | skipped | 0 |

Themes from comments on Improvement Project 1

- **Very positive support for volunteering:** Many see volunteering as a positive way to strengthen communities, build skills, and help deliver benefits when resources are limited.
- **Support existing volunteer groups first:** Strong message to recognise, fund, and sustain established local groups (e.g., Conservation Volunteers/Lagan Valley Regional Park), ensuring volunteers feel valued and properly supported.
- **Inclusion and targeted engagement:** Calls to involve young people (e.g., through schools/youth clubs to counter anti-social behaviour) and retired residents; ensure participation is accessible for people with disabilities (including suggestions to engage RNIB).
- **Practical needs & ideas for roles:** Suggestions include volunteering linked to allotments, towpath clean-ups, and support with grant/funding applications for community groups.
- **Promotion, delivery, and accountability:** Some haven't seen advertising and are unsure how it will work; others want visible progress and strong volunteer uptake within 12 months, plus sustained investment and organisational capacity to manage volunteers well.




Improvement project 2: *Our communities have engaged with expanded Council-supported safety initiatives which protect the most vulnerable in our society. A safety programme will be designed and delivered to end violence against women and girls. Defibrillators will be placed in community hubs and training provided.*
Have we got this improvement objective and project correct?

| Answer Choices | | | Response Percent | Response Total |
|----------------|------------|--|------------------|----------------|
| 1 | Yes |  | 88.10% | 111 |
| 2 | No |  | 4.76% | 6 |
| 3 | Don't know |  | 7.14% | 9 |
| | | | answered | 126 |
| | | | skipped | 2 |

Themes from comments on Improvement Project 2

- **Strong support for more defibrillators:** Many want defibs widely available (including every village), with 24/7 access, clear placement plans, and links to emergency services (e.g., NI Ambulance Service).
- **Training, awareness, and information gaps:** People ask for more public training, better advertising, clear guidance on how to use defibs (including prompts), and an up-to-date map of locations (noting current information is outdated).
- **EVAWG programme welcomed but needs clarity:** Broad support for addressing violence against women and girls, but repeated calls for more detail on what the programme involves, how it will work, and what “success” looks like.
- **Prevention must be inclusive and multi-agency:** Feedback stresses education and early intervention, involving schools, youth groups, police and courts, and engaging boys/men as part of prevention; some also ask to recognise violence against men and support for care-experienced young people.
- **Survivor-led, accessible support and safe spaces:** Respondents emphasise starting with survivor voices, challenging myths about who abuse affects, ensuring services are inclusive for disabled women/girls (RNIB input), and expanding safe spaces/refuge support.

Improvement project 3: *We will provide additional opportunities and widen the Health & Wellbeing programme through the Physical Activity Referral Scheme (PARS) initiative.*
Have we got this improvement objective and project correct?




| Answer Choices | | | Response Percent | Response Total |
|----------------|------------|---|------------------|----------------|
| 1 | Yes |  | 79.37% | 100 |
| 2 | No |  | 2.38% | 3 |
| 3 | Don't know |  | 18.25% | 23 |
| | | | answered | 126 |
| | | | skipped | 2 |

Improvement project 3: We will provide additional opportunities and widen the Health & Wellbeing programme through the Physical Activity Referral Scheme (PARS) initiative. Have we got this improvement objective and project correct?

Themes from comments on Improvement Project 3

- **Low awareness & need for promotion:** Several people hadn't heard of the scheme and want it better advertised, with clearer information on how it works and who it's for.
- **Capacity pressures & growing waiting lists:** Staff report backlogs and pressure, linked to high demand and insufficient staffing; frustration is worsened when GP referrals provide limited information, leaving frontline staff to manage expectations.
- **Referral process concerns (GP vs self-referral):** People are unsure who can refer and worry GP-only routes could discourage participation, add burden to GPs, and create stigma/embarrassment. Preference is expressed for self-referral or wider routes (community hubs).
- **More age-appropriate provision:** Requests for dedicated classes for 60+ and especially 70+, including options for less active older adults and opportunities for social connection.
- **Broaden activities & locations:** Suggestions include outdoor options (e.g., walking), more activity types if coaches receive training, greater use of spaces like Lough Moss, and rotating classes across the council area (community halls/centres, not just leisure centres).

Improvement project 4: We will engage with community groups to improve community resilience across the Council area. We will work with partner organisations and we will help communities prepare for emergencies. Have we got this improvement objective and project correct?

| Answer Choices | | | Response Percent | Response Total |
|----------------|------------|---|------------------|----------------|
| 1 | Yes |  | 75.81% | 94 |
| 2 | No |  | 5.65% | 7 |
| 3 | Don't know |  | 18.55% | 23 |
| | | | answered | 124 |
| | | | skipped | 4 |

Themes from comments on Improvement Project 4

- **General support:** Many agree the idea is important,
- **Flooding and infrastructure as a priority:** Flooding is repeatedly highlighted (especially recent winter events), with calls to improve local infrastructure and ensure communities have early-response resources (e.g., sandbags, basic first aid) before emergency services arrive.
- **Learning from COVID/storm impacts:** People note communities are still recovering from COVID-19 and storms that damaged sports grounds and facilities; they see resilience planning as helpful for recovery, wellbeing, and preparedness.

- **Training, inclusion, and widening reach:** Suggestions include Citizen Aid training, extending the programme to more areas (e.g., Annahilt and Dundonald first, then wider), and ensuring it is inclusive, particularly for blind/partially sighted residents and other vulnerable groups.
- **Community sector capacity and volunteering:** Strong view that resilience depends on volunteering and community support, but councils must also address the basics—funding, access to facilities, and strengthening weak/non-existent groups—rather than focusing only on business continuity planning.
- **Broader definition of “emergencies”:** Some want the work linked to other crises too, including mental health and wellbeing emergencies, in partnership with other agencies.

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS REGARDING SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS

- **City/town centre regeneration & business costs:** Strong calls to reduce commercial rates and lower parking costs to attract businesses and shoppers back to Lisburn. Many describe the centre as run-down/empty and want stronger action on derelict buildings, building control, and encouraging independent traders, boutiques, and a better retail/leisure offer (e.g., Bow Street Mall redevelopment, food court, nightlife). Some support events/festivals, but others criticise spending on “cosmetic” items (e.g., Christmas lights) instead of fundamentals.
- **Cleaner, better-maintained public spaces:** Requests for more street cleaning, weed clearance, and better upkeep of public toilets (cleanliness, supplies). Some want enforcement or practical measures for issues like pavement parking (e.g., bollards).
- **Waste and recycling improvements:** Repeated dissatisfaction with recycling provision and reliability—calls to replace kerbside boxes with proper bins (blue bin), increase glass recycling points, improve collection service (including Bryson performance concerns), add more bins (e.g., Lagan towpath), and address access issues for older/disabled residents.
- **Fairness across areas & investment in community infrastructure:** Concerns that some places receive more attention/funding than others, with requests for more investment in Castlereagh, Dundonald (beyond Ballybeen), Carryduff, Moira, Ballinderry, rural settlements (e.g., Killultagh, Stoneyford). Common needs include play parks, community centres, leisure facilities, sports provision, shared spaces for voluntary groups, and improved engagement with new housing areas.
- **Transport, active travel & accessibility:** Calls for better public transport (airport/Dublin links, regular rural services, Hillsborough Road route). Accessibility is a recurring theme—more apartments with lifts, improved disability access in leisure facilities, a Reasonable Adjustment Policy, inclusive street design (RNIB), and affordable access to facilities (free/cheaper classes for over-60s).
- **Community wellbeing, youth provision & safety:** Requests for more youth services and activities (e.g., to address antisocial behaviour in Carryduff), mental health support, quieter/inclusive events for older people and those with learning difficulties, and improved communication about what’s available locally.
- **Environment, heritage & place quality:** Support for sustainability, protecting green spaces (opposition to building over them), re-wilding/wild areas in parks with

appropriate grounds maintenance, more nature-friendly town features, and significantly more investment in heritage/museum collections (e.g., Irish Linen). Some also raise community cohesion/inclusion issues (e.g., removing sectarian-style kerb painting/flags; calls for inclusive events).

- **Overall sentiment leans cautiously positive:** Some praise the objectives as “good work,” “going in the right direction,” and “well structured,”