



**Causeway
Coast & Glens
Borough Council**

***CORPORATE SERVICES
Policy and Community Planning***

***BUSINESS PLAN
2025/26***

SECTION 1: SETTING THE CONTEXT

1.1 FUNCTIONS OF THE DEPARTMENT

Corporate Policy

- Assist with the development and review of the Council's Council Strategy
- Development and review of the Council Constitution
- Development of policy initiatives and provide assistance and support to the policy making processes of Council.
- s of Council.

Community Planning

- Evidence gathering and analysis of data for an evidence informed Community Plan
- Facilitate capacity building and culture change re community planning
- Initiate consultation, engagement and communication initiatives with stakeholders
- Develop appropriate delivery mechanisms to achieve the outcomes identified within the Community Plan.
- Develop and establish performance monitoring and reporting mechanisms for the community plan/delivery plan.

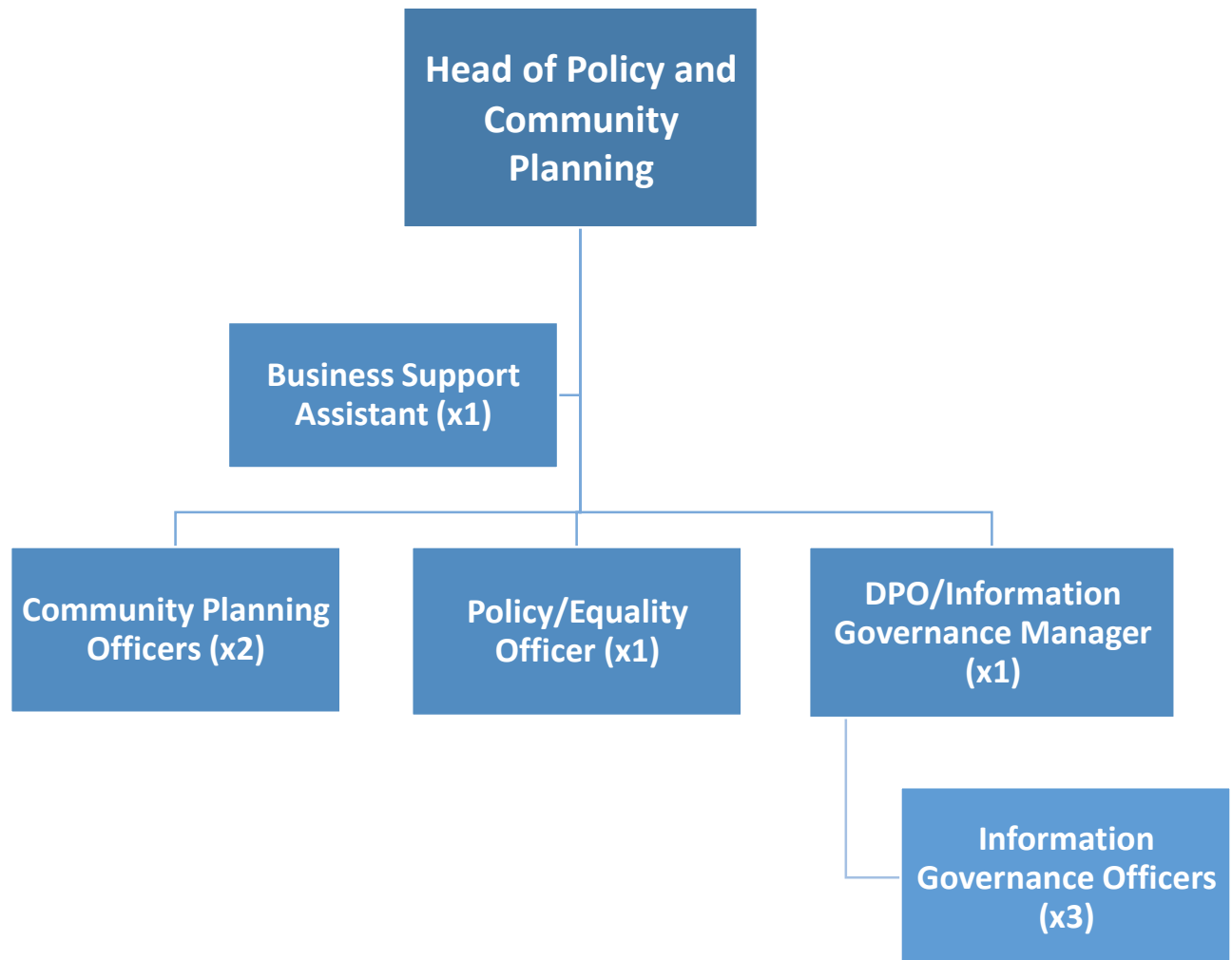
Information Governance

- Co-ordinate Council compliance with access to information legislation such as Freedom of Information Act, Data Protection Act and Environmental Information Regulations.
- Development of a corporate records management strategy and framework with associated policies, procedures and systems.
- Development and implementation of a Disposal and Retention Schedule for Council

Equality and Diversity

- Develop and implement strategies, policies and initiatives to promote equality of opportunity and appreciation of diversity within Council.
- Ensure Council meets its legal obligations in relation to equality and diversity.
- Ensure the Council meets its obligations in relation to the disability duties.

1.2 DEPARTMENTAL STAFFING STRUCTURE



1.3 STRATEGIC CONTEXT

The strategic objectives of the Service area are to:

- Ensure that the Council delivers its services in accordance with its legal obligations and best practice relating to equality and diversity and develops/implements strategies, policies and initiatives which promote equality and diversity within the Council.
- Ensure the Council meets its obligations in relation to the promotion of positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourages participation by disabled people in public life.
- Support the development and implementation of the Causeway Coast and Glens Community Plan which includes evidence gathering, community engagement activities, performance management and putting in place governance and reporting mechanisms.
- Develop and implement an information management strategy and framework for the Council which co-ordinates Council compliance with a range of access to information legislation.
- Develop and implement a records management strategy and framework for the Council with associated policies, procedures and systems, ensuring that it supports the priorities and statutory obligations of the Council.
- Support the development of relevant strategies, policies, procedures and systems to support the priorities and statutory obligations of Council.

COUNCIL STRATEGY:

Aligned with the following Council Strategic Aims and Objectives:

- Cohesive Leadership
- Local Economy
- Improvement and Innovation
- Healthy, Active and Engaged Communities
- Climate Change and Our Environment.

LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT:

The functions of the service are shaped primarily by a range of legislative obligations such as the Local Government Act 2014, S75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, the

Disability Discrimination Act 1995, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 2018 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.

RESOURCE CONTEXT:

The functions of the service are facilitated by a small team of 9 people and the budget for the service for the 2025/26 financial year is £551,014.44. Staff salaries make up the bulk of the Department's budget.

INTERNAL CONTEXT:

The policy, equality and information governance functions of the service are primarily corporate in nature and require the co-operation and input of officers across the Council, for example in relation to dealing with requests for access to information, screening of policies, etc.

EXTERNAL CONTEXT:

The Community Planning function is externally influenced by legislation and by statutory guidance issued by the Department for Communities. It also requires input from, and external reporting to, statutory partners, the community and voluntary sector and the general public.

The Equality Commission plays a major role in oversight and compliance as well as offering advice and guidance on the application of Section 75 Equality and Good Relations legal obligations by Council, as well as a range of other legislation relating to equality and diversity issues such as disability, race, gender, etc.,

The Information Commissioners' Officer undertakes an oversight role and compliance role in relation to how Council has dealt with requests for access to information, data protection and other information related legislation. The Information Commissioners' Office also provides guidance in relation to a range of information related legislation.

1.4. SWOT ANALYSIS AND PESTLE ANALYSIS

A SWOT Analysis and a PESTLE Analysis were undertaken in relation to the Policy and Community Planning Department to help identify issues which could potentially impact on the business planning process:

STRENGTHS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A knowledgeable and skilled team of staff able to use their own initiative to take forward projects. • Established systems and processes in place which underpin and support the functions of the service area. • Positive relationships established with a range of internal and external stakeholders. 	WEAKNESSES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A small team of staff and resource light. • Unforeseen or long-term absence can have a detrimental impact on the work of the service area due to lack of cover. • Lack of co-operation internally and externally can impede progress of actions.
OPPORTUNITIES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to access best practice ideas from other Councils. • Can provide positive PR opportunities for Council. • Can help develop a robust and effective Council Strategy. • Can help deliver positive change for people in Causeway Coast and Glens area through community planning activities. 	THREATS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing use of legal actions taken against Council which impact on the service area, eg compliance issues. • Impact on resources available through the budgeting and rates setting process within Council.

POLITICAL <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of strategies by the NI Assembly/Government Departments could possibly have implications for the Community Planning process. 	ECONOMIC <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact of cost of living on community planning activities. • Challenges to financial resources both internal and external. • Central government budgets could potentially have an impact on the ability to progress community planning initiatives.
SOCIO-CULTURAL <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased lobbying by special interest groups which impact particularly on the equality agenda. • An ageing population in CC&G which will impact community planning and equality activities. 	TECHNOLOGICAL <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New technological developments which can help provide better customer accessibility to Council services, for example the introduction of SignVideo.

<p>LEGAL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data Protection issues are increasingly arising, particularly data breaches. • Increasingly complex requests on a range of access to information issues. • Complex guidance from ICO on information access issues and the need for legal guidance. • Increased likelihood of legal challenge to various decisions of Council. 	<p>ENVIRONMENTAL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater emphasis on climate change and environmental issues and indicators which will impact on community planning activities and initiatives. • Use of Rural Needs Assessments in policy development work within Council.
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1.5. PRE-REQUISITES AND EXTERNAL DEPENDENCIES

The following outlines the pre-requisites and external dependencies which could potentially impact or influence this Business Plan (predicated on certain things being in place):

- The Equality Forum is maintained and meeting quarterly.
- The S75 consultee database is reviewed and updated on a regular basis.
- ICT systems will support any new technology introduced, such as SignVideo.
- The Community Planning Partnership continues to work together effectively.
- A revised/updated Equality Action Plan and Disability Action Plan are agreed and in place.
- An Information Security and Management Working Group is in place and meeting regularly.
- Sufficient resources (people and financial) are made available to the Department to enable it to function effectively.

1.6. ASSUMPTIONS

- Sufficient resources will be available to enable the Department to function effectively.
- The Community Planning baseline data can be reviewed and updated as required.
- A process for the management of requests for access to information is in place and adequately resourced.
- Processes for S75 screening, Rural Needs Assessments and Data Protection Assessments are in place and such screening is actively taking place within Council.

SECTION 2: POLICY AND COMMUNITY PLANNING BUSINESS PLAN

2.1 BUSINESS PLAN OBJECTIVES

- Support the development and implementation of the Causeway Coast and Glens Community Plan which includes evidence gathering, community engagement activities, performance management and putting in place governance and reporting mechanisms.
- Support the priorities and statutory obligations of Council by developing and maintaining relevant strategies, policies, procedures and systems.
- Specific Objectives:

Equality and Diversity - Ensure that the Council addresses equality and diversity issues in accordance with its legal obligations and best practice and develops/implements strategies, policies and initiatives which promote equality and diversity within the Council.

Disability - Ensure the Council meets its obligations in relation to the promotion of positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourages participation by disabled people in public life.

Policy Development - Support the priorities and statutory obligations of Council by developing and maintaining relevant strategies, policies, procedures and systems.

Information Governance - Develop and implement an information management strategy and framework for the Council (including an effective data protection regime and records management strategy and framework).

Community Planning - Support the development and implementation of the Causeway Coast and Glens Community Plan which includes evidence gathering, community engagement activities, performance management and putting in place governance and reporting mechanisms.

Directorate	Corporate Services
Service Area	Policy and Community Planning
Reporting Year	2025/26

Business Plan Objective 1: Equality and Diversity
Ensure that the Council addresses equality and diversity issues in accordance with its legal obligations and best practice and develops/implements strategies, policies and initiatives which promote equality and diversity within the Council.
Lead Officer(s):
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head of Policy and Community Planning • Equality/Policy Officer
Link to Corporate Strategy:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement and Innovation • Healthy, Active and Engaged Communities •
Link to Community Plan:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Thriving Economy • A Healthy Safe Community • A Sustainable Accessible Environment •
Link to Performance Improvement Plan:
Not applicable

Work Stream	Actions	Financial Information/ Budget £	Timescale	Performance Indicator(s) APSE Benchmarking Indicators	Progress	RAG Status
Equality and Diversity	Work to identify key improvement actions to support building accessibility.		April 2025 to March 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the percentage of Council owned buildings that are accessible to people with a disability. • Educate staff about Trauma Safe Spaces. 		
	Develop a programme of actions regarding rural inclusion		April 2025 to March 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a link with Rural Community Network. • Improve information on Rural Needs Assessments and how staff can make these more impactful. • Promote the importance of Rural Needs Assessments with Senior Management, Staff and Elected Members. 		
	Develop and implement a range of communication, information and engagement activities designed to positively improve levels of interaction on equality and diversity issues.		April 2025 to March 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop 5 new easy read documents across Council. • Work in partnership with disability partners to have 2 Easy Read documents peer reviewed. • Draft pre-visit guides for all 4 civic buildings. 		

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate officers to engage with the equality forum on 4 Council projects/policies. Work with the Local Government Training Group to improve Councils Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training resources. Work with the Town and Village Management team to develop a walkabout to improve elected members understanding of Visual Impairments. 		
	Improve information for carers of the elderly within Council		April 2025 to March 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide information to staff and elected members about caring for older people in the community. Educate staff and elected members about a minimum of 2 support tools for carers. 		

Risk Management

Identify Risks and any Mitigating Actions Required:

There is a risk that the budget required for improvements exceeds current agreement by Director of Corporate Services, mitigate by ranking and scheduling key actions. Reliance on other departments may mean actions slip into the following year, mitigate by asking Heads of service to feedback on Equality Action Plan Actions on a quarterly basis.

Business Plan Objective 2: Disability

Ensure the Council meets its obligations in relation to the promotion of positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourages participation by disabled people in public life.

Lead Officer(s):

- **Head of Policy and Community Planning**
- **Equality/Policy Officer**

Link to Corporate Strategy:

- **Improvement and Innovation**
- **Healthy, Active and Engaged Communities**

Link to Community Plan:

- **A Thriving Economy**
- **A Healthy Safe Community**
- **A Sustainable Accessible Environment**

Link to Performance Improvement Plan:

Not applicable

Work Stream	Actions	Financial Information/ Budget £	Timescale	Performance Indicator(s) APSE Benchmarking Indicators	Progress	RAG Status
	Work with the Neighbourhood Renewal team to make community facilities more inclusive.		April 2025 to March 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a programme of best practice sharing and inclusive practices with local communities. 		
	Develop and implement measures to improve access to Council services by people with a disability.		April 2025 to March 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research at least one option whereby the Councils website could be more accessible for the Deaf Community. Present this option to Head of ICT. Continued provision of Makaton sign education to staff and Elected members via inclusion in the staff news. Continue to highlight the importance of Equality Screening within Council through reminders and support. Develop Autism Friendly visitor guides for Councils 4 civic buildings. 		
	Develop and implement initiatives to promote awareness of and positive attitudes to people with a disability.		April 2025 to March 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Involve the Diversity Champion in 3 awareness raising campaigns. 		

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of 5 awareness raising articles on lived experience, health or understanding disabilities. • All staff educated on equality, diversity and inclusion issues in 2025 / 2026 		
Risk Management Identify Risks and any Mitigating Actions Required:						
Training budgetary constraints, identify potential free training or alternative free formats for education eg: relevant UTube videos						

Business Plan Objective 3: Policy Development	
Support the priorities and statutory obligations of Council by developing and maintaining relevant strategies, policies, procedures and systems.	
Lead Officer(s):	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head of Policy and Community Planning • Policy/Equality Officer 	
Link to Council Strategy:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cohesive Leadership • Improvement and Innovation 	
Link to Community Plan:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Thriving Economy 	

- A Healthy Safe Community
- A Sustainable Accessible Environment

Link to Performance Improvement Plan:

Not applicable

Work Stream	Actions	Financial Information/ Budget £	Timescale	Performance Indicator(s) APSE Benchmarking Indicators	Progress	RAG Status
Policy Development	Assist with the development of a new Council Corporate Strategy.	£5,000	June 2025	New Corporate Strategy to be in place.	Consultation underway with Councillors with a view to having a new draft Strategy prepared by June 2025.	
	Review and amend Council Constitution on an annual basis (or as required).	0	April 2025 to March 2026		Amendments of Constitution conducted as required.	
	Review the log of Council policies and develop a resource to provide easy access to policies for staff.	0	September 2025		Review of Staff Portal completed, and review can now progress.	
Risk Management						
Identify Risks and any Mitigating Actions Required:						
None identified.						

Business Plan Objective 4: Information Governance
Develop and implement an information management strategy and framework for the Council (including an effective data protection regime and records management strategy and framework).
Lead Officer(s):
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head of Policy and Community Planning • Information Governance Manager/Data Protection Officer
Link to Corporate Strategy:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement and Innovation
Link to Community Plan:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Thriving Economy • A Healthy Safe Community • A Sustainable Accessible Environment
Link to Performance Improvement Plan:
Not applicable

Work Stream	Actions	Financial Information/ Budget £	Timescale	Performance Indicator(s) APSE Benchmarking Indicators	Progress	RAG Status
Information Governance Policies and Guidance	Review, streamline and update Council's information governance policies and procedures taking into account ICO issued guidance and relevant case law.		April 2025 – March 2026	Number of logged requests responded to within 20 working days to increase from 85% to 90%	Review undertaken by Cleaver, Fulton, Rankin and the IG Team completed in 2024. Streamlining of policies on-going.	
	Consolidate the information held within Information Governance's repository. Review and update the Staff Portal as regards information law policies.				Consolidation on-going. Updating of Staff Portal on-going.	
	Develop a guidance bank for all staff in relation to the requirements of information legislation.				Development of guidance bank commenced.	
	Undertake a review of the Council's Publication Scheme.				Scoping exercise underway.	
	Conduct an information audit and update Information Asset Register				IGOs have initiated this work with business areas – work to be carried out on phased basis.	
Information Governance Training	Work with OD/HR to ensure the annual training plan includes information governance training appropriate to different levels of staff within Council (to include induction training and annual	Training budget held by OD/HR			Training roll-out underway with Tiers 1, 2, 3 and 4 complete.	

	refresher training for senior managers).					
	Work with OD/HR to ensure training on records management is included in the annual training plan for different levels of staff (to include induction training).	Training budget held by OD/HR			Still to be completed	
	Support the on-going work of the Information Security Management Group (ISMG).				The ISMG has been restarted. Action Plan in place and being worked through.	
Records Management	Establish a process for monitoring adherence to records management guidance.				Scoping work currently underway via consultation with other councils by the IGOs. IGOs working on a scoping exercise.	
	Review the Council's Retention and Disposal Schedule and work with Departments to ensure regular implementation of the Schedule.				Currently underway. IGOs undertaking audit to identify whether Creation and Disposal logs are being kept by business areas – being conducted on phased basis.	
Data Protection	Review, streamline and update Council's data protection policies and procedures taking into account ICO issued guidance and relevant case law.				Review conducted by Cleaver, Fulton & Rankin and IG. Streamlining and updating currently underway.	
	Work with other Departments to review operational issues and policies relating to CCTV and other mobile cameras.				Work ongoing.	

	Conduct a review of privacy notices across the Council.				Currently on-going.	
	Review data breach training and notification/logging system.				IG Team working with ICT to develop a logging system via SharePoint. Currently running this on a pilot basis with two business areas.	
	AI Strategy				Work being undertaken by the IG Team to develop an AI strategy which provides guidance to business areas within Council to ensure it is applied in line with data protection considerations in Council projects.	
Risk Management						
Identify Risks and any Mitigating Actions Required:						
None identified.						

Business Plan Objective 5: Community Planning
Support the development and implementation of the Causeway Coast and Glens Community Plan which includes evidence gathering, community engagement activities, performance management and putting in place governance and reporting mechanisms.
Lead Officer(s):
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head of Policy & Community Planning • Community Planning Officers

Link to Corporate Strategy:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cohesive Leadership • Local Economy • Improvement and Innovation • Healthy, Active and Engaged Communities • Climate Change and Our Environment
Link to Community Plan:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Thriving Economy • A Healthy Safe Community • A Sustainable Accessible Environment
Link to Performance Improvement Plan:
Not applicable

Work Stream	Actions	Financial Information/ Budget £	Timescale	Performance Indicator(s) APSE Benchmarking Indicators	Progress	RAG Status
Community Planning	Management and facilitation of the Causeway Coast and Glens Community Planning Strategic Partnership	£2000.00	April 2025 to March 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No of Partnership Meetings • No of Action Steering Group Meetings • Attendance Improvement (Increase by 10%) 		

	Provision of training and development opportunities for Community Planning Action Leads and Community Planning partners for progression of performance monitoring and reporting in relation to Community Planning Delivery Plan Actions for CC&G.	£3000.00	April 2025 to March 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training Conference event to be delivered September 2025. • Participation Improvement (Increase by 10%) • Community Planning Partners / Thematic and Action Leads participate in OBA Performance Monitoring 		
	Collaborative training, awareness raising sessions and events across the themes of the CC&G Community Plan. Promotion of inter-professional interactions across the themes of community, health, the environment, tourism, and the economy.	£2000.00	April 2025 to March 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation Improvement (Increase by 10%) • Community Planning Partners / Thematic and Action Leads participate in OBA Performance Monitoring 		
	Research & publication of the Statutory 'Statement of Progress'	£2000.00	November 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publication of Statement of Progress 		
	Review of CP Delivery Plan and Actions to reflect ongoing priorities	£2000.00	November 2025	Delivery Plan Workshop to be held in November 2025		
	To further develop engagement opportunities with young people of CC&G through a 'Youth Voice' initiative.	£2000.00	April 2025 to March 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number / range of engagement activities undertaken 		

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation of effectiveness of engagement activities. 		
Risk Management Identify Risks and any Mitigating Actions Required:						
<p>Risk 1 - Nonparticipation by supporting partners in Community Planning process. Mitigation Advanced schedule of Statutory Partnership meetings Enhance and sustain relationships with Statutory Partners</p> <p>Risk 2 - Budget Cuts Mitigation Partnership support with greater collaboration</p>						