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LOCAL GOVERNMENT
AWARDS

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Northern Ireland Local Government Awards



The Northern Ireland Local Government Awards partners welcome you to the 2009 Awards Ceremony

18 February 2010,
The Slieve Donard Hotel, Newcastle



The Northern Ireland Local Government Awards showcase the best examples of service provision, new initiatives and personal commitment from councillors and officers. The awards show public recognition while awarding excellence in front line local government public services.

The judging panels look for evidence of best practice, innovation and service improvement while providing better outcomes for the service users. With almost 70 submissions for just 10 awards, judges this year had a tough job deciding the list of finalists. This goes to show that councils across Northern Ireland are doing us all proud by going the extra mile to deliver services to citizens and communities.



2010 is the second year of the awards and building on the momentum of last year two new categories and two new partners have been introduced bringing the number of categories to ten.

A special thank you to our event sponsors, The Municipal Journal, Redbox Media and Scotshield.



The categories are designed to acknowledge innovation, individual commitment and to highlight the best working practices, while providing opportunities for those working within local government, a chance to step forward and shine.

Congratulations to all finalists.



Best Local Authority Service Team

Sponsored by APSE



Belfast City Council *Community Safety*

Belfast City Council's Community Safety Team was established in 2004 with only 3 staff. Since this time the team has developed and delivered over 40 initiatives across the city including ground breaking services such as the first alleygating and community safety warden schemes in Northern Ireland. Due to its success and reputation the team has since grown to over 40 staff and continues to deliver pioneering work to neighbourhoods across Belfast. The community safety team is forerunner in Northern Ireland and has pioneered several models of good practice – many of which have been replicated elsewhere in Northern Ireland and GB. As a result of its hard work and dedication the team has made a real and visible improvement to communities across Belfast and through working in partnership has brought about notable reductions to crime, antisocial behaviour and fear of crime.

Cookstown District Council *Ballyronan Marina*

Cookstown District Council have significantly improved service delivery and business performance at Ballyronan Marina and Caravan Site through the partnership work of specific teams from Leisure Services, Technical Services and Development Departments. These improvements have been achieved by significant investment in resources – financial and human. Council identified the Ballyronan site as having huge potential as a recreational / educational facility for both tourists and the local population. Council surveyed existing and potential users of the site and developed a plan on how to improve the services and business performance. This plan was put into place resulting in Ballyronan Marina just recently being accredited as a Royal Yachting

Association Training Centre, winning the Charles Thomson Award for Water Safety (All Ireland) and doubling income and attendance at the site over a 5 year period. Council's Leisure Services, Technical Services and Development Departments have combined to ensure that the offer at Ballyronan is now considered one of the best on Lough Neagh if not Northern Ireland.

Newtownabbey Borough Council *Zest Fitness of the Council.*

The Zest Fitness team provide exceptional customer service at the 3 Zest Fitness gyms. It will show how the team go above and beyond, providing customers with one to one attention; preparing individual exercise programmes and making visitors feel welcome. It will also show how it has used its expertise to improve events run by other teams such as Environment Services and Community Development. Inclusive meetings take place in order to disseminate good practice, come up with innovative ideas and discuss creative solutions to problems. Having taken over management of the gyms from a private provider, the team has developed Zest Fitness from a costly venture to a high income generating business unit. This has been quite a process for the staff who had to learn about the direct debit process, forms required, legalities and sales. They have created procedures which are easy to follow from a staff and customer viewpoint and significantly improved the overall income for each site. Not only is the team providing an excellent service for our customers they are also using their talents to benefit the community by raising money at charity events and providing important health advice and support for the Council at local health fairs and community events. The Zest Fitness team are leading the way in teamwork and set a great example on working together for a common goal to other teams in local government.



Change Champions in Practice

Sponsored by Local Government Staff Commission

Coleraine Borough Council

Causeway Kids Cuisine

'Causeway Kids Cuisine' is an innovative nutrition project; the first of its kind in N.Ireland funded by the Food Standards Agency which offers healthier meals to children in local restaurants across the Borough. Members from the Environmental Health team have been working in partnership with the owners, managers & chefs of 30 local restaurants to provide and actively promote healthier children's meals. The project fostered enthusiasm, passion and creativity in making new healthy options tasty & attractive to children dining in these establishments.

Other partnerships involved in the project working with the Environmental Health team include Dieticians (Northern Investing for Health Partnership) to provide support in compiling the list of healthy eating recommendations that businesses are required to implement. The Food Standards Agency are a key partner who kindly funded the project and Council have actively promoted their involvement & supported their saturated fat & salt campaigns.

There are also plans to feature the project in 2010 in Food Vision Publications & the Environmental Health News to publicise proactive initiatives delivered by the EH team at Coleraine Borough Council.

Coleraine Borough Council

Wildcats Activ8

The 'Wildcats Activ8 Club's' are aimed at young people from five to eleven years of age. The Club's ethos is to develop participants' core Physical Literacy (PL) in a fun, safe and non-competitive environment. Through effective delivery of structured sessions by vetted, appropriately qualified and local quality sports clubs' coaches, Wildcats will improve each young person's agility, balance, control, co-ordination, body movement, team skills, individual skills, confidence in sport, enjoyment of sport and the ability to adapt multi-skills to specific sports skills. In doing so it lays the foundation for a life-time of participation in sport and raise awareness about the importance of doing a minimum of 60 minutes physical activity each day.

Wildcats is now endorsed and supported by Sport NI and is one of only three sports initiatives in Northern Ireland to be awarded the London 2012 Inspire Mark.

Limavady Borough Council

Team Success and Culture Change at Roe Valley

Roe Valley Leisure Centre (RVLC) has improved significantly in the last two years, making it one of the top three leisure centres in Northern Ireland. However, this isn't a submission about gaining a high score in a Quest Assessment, but instead how a rural leisure Centre initiated cultural transformation leading to outstanding performance and excellence in service delivery. This change management journey illustrates dynamic leadership, inventive strategy and outstanding team working at its best.

Innovative HR in Practice

Sponsored by Local Government Staff Commission



Armagh City and District Council *A Muscular Approach to Managing Absence*

Armagh City and District Council introduced an Attendance Management Policy in 2002. The Council recognised that it was inevitable employees would experience periods of ill health which would prevent them from attending work. As such, the Council aspired to promote good attendance and to ensure that, as far as possible, staff absence is minimised. To this end, the Council adopts a consistent, fair, flexible and sympathetic approach to the management of attendance.

The overall goal for this strategy is to reduce absence whilst maintaining a welfare approach to attendance management. To help achieve this year on year the causes of absence are scrutinised to allow us to proactively seek new and better ways of creating a healthy workforce. We also feel that this approach deals proactively rather than reactively with absence and as a result has had a positive impact on the motivation of employees.

In 2006 the council identified musculoskeletal issues as a major factor accounting for 29% of overall absence.

In response to this the Council adapted its attendance management strategy to include a physiotherapy referral service as part of its package of occupational health services. In the first year of operation levels of absence categorised as musculoskeletal was reduced by 14%.

The council has continued to build on this strategy year on year and review absence data and adapt strategies in response to other areas of concern.

Omagh District Council *Innovative and Integrated HR*

Over the last number of years Omagh District Council (ODC) HR Department has played a key role within the organisation, delivering leading edge policies, systems and processes which enabled leaders and their teams to perform effectively, efficiently respond to change and deliver first class services.

The Council has experienced significant changes in terms of public and community expectations, increasing legislative demands, governance and environmental issues. HR has demonstrated commitment, innovation, foresight, business acumen and a blend of strategic and operational focus to support the organisation through these changes with a business-focused, integrated Strategy which could be benchmarked with the best in NI and the UK.

Their vision was all encompassing...
"All staff working together effectively in a safe, ethical and collaborative environment to deliver business objectives with both discipline and flexibility, whilst supporting the achievement of individual development aspirations of employees."



Innovative Training Initiative

Sponsored by Local Government Training Group

Ards Borough Council

Excellence Driver Training

In 2007, Ards Borough Council identified three 'drivers' which would form the focus of its work and move it from being a good organisation to an excellent one, providing excellent services. Following a series of initiatives to integrate this concept of excellence across the organisation, the Council agreed to undertake an employee-wide training programme, which would reinforce the Drivers and their associated values, and introduce cultural and behavioural change. Working with Huddersfield-based, Theatre and Development Ltd, actors were used to play out real-life scenarios, giving employees the opportunities not only to witness realistic scenes of typical encounters with customers, managers and other staff in settings they recognised, but to interact with the actors, telling them what they did well, what they shouldn't have done in a particular situation and directing them to change their behaviour so a particular scene could be re-played with a more positive outcome. Employees attended facilitated training sessions in May 2009, with overwhelmingly positive results and feedback, including:

Prior to attending the workshops, just over half (56%) of staff indicated that they understood the behaviours needed to meet the Excellence Drivers. Post-training the number was 93%.

Omagh District Council

Delta-a force to be reckoned with...

For over 30 years Omagh District Council (ODC) has remained at the forefront of developing, designing and delivering learning and development opportunities and training interventions for those most disadvantaged in the community.

ODC recognised a specific gap in provision and acted on an opportunity to bridge this through the support of EU funding. DELTA delivers an individually tailored, client-led, quality-driven, results-focused programme, embracing those furthest from the labour market, who face multiple barriers to employment. Additionally, this programme illustrates exemplary practice in joined-up working.

Lisburn City Council

Unlocking Potential...delivering excellence

"We believe Learning & Development sits at the heart of bringing the Council's core values to fruition and delivering success for the organisation" Norman Davidson, CE

Over the last seven years the Council has established an effective and structured learner-focused learning and development strategy, emphasising the development of employee's skills as central to business success. As a result, the Council has increased the core capability and unlocked high performance, creating value and significant improvements in service delivery.

Best Initiative by a Councillor

Sponsored by National Association of Councillors



Ald Anderson *Craigavon Borough Council*

Alderman Sydney Anderson is nominated for his involvement in the Public Realm scheme in Portadown. Public Realm is an environmental project relating to enhanced streetscape, lighting and furniture.

Alderman Anderson met negative publicity and public perception head on, showing exceptional leadership and determination to improve relationships with traders, selling the benefits of this local regeneration project, and transforming public opinion.

Alderman Anderson personally initiated, led and implemented a series of 14 street by street meetings to address concerns by local traders, creating a 'win-win' situation out of a potential disaster for Craigavon Borough Council.

He skillfully chaired contentious multi-agency meetings and was ultimately responsible for getting this visionary £5million project off the ground.

Cllr Curran *Down District Council* *The Dermot Curran Young Achiever Awards*

The Dermot Curran Young Achiever Awards were established in 2004 to celebrate Councillor Curran's 30-year commitment to public life (which now stands at over 35 years) and are presented annually to young people who have made an outstanding contribution to business in the Down District Council area.

Initiated by Councillor Curran, the Awards showcase young businesses and young entrepreneurs, their contribution to the development of the District, while simultaneously promoting Down District as a

positive place for business location and business development.

The Awards reflect the Council's role as the local coordinator of economic development, through the sponsorship of Awards by a range of agencies involved as partners in enterprise and economic development support.

The Awards emphasise the importance the Council places in encouraging local enterprise, and also provides direct positive spin-off for the winning businesses, as detailed in the Supplementary Evidence section (see section 5.)

Ald Moutray *Craigavon Borough Council*

The worldwide 'Credit Crunch' crisis has caused the worst unemployment for almost a generation. Craigavon Borough Council area has not escaped the harsh effects of this recession.

In the later part of 2008 and into 2009, thousands of Craigavon constituents found themselves in unemployment.

Alderman Stephen Moutray MLA initiated a programme to practically address the problems facing both Craigavon's jobseekers and businesses.

Liaising with other complementary agencies, such as Department for Employment & Learning, Southern Regional College, local Enterprise Agencies and employers, Alderman Moutray led the team to discuss ways of working collaboratively and to show the wider community that Craigavon Council was actively pursuing solutions to an escalating problem.



Best Joint Initiative Between Councils

Sponsored by SOLACE

Blackwater Regional Partnership *(Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough Council, Armagh City & District Council, Monaghan County Council)*

Blackwater Regional Partnership has been developing cross border relationships from its outset in 1994. This has ranged from “grass roots” community development, inter statutory co-operation, cross border business development and integrated tourism initiatives which the Councils recognised were best addressed by adopting a partnership approach. In these three communities large and small, rural and urban; issues are being addressed in an interconnected manner. The partnership demonstrates how innovative strategies can produce communities that are more environmentally sound, culturally aware, economically prosperous and socially equitable.

The Partnership has been successful in securing over €3 million of EU funding, and has involved a wide range of stakeholders in their delivery, particularly from the community and voluntary sector.

From the beginning BRP has been a collaborative partnership effort. The constant communication and interaction between communities, voluntary groups and local and central government has been vital in getting us to where we are today.

Café Culture – Good Relations Conference, September 2009 *(Coleraine Borough Council, Derry City Council, Ballymoney Borough Council, Limavady Borough Council, Magherafelt District Council and Moyle District Council supported by OFMDFM)*

Groups and individuals from a wide range of backgrounds came together to discuss issues pertinent to the development of good community relations at an innovative conference held in September 2009. The 2009 project was

a conference with a difference. ‘Café Culture’ aimed to stimulate conversations among people from diverse backgrounds on a range of issues. The project was to produce a relaxed café style ambience to encourage conversations between individuals from a variety of cultural, racial and political perspectives.

The event allowed those taking part to engage in a relaxed manner with individuals and groups dealing with challenging community relations issues from various community backgrounds. This helped to engender a greater understanding between groups and individuals who rarely get the chance to meet in an informal setting. Those attending ‘Café Culture’ benefited from a unique opportunity to build an understanding and respect for the differing viewpoints which exist within the various communities across the participating council areas.

East Border Region Tourism Partnership *(Ards, Armagh City & District, Banbridge, Craigavon, Down, Louth, Meath, North Down, Monaghan and Newry and Mourne Councils)*

In 1999 East Border Region Ltd (EBR Ltd) and its counterparts in the ICBAN and North West Cross Border Region launched the Border Corridor Strategy which was influential in shaping the Interreg IIIA programme. EBR Ltd adopted a thematic approach to cross border economic development and as a result six thematic Working Groups were developed, one of the key groups which developed was the EBRTTP Working Group. The EBRTTP has been highly successful in drawing down significant levels of European funds which have been utilized to improve the tourism product development within the East Border Region and subsequently has been recognized and acknowledged on a number of occasions for the quality and impact of the work undertaken on a cross border partnership basis.

Employee of the Year

Sponsored by William Johnston Memorial Trust



Ciara Lowe

Newry and Mourne District Council

Contribution to District Council in terms of:

- Provision for people with physical disabilities.
- Provision for people with learning disabilities.

Contribution to the Voluntary Sector in the District with special reference to:

- Provision for people with physical disabilities.
- Provision for people with learning disabilities.

Ian Beaney

North Down Borough Council

North Down Borough Council's Grounds Maintenance Section is responsible for the management and maintenance of a number of public spaces including parkland, woodland and most recently the Council's flagship Walled Garden in Castle Park, Bangor. As such it is a very public facing Section, whose work is open to scrutiny from residents and visitors alike.

Under the leadership of the Grounds Maintenance Manager, Ian Beaney, the Section has gone from strength to strength in recent years; delivering a superb open space service to the Borough, demonstrating an innovative approach to all horticultural pursuits and increasing engagement with ratepayers via an effective programme of public education. The Council regularly receives compliments on the management of its outdoor spaces and in 2009 has received an unprecedented level of success at local and national horticultural awards schemes.

Much of this has been achieved thanks to the vision, expertise and dedication of Ian Beaney, who is the subject of this award submission.

Katrina McGuire

Lisburn City Council

This submission focuses on Katrina McGuire as nominee for Employee of the Year. It describes how Katrina has used her personal attributes and knowledge to influence the culture of health and safety in Lisburn City Council and how her ambition is forming and expanding the role to include Environmental Management.

Best Sustainable Development Initiative **Sponsored by Northern Ireland Local Government Association**



Belfast City Council

Lord Mayor's Big Clean Up

The Lord Mayor's Big Cleanup is the first project where the council looked at the environment with an inter-generational slant. The project got young and old involved in looking after their local environment and helping to clean up their community. Councillor Hartley wanted young people to put the pride back into their own areas and look to the past for tips on how they can keep their communities litter-free.

One of the main achievements of this project was an average of 32% improvement in school's local area after their cleanup, and the winning school achieved an impressive 67% improvement. The project was deemed so successful that we have decided to invest in an exhibition for Belfast City Hall to highlight cleansing practices in the past and what we can learn for the future.

Cookstown District Council

Willow Biomass Project

Cookstown Swimming Pool opened its doors to the public on 29th November 1976 and following an extension and refurbishment opened as a Leisure Centre in 1987. In 2003 there were no public buildings in Northern Ireland with a biomass heating system installed. This innovative project examined the possibility of heating a large public building with willow biomass fuel at a time when as well as there being no similar installations in NI and there was no SRC willow being grown in NI to use as a fuel. This project involved the Council working with many partners in the installation of the 500kW boiler and in the planting of SRC willow locally to use as a fuel. The new boiler complements the old heating system and was designed to work alongside the oil boilers through the winter and

provide the main heating in the summer. The boiler now provides the base load of heat into Cookstown Leisure Center using SRC willow chip produced locally (within 5 miles of the Leisure Centre). In using a local fuel supply, farmers within the district have been able to invest in new technology to assist with the production of a quality chip and are now providing a fuel from a sustainable source with security of supply.

Larne Borough Council

Sustainable Living Magazine

"Sustainable Living" is Northern Ireland's first, and currently only, Council produced magazine dedicated to promoting sustainable living among householders.

This innovative and award-winning project has been received positively by both the public and Elected Members. Survey work has indicated that 45% of householders have made small lifestyle changes as a result of reading the magazine and this is supported by the Council's improving recycling rate, which continually exceeds targets.

The magazine also provides the Council with the opportunity to engage positively with local businesses, environmental groups and interested individuals. This partnership approach has been very successful with the Council fulfilling its civic leadership role.

Larne Borough Council is committed to produce an annual publication promoting sustainable living but also plans to build on its success with a number of new and challenging environmental targets detailed within this submission.



Best Improvement Project

Sponsored by Northern Ireland Local Government Association

Belfast City Council

Building Control Partnership

Working in a joint up government partnership with Land and Property Service (LPS), Belfast Building Control Service (BCS) now provide key property data on new and altered properties when the property is fit for occupation. This has improved valuation and rating services by ensuring efficient and equitable billing for ratepayers and significant time and cost savings. It has also brought about other potential efficiencies between LPS and BCC such as identifying vacant properties and the improved allocation of Resource Grant for Local Authorities which are being considered and implemented.

North Down Borough Council

Bangor Castle Walled Garden

North Down Borough Council (NDBC) opened Bangor Castle Walled Garden, a restoration of the original Victorian garden created by the Ward Family in the 1840s, to the public for the first time in May 2009. This exciting improvement project was completed over 18 months and represented an investment of £1M.

The Walled Garden came into Council ownership in 1941. At that time it was already in decline and the site was never opened to the public, instead being used to support NDBC's Grounds Maintenance Section to raise plants from seeds and cuttings and as a store for gardening materials.

Over time and with changes in production methods these uses were no longer needed and NDBC took the decision to restore and improve the site in order to celebrate its significant heritage and provide a new area of open space for ratepayers to enjoy.

Locals, visitors, school children, community groups, gardening enthusiasts, wedding parties and many more have visited the Garden during its first six months of opening and the positive feedback has been overwhelming. This project has captured the imagination of people in the North Down area beyond any other introduced by NDBC in recent years.

Belfast City Council

Ulster Hall Redevelopment

Belfast's Ulster Hall, almost 150 years after its opening, had in recent years become somewhat rundown and in need of new technical and front of house facilities to meet the demands of today's customers.

Following internal reviews and public consultation Belfast City Council identified key objectives for the redevelopment of the Hall. These focused on improving both the physical environment and the service provided by the Hall. Central to securing funding for the work was a focus on the Hall's heritage and long association with both classical and rock music.

The success of the Hall since its reopening in March 2009 has been considerable, the venue quickly retaking its place in Belfast's entertainment scene and developing a new profile in the business sector.

Women in Local Councils Award

Sponsored by Women's Development Steering Group

Ards Borough Council / North Down Borough Council

Visible Women

Working together to promote gender equality has been an exciting and worthwhile experience for North Down (NDBC) and Ards (ABC) Borough Councils.

Visible Women has become a hugely popular event in the local calendar and although offering 250 places is over subscribed every year. The event aims to inspire women, whether in their personal or professional lives, to take a leading role in public life and make a contribution to private, public and voluntary/community sector organisations. Feedback from attendees shows that the event is very much meeting its aim. The Visible Women concept has proven so popular that other local authorities in Northern Ireland have adopted it. Without the partnership approach taken, Visible Women would not be the hugely successful event that it has become and could not deliver the same benefits to women across the North Down and Ards community.

Craigavon Borough Council

Olga Murtagh

This application is made in recognition of Ms Olga Murtagh's 20 years service to Local Government in Northern Ireland. She has recently made a significant impact as Director of Development in Craigavon Borough Council. Specific achievements include the publication of the Development Department Integrated Development Framework 2009-2011, hosting a major Regeneration Conference in conjunction with British Urban Regeneration Association and launching a website which has won an All Ireland award. The team here in Craigavon would like to see Olga gain an official recognition for her hard work, vision and excellent management and leadership skills.

Derry City Council

Mainstreaming Gender Equality - we've made a difference!

This submission is based on presenting evidence of clear cultural change within Derry City Council which has resulted in significant positive changes to the participation of women in community, political and managerial decision-making, in recruitment and training activity and in helping to shape the future of local government.

In addition, the proactive approach to the development of women has led not only to changes within the Council, but also to the capacity and confidence of women in the local community.

Gender mainstreaming, through all our processes, including Equality Impact Assessments, is not an aspiration but is delivered through a range of initiatives, supported by positive attitudes from the perspective of developing women in the community the "Women of the Year Awards" 2009, acknowledged the pivotal role women play in shaping our society and awards were made under eleven categories.

Furthermore, 108 women from communities across the city attended the 'Women in Post Conflict Society' conference which was organised by Derry City Council.

