



**MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE MEETING OF THE POLICY AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE HELD AT MOSSLEY MILL ON TUESDAY 2 FEBRUARY 2021 AT 6.30 PM**

<b>In the Chair:</b>	Alderman P Brett
<b>Members Present:</b>	Alderman F Agnew Councillors – H Cushinan, S Flanagan, R Foster, P Hamill, L Irwin, N Kelly, V McAuley, N Ramsay, S Ross, M Stewart and R Wilson
<b>Non Committee Members:</b>	Councillors – A Bennington, N McClelland, V McWilliam and B Webb
<b>Officers Present:</b>	Director of Finance & Governance – S Cole Director of Organisation Development – A McCooke Borough Lawyer and Head of Legal Services – P Casey ICT Helpdesk Officer – J Wilson Member Services Officer – S Boyd

**CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS**

The Chairperson welcomed everyone to the February Meeting of the Policy and Governance Committee, and reminded all present of recording requirements.

In order to protect public health during the current COVID-19 emergency it was not possible to allow the public or the press to physically attend the meeting. The public and the press can access those parts of the meeting which they are entitled to attend via livestream (a link to which is on the Council website). The meeting minutes and audio recording would be published on the Council's website.

**1. APOLOGIES**

Aldermen - M Cosgrove and P Michael

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None

### 3. ITEMS FOR NOTING

#### 3.1 FI/FIN/9 PROMPT PAYMENT PERFORMANCE

Members were reminded the Department for Communities (DfC) issued revised guidance (Local Government Circular 19/2016) on prompt payments and the recording of invoice payments in November 2016. This guidance requested councils to record specific performance targets of 10 working days and 30 calendar days and continue a cycle of quarterly reporting on prompt payment performance by councils to the DfC and its publication on their website.

The Council's prompt payment performance for the period **1 October 2020 to 31 December 2020** is set out below:

The default target for paying invoices, where no other terms are agreed, is 30 days.

(N.B. 30 days target is 30 calendar days and 10 days is 10 working days).

During the above period, the Council paid 4,659 invoices totalling £10,381,339.

The Council paid 4,302 invoices within the 30 day target. (92%)

The Council paid 3,577 invoices within the 10 day target. (77%)

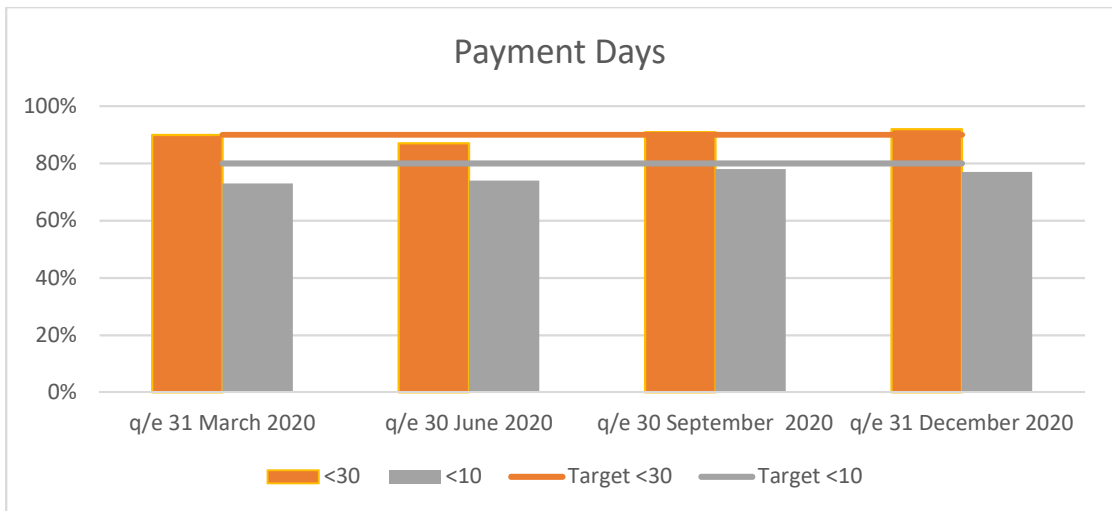
The Council paid 357 invoices outside of the 30 day target. (8%)

The Council has set a target of paying 90% of invoices within 30 days and 80% within 10 days.

The quarterly results from March 2020 to date are as follows:

Period	Total Number of Invoices Paid	% Paid Within 30 Days	% Paid Within 10 Days
<b>Target</b>		<b>90%</b>	<b>80%</b>
q/e 31 March 2020	6,308	90%	73%
q/e 30 June 2020	4,032	87%	74%
q/e 30 September 2020	3,799	91%	78%
q/e 31 December 2020	4,659	92%	77%

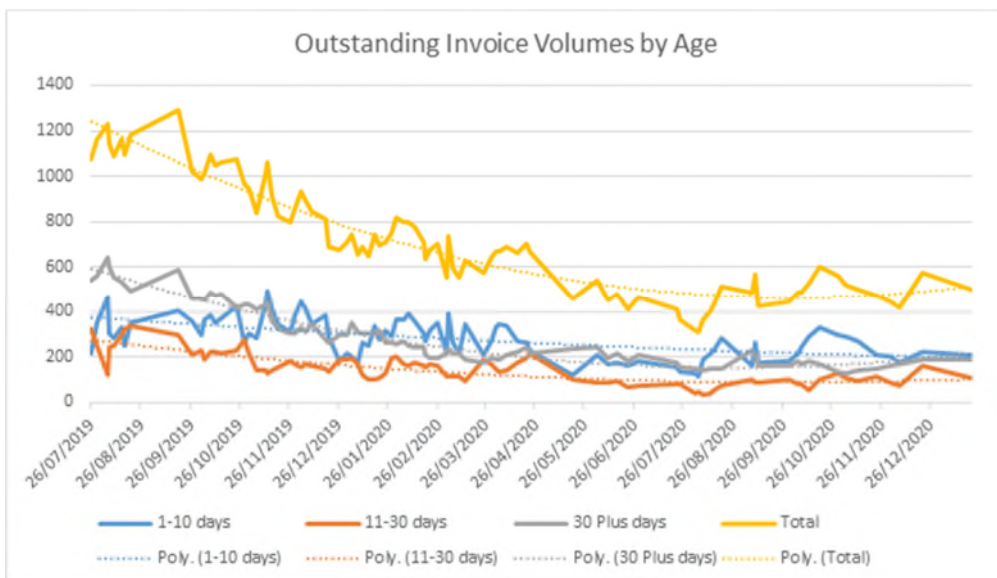
The performance presented graphically highlights the performance metrics for the above.



During both the second and third quarters of 2020/21 the target of paying 90% of invoices within 30 days was met, with performance for the 10 day target remaining similar to quarter 2.

The volume of invoices paid (4,659 invoices) for Quarter 3 for 2020/21 compared to the same quarter for 2019/20 (7,240 invoices paid) was down by approx. 35%, with some facilities closed or services reduced due to COVID-19.

Central to the performance improvement over the year has been the monitoring regime implemented by the Corporate Leadership Team. Another outturn of this is that the overall level of outstanding invoices has decreased markedly from over 1200 in August 2019 to now below 500.



Whilst both indicators now sit above the average for all Councils we will continue to strive to improve performance whilst maintaining a high level of good governance and internal control in relation to supplier payments. Performance levels remain a priority for senior staff and other enhancements, for example, tolerance levels and further decreases to the overall outstanding volumes will bring additional improvements.

The prompt payment performance for Councils in Northern Ireland is published quarterly by the Department for Communities (DfC). The prompt payment performance for the quarter ended 30 September 2020 was shown in **Appendix 1** (circulated); the Council's performance for Quarter 2 against the average performance for the other Councils for the same Quarter of 2020/21 is set out in the table below:

<b>Council</b>	<b>% Paid Within 30 Days</b>	<b>% Paid Within 10 Days</b>
Antrim & Newtownabbey BC (2nd Quarter 2020/21)	91%	78%
All Councils (2nd Quarter 2020/21)	90%	64%

Proposed by Councillor Hamill  
 Seconded by Councillor Foster and agreed

**that the report be noted.**

*NO ACTION*

### **3.2 G/DPFI/2 QUARTERLY REPORT ON FOI/EIR/DPA REQUESTS**

A report has been prepared on requests received in the third quarter of the year (1 October to 31 December 2020) under the Freedom of Information Act (FOI), Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) and the Data Protection Act (DPA) and this was circulated.

A summary of the quarter's statistics is as follows:

- There was a 26% decrease in the number of requests on the same period the previous year.
- Of the 64 requests received, 48 were under FOI, 15 under EIR and 1 under DPA.
- 50 requests were completed within the quarter.
- 100% of the requests were completed within the legislative deadlines of 20 days for FOI and EIR requests and a calendar month for requests made under DPA.
- The sections that received the most requests in the quarter were Governance (20), Finance (13), Planning (11) and Environmental Health (11).
- No appeals were received during the quarter.
- No complaints to the ICO were notified within the quarter.

Proposed by Councillor Flanagan  
Seconded by Councillor Ramsay and agreed

**that the report be noted.**

*NO ACTION*

### **3.3 CCS/EDP/11 FIVE YEAR REVIEW OF THE EQUALITY SCHEME, EQUALITY COMMISSION**

Members were reminded that under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 the Council is required, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between the nine categories of persons noted within the legislative framework. The Council must also have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

The Council's Equality Action Plan 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 a Five Year Review to the Equality Commission on the success of their equality scheme 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 Five Year Review document for the period of 2015 to 2020 was circulated for Members' information.

Proposed by Councillor Hamill  
Seconded by Councillor Foster and agreed

**that the report be noted.**

*NO ACTION*

### **3.4 HR/HR/019 AGENCY STAFF UPDATE**

Members were 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 appended provided an update for Members on the use of agency staff as at December 2020 as compared to December 2019. It excludes limited ad-hoc agency cover, which is necessary to provide operational cover, at short notice (Appendix 1 circulated).

Appendix 2 (circulated) set out expenditure on agency workers in December 2020.

The cost of agency staff had decreased for the period of 1 April 2020 to 31 December 2020 at 4% of all staffing costs compared to 7% for the same period last year.

Proposed by Councillor Flanagan  
Seconded by Councillor Wilson and agreed

**that the report be noted.**

*NO ACTION*

### **3.5 CCS/EDP/7 QUARTERLY SCREENING REPORT AND RURAL SCREENING**

Members were advised that in line with the Council's Equality Scheme it was agreed to provide quarterly updates on the screening of policies under Section 75. Within the Scheme, the Council gave a commitment to apply screening methodology to all new and revised policies. Where necessary and appropriate, these new policies would be subject to further equality impact assessment.

The policies noted below had been screened between October to December 2020.

<b>POLICY</b>	<b>SCREENING DECISION</b>
Draft Disability Action Plan (DAP) 2020-2025	1
Covid-19 Community Support Fund	1
Light-up Policy (Civic Buildings)	1
UDR Memorial Ballyclare	1
Access to Food (Christmas and New Year Support)	1
Access and Inclusion Project at Hazelbank	1
Access and Inclusion Project at Threemilewater	1
Access and Inclusion Project at Valley	1
Raising Concerns Policy	1
Pay Tapering Policy	1

- (1) Screened with no mitigation
- (2) Screened with mitigation
- (3) Screened and EQIA required

Proposed by Councillor Wilson  
Seconded by Councillor Foster and agreed

**that the quarterly screening report be noted.**

NO ACTION

*Alderman Agnew joined the meeting.*

### **3.6 CCS/CEA/020 ONLINE BURIAL SEARCH PORTAL - UPDATE**

The Registration Team has worked with the Cemetery Pro software provider, to progress the completion of establishing an online burial search facility for the public to access, 24/7.

During the development of the portal, the Digital Panel and Council staff tested the search facility during the pilot phases so as to progress the available features. Prior to going live, a final phase of testing will be completed and Elected Members feedback is welcomed to inform any further improvements.

Currently, the new online search facility has the following features:

- Where available, a photograph of the memorial will be visible,
- Search for a burial using a variation of information available (e.g. surname /date of death/ combination of forename, surname and date of death),
- Search results will appear in date order (most recent first),
- Users will be able to view other burials in the same plot.
- If the user believes that the information found is incorrect, they can email the Cemeteries Administration Team who will review and validate the information submitted prior to updating if appropriate.

When the search facility is live, customers will be able to access the new online burial search portal via the Council's website and a link from the Residents' App.

Members will be sent the tester link for feedback  
[https://myhostedapp.com/fmi/webd/anbc\\_portal](https://myhostedapp.com/fmi/webd/anbc_portal)

Proposed by Councillor Foster  
Seconded by Councillor Irwin and agreed

**that the report be noted.**

NO ACTION

There being no further committee business, the Chairperson thanked everyone for their attendance and co-operation, and the meeting concluded at 6.37 pm.

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**MAYOR**