



27 November 2020

Committee Chair: Alderman P Brett

Committee Vice-Chair: Councillor N Kelly

Committee Members: Aldermen - F Agnew, M Cosgrove and P Michael
Councillors - H Cushinan, S Flanagan, R Foster, P Hamill,
L Irwin, V McAuley, N Ramsay, S Ross, M Stewart and R Wilson

Dear Member

MEETING OF THE POLICY & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

A remote meeting of the Policy & Governance Committee will be held in The **Chamber, Mossley Mill on Wednesday 2 December 2020 at 6.30pm.**

All Members are requested to attend the meeting via "Zoom".

To ensure social distancing it is only possible to facilitate 11 Members in the Council Chamber. Priority admission will be given to Committee Members on a first come, first served basis. This does not affect the rights of any Member participating in the meeting.

You are requested to attend.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jacqui Dixon".

Jacqui Dixon, BSc MBA
Chief Executive, Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council

For any queries please contact Member Services:

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2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

3 ITEMS FOR DECISION

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- 3.2 NILGA Consultation –Transformation and Driving Practical Change in Local Government
- 3.3 Land Abandoned by the Department – Castle Lodge, Randalstown
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- 4.2 Agency Staff
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- 4.4 Cemetery Burial Capacity
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REPORT ON BUSINESS TO BE CONSIDERED AT THE POLICY AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE MEETING ON WEDNESDAY 2 DECEMBER 2020

3. ITEMS FOR DECISION

3.1 FI/AUD/79 RAISING CONCERNS POLICY

Members are advised that in June 2020, the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) released their Raising Concerns: A Good Practice Guide for Northern Ireland Public Sector. This guide was circulated to the Corporate Leadership Team and the Audit Committee for information.

Officers have undertaken a review of this guidance and considered its implications for the Council's Whistleblowing Policy that has been in place since April 2015.

As a result, a new Raising Concerns Policy (**enclosed**) has been developed, aligning to the new guidance, and will replace the Whistleblowing Policy. The new Policy has been reviewed and approved by the Corporate Leadership Team.

The main notable difference between the outgoing Whistleblowing Policy and the new Raising Concerns Policy is the change in terminology. 'Whistleblowing' has been replaced with 'raising concerns' in an attempt to soften the language used and to promote a culture of raising concerns as part of normal business. In addition, the new Policy also focuses on providing a formal route for members of the public to raise concerns with the Council.

The overall aim of the Policy is to encourage employees and members of the public to understand the value of an open and honest reporting culture, where their concerns can be raised and dealt with effectively as part of normal business, leading to strengthened governance. The Policy also provides guidance on how to raise a concern and how that concern will be dealt with by the Council.

The Raising Concerns Policy has been screened for the need for an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) and it was decided that an EQIA was not recommended.

The Policy has also been screened for the need to carry out a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) and it was decided that a DPIA was required due to the potential risk of personal harm to individuals in the event of a security breach.

Completion of the DPIA has indicated that all necessary steps have been taken to ensure that the data is held securely and so processing can proceed. The DPIA will be kept under review by the Head of Internal Audit.

RECOMMENDATION: that the Committee approves the Raising Concerns Policy.

Prepared by: Paul Caulcutt, Head of Internal Audit

Approved by: Sandra Cole, Director of Finance and Governance

3.2 PT/GEN/40 NILGA CONSULTATION – TRANSFORMATION AND DRIVING PRACTICAL CHANGE IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Members are advised that correspondence (**enclosed**) was received from NILGA inviting the Council to complete a questionnaire to ascertain the Council's views in relation to reform to date and developing additional and improving existing powers, resources and services of local government in Northern Ireland. The questionnaire is set in the context of what is needed to sustain councils and revitalise communities as part of post-pandemic recovery and towards a more driven suite of policies and resources for Northern Ireland.

A response has been prepared and **enclosed** for Members' consideration.

RECOMMENDATION: that the response be approved.

Prepared by: Helen Hall, Head of Performance and Transformation

Approved by: Sandra Cole, Director of Finance and Governance

3.3 G-LEG-319/10 LAND ABANDONED BY THE DEPARTMENT – CASTLE LODGE, RANDALSTOWN

Members are advised that correspondence has been received from the Department for Infrastructure (Dfi) concerning the proposed abandonment of roadway at Castle Lodge, Randalstown under Article 68(1) of the Roads (Northern Ireland) Order 1993.

The Council has no interest in the lands.

The **enclosed** correspondence outlines the proposal and highlights the area considered for abandonment. Dfi Roads are requesting comments in relation to this proposal and have granted Council an extension after the 2nd December to make any comments on this matter.

RECOMMENDATION: that Council responds to Dfi and indicates it has no interest in the lands.

Prepared by: Deirdre Nelson, Paralegal

Approved by: Paul Casey, Borough Lawyer & Head of Legal Services

3.4 CCS/EDP/7 EQUALITY COMMISSION ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT

Members are reminded that Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires public authorities to have due regard for the need to promote equality of opportunity between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation, men and women generally, persons with a disability and persons without and persons with dependants and persons without.

The Council's Equality Scheme describes certain arrangements that as a public authority, the Council has set-up and is obliged to apply and follow as a means of fulfilling the duties imposed on it by Section 75(1) and (2) (i.e. the duties to have regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity, and regard to the desirability of promoting good relations).

This includes arrangements for training staff, assessing and consulting on the likely impact of policies adopted or proposed to be adopted by the authority on the promotion of equality of opportunity, and monitoring any adverse impact of those policies that have been adopted.

The Council must provide an Annual Progress Report to the Equality Commission and outline how those arrangements have been applied and to assess how effective they have been in supporting the Council to comply with the Section 75 duties.

The progress report for March 2019 to April 2020 is **enclosed** for Members' information.

RECOMMENDATION: that the report be approved.

Prepared by: Ellen Boyd, Customer Accessibility and Equality Officer

Approved by: Andrea McCooke, Director of Organisation Development

4 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

4.1 G-LEG-325/4 DEPARTMENT FOR INFRASTRUCTURE - THE PRIVATE STREETS (NORTHERN IRELAND) ORDER 1980 – DEVELOPMENT AT GULLIVERS LANE, BALLYNURE

Correspondence has been received from the Department for Infrastructure (Dfi) advising that streets at the above development have now been adopted by Dfi Roads (copy correspondence **enclosed**).

RECOMMENDATION: that the correspondence be noted.

Prepared by: Deirdre Nelson, Paralegal

Approved by: Paul Casey, Borough Lawyer and Head of Legal Services

4.2 HR/HR/019 AGENCY STAFF UPDATE

Members are reminded that agency staff are used across the Council to provide temporary cover for absence such as:

- Maternity leave
- Secondments
- Sickness absence
- Vacant posts

The use of agency staff is subject to a rigorous approval process, which requires the approval of the Corporate Leadership Team and there is budgetary provision for the majority of posts filled via departmental salary budgets, salary contingency and grant funding.

The table **enclosed** provides an update for Members on the use of agency staff as at October 2020 as compared to October 2019. It excludes limited ad-hoc agency cover, which is necessary to provide operational cover, at short notice (Appendix 1).

Appendix 2 **enclosed** sets out expenditure on agency workers in October 2020.

The cost of agency staff has decreased for the period of 1 April 2020 to 31 October 2020 at 4% of all staffing costs compared to 7% for the same period last year. Agency expenditure has significantly reduced following the release of agency workers in May 2020.

RECOMMENDATION: that the report be noted.

Prepared by: Victoria Stewart, Human Resources Administrator

Agreed by: Jennifer Close, Human Resources Manager

Approved by: Andrea McCooke, Director of Organisation Development

4.3 HR/ER/002 LOCAL GOVERNMENT STAFF COMMISSION DISSOLUTION

Members are advised that correspondence has been received from the Local Government Staff Commission (LGSC) in relation to the dissolution of the Commission. and a copy of the correspondence is **enclosed** for Members information.

Early indications are that the date for the Commission to be dissolved is 31 March 2022 and the Department has advised that the Commission plan accordingly. On this basis it will be necessary for the Commission to determine a financial scheme up to 31 March 2022.

The Commission will advise the Council early in the New Year of its apportioned contribution for the financial year 2021/2022.

RECOMMENDATION: that the report be noted.

Prepared by and Approved by: Andrea McCooke, Director of Organisation Development

4.4 CCS/CEA/013 CEMETERY BURIAL CAPACITY UPDATE

Members are reminded that in January 2018 the Council agreed that the policy relating to the pre-sale of new burial rights be amended so that, with immediate effect, these will only be sold for immediate burial and that pre-selling will end, except in cases where terminal illness has been confirmed.

The burial capacity within Council cemeteries is noted in the table below (as at **31/10/2020**)

CEMETERY	AVAILABLE PLOTS REMAINING	AVERAGE BURIAL PLOTS SOLD (based on previous 3 years sales)	ESTIMATED REMAINING BURIAL CAPACITY (years)
Carnmoney	0	156	0.0
Ballyclare	903	30	30.8
Rashee	479	9	53.7
Sixmile	2346	53	44.6
Crumlin	475	10	47.7
TOTAL	4262	258	16.52
GARDEN OF REMEMBRANCE, (for the burial of ashes only)			
GARDEN OF REMEMBRANCE, (for the burial of ashes only)	AVAILABLE PLOTS REMAINING	AVERAGE BURIAL PLOTS SOLD (based on previous 3 years sales)	ESTIMATED REMAINING BURIAL CAPACITY (years)
Carnmoney	Under review due to land conditions. An update will be provided in the next report.		
Ballyclare	131	5	26.20
Mallusk	15	1	15.00
TOTAL	1120	38	29.47

The estimated burial capacity for the entire Borough is currently just over **16 years**.

RECOMMENDATION: that the report be noted.

Prepared by: Emma Thompson, Registrar

Approved by: Andrea McCooke, Director of Organisation Development

4.5 HR/GEN/019 MANAGING ATTENDANCE

The purpose of this report is to update Members about the position relating to the management of attendance from April 2019 – October 2020 (summary enclosed)

1. April 2020 – October 2020 - Attendance Update

Excluding COVID-19 sickness absences, attendance has improved during this current financial year. The average days absence per employee was 4.86 against a target of 7.20 days, which represents 2.34 days within target.

The number of employees with 100% attendance was 87%, which marks an improvement when compared to the same period the previous year (75% of employees had full attendance). Our 100% attendance target this year is 60%

2. Employee Engagement and Wellbeing Strategy

The Council's Employee Engagement and Wellbeing Strategy has supported its management of attendance as it recognises the correlation between employee engagement, wellbeing and organisational performance. It is rooted in the understanding that health & wellbeing is about proactively avoiding illness, and optimising employees' physical and mental health. The Council has established a holistic approach, with a range of interventions across the organisation to include:

- Training for line managers on absence management
- Streamlining staff sickness reporting procedures
- Communication of occupational health service, employee assistance programmes and counselling
- Delivery of health events linked to the top three reasons for absence each year
- Commencement of the roll out of a Mental Health Toolkit
- 100% attendees get a letter of recognition for full attendance, from the Mayor
- Low cost staff leisure membership
- On-site access to cancer screening via the Action Cancer 'Big Bus' twice yearly.

HR Partners will continue to work with Heads of Service and Managers to monitor long term absence cases, to proactively accomplish employee health and wellbeing and improve the ongoing management of attendance.

RECOMMENDATION: that the report be noted.

Prepared and Approved by: Andrea McCooke, Director of Organisation Development

4.6 CCS/CPRM/5 COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING UPDATE

The Communication and Marketing Plan is designed to provide an integrated approach to external communication, including marketing, and to protect and enhance the reputation of the Council.

Important to our progress is the innovative use of technology so that we communicate and engage with residents and customers in a way which meets their needs.

This report summarises the progress made so far and notes some new developments for 2020 and beyond, and the updates on the Council's current performance on digital communications.

TARGETS AND PERFORMANCE

Although due to the COVID19 pandemic the Council is not carrying out its normal cycle of reporting we are still bench-marking against key targets set as part of the Corporate Performance process.

The table below notes our online audience size and the target identified for this year. Based on the current organic rates of growth we are projected to hit our Facebook target within the next 2 months, and have specific plans in place to ensure that we meet those of Twitter and Instagram also.

Channel	Facebook	Twitter	Instagram	LinkedIn	Website hits
Current audience	24,453	9,324	3,418	606	1.7m
Target 2020/21	25,000	10,000	5,000	500	>2.3m

The target for visits to Council's website during 2020-21 is >2.3m. Since April we have registered 1,736,664 visitors and at this point in the year we are ahead at 75% of the target.

During the early phase COVID19 we implemented a new front end for the website to ensure that customers could navigate and access information quickly and easily. This funnelled customers into 4 key areas, Council Services & Facilities; Support for Business; Community Support; and Health & Wellbeing.

Our audience has steadily grown over the last year and we sit amongst the top three Councils outside Belfast.

When compared against peers our key platform Facebook performs well, particularly on how our audience engages with our content. This is something we want to retain and we remain mindful that the quality of our content (judged by engagement) has a key bearing on the amount of our audience that sees it (reach).

CURRENT AND FUTURE FOCUS

Our digital media channels are performing well, growing steadily and on track to meet annual targets. We are aiming to improve the alignment of our demographics on digital media to the population breakdown of our Borough.

In this respect, the use of Instagram is a key area of focus as it presents an opportunity to better reach young people.

With Facebook we have a disproportionately high proportion of female followers across both Facebook and Instagram when compared to the demographic make-up of our Borough. We will seek to rebalance this with more targeted content towards males.

In addition, we could improve significantly the 18-24 age group (currently 4% of followers). Our strongest demographic is the 25-44 age group, with 35-44 year olds accounting for the highest proportion of this age bracket.

On our website, gender engagement is balanced with a fairly even split of users between male (47.6%) and female (52.4%).

Since the addition of our Digital Officer posts in 2019 we have improved our digital outputs, including increased use of video and designed assets to accompany materials to make it more visually appealing.

Officers are currently working on a system to catalogue the existing digital assets to make these easily searchable and useable for key teams within Council.

With the growth of online media, an additional option being considered is the use of a digital newsroom for media outlets where more of these enriched assets could be available to journalists on a convenient and self-serve basis. A key benefit for Council would be to gather better statistics on which assets journalists are accessing and refine our outputs to meet these trends.

RECOMMENDATION: that the report be noted.

Prepared by: John Hart, Head of Communications

Approved by: Andrea McCooke, Director of Organisation Development

4.7 HR/GEN/004 STATUTORY HOLIDAY – QUEEN'S PLATINUM JUBILEE 2022

Members are advised that the Government has announced that there will be an additional bank holiday to celebrate Her Majesty the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

The late May bank holiday will be moved to Thursday 2 June 2022 and the additional Jubilee bank holiday will be on Friday 3 June 2022.

RECOMMENDATION: that the report be noted.

Prepared by: Laura Campbell, Personal Assistant

Approved by: Andrea McCooke, Director of Organisation Development

4.8 CE/OA/012 LOCAL GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIP PANEL MEETING

The Local Government Partnership Panel provides a structured, political relationship between central and local government to discuss strategic policy and operational matters of mutual interest and concern.

The next meeting of the Partnership Panel will take place in January 2021 with a meeting of the local government side of the Panel on 15 December 2020. Support material in relation to the meeting on 15 December is **enclosed** for Members' information.

Members are invited to advise of any specific areas of importance which they feel should be raised at the meeting.

RECOMMENDATION: that the report be noted.

Prepared by: Member Services

Approved by: Jacqui Dixon, Chief Executive