



<b>Title of Report:</b>	<b>Mark Ashton Memorial</b>
<b>Committee Report Submitted To:</b>	Leisure & Development Committee
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	19 May 2026
<b>For Decision or For Information</b>	For Decision
<b>To be discussed In Committee</b>	<b>No</b>

<b>Linkage to Council Strategy (2026-31)</b>	
Strategic Theme	Priority 2: Empowering and supporting our people
Outcome	A Council which reflects the diversity of our community and creates an inclusive culture where everyone can thrive
Lead Officer	Head of Community & Culture; Head of Performance

<b>Estimated Timescale for Completion</b>	
Date to be Completed	September 2026

<b>Budgetary Considerations</b>	
Cost of Proposal	External funding provided (circa £850)
Included in Current Year Estimates	<b>YES/NO</b>
Capital/Revenue	n/a
Code	n/a
Staffing Costs	n/a

<b>Legal Considerations</b>	
Input of Legal Services Required	<b>YES/NO</b>
Legal Opinion Obtained	<b>YES/NO</b>

<b>Screening Requirements</b>	Required for new or revised Policies, Plans, Strategies or Service Delivery Proposals.		
Section 75 Screening	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date: May 2026
	EQIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Rural Needs Assessment (RNA)	Screening Completed	Yes/No	Date:
	RNA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
	DPIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:

## 1.0 Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to present the outcome of an assessment undertaken by Council's Memorial Advisory Group in relation to applications submitted to commemorate Mark Ashton in Portrush, in accordance with Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council's *Public Memorials: A Policy Framework*. The Memorial Advisory Group has considered two options and is recommending Option 1 (Town Hall Plaque) for consideration by the Leisure & Development Committee.

## 2.0 Background

A Notice of Motion was considered and approved by council in June 2021 that:

*'This Council notes Portrush resident Mark Ashton's work and commitment as an activist for the advancement of LGBTQ+ rights and worker's rights, especially coal miners during the Coal Miner's strike of 1984/1985, recognises the importance of commemorating all those from our Council area who have fought for the rights of others, and calls for the immediate allocation of funds and identification of a suitable site, to take place in consultation with family and LGBTQ+ groups, for a suitable memorial to Mark Ashton within the Council area.'*

2.1 Following the adoption of Council's Memorial Policy Framework in 2024, two applications were submitted requesting the installation of a memorial to Mark Ashton, an internationally recognised LGBTQIA+ activist, co-founder of Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners, and a native of Portrush who died in 1987. The request to commemorate Mr Ashton has been supported by:

- A public petition containing 28,972 signatures, and
- A Notice of Motion agreed by Council, subject to the outcome of an application.

## 3.0 Proposals

3.1 In accordance with Council's *Public Memorials: A Policy Framework*, applications of this nature must be assessed against:

- Formal criteria and scoring matrix,
- Section 75 Equality and Good Relations duties, and
- The principles of consistency, transparency, proportionality, and good governance.

3.2 The Policy explicitly provides that, as an alternative to a structural public memorial, Council may consider a public commemorative name, including plaques.

Two applications have therefore been assessed:

3.2.1. **Option 1:** Town Hall Plaque (Public Commemorative Name / Marker) – located within the main hall, with the following wording *'In Memory of Mark Ashton (1960—1987) Political Activist, Humanitarian, and Co-Founder of Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners (LGSM) Born in Oldham, Raised in Portrush "One community should give solidarity to another."*

3.2.2. **Option 2:** Mural and creation of garden within Antrim Gardens - Small garden containing a mural within the gardens. *'Mark Ashton was a British LGBTQ+ rights activist and co-founder of the Lesbian and Gays Support the Miners (LGSM) group, which played a key role in uniting LGBTQ+ activists and striking miners during the 1984–85 UK miners' strike.'*

3.3 An assessment of both options is provided in **Annex A**.

#### **4.0 Summary of Assessment Outcome**

Both options were assessed by the Memorial Advisory Group against Council's policy framework, including the formal scoring matrix, equality and good relations considerations, and financial and operational implications.

4.1. The assessment concluded that:

4.1.1. **Option 1** (Town Hall Plaque) demonstrates strong alignment with policy, including clear connection to place, evidence of family and community engagement and support, proportional design, minimal financial implications, and low risk in terms of equality and good relations.

4.1.2. **Option 2** (Antrim Gardens Memorial), while a valid proposal in principle, presents a number of challenges relating to site-specific connection, design suitability and long-term maintenance.

4.1.3. The scoring matrix reflects this assessment, with option 1 scoring 93, and option 2 scoring 65.

4.1.4. Equality Duty - In line with Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and Council policy, the preferred option has been screened out for a full Equality Impact Assessment.

#### **5.0 Conclusion**

5.1 Both options provide a means of commemorating Mark Ashton and recognising his connection to Portrush. However, having regard to:

- The Public Memorials: A Policy Framework,
- The outcomes of the criteria and scoring matrix,
- Equality and Good Relations considerations, and
- Financial and operational implications,

Council's Memorial Advisory Group have considered both applications and recommends Option 1 (Town Hall Plaque) as the most proportionate, policy compliant, and deliverable option for consideration by the Leisure & Development Committee.

#### **6.0 Recommendation**

It is recommended that Leisure & Development Committee approve the installation of a commemorative plaque for Mr Mark Ashton within Portrush Town Hall as laid out within section 3.2.1. of this report and that the application is presented to Land & Property Committee for consideration.

## **Annex A – Project assessments for Mark Ashton Memorial**

### **A1. Option 1: Town Hall Plaque (Public Commemorative Name)**

This option proposes the installation of a commemorative plaque within Portrush Town Hall.

#### **Policy Compliance**

This option is aligned with Council's Public Memorials: A Policy Framework, specifically:

- Policy Section 2 – provision for public commemorative names as an alternative to structural memorials;
- Application and scoring framework for commemorative naming of Council-owned buildings or spaces;
- Section 75 duties, through proportionate, contextual commemoration within an existing civic space.

#### **Assessment Summary**

- **Connection to location:** Mark Ashton lived in Portrush and participated in events within Portrush Town Hall and was an avid supporter of the arts.
- **Justification:** Evidence includes 28,972 petition signatures, family endorsement, and significant digital engagement (6,234 views, 518 likes, 86 comments, 45 shares).
- **Time elapsed:** Over 35 years since death.
- **Design and scale:** Proportionate and non-intrusive.
- **Funding and maintenance:** External funding confirmed; minimal installation and ongoing maintenance costs
- **Ownership and maintenance:** Council ownership.
- **Equality and Good Relations:** Low risk due to scale and setting.
- **Public education:** Can support wider heritage initiatives.

**Scoring Outcome: 93**

### **A2. Option 2: Memorial Installation within Antrim Gardens (Structural Public Memorial)**

This option proposes a mural and memorial garden within Antrim Gardens.

#### **Policy Considerations**

- Site-specific connection
- Design appropriateness
- Maintenance and cost
- Good relations sensitivities

#### **Assessment Summary**

- **Connection to location:** Mark Ashton lived in Portrush, however no direct historic link identified with specific site.
- **Design and scale:** Requires further development.
- **Funding and maintenance:** Funding sources to be confirmed; long term maintenance and lifecycle costs attributed to council
- **Ownership:** Council ownership- post construction
- **Consultation:** Strong petition support; further engagement possible.
- **Equality and Good Relations:** Higher risk due to prominence.

**Scoring Outcome: 65**