



30 November 2023

Committee Chair: Alderman L Clarke
Committee Vice-Chair: Councillor M Stewart

Committee Members: Aldermen – L Boyle, P Bradley and P Michael
Councillors – M Brady, S Cosgrove, H Cushinan,
S Flanagan, N Kelly, H Magill, E McLaughlin, L O'Hagan,
A O'Lone and B Webb.

Dear Member

MEETING OF THE POLICY AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Policy and Governance Committee will be held in the **Round Tower Chamber, Antrim Civic Centre on Tuesday 5 December 2023 at 6.30 pm.**

You are requested to attend.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard Baker", is written over a light blue circular stamp.

Richard Baker GM MSc
Chief Executive, Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council

PLEASE NOTE: Refreshments will be available in the Café from 5.20pm

For any queries please contact Member Services:

Tel: 028 9448 1301/028 9034 0107

Email: memberservices@antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk

A G E N D A

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**REPORT ON BUSINESS TO BE CONSIDERED AT THE
POLICY AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE MEETING ON
TUESDAY 5 DECEMBER 2023**

3 PRESENTATION

3.1 INFORMATION GOVERNANCE PRESENTATION

A presentation will be provided on Information Governance.

RECOMMENDATION: that the presentation be noted

Prepared by: Liz Johnston, Deputy Director of Governance

Approved by: Sandra Cole, Director of Finance and Governance

4 ITEMS FOR DECISION

4.1 FI/FIN/050 DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE CONSULTATION DOMESTIC AND NON DOMESTIC RATING

The purpose of this report is to obtain Members instructions in relation to the public consultation on Domestic and Non-Domestic Rating.

Members are advised that correspondence **enclosed** at Appendix 1 has been received from the Department of Finance in relation to the launch of the public consultation on Domestic and Non-Domestic Rating. This follows a letter to all Permanent Secretaries from the Secretary of State directing them to consult on measures to support budget sustainability by raising additional revenue **enclosed** at Appendix 2.

The following areas are being consulted on:

Domestic Rating **enclosed** at Appendix 3: – The removal of domestic rating support schemes including

- The early payment discount
- The maximum capital value cap
- The landlords allowance

Non-domestic rating **enclosed** at Appendix 4: – The removal of non-domestic rating support schemes including:

- Non-domestic vacant property relief
- Industrial derating
- Freight transport relief
- Exemption for student halls of residence

The consultation closes on the 13 February 2024 and details of the consultation including the consultation response form can be accessed via the website link below:

[Consultation on non-domestic and domestic rating measures | Department of Finance](#)

Members are advised that they may wish to respond on a corporate, individual or party political basis.

RECOMMENDATION: Members' instructions are requested.

Prepared by: Denise Lynn, PA to Director of Finance and Governance

Agreed and Approved by: Sandra Cole, Director of Finance and Governance

4.2 **G/MSMO/008 VOL 3 PUBLIC CONSULTATION: REFORMING THE NORTHERN IRELAND CLINICAL EXCELLENCE AWARDS SCHEME (CEA)**

The purpose of this report is to obtain Members instructions in relation to the public consultation on Reforming the Northern Ireland Clinical Excellence Awards Scheme (CEA).

Correspondence (**enclosed**) has been received from the Department of Health advising that a public consultation has been launched on reforming the Northern Ireland Clinical Excellence Awards Scheme (CEA).

The Consultation documentation, including information on how to respond, can be accessed on the Department's website at:

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/consultations>

The consultation opened on the 21 November 2023 and closes at 5pm on 13 February 2024.

Any queries in relation to the consultation should be directed by email to

ceaconsultation@health-ni.gov.uk

Members are advised that they may wish to respond on a corporate, individual or party political basis.

RECOMMENDATION: the Council's instructions are requested.

Prepared by: Laura Campbell, PA to Director of Organisation Development

Approved by: Jennifer Close, Director of Organisation Development

4.3 FC/G/2 BANKING ARRANGEMENTS

The purpose of this report is to obtain approval for Mr Richard Baker to transact financial business on Council's behalf.

Members are advised that Mr Richard Baker has recently been appointed as the Chief Executive for Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council.

It is a requirement of the financial institutions used by Council to formally minute the authorisation given by Council to named officers to transact financial business on the Council's behalf.

RECOMMENDATION: that Mr Richard Baker, Chief Executive be authorised:

- a) as a signatory to the Council's bank accounts;**
- b) to submit and approve internet banking transactions;**
- c) to submit and approve Bankers' Automated Clearing Services (BACS) transactions;**
- d) transact business with Council approved counterparty institutions**

Prepared by: Richard Murray, Head of Finance

Agreed by: John Balmer, Deputy Director of Finance

Approved by: Sandra Cole, Deputy Chief Executive of Finance and Governance

5 ITEMS FOR NOTING

5.1 FI/FIN/4 BUDGET REPORT – QUARTER 2 APRIL TO SEPTEMBER 2023

The purpose of this report is to provide financial performance information at quarter two (April –September 2023) for Finance and Governance, Organisation Development and Council.

A quarterly budget report is noted at the relevant Committee or Working Group with responsibility for each Council department. All financial reports are available to all Members.

Reports on financial performance are noted at the following committees:

Committee	Department
Operations	Parks and Leisure Sustainability
Policy & Governance	Finance and Governance Organisation Development Council summary
Community Planning Our Prosperity Outcome Delivery Group	Community Planning Economic Development and Planning

The overall financial position of the Council is presented to the Policy & Governance Committee.

Budget reports for Finance and Governance (appendix 1), Organisational Development (appendix 2), and the Overall Council Financial Performance for Quarter 2 (appendix 3) are enclosed for Members' information.

The overall position of the Council at the end of the second quarter is an unfavourable variance on the net cost of services of £125k. Taking into account the credit balance application used in striking the rates (pro-rata) results in an overall decrease to the general fund of £1,091k.

RECOMMENDATION: that the report be noted.

Prepared by: Richard Murray, Head of Finance

Agreed by: John Balmer, Deputy Director of Finance

Approved by: Sandra Cole, Director of Finance & Governance

5.2 PT/CI/049 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE AND IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2023/24: QUARTER 2 PERFORMANCE UPDATE (APRIL-SEPTEMBER 2023)

The purpose of this report is to provide a Quarter 2 update on corporate performance against the Council's Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan 2023/24.

Members are reminded that Part 12 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 puts in place a framework to support the continuous improvement of Council services.

The Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan 2023/24 was approved in June 2023. The Plan sets out a range of robust performance targets, along with six identified improvement objectives alongside a number of statutory performance targets. In August 2023 it was agreed that quarterly performance updates would be reported to the relevant committee or working group.

The Quarter 2 corporate performance updates for 2023/24 are **enclosed** as follows: - Council (Appendix 1), Finance & Governance (Appendix 2) and Organisation Development (Appendix 3).

RECOMMENDATION: that the report be noted.

Prepared by: Allen Templeton, Performance Improvement Officer

Agreed by: Lesley Millar, Head of Organisation Development

Approved by: Jennifer Close, Director of Organisation Development

5.3 FC/FA/8 ANNUAL REVIEW OF PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS & TREASURY MANAGEMENT 2022/2023

The purpose of this report is to provide the 2022/23 annual report for Council's borrowing and investment activities for noting.

Members are reminded that the Council approved the Prudential Indicators for 2022/23 to 2024/2025 and the Treasury Management Strategies for 2022/23 in February 2022.

Under the Prudential Code and the Code of Practice on Treasury Management in the Public Services the Council is required to monitor and review its prudential indicators. The key objective of which is to ensure that, within a clear framework, the capital investment plans of the Council are affordable, prudent and sustainable and that treasury management decisions are taken in accordance with good professional practice.

The Council's Treasury Management Policy requires mid-year and annual reports on treasury management activities.

This report compares the approved Prudential Indicators with the outturn position for 2022/23 and the annual report on the Council's borrowing and investment activities for 2022/23.

A copy of the annual report is **enclosed** for Members' information.

RECOMMENDATION: that the report be noted.

Prepared by: Richard Murray, Head of Finance

Agreed by: John Balmer, Deputy Director of Finance

5.4 HR/HR/019 AGENCY WORKERS UPDATE

The purpose of this report is to provide a monthly update on the engagement of agency workers across the Council.

Agency workers are engaged to provide temporary cover for absence such as:

- Maternity leave
- Secondments
- Sickness absence
- Vacant posts
- Seasonal events

The engagement of agency workers is subject to a rigorous approval process and requires the approval of the Corporate Leadership Team. There is budgetary provision for the majority of posts filled through departmental salary budgets, salary contingency and grant funding.

Current Agency Workers

The utilisation of agency workers in October 2023 compared to October 2022 is **enclosed** at Appendix 1. This excludes limited ad-hoc agency cover which is necessary to provide operational cover at short notice.

In reviewing the number of agency workers it should be noted that there are 18 seasonal Parks Operatives (GMO driver and non-drivers). This will reduce further during October 2023 and will end in November 2023.

Agency Expenditure

The expenditure on agency workers in October 2023 is **enclosed** at Appendix 2. The cost remains unchanged at 7% (of all staffing costs) for the period April 2023 to October 2023 compared to April 2022 to October 2022.

Current Recruitment:

Following recent recruitment exercises, 14 agency workers have been offered Parks Operative roles. 10 commenced in October 2023 (ended with the Agency in September 2023) and the remaining 4 will commence in November 2023.

Recruitment exercises are ongoing to fill vacant positions which will reduce our reliance on agency workers. There are 5 vacant positions currently being covered by agency workers that we anticipate will be recruited for directly on a permanent basis.

We are committed to reducing our dependency on agency workers and will continue to recruit directly for vacant positions. However, we may still require agency workers for ad-hoc, seasonal or temporary assignments.

RECOMMENDATION: that the report be noted.

Prepared by: Pamela Boyd, Human Resources Officer

Agreed by: Pauline Greer, Lead Human Resources Manager

Approved by: Jennifer Close, Director of Organisation Development

5.5 HR/GEN/019 MANAGING ATTENDANCE UPDATE APRIL 2023 – OCTOBER 2023

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the management of attendance for the period April 2023 to October 2023 (summary **enclosed**).

Absence at the end of October 2023 was above target by 1.12 days, with 8.32 average days lost per employee against a target of 7.2 days. Covid absence is not included in the reported figure because a significant number of these employees work from home during the isolation period.

There continues to be a positive return to work of short-term absence cases. There are 14 long-term absence cases ending in October 2023, 4 of which have now left the Council's employment.

Further analysis of absence figures for October 2023 indicates the following:

100% Attendance

The 100% attendance rate continues to be above target. 72% of our workforce achieved full attendance to the end of October 2023 against a target of 60%.

If employees with 100% attendance were excluded from the average day's calculation, the actual absence incurred by those employees with absence episodes would be:

Period	% of workforce with absence	Long term average days	Short term average days	Overall average days
October 2023	28%	24.64	3.9	28.54
Same period last year 2022/23	27%	29.23	3.76	32.99

The above figures show a reduction in the average length of long-term absence when compared to the same period last year. This demonstrates our active commitment to reducing days lost to long-term sickness absence.

Formal Case Reviews from April 2023 to October 2023

Formal Case reviews (FCRs) are initiated when all possible steps have been taken but have failed to secure an employee's return to work within a maximum of 9 months.

- **Concluded Cases – 10**, with employees at FCR stage either returned to work, obtained ill health retirement or left the organisation.
- **In Progress – 2**
- **Approaching – 0**

Long-term Absence – 87% of the overall absence figures

Long-term absence is defined as continuous absence greater than 20 days. Although there was a slight decrease in long-term absence from 88% to 87% compared to the previous month, 14 long-term absence cases have ended and it is expected that this figure will decrease in the coming year. This is due to our continued efforts to address complex long term absence cases, conduct regular wellbeing meetings with employees, utilising Occupational Health services, promotion of the Staywell App, and holding timely absence review meetings.

- **% of Challenging long term cases – 45%**, this includes absence related to road traffic accidents, disability related illness and general injuries.
- **Returned to work – 10 cases** have successfully returned to work with a further 4 leaving the Council's employment.

Short Term Absence – 13% of the overall absence figures

Short term absence is defined as absence less than 20 working days. Whilst it is understood that short term absences are inevitable, it is crucial for Managers/Supervisors, Human Resources and employees to work together to minimise the impact of these absences on service delivery.

Main Reasons:

- Cold/flu, stomach bug, infection (accounting for 44% of short term absence)
- Stress Depression, Mental Health
- Chest and respiratory issues

Overall Absence

Stress-related absence (including work related stress) accounted for 47% of total absence. Proactive work is ongoing to address this as follows:

- Encouraging open communication to address stress and mental health concerns in wellbeing meetings.
- Providing mental health awareness training for employees.
- Providing access to mental health support services, through Inspire Counselling service, the Council's Occupational Health service, Northern Recovery College and additional information available through STAYWELL.
- Implementing flexible working arrangements, supporting phased returns and reasonable adjustments where possible in the workplace.
- Encouraging physical activity through the promotion of the Council's employee subsidised Gym Membership Scheme.
- Encouraging participation in our wellness programme with regular wellbeing activities and health advice promoted weekly through the STAY MORE CONNECTED kudoboard.
- HSENI Managing Work Related Stress training "A Line Manager's Approach" held in October 2023 with 45 line managers across departments attending.
- Line Managers have been invited to attend the HSENI training on "Burn Out and Fatigue" on 15 November 2023.
- Partnering with legal advisors and Employers for Disability NI to arrange awareness sessions on mental health illnesses, to provide training to managers on managing stress and how to encourage open communication to reduce stress-related absence and to promote a healthy work environment.

To improve absence rates and encourage earlier returns to work, the following actions are being undertaken:-

- The consultation for the alignment of Terms & Conditions of employment has commenced and this includes the proposal of one single policy for managing attendance. Subject to the successful outcome of a workplace ballot, it is anticipated that the agreement of a single policy will support staff, line management and HR in the management of absence cases.
- Case management discussions are held with legal advisors to support a targeted approach for complex cases. These help Directors, Heads of Services, and HR to review cases, consider reasonable adjustments, and understand the legal context, enabling specific action plans for individual cases.
- Meetings held with directorates with high or complex absence cases have been increased to analyse cases and agree on next steps, with attendance from relevant Directors, Deputy Directors, and Heads of Service. Formal case reviews are scheduled as needed.
- The HR Business Partnership team is working closely with managers and Occupational Health on an individual case management basis. This ensures prompt action is taken to keep absences within target and provides support to managers in absence review trigger meetings for fair and consistent approach.
- Monthly case management discussion meetings are scheduled as needed to review complex cases with an Occupational Health consultant. Case managers attend these sessions to ensure effective use of the Occupational Health service and support earlier returns to work where possible.
- The Corporate and Human Resources Risks registers have been reviewed to reflect the current absence rate position, with actions and interventions recorded to mitigate risks.
- Managers within Parks and Planning have received training on effectively managing absence caseloads. A number of toolkits have been identified and shared on STAYWELL to further assist managers and employees.
- Targeted training is being planned in areas of high absence provided by Human Resources, legal advisors, and in partnership with employers for disability or other relevant organisations.
- Development continues on an online training module to promote the importance of attending work. This will be rolled out to new staff initially and then across the wider organisation.
- An annual flu jab clinic was held in October with 33 employees receiving the vaccine. A further flu jab clinic is scheduled in November 2023.
- Through staff communications, Breast Cancer awareness has been promoted across the Council during October 2023
- There are a number of health and wellbeing initiatives scheduled in November 2023 as part of the Employee Engagement Framework including: Action Cancer Big Bus and International Men's Day event.
- The use of the Wellbeing Calendar is promoted to continue to support employee wellbeing.
- Our Employee Engagement Working Group will recommence in November 2023 with participation being cross departmental and cross generational.
- Physiotherapy services are being provided for appropriate cases of back and musculoskeletal-related absence.

- HR will review the absence paperwork, including the absence notification and return to work forms.
- A Managing Attendance Action Plan is being developed by the Human Resources Department.

RECOMMENDATION: that the report be noted.

Prepared by: Victoria Stewart, HR Systems and Analytics Manager

Agreed by: Pauline Greer, Lead HR Manager (Interim)

Approved by: Jennifer Close, Director of Organisation Development

5.6 G/MSMO/27 ELECTED MEMBER DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP MINUTES

The purpose of this report is to inform Members that a meeting of the Member Development Working Group took place on Monday 13 November 2023.

A copy of the minutes of the meeting are **enclosed** for information.

RECOMMENDATION: that the minutes of the Elected Member Development Working Group held on Monday 13 November 2023 be noted.

Prepared by: Sarah Fenton, Organisation Development Officer

Approved by: Jennifer Close, Director of Organisation Development

5.7 G-LEG-325/27 DEPARTMENT FOR INFRASTRUCTURE - THE PRIVATE STREETS (NORTHERN IRELAND) ORDER 1980 – DEVELOPMENT AT FORTHAVEN, BALLYCLARE (STAGES 3 – 5)

The purpose of this report is to inform Members that Correspondence (**enclosed**) has been received from the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) advising that streets at the above development have now been adopted by DfI Roads.

RECOMMENDATION: that the correspondence be noted.

Prepared by: Deirdre Nelson, Paralegal

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

5.8 CE/GEN/030 ASSOCIATION FOR PUBLIC SERVICE EXCELLENCE (APSE)

The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update in relation to the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) invitation to present to a future Policy and Governance Committee.

Members are reminded that it was agreed that a representative from the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) would be invited to make a presentation to the Policy and Governance Committee on how the organisation promotes excellence and best practice across the sector.

Members are advised that Mo Baines, APSE Chief Executive will attend the Policy and Governance Committee on 6 February 2024 to make an 'in-person' presentation.

RECOMMENDATION: that the report be noted.

Prepared and Approved by: Helen Hall, Director of Corporate Strategy

5.9 CCS/CS/006 CUSTOMER CHANNELS REPORT

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the performance indicators as set out in the Council's Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan 2023/24.

The Plan sets out the performance improvement target; *'we will achieve high levels of customer satisfaction'*.

We achieve at least 80% satisfaction with overall Council services:

Each issue of the Borough Life magazine has a specific themed survey and within each one residents are asked to rate their satisfaction with Council services.

In addition, further surveys throughout the year will request feedback on satisfaction with Council services and other areas of interest.

Within quarter 3 to date, results have been received from the Halloween events survey, with 38 responses and further surveys are planned for Feeling Safe in our Borough (Borough Life), Christmas Switch on events and Enchanted Winter Garden (Residents).

2021-22	2022-23	Target 2023-24	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3 (October)	2023-24 Apr to Oct	Status
87.5%	92.9%	80%	91.9%	94.4%	92.1%	93.0%	On Track

The percentage of abandoned calls will be 6.5% (or less):

A total of 106,529 calls were presented from 1 April to 31 October, a 0.7% increase compared to the same period in 2022-23. The percentage of abandoned calls during 2023-24 to date is 5.3%.

There has been a consistent decline in the percentage of abandoned calls, from 6.0% in quarter 1, 4.8% in quarter 2 and 4.4% in October. We have implemented the following to achieve target:

- Additional daily reports provided to each team
- Customer Service team identified issues and provided support
- Technical issues had been identified and Officers continue to work with the provider to monitor and resolve any issues that arise.

2021-22	2022-23	Target 2023-24	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3 (October)	2023-24 Apr to Oct	Status
6.0%	5.1%	6.5%	6.0%	4.8%	4.4%	5.3%	On Track

We have achieved at least 650,000 online transactions:

Officers continue to promote and monitor the shift of transactions to an online basis, where practical and beneficial. For the purpose of maintaining consistency with previous benchmarks, this indicator focuses on the number of online transactions including:

- Caravan bookings
- Online theatre and events bookings
- Leisure bookings
- Dog licensing applications
- Bulky waste bookings

Results are reported on a quarterly basis, and the next set of data will be available in January 2024.

2021-22	2022-23	Target 2023-24	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	2023-24 Apr to Oct	Status
652,593	874,10	650,000	151,743	138,264	January 2024	290,007	On Track

There are at least 8,000 downloads of the Residents App:

Downloads of the ANBorough App are measured through official app stores (Google and Apple). There were 1,110 downloads during October, 52.4% of downloads being for iOS devices and 47.6% for Android. Total downloads for the year are 8,959 which is 112% of target. The target of 8,000 downloads for 2023-24 has been achieved.

2021-22	2022-23	Target 2023-24	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3 (Oct)	2023-24 Apr to Oct	Status
14,481	13,963	8,000	3,355	4,494	1,110	8,959	Achieved

Progress on the Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan 2023-2024 is reported on a quarterly basis to the Policy and Governance and Audit and Risk Committees, and final, validated figures are contained within the Annual Report on Performance 2023-2024 (Self-Assessment), which will be reviewed by Council and published on the Council's website by 30 September 2024.

RECOMMENDATION: that the report is noted.

Prepared by: James Porter, Customer Services Manager

Agreed by: Lesley Millar, Head of Organisation Development

Approved by: Jennifer Close, Director of Organisation Development