

Putting our residents at the heart of everything we do

Analysis of consultation responses to inform the

Corporate Plan 2024-2028:

“Working together for our People and Place”



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Key findings, at a glance.

Some positive comments ...

"Listening and engaging are key elements in Council planning and delivery. This survey is an encouraging start."

"Recent changes and investments such as the Gortin Glens and the new play parks have really made a difference".

"All sounds good great to see the old police station site finally getting developed and the old health centre."

"I believe this is becoming more relevant as more people are struggling due to resources such as money, access to health care and childcare. Any additional support that can be provided by the Council will be well received."

"These values are strong and relevant. Glad to see air monitoring being mentioned in Action 24".

"The collaborative approach and actions outlined will aim to deliver inclusive, sustainable growth across the Council area which will drive productivity improvements, provide opportunities for those furthest from the workforce, help to deliver on carbon reduction towards net zero targets and maximise our natural assets to support the growth of tourism economy."

"Again these are admirable but will require a 'joined up' approach across all government, employers, education and training as this is not achievable within a DC by itself."

"Poverty is an increasingly big problem and often hidden issue in the council area. A strategy aimed specifically for our rural communities is a good starting point. It's not a nice to have, it's a social and economical necessity."

"....
...the objectives and actions taken now will help the environment for the future generations."

"The first three priorities align closely with the priorities in the updated Fermanagh and Omagh Community Plan and the priorities identified in the Minister for the Economy's 'Economic Vision'"

"Community engagement can be difficult, I think your engagement Officers are doing a good job and it'll be key to have them continuously seen"

The values are strong and relevant

Key Findings at a Glance:

High level of support received.

Overall, the consultation demonstrated a high level of support for the direction set out in the Corporate Plan, specifically the identified priorities, core objectives and what we said we would do. There are some further considerations in relation to specific points highlighted in the following sections.

Key findings include:

- High support identified for the content of the Corporate Plan.
- 81% agreed with the Shared Vision.
- Over 80% of all respondents agreed with the four identified core priorities.
- The highest support received was for the 'People and Communities' priority at 93%.
- More than 78% support was received across all six shared values identified with the value 'integrity' regarded as most important (81%).

The final Corporate Plan 2024-2028 will be available on the Council's website in July 2024. We would like to thank everyone who took the time to respond www.fermanaghmagh.com



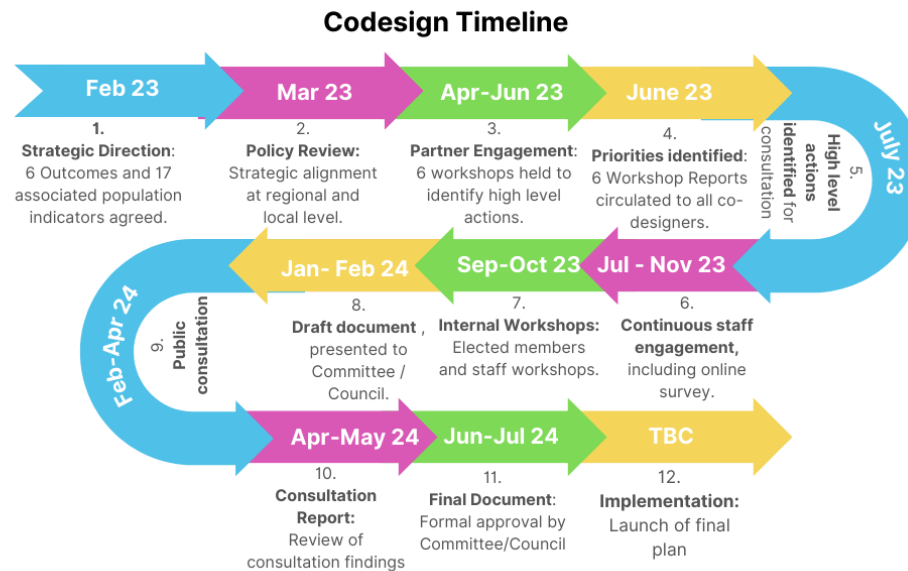
1.0 Introduction

The draft Corporate Plan 2024-28 was developed through an extensive engagement process involving Elected Members, Council staff, community planning partners, community and voluntary sector organisations, residents and service users. This work was informed by the Community Plan for the district. Prior to the engagement process, a review of relevant data, evidence and statistics and consideration of the availability of resources informed the direction of travel. The timeline documented below illustrates this process:

This Consultation Report focuses on the outcomes from the public consultation process which sought views on the content of the draft Corporate Plan 2024-28.

The public consultation took place over a period of 9 weeks, from 12 February until 12 April 2024.

Together with the online survey, Council Officers facilitated a series of online discussions and in person events to gather feedback on the draft **Corporate Plan 2024-2028: Working together for our People and Place** content. This report analyses the survey responses and engagement feedback; this includes 96 completed surveys and over 80 participants' contributions in online or in-person discussion sessions and one written response received from Tourism NI (appendix 3) of this report.



Commented [KW1]: Place holder title of Corporate Plan until agreed

2.0 How we consulted

An online survey was created and hosted on the Council's website under its consultation section together with a link to the draft Corporate Plan. In addition, Strategic Planning and Performance officers attended in-person and online discussion sessions with a range of groups. Details are included in the relevant sections within Table One below:

Table one: Copy of Consultation methods and evidence where applicable			
Method	Detail	Impact	
1	Staff	<p>Consultation with FODC Staff through dissemination of staff survey and meetings with Heads of Service/Lead Officers across all four Directorates.</p> <p>2 staff workshops were also held.</p>	<p>134 staff directly engaged.</p> <p>Approximately 106 staff engaged over two workshops.</p>
2	Social Media Platforms	<p>Utilisation of FODC Social media platforms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11 Facebook posts over 8-week period • 11 Twitter posts over 8-week period • 11 LinkedIn posts over 8-week period 	<p>644 'interactions' across all three platforms used.</p> <p>(*This includes comments, likes, shares and link click only)</p>
3	Email Campaign	<p>Internal/External Databases targeted (including Partner databases on Community Plan Partnership)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community and Voluntary Sector database • Business Sector database (inc. Town Centre Recovery Data base) • Access and Inclusion Group • Community and Voluntary Sector Forum • Internal Climate Change Working Group • Community Planning Partners 	<p>Over 1500 on identified data bases circulated</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place Shaping Steering Groups • Schools Primary and Secondary (on Climate Change theme through KNIB, Eco School Community Planning Partner) • FODC Consultee list 	
4	External	Circulated to Council staff for sharing with their own networks.	
5	Engagement with Various Groups	<p>22/02/24 Community Planning Strategic Partnership Board</p> <p>19/02/24 PEACEPLUS Correspondence</p> <p>21/03/24 LMP Correspondence</p> <p>13/03/24 Biodiversity Action Group Correspondence</p> <p>28/02/24 Sustainable Food Partnership Correspondence</p> <p>29/02/24 Omagh Hub In person update</p> <p>12/03/24 Youth Voice Presentation</p> <p>14/03/24 SWAP Presentation</p> <p>14/03/24 CVS Forum Presentation</p> <p>06/03/24 Neighbourhood Renewal Enniskillen Presentation</p> <p>22/02/24 Neighbourhood Renewal Omagh Correspondence</p> <p>27/02/24 Policing and Community Partnership correspondence.</p>	

6	Turning the Curve events	6 Turning the Curve Workshops from May – August 2023	284 participants from across 82 partner organisations
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A range of consultation methods were adopted, and target groups identified to maximise involvement of residents, community, voluntary, business and statutory sectors. A varied range of engagement methods were also used to maximise opportunities and ensuring all Section 75 categories had an equitable opportunity to be involved.

To encourage participation, the sessions and the online survey were promoted by:

- Direct emails to Community Planning Strategic Partnership Board organisations, Community and Voluntary Sector Forum, Access and Inclusion group and Community Planning contact database.
- Public Notices in all four local newspapers including Tyrone Constitution, Ulster Herald, Impartial Reporter and Fermanagh Herald.
- Digital screens in the Strule Arts Centre and Ardhowen Theatre.
- Posters, surveys and development of Plan on a Page sent to contacts in 18 council buildings.
- Responses to web chats and emails via Connect Centres.
- Internal staff communication channels.
- Social media channels - information was shared across three of the Council's channels using a combination of post types focussing on the corporate plan priorities. You can view examples of the communication methods used and the impact of these in the tables included in Appendix 2.

As with any exercise of this type, participant breakdown cannot be considered fully representative of all Fermanagh and Omagh residents but is broadly indicative. Demographic information was not requested from in person attendees but was gathered as part of the online survey questions and is reflected in Appendix 1 of the document.

3.0 Overall Analysis of online survey responses

There were 96 responses to the Corporate Plan questions on the online survey.

1.Shared Vision	Yes	No
Do you agree the Shared Vision is still relevant	81%	19%
Of the 19% who did not agree, 36 additional comments were received which included comments on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Importance of upholding and achieving the Vision. • Concern over budget spend and constraints, including in the wider public sector and impacts for local services. • Natural, cultural and built heritage of the area is important to the community and requires investment. 		

- Climate Change net zero target will be difficult to achieve but is important.
- Investment in rural towns and villages should be a priority.
- Engaging residents and service users is important.

Noted: that a number of the points raised are specific to particular issues and to services for which the Council is not responsible and therefore there is a continuing need to inform the public of the Council's responsibilities and those of other public bodies.

RECOMMENDATION: in light of the overall high level of support, retain the existing Shared Vision, as follows:

"Our Vision is of a welcoming, shared and inclusive Fermanagh and Omagh district, where people and places are healthy, safe, connected and prosperous, and where our outstanding natural, built and cultural heritage is cherished and sustainably managed".

Mission Statement Do you agree the Mission Statement is still relevant	Yes	No
	73%	27%
<p>Of the 27% who did not agree, 39 additional comments were received which included comments on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The importance of engaging residents and service users. • Concerns over budget spend and constraints, including in the wider public sector and impacts for local services in district (eg SWAH, roads, rail). • The importance of investment in the tourism sector. • Investment in rural towns and villages should be a priority. • The importance of inclusivity including the wording 'promotion of diversity'. • Expand the wording of the 'Mission' to include 'protect and enhance the environment'. • Improve service quality in key council customer facing services. • Include 'visit' in wording to read ' ... for those who visit, invest and work in our district'. while, conversely, other comments received on prioritising local people who live in the district as opposed to those who visit. <p>Noted: that a number of the points raised are specific to particular issues as opposed to a broad Mission Statement and that a number relate to wider public services.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION: in light of the overall high level of support, retain the existing Mission Statement which is a concise explanation of the Council's purpose and note that a number of the points raised are already covered in the Vision statement.</p>		

3. Our Values	Yes	No
Do you agree with Our Values		
Leadership	79%	21%
Integrity	80%	20%
Accountability	77%	23%
Innovation	78%	22%
Sustainability	77%	23%
Engagement and Involvement	76%	24%
<p>Of those who did not agree, 44 additional comments were received which included the following points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Importance of engagement and consultation in informing decision making, including with minority groups. • Values should be embedded and evident in decision making and the delivery of all council services. • Communication of decision-making processes is vital. • Importance of investment in rural areas as well as in urban towns. • Engagement and Involvement value should include, 'of all ages' to read 'Listening to, understanding and putting the evidence-based needs of our people <i>of all ages</i>, across our urban and rural communities at the heart of what we do to create solutions together'. • Leadership, accountability and transparency were highlighted as being of key importance. • Concern over use of statistics, importance of listening to people's lived experiences when delivering models of support was highlighted as equality significant. • Improved communication across internal services in the Council was advocated as important and necessary. <p>RECOMMENDATION: in light of the high levels of support, retain the shared values as outlined. It is considered that the descriptor relating to 'Engagement and Involvement' and reference to 'our people' within this is sufficiently broad.</p>		

4. Priorities	Yes	No
Do you agree the Priorities		
Climate Action	83%	17%

People and Communities	93%	7%
Shared Prosperity	88%	12%
One Council	80%	20%

Of those who did not agree with the priorities, 44 additional comments were received which included the following points:

- Importance of action to deliver on the priorities.
- Delivery of priorities equally and fairly across the district was highlighted as a concern.
- Support for renewable / green energy sources and opposition to natural gas and fracking.
- Some views that 'Climate Action' should not be considered a priority and concerns at cost implications and implications for agriculture and tourism.
- Concern over council target of being Net Zero by 2040 as 'unachievable'.
- More focus within the plan on rural communities and rural needs.
- Clarity on the wording 'One Council' is needed.
- 'Climate Action' should not be the first identified priority. 'People and Communities' was highlighted as more important than Climate Action in the current financial times.
- Measurements need to have set targets rather than direction to make them meaningful to the public.

RECOMMENDATION: in light of the high levels of support, retain the priorities as outlined with the inclusion of an amended wording below to provide greater clarity on the 'One Council' priority. It is noted that there will be benchmarks identified against all performance measures in terms of reporting against the prior year's performance and, where available, comparison with other Councils. These will be included in the Council's Annual Report published in September each year.

1. Updated wording in the opening paragraph of the 'One Council' priority, as follows:

"In formulating this Corporate Plan, the Council has considered the type of organisation it wants to be: a forward-thinking, innovative Council which is customer focussed and recognised internally and externally as accountable, transparent and effective. As we reach our first decade the Council must continue to provide strategic direction and leadership ensuring that robust systems and structures are in place to facilitate and support our dedicated, skilled and motivated staff to deliver **consistent, quality key services across our district** for residents and visitors alike.

5. Climate Action Core Objectives	Yes	No
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Do you agree that in order to prioritise Climate Action the following core objectives are the right ones?		
Sustainable Assets	83%	17%
Effective and Efficient Waste Management	87%	13%
Protect and Enhance our Environment	91%	9%
<p>Of those who did not agree with the core objectives, 32 additional comments were received which can be summarised into the following relevant points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reference to missed bin collections and the importance of improving recycling rates. • Importance of improving water quality in Lough Erne. • Concern at cost implications of achieving climate targets. • Concern at levels of littering and fly tipping. • Clarity sought on what we mean by 'estate', ie, Council owned or wider assets? Built estate or environmental assets? • Consider use of appropriate standards or charter marks to inform and educate. <p>Recommendation: in light of the high level of support, retain the core objectives; update the narrative for the 'sustainable assets' core objective to clarify the meaning of 'our estate', as follows:</p> <p>"Ensure our Council owned estate is accessible, safe and clean and meets the needs of residents and visitors, focusing on sustainable, low carbon and renewable energy solutions".</p>		
6. Actions Do you think these Actions are appropriate to achieve our core objectives?	Yes 65%	No 35%
<p>25 additional comments were received which can be summarised into the following relevant points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reference to missed bin collections and the importance of improving recycling rates. • Importance of ongoing engagement with residents • Climate change was perceived as not the number one priority when compared to 'poverty' and tourism/economic development. • Changing people's environmental behaviours/education on the significance of climate change and broader approaches to sustainability considered a priority. 		

Recommendation: to retain the actions as outlined which will aim to address the majority of issues raised and note that further detail on each of these including the target groups and performance measures will be provided through the performance report cards for specific actions.

7. People and Communities Do you agree that, in order to prioritise opportunities for everyone to live well that the following core objectives are the right ones?	Yes	No
Address Poverty and Disadvantage	84%	16%
Improve citizen wellbeing	93%	17%
Support Communities	92%	18%
Value and enrich our heritage	92%	18%

Of those who did not agree with the core objectives, 25 additional comments were received which can be summarised into the following relevant points:

- A number of comments regarding issues with poverty and the need for interventions to support those affected while other comments felt that this was the role of other agencies and not the Council
- A number of comments regarding the increase in issues with mental health, particularly amongst young people
- Lack of reference to arts and culture
- It was suggested that the words 'promotion of diversity' be added as it goes further than 'provide equal opportunities in the 'Core Objective', 'addressing poverty and disadvantage'.
- Support for children and young people with 'Special Educational Need and Disability (SENDS)' to be prioritised as it was considered they are very excluded and disadvantaged from community life.
- Importance of intergenerational approaches.
- View that there is a need to go beyond 'support communities'.

Recommendation: in light of the high levels of support, retain the core objectives with the following amendment to the 'Support Communities' objective:

"Support Communities: Work to build and empower ~~support~~ resilient, thriving and safe communities".

It is noted that reference to specific groups, eg, those with mental health issues, those with special educational needs, will be identified in the performance report cards for specific actions which will provide detail as to target groups.

8. Actions Do you think these Actions are appropriate to achieve our Core Objective?	Yes 78%	No 22%
<p>23 additional comments were received which can be summarised into the following relevant points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was identified that support for people who are low earners needs to be recognised and not just those that are unemployed when talking about poverty and the impact of the cost of living crisis. • Activities for young people, including to support their mental health, was identified as a concern. • Investment in built heritage was identified as a priority. • Highlighted that DfC are the organisation tasked with addressing poverty and disadvantage and this should be clearly articulated • Reference to closure of the Lakeland Forum and the need for alternative provision. <p>Recommendation: in light of the high levels of support, retain the existing actions and note that further detail on each of these including the target groups and performance measures will be provided through the performance report cards for specific actions.</p>		

9. Shared Prosperity Do you agree that, in order to prioritise Shared Prosperity that the following core objectives are the right ones?	Yes	No
Inclusive Economy	85%	15%
Capital Investment	92%	18%
Quality Places	86%	14%
<p>27 additional comments were received which can be summarised into the following relevant points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comments referencing rates increases and impacts on businesses and town centres • Support for capital investment in facilities across the district • Some queries around reference to 'inclusivity' in relation to the economy and a view that it was a matter for individual businesses to ensure inclusivity • Some comments on the importance of sustainable development and consideration of environmental impacts. <p>Recommendation: in light of the high levels of support, retain the core objectives as outlined.</p>		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actions • Do you think these Actions are appropriate to achieve our Core Objective? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • 78% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No • 22%
<p>18 additional comments were received which can be summarised into the following relevant points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The need for a separate tourism strategy. • The need for actions to bring vibrancy back to town centres. • Some views expressed that actions are too aspirational while others that they need to be more ambitious. <p>Recommendation: in light of the high level of support that the actions as outlined are retained. It is noted that a separate tourism strategy is in place through the Visitor Experience Development Plan.</p>		

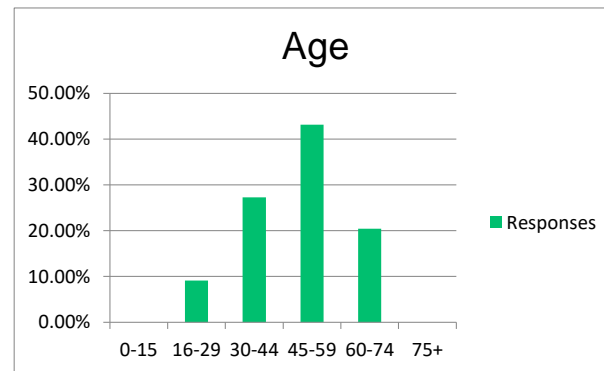
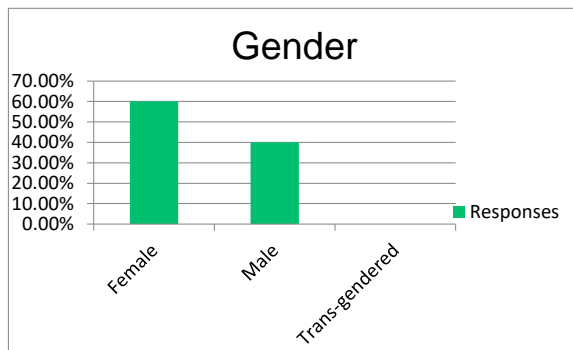
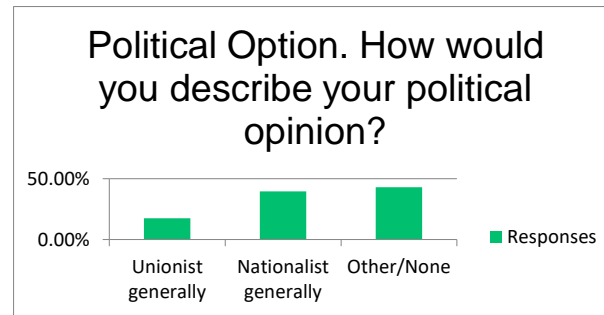
11. One Council Do you agree that, in order to prioritise an efficient, effective and agile Council that the following core objectives are the right ones?	Yes	No
Strong Governance	88%	12%
Citizen Focussed	90%	10%
Innovation and Continuous Improvement	91%	9%
<p>27 additional comments were received which can be summarised into the following relevant points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerns raised over budget constraints and the need for investment in the area as part of the levelling up agenda. • The need to adapt to new technology/artificial intelligence and be more responsive • Importance of continuous improvement in service delivery • Importance of ongoing engagement with residents and transparency in terms of spend. <p>Recommendation: in light of the high levels of support, retain the core objectives as outlined.</p>		

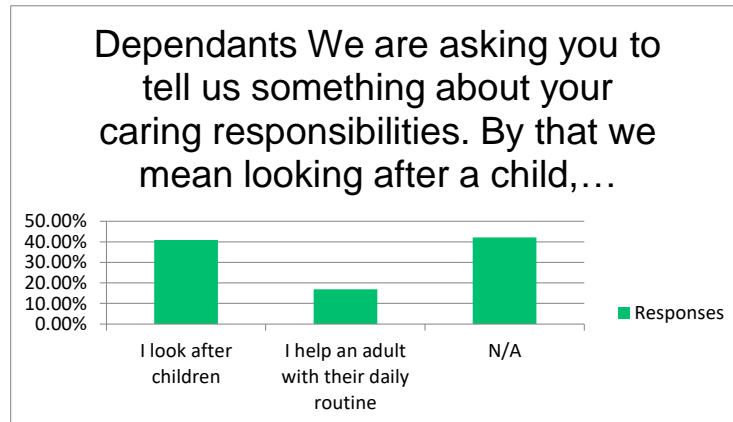
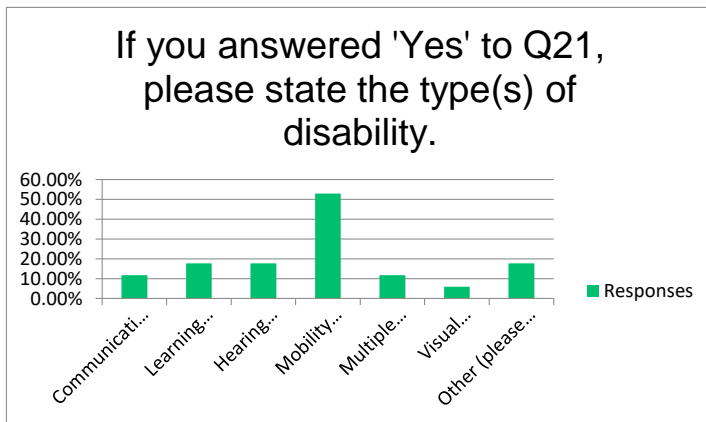
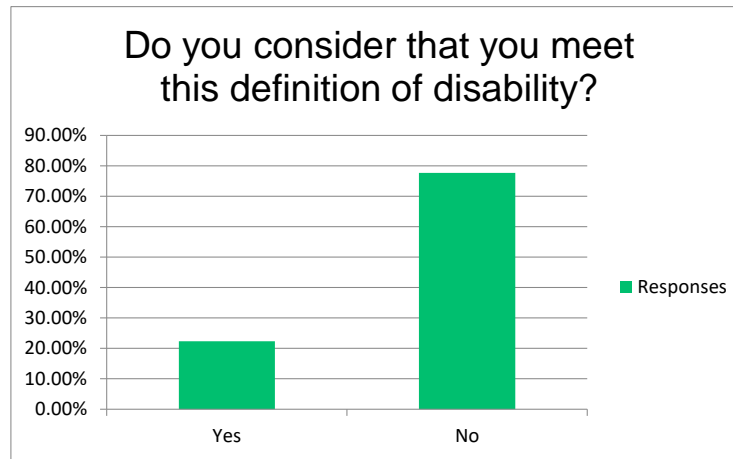
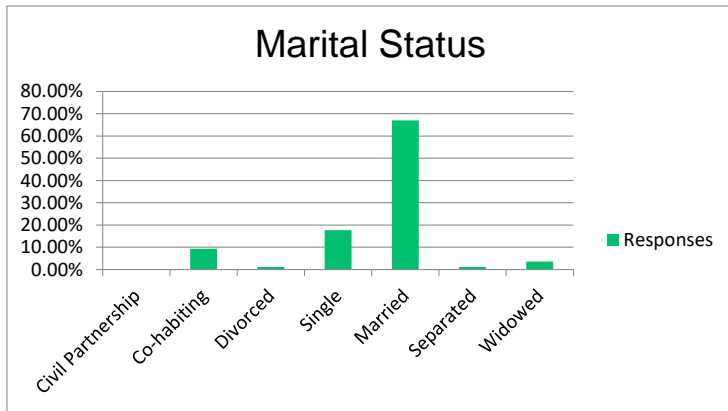
12. Actions Do you think these Actions are appropriate to achieve our Core Objective?	Yes 84%	No 16%
21 additional comments were received which can be summarised into the following relevant points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The need for investment in wider public services • The need to adapt to new technology/artificial intelligence and be more responsive • Importance of continuous improvement in service delivery • Importance of ongoing engagement with residents and transparency in relation to spend. <p>Recommendation: in light of the high levels of support, that the actions as outlined are retained.</p>		

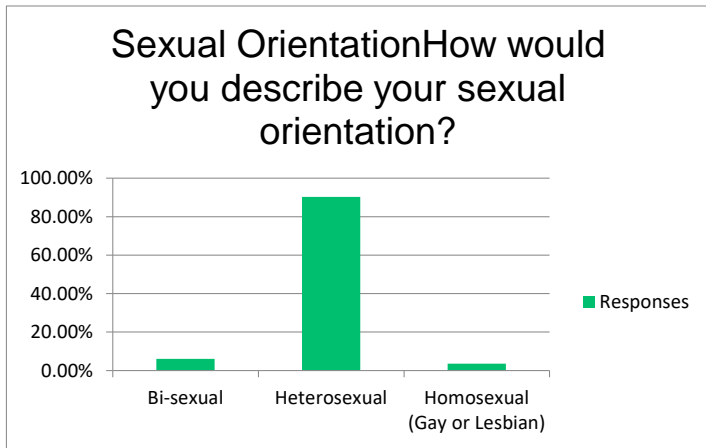
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Appendix 1: Equality Monitoring information

As with any exercise of this type, results cannot be considered to be fully representative of all Fermanagh and Omagh residents but are indicative and influenced by the demographic of participants. Demographic information was not requested from in person attendees but was part of the online survey questions and is reflected in the graphs below:







Appendix 2: Evidence of PR/ Communications



Fermanagh & Omagh District Council
Comhairle Ceantair Fhear Manach agus na hÓmaí

Corporate Plan

2024-2028

Consultation

12 February - 12 April 2024

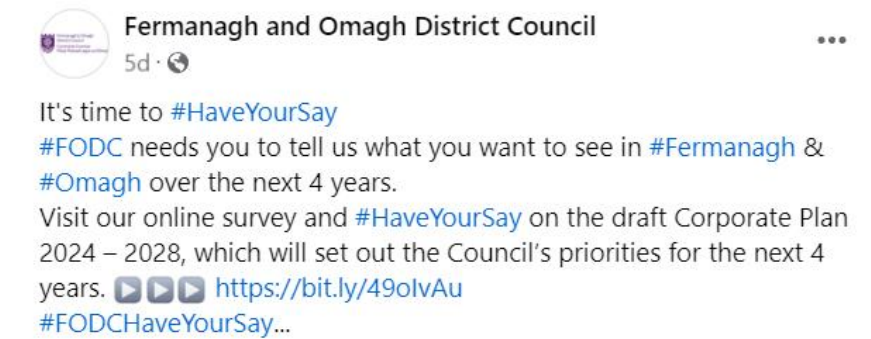


Click here to give us your views:

For further information:
w: www.fermanaghomagh.com
p: 0300 303 1777
e: info@fermanaghomagh.com



SCAN ME



Fermanagh and Omagh District Council
5d · 🌐

It's time to [#HaveYourSay](#)
[#FODC](#) needs you to tell us what you want to see in [#Fermanagh](#) & [#Omagh](#) over the next 4 years.
Visit our online survey and [#HaveYourSay](#) on the draft Corporate Plan 2024 – 2028, which will set out the Council's priorities for the next 4 years. 📺📺📺 <https://bit.ly/49olvAu>
[#FODCHaveYourSay...](#)



Fermanagh & Omagh District Council
Comhairle Ceantair Fhear Manach agus na hÓmaí

Corporate Plan

2024-2028

we want your



Public Consultation on Draft Corporate Plan 2024-2028

Fermanagh and Omagh District Council has published its Draft Corporate Plan 2024-2028 for public consultation. The consultation will run from 12th February until 12th April 2024.

The priorities include.

- **Climate Action:** Embed sustainability to ensure progress towards a Net Zero Council by 2040.
- **People and Communities:** Provide opportunities for everyone to live well.
- **Shared Prosperity:** Drive an inclusive economy and aid prosperity across our district.
- **One Council:** Ensure an efficient, effective and agile Council founded on good governance practices.

You can take part in this public consultation by completing an online survey on our website, www.fermanaghomagh.com or by getting in touch with us using the contact information provided below.

The document is available in alternative formats upon request. We are committed to reducing our carbon footprint and have not printed this document. However, you can access or request it in an alternative format through:

Website: www.fermanaghomagh.com

Telephone: 0300 303 1777

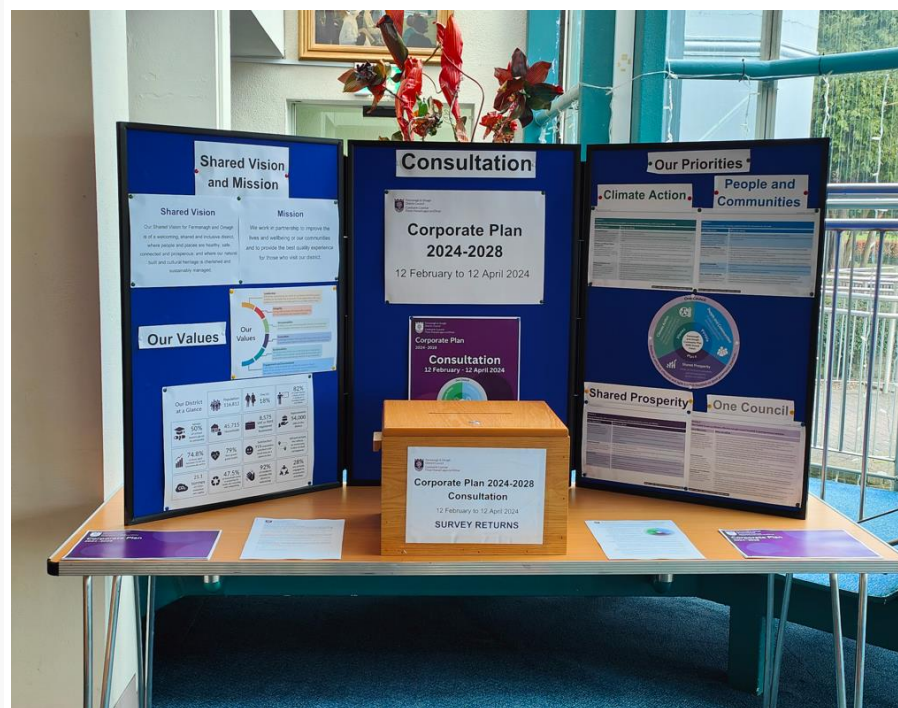
Textphone: 028 8225 6216

Email: info@fermanaghomagh.com

Sign Video: For people who are deaf or are hard of hearing.

Live web chat: Available on our website during office hours, Mon- Fri 9-5pm.

Alison McCullagh, Chief Executive



Public consultation on FODC Corporate Plan 2024 – 2028

Fermanagh and Omagh District Council has launched the public consultation phase for its draft Corporate Plan, outlining the priorities that will guide the Council’s development and delivery until 2028.

The [draft Corporate Plan](#) reflects the Council’s commitment to create a sustainable, inclusive district, where people and places are healthy, safe, connected and prosperous. This consultation provides an opportunity for residents, businesses, and community stakeholders to actively participate in shaping the future of the district. The Council is actively seeking input and recognises the importance of collaborative decision-making to address the diverse needs and aspirations of people who live, work, visit and invest here.

The four priorities are:

- **Climate Action:** embed sustainability to ensure progress towards Net Zero Council by 2040
- **People and Communities:** provide opportunities for everyone to live well
- **Shared Prosperity:** drive an inclusive economy and aid prosperity across our district
- **One Council:** ensure an efficient, effective and agile Council founded on good governance practices

The public consultation is now open and will conclude on Friday 12th April 2024.

You can read the document in full [Corporate-Plan 2024-28 \(Draft\)](#)
 You can give your feedback by completing the [online survey](#)

If you have any comments, would like any further information, or would like a copy of the Corporate Plan or Survey in an alternative format, please contact us using one of the following methods.


- In writing: Strategic Planning & Performance Team, The Grange, Mountjoy Road, Lisnamallard, Omagh BT79 7BL
- Telephone: 0300 303 1777
- Email: info@fermanaghomagh.com
- For people who are deaf or hard of hearing: SignVideo

12:25pm

Scheduled

Claire Irvine ✕

 Fermanagh & Omagh

 Fermanagh And Omagh

#HaveYourSay - consultation closes in 10 days!

#FODC needs you to tell us what you want to see in #Fermanagh & #Omagh over the next 4 years.

Visit our online survey and #HaveYourSay on the draft Corporate Plan 2024 – 2028, which will set out the Council’s priorities for the next 4 years. ▶▶▶

<https://bit.ly/49oIvAu>

#FODCHaveYourSay...



Facebook

Date	Impressions	Reach	Reactions	Comments	Link Clicks	Shares
11-Apr	5178	5178	2	6	6	5
10-Apr	4322	4135	4	8	8	
05-Apr	2,844	2,659	1	5	4	2
01-Apr	1,887	1,835	1		3	
24-Mar	23,763	8,747	19	22	234	8
14-Mar	1,449	1,449	1	1	5	
03-Mar	2,909	2,800	9	1	8	7
28-Feb	966	940		1	1	
20-Feb	1,211	1,182	1	2	3	
14-Feb	6,397	6,255	5	16	47	4
12-Feb	2,691	2,549	9	2	25	3
Total	41,273	25,757	45	45	326	22

Twitter

Date	Impressions	Reach	Reactions	Comments	Link Clicks	Shares
11-Apr	239		1	0	1	2
10-Apr	307		2	0	2	2
05-Apr	239		1	0	3	1
01-Apr	316		1	0	0	1
24-Mar	303		0	0	3	0
14-Mar	268		3	0	3	2
03-Mar	571		3	0	0	3
28-Feb	204		1	0	2	0
20-Feb	307		1	0	0	1
14-Feb	248		0	0	5	0
12-Feb	371		1	0	9	1
Total	2,588	0	10	0	22	8

LinkedIn

Date	Impressions	Reach	Reactions	Comments	Link Clicks	Shares
11-Apr	129		1	0	2	0
10-Apr	249		4	0	10	2
05-Apr	112		2	0	0	1
01-Apr	132		1	0	0	1
24-Mar	307		2	0	5	1
14-Mar	257		5	0	6	1
03-Mar	441		7	0	23	1
28-Feb	323		8	0	6	0
20-Feb	651		22	0	29	3
14-Feb	292		4	0	6	0
12-Feb	434		7	0	26	2
Total	2,837	0	56	0	101	9

Appendix 3: TNI Partner response**Tourism NI Response to Public Consultation - New draft Fermanagh & Omagh District Council Corporate Plan for the period 2024 – 2028****Overview**

Tourism NI welcomes the development of the Fermanagh & Omagh District Council (FODC) draft Corporate Plan for the period 2024 – 2028 and the opportunity to provide feedback as part of the public consultation.

It is encouraging to note that the local economy in the FODC area has fared well in the past decade, with both economic activity and job levels at a comparative high. It is particularly encouraging that tourism is among the largest local industries along with retail, manufacturing, construction and agriculture.

Tourism NI recognises that tourism is an important sector for the FODC area in relation to visitor spend, business growth and jobs. The area accounts for 8% of all tourist trips in NI, with an average spend per trip of £186 (NI average – £174). Furthermore, it attracts the fourth highest visitor spend of the 11 N. Ireland Council areas at £79.4m, based on 2019 data.

The area has a natural landscape with significant appeal, including the Cuilcagh Lakelands UNESCO Geopark and the Sperrins AONB. There is scope for further development, building on existing experiences such as the Fermanagh Lakes and Cuilcagh Boardwalk.

Department for the Economy: Economic Vision

In February 2024, the Economy Minister set out four key objectives as part of his Economic Vision for Northern Ireland, that in turn provide clear direction for the forthcoming Tourism Strategy:

1. Increase the proportion of working age people in **Good Jobs**
2. Promote **Regional Balance** so that everyone, no matter where they live, should have the same opportunity to earn a living.
3. A fundamental driver of overall living standards is to **Raise Productivity**
4. **Reduce Carbon Emissions** in order to transition to a greener and more sustainable economy, generating prosperity for all.

Tourism NI would encourage that the tourism related priorities in the draft Fermanagh & Omagh District Council Corporate Plan 2024 – 2028 align as far as possible with the Minister's Economic Vision.

Visitor Experience Development Plan (VEDP)

In 2023, Tourism NI part funded and supported the development of a new Visitor Experience Development Plan (VEDP) for the area, along with FODC and Waterways Ireland. Tourism NI believes that the VEDP will act as an important roadmap for tourism growth and delivery in this area.

We recognise that the depth and breadth of distinctive visitor experiences have the opportunity to encourage both domestic and international visitors to spend longer and contribute significantly to tourism revenue both locally and in N. Ireland as a whole. The FODC area has the potential to be recognised as an exceptional regenerative tourism destination.

Tourism NI is represented on the FODC VEDP Delivery Partnership as well as the Enabling Intelligence and Insights Working Group and the Brand Review and Marketing Working Group.

Market demand and what visitors are looking for in their tourism experiences are key drivers for future development. The N. Ireland priority market segments demonstrate a high level of fit with the profile of the area. Building on this foundation, it will be important to look in-depth at visitor needs and motivations for travel to understand how to create experiences / offers that will appeal to them. This ties into the large capital projects already underway or in development.

It is recommended that the Council works closely with Tourism NI and Tourism Ireland to help identify and refine the key, target NI and ROI market segments and international markets, respectively.

Other Key Considerations for Tourism NI

Mid South West (MSW) Growth Deal

Tourism NI is working closely with the Council and partners on a number of tourism projects under the MSW Growth Deal. This has included concept development and market testing of proposed visitor experiences, including the Cuilcagh Lakelands Geopark and Ulster American Folk Park projects.

Tourism NI is now acting as Department for the Economy's Investment Decision Maker (IDM) for the Cuilcagh Lakelands Geopark project. It is hoped that formal approval of the project's Strategic Outline Case (SOC) will be in place in the coming weeks so that an Outline Business Case (OBC) can be progressed. Tourism NI also supported National Museums NI and FODC in the development of the SOC for the Ulster American Folk Park, which is being progressed via the Department for Communities as part of the Growth Deal.

Tourism NI is keen to continue to work closely with FODC and stakeholders as the projects develop so that they are ambitious, deliverable and demonstrate value for money.

Sperrins Tourism

Tourism NI has been an active supporter of the Sperrins Partnership since its inception and is represented on the Sperrins Partnership Board, Statutory Partners Sub-group and the Brand and Tourism Sub-group.

Representatives from the Sperrins Partnership and FODC attended a successful Tourism NI-led Learning Journey to Co. Clare in March 2023 where they experienced first-hand a number of sustainable tourism experiences and met with key, local tourism stakeholders. In addition, a representative from the Cuilcagh Lakelands Geopark attended a Tourism NI-led Learning Journey to Slovenia in March 2023 and where they visited several, best practice sustainable tourism experiences.

Tourism NI is keen to continue working closely with FODC and partners to develop the tourism potential of the Sperrins as part of delivering the broader objective of greater regional balance across N. Ireland.

Experience Development

Tourism NI is working closely with experience providers in the FODC area to develop and enhance visitor experiences aligned to the Embrace a Giant Spirit (EAGS) experience brand. The following providers have been re-engaged within the EAGS portfolio:

- Belleek Pottery
- Erne Water Taxi
- Enniskillen Taste Experience
- Boatyard Distillery

Furthermore, through the recent Embrace A Giant Taste programme, new visitor experiences have been created in the area.

Other complementary activity includes the NI Spirits Trail, of which the Boatyard Distillery is a key participant. The Distillery is also working closely with Tourism NI across a number of food and drink related marketing and PR initiatives.

In relation to capital investment, Tourism NI supported five businesses through their recent Experience Development Programme with combined capital funding of approximately £430,000. Projects included a new lighting enhancement at Marble Arch Caves, new and innovative hydrobikes at Castle Archdale Boat Hire & Watersports and new visitor facilities at Glenpark Estate, Omagh.

Tourism NI is keen to explore further opportunities with the Council and other partners to grow the portfolio of visitor experiences and products across the FODC area in order to complement the major investments being progressed via the MSW Growth Deal.

Conclusion

Tourism NI will continue to work closely with Fermanagh & Omagh District Council and partners in the period ahead to achieve shared objectives for the tourism sector. We are encouraged by the enthusiasm and early progress demonstrated as part of the delivery of the priorities set out in the FODC Visitor Experience Development Plan. We wish the Council well in the further development and publication of their Corporate Plan for the period 2024 – 2028.

End.../