

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Corporate Plan 2015-19

CORPORATE PLAN 2015-2019

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Introduction

In 2014, the people of Ards and North Down elected 40 councillors to represent them in their new Borough. On 1 April 2015 the new Council for Ards and North Down was established, serving a population of 157,000 over 228 square miles.

We have an annual operating budget of approximately £46 million and a workforce of almost 1,000, delivering a range of services to local residents. These include refuse collection and disposal, street cleaning, recycling, community development, economic development, environmental health, building control, leisure services, parks and play areas, arts and tourism.

We have new powers including planning, off-street parking and responsibility for Donaghadee Harbour. From 2016, we will also have responsibility for enhanced economic, physical and social regeneration.

Community planning is a further new power that will have a significant impact upon how we engage with our residents and empower them to help us make decisions for the new Borough.

This plan, which covers the first four years of the Council, outlines our purpose, priorities and objectives. It describes our ambitions for how local services will be delivered more efficiently and effectively for everyone. It is supported by detailed operational plans and will regularly be reviewed through our performance management processes.

We recognise the many achievements of our two legacy councils (North Down Borough Council and Ards Borough Council) and are proud to build on what has been delivered to date. We believe our new, enlarged Borough has the potential to be the best place to live, work, visit and invest in Northern Ireland and with the new powers we have received we have increased ambition to realise this goal.

We are interested to hear your feedback on the plan and any ways in which you would like to engage with us.

Stephen Reid, Chief Executive

Alderman Alan Graham, Mayor 2015-16

Our area

➤ **AND is growing: our population is predicted to reach 163,300 by 2023.**

Ards and North Down (AND) has a population of 157,000, (8.6% of the Northern Ireland total) and is still showing growth. It comprises a unique mix of urban and rural communities. The largest towns, in order of size, are Bangor (60,000), Newtownards (28,000), Holywood, Comber and Donaghadee and each is located in the north of the borough.

The remainder of the population lives mainly in 19 smaller villages – Balloo, Ballygowan, Ballyhalbert, Ballywalter, Carrowdore, Conlig, Cloughey, Crawfordsburn, Greyabbey, Groomsport, Helens Bay, Killinchy, Kircubbin, Lisbane, Millisle, Portaferry, Portavogie, Seahill and Whiterock.

80% of residents live in the northern 25% of our borough. Rural isolation is experienced by some communities.

➤ **AND has around 115 miles of coastline: one of the longest in Northern Ireland**

Our borough is bounded by the shores of Belfast Lough to the north and the Irish Sea to the east. Strangford Lough, with its reputed 365 islands, provides the coastline to the west of the area and creates the Ards Peninsula to the east.

Strangford Lough is designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Special Scientific Interest and a Marine Nature Reserve. It is one of the Northern Ireland Tourist Board's ten key visitor destinations.

The special environment of Strangford Lough, with its unique habitat for birds and sanctuary for wildlife, has created the optimum location for Exploris in Portaferry (Northern Ireland's only Aquarium) and the Wildfowl and Wetlands Centre at Castle Espie (Comber).

The coastal path network is used daily by residents and visitors for recreation and to access the many coastal towns and villages along our peninsula. Bangor is home to the island of Ireland's largest marina with space for 600 boats.

Our borough offers a superb environment for the development of sailing and water sports.

➤ **AND has a rich heritage: Fair fa' ye**

The area has a strong link to early Christian heritage through St Columbanus and Bangor Abbey, Nendrum Monastery and Movilla Abbey. It is part of the legend of St Patrick. Our built heritage extends to many medieval tower houses and the Cistercian Grey Abbey. The National Trust House and Gardens at Mount Stewart are also exemplary.

The area experienced significant change during the 17th century Plantation of Ulster, when there was a large influx of migrants from, in particular, Scotland. The effect of this period is still very evident today in the place names, surnames, dialect and a strong sense of an Ulster Scots culture.

➤ **AND benefits from an annual visitor spend of £48 million**

Tourism is a mainstay of the local economy and continues to flourish; testament to the excellent promotional work that has been undertaken in recent years. There are more than 343,000 overnight visits annually, contributing £48M to the area.

Our main attractions are Pickie Fun Park in Bangor, Mount Stewart House and Gardens, three Country Parks (Crawfordsburn, Scrabo and Redburn), the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum at Cultra, Exploris at Portaferry, Scrabo Tower and a variety of heritage and cultural sites.

The Borough has a strong reputation for hosting major events attractive to both residents and visitors. These include the Circuit of Ireland Rally, Aspects Literary Festival, the Creative Peninsula festival, the Open House Festival, Portaferry Gala Week, Comber Potato Festival and the Hollywood May Day celebrations.

The developing agri-food sector has created more local employment and a thriving restaurant scene resulting in the area becoming a desirable 'food-tourism' destination.

➤ **AND unemployment rate is below the Northern Ireland average**

68% of our population is economically active compared to the average of 66% across Northern Ireland. The public sector provides employment for 36% of the workforce, with the Council and Central Government departments alone employing around 1,500 people. The hospitality and service sectors provide 27% of jobs, whilst the retail and wholesale sector provides 22%. Manufacturing and construction makes up 10% of the workforce.

There are more people employed in professional and managerial sectors than the Northern Ireland average.

Retail continues to be important to the local economy. Newtownards, Bangor and Holywood offer quality mixed retail, with high street names trading alongside independent and family-owned businesses. However, like many town centres across the UK, each is feeling the impact of the recent recession.

There has been a decline in traditional industries such as the clothing and textile sector. However, the area's response has been to build a diverse economy in areas such as added-value food and engineering. This is demonstrated by Comber Potatoes now being designated among the few products from Northern Ireland to have Protected Geographical Indication status under European law.

➤ **AND has a higher level of degree qualified residents than anywhere else in Northern Ireland**

There is a higher than average number of people gaining qualifications in secondary and tertiary education, with 27% having a degree as compared to the Northern Ireland average of 24%. Only 36% of people have no or low qualifications (41% across Northern Ireland).

➤ **AND is becoming increasingly connected with free WiFi in all five town centres**

There is good connectivity in the northern part of the Borough, with road and rail connections between Belfast and Bangor / Holywood, Newtownards and Comber. The Belfast City Airport and Sea Port are easily accessible. However, there is heavy commuter traffic along the main routes with more than 32,000 vehicle journeys per day as residents travel into Belfast for employment and education.

There is currently free town centre WiFi provision in Bangor, Newtownards, Comber, Donaghadee and Holywood. This is an added attraction for visitors and businesses.

➤ **AND's average house price is £176,000 compared to £135,000 across Northern Ireland.**

The area has long been recognised as a very desirable place to live, with many superb amenities – schools, leisure and sports facilities, good transport links, quality infrastructure. It is one of the least deprived areas in Northern Ireland, ranking 10 out of the 11 new Council areas. However there are five Wards ranked between 150th and 168th most deprived in Northern Ireland; these are in Newtownards and the Ards Peninsula.

➤ **In AND females will live 0.5 years and males 1.4 years longer than the Northern Ireland average**

One of the primary challenges facing us from a social perspective comes from our aging population and how we can support health and wellbeing. Since 2001, there has been a 6.6% decrease in the number of people under the age of 16, while there has been marked increase of 40% in the number of people aged over 65 years. The borough has a higher percentage of residents over the age of 40 than the Northern Ireland average, yet a lower percentage under the age of 40 years.

The key facts in respect of the health of those living in the area are:

- 20% have a long term health problem or disability compared to 21% across Northern Ireland.
- 81% enjoy good or very good health compared to 80% across Northern Ireland

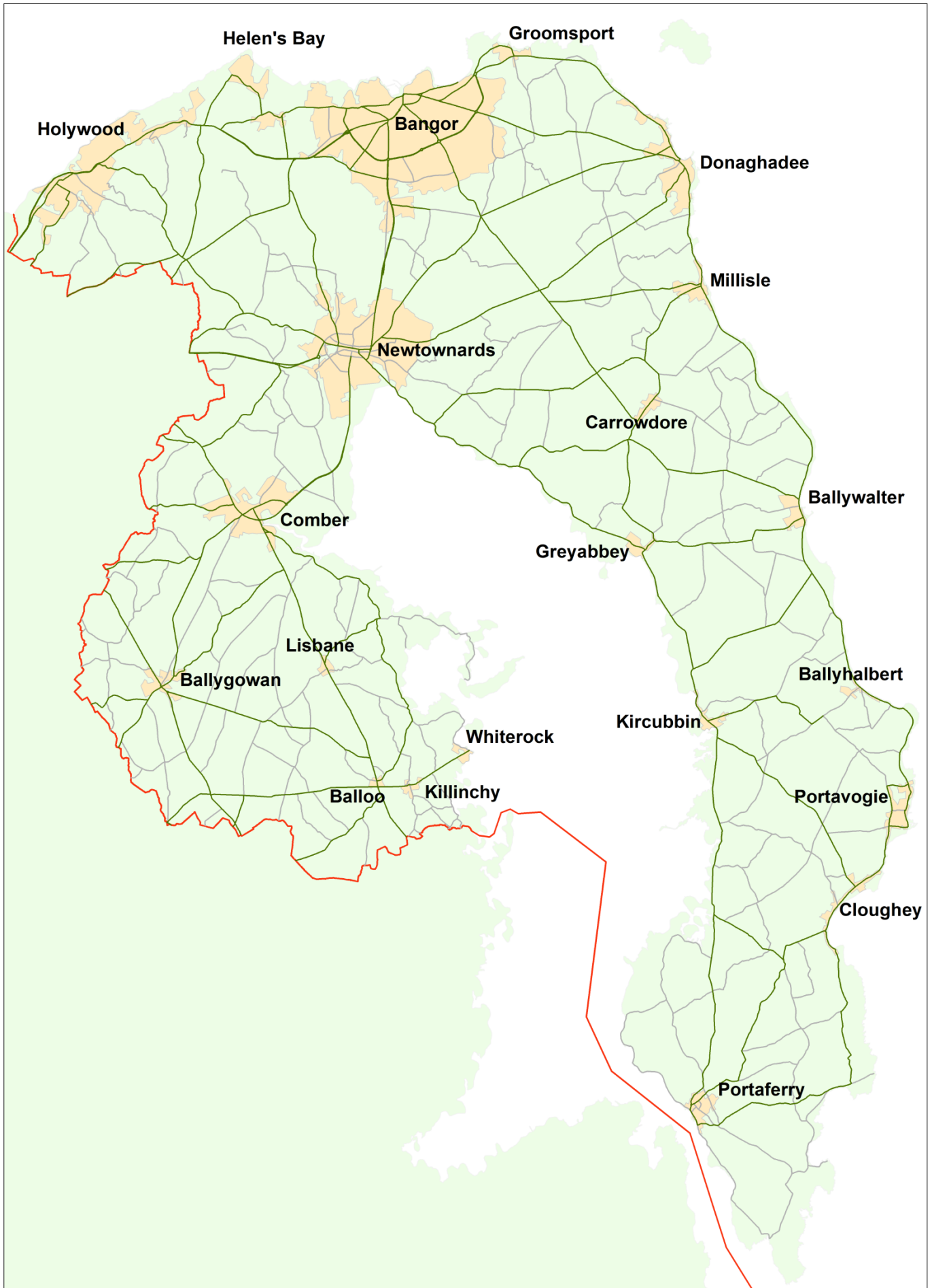
In summary:

Ards and North Down is a place where there is an older but healthier population and where you will live longer.

By living here you are likely to be better educated and to have a job but will have to pay more to rent/own your own home. You may have to commute to Belfast for your work.

It is less likely you will live in a deprived area and you will be able to enjoy superb facilities and assets in your neighbourhood.

Ards and North Down Borough



Our Purpose

Our purpose is to make Ards and North Down the best place to live, work, visit and invest.

Our Vision

Our vision is that Ards and North Down will be a place to be proud of which is more prosperous, vibrant, healthy, sustainable and where people enjoy an excellent quality of life.

Our objectives

Our objectives are concerned with both external impact and organisational development. We have grouped our external objectives under three headings – people, place and prosperity. Delivery upon these will be supported by inward looking objectives concerned with performance excellence.



Each objective has key performance measures attached that will allow us to measure success. Full details of these will be published in our annual performance improvement plans but the following narrative gives a high level view of our aspirations under each objective.

PEOPLE

➤ **Develop more engaged, empowered and integrated communities**

We will support local communities to become more cohesive, sustainable and vibrant; helping them to help themselves.

Success measures will include: the delivery of a community plan for the borough; the number of active community based groups; people engaging in community volunteering.

➤ **Foster a United Community, based on equality of opportunity, the desirability of good relations and reconciliation**

We will endeavour to build a community which is strengthened by its diversity, where cultural expression is celebrated and embraced and where everyone can live, learn, work and socialise together, free from prejudice, hate and intolerance.

Success measures will include: increased engagement, meeting with community influencers and delivery of projects, intergenerational works and partnership work with other agencies.

➤ **Improve health, wellbeing and promote active lifestyles**

We will provide opportunities for residents to enjoy an active lifestyle and work to reduce social deprivation and inequality.

Success measures will include: people getting involved in health and wellbeing programmes, levels of participation and satisfaction in our leisure facilities; the perception of our residents of their quality of life.

➤ **Increase pride in the borough**

We will ensure our residents are engaged and empowered to help shape the future of our borough.

Success measures will include: the number of people choosing to live in Ards and North Down; the level of contribution to Council surveys, initiatives and projects; the proportion of our residents who feel proud to live in the Borough.



People

Ensuring we engage with, and support, all local communities to deliver real social benefits.

PLACE

➤ **Promote a clean, green, healthy, safe and sustainable environment**

We will take time to understand the needs of all parts of the borough and to ensure local neighbourhoods are attractive and vibrant places, where everyone feels welcome and safe.

Success measures will include: levels of anti-social behaviour and crime; success in environmental award schemes; waste and recycling levels; the number of residents perceiving the borough to be clean and attractive; the proportion of residents who feel safe.

➤ **Invest in and promote the borough's rich cultural heritage and environment**

We will strive to ensure residents' benefit from a well-planned and designed borough with attractive local environments.

Success measures will include: publishing a new local development plan for the borough; supporting continued investment in local attractions; the number of visitors.

➤ **Invest in and promote facilities and outdoor spaces**

We will make the borough an attractive place to live/visit through a variety of recreational and sporting facilities and events.

Success measures will include: the amount of capital investment in facilities in all parts of the borough; securing/maintaining awards eg 'best kept', 'Britain in Bloom' 'Green Flag'.

➤ **Enhance our towns, villages and coastlines**

We will enhance all our local neighbourhoods in order to support services for individuals, community groups and businesses.

Success measures will include: the number of completed public realm schemes; publishing village plans for all areas; the number of official designations for our Borough, towns and villages; the efficiency and effectiveness of our planning service.

Place

Ensuring we make the very best of the natural, cultural and environmental assets in our borough.

PROSPERITY

➤ **Attract and promote economic investment**

We will strive to make the borough an attractive place in which to invest and do business.

Success measures will include: the level of inward investment and the level of the business rates base.

➤ **Support business start-up, development and growth**

We will provide an environment when entrepreneurs can flourish and young people are able to access training and employment.

Success measures will include: the number of new business start-ups; the number of jobs created or supported; the number of business incubator hubs; the level of work experience opportunities for young people.

➤ **Enhance the visitor experience to increase visitor spend**

We will promote the cultural, recreational, sporting and event offering in the borough to attract visitors.

Success measures will include: the development of distinctive place branding for all five towns; visitor numbers; visitor spend.

➤ **Develop a thriving rural economy**

We will take time to understand and address the needs of each individual village and support learning and engagement between villages.

Success measures will include: the level of employment in rural areas; the number of jobs created or supported; effective lobbying for improved digital infrastructure in rural areas; the number of businesses and projects supported in rural areas.

Prosperity

Ensuring the borough's towns and rural localities are prosperous, vibrant and attractive.

Performance: Ensuring we take time to understand our customer's need and manage our people, money and assets effectively so we can deliver on our objectives for the borough.

➤ **Engage, communicate and listen to our residents and customers**

We will take time to determine our customers wants and needs and listen and respond to their feedback.

Success measures will include: the level of customer satisfaction; the number of unqualified audits; resolution of complaints without recourse to the ombudsman.

➤ **Be financially responsible**

We will work to realise savings while delivering excellent services and facilities.

Success measures will include: annual rate increases versus the rate of inflation; percentage of residents considering the Council provides value for money; performance against operating budget.

➤ **Maximise the potential of our staff to deliver outcomes**

We will invest in our people to ensure we have a skilled, adaptable and motivated workforce.

Success measures will include: securing and maintaining an Investors in People award; staff turnover; staff attendance; percentage of staff operating to personal development plans; health and safety compliance.

➤ **Deliver high quality customer focussed services**

We will work to ensure our services meet our customer's needs.

Success measures will include: level of customer satisfaction; number of quality awards secured; the level of performance against targets.

➤ **Establish and grow productive partnerships**

We will develop and grow effective partnerships that deliver better social, economic and environmental outcomes for the borough.

Success measures will include: the number of collaborative funding applications made; the number of successfully developed and effective partnerships; the number of partnership programmes delivered to the community.

Delivering the plan

This document sets out the overall strategic direction for the council in the 2015-19 period. This plan is underpinned by a range of strategic and operational plans, which set out in more detail how our vision and priorities will be delivered. These plans contain specific targets, which are allocated to service units to deliver.

Progress against targets will be monitored and reviewed regularly through the council's performance management framework.

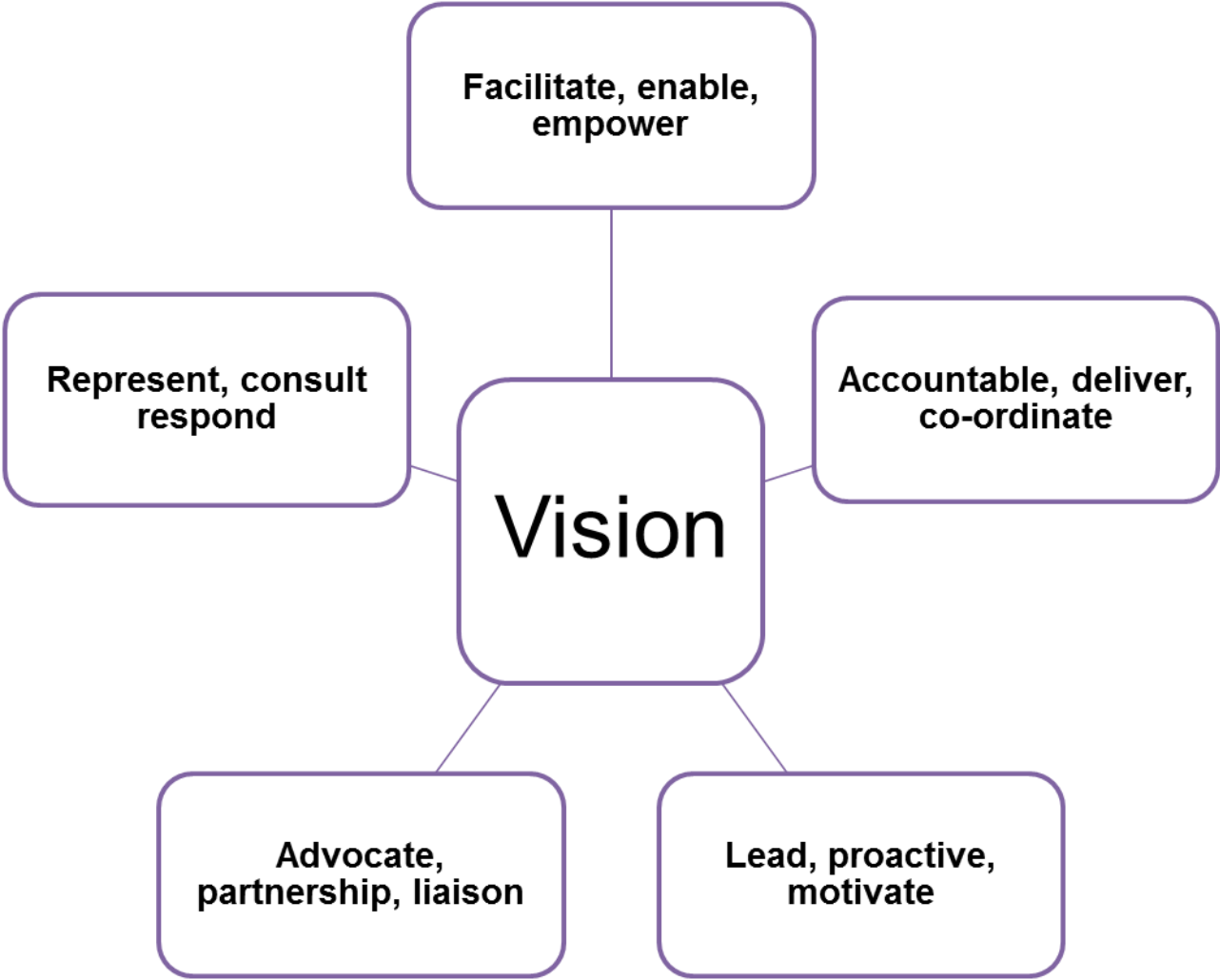
Overall progress on delivering the corporate plan will be reported to the council on a regular basis and an annual performance review will be published online at ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

This corporate plan 2015-19 sits alongside the council's budgets/financial strategy. These documents ensure that resources are available for the delivery of the plan.

The corporate plan 2015-19 also links closely to the council's risk management strategy and corporate risk register. The Council has a comprehensive approach to risk management that ensures that all strategic risks are appropriately identified, managed and mitigated against.

A Community plan and local development plan for the borough will be progressed throughout 2015/16 with refinements to the Corporate plan where necessary.

Strategic Role of the Council



Our Core Values

We are an organisation that people are proud to work for and which is passionate about the quality of its service delivery.

Our core values that underpin all that we say and do are **'PRIDE'**

Our core values – these drive how we will all work and act as teams and employees of the council.

Taken together these summarise what we promise to do and be as a council over the next four years for the city and its residents.

- **Progression** – We will be proactive, ambitious, innovative, forward thinking and outward looking.
- **Respect** – We will treat everyone in a fair and equitable manner, respecting diversity and each other's roles.
- **Integrity** – We will always be open, honest, transparent, trustworthy and accountable in our business relationships.
- **Delivery** – We will ensure a “can do” attitude, being passionate about achieving results, performance driven and outcome focussed.
- **Excellence** – We will strive to deliver continuously improving and excellent quality services whilst ensuring value for money.