



**MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE MEETING OF THE POLICY AND GOVERNANCE
COMMITTEE HELD IN THE ROUND CHAMBER, ANTRIM CIVIC CENTRE ON
TUESDAY 3 DECEMBER 2024 AT 6.30 PM**

In the Chair	:	Alderman L Boyle
Members Present (In person)	:	Aldermen – L Clarke and J Smyth Councillors – J Burbank, S Cosgrove, H Cushinan, H Magill and V McWilliam
Members Present (Remote)	:	Alderman P Bradley Councillors – M Cooper, A McAuley, E McLaughlin and L O'Hagan
Non Committee Members: (Remote)	:	Councillor S Flanagan
Officers Present (In person)	:	Director of Finance & Governance – S Cole Director of Organisation Development (Interim) – H Hall Deputy Director of Governance – L Johnston Head of Health, Safety & Resilience – E Girvan Head of Human Resources (Interim) – J Clarke ICT Helpdesk Officer – J Wilson Member Services Officer – C McIntyre
Officers Present (Remote)	:	Deputy Director of Finance – J Balmer

CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

On behalf of Members, the Chairperson extended heartfelt sympathies to Councillor Kinnear on her recent bereavement. The Chairperson welcomed everyone to the December Meeting of the Policy and Governance Committee and reminded all present of recording requirements.

1 APOLOGIES

Councillors Bennington and O'Lone.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

3 ITEMS FOR DECISION

3.1 F1/FIN/10 AMENDMENT TO FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to recommend the approval of the updated Financial Regulations.

2. Introduction/Background

Council regularly reviewed the Financial Regulations to ensure a high level of governance was in place in relation to financial activity. Amendments to the Financial Regulations were last approved at the Policy and Governance Committee in May 2024.

The Financial Regulations formed part of the financial framework of Council which provided the necessary control on financial matters, whilst encouraging best practice and promoting local accountability.

The Financial Regulations provided a framework through which the Chief Executive could be satisfied that proper financial administration would be in place. The aim of these Regulations was to help ensure that high standards of propriety and best value were achieved. All Elected Members and employees had a duty to promote these aims, not just by following Financial Regulations, but in their general approach.

3. Review of the Regulations

Following review, a number of amendments had been drafted and were summarised below:

Section	Amendment
Section 7	Clarification on direct award of works, suppliers or services
Section 8	Additional emphasis on the importance of timely electronic receipting of goods to ensure suppliers are paid promptly
All sections	Minor amendments to wording and related policy titles and dates

A copy of the proposed updated Financial Regulations was circulated for approval.

In response to a Member's query in respect of payments, the Director of Finance and Governance and Deputy Director of Finance confirmed the safeguards which were in place for on line payments. The Director of Finance and Governance agreed to ensure that this was detailed within the Financial Regulations.

Proposed by Councillor Cosgrove
Seconded by Alderman Smyth and agreed that

the updated Financial Regulations be approved.

ACTION BY: Richard Murray, Head of Finance

3.2 HR/ER/001 PARENTAL BEREAVEMENT LEAVE POLICY

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to recommend to Members to approve the new Parental Bereavement Leave Policy.

2. Main Report

In consultation with the Trade Unions, a new Parental Bereavement Leave policy (circulated) was presented to Members for approval and immediate implementation for all staff.

3. Governance

This Policy had been equality screened, a copy of which had been circulated for Members' information.

Proposed by Councillor Magill
Seconded by Alderman Clarke and agreed that

the Parental Bereavement Leave Policy be approved.

ACTION BY: Pauline Greer, Lead Human Resources Manager

3.3 PT/CI/060 PERFORMANCE AND IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2024/25 - PERFORMANCE PROGRESS REPORT QUARTER 2

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to recommend to Members to approve the Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan 2024/25, Quarter 2 Performance Progress Reports for Finance and Governance, Organisation Development and overall Council.

2. Background

Part 12 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 had put in place

a framework to support the continuous improvement of Council services.

The Council's Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan 2024/25 was approved in June 2024. This had set out a range of robust performance targets, along with identified improvement objectives and a number of Statutory Performance Targets.

3. Previous Decision of Council

As agreed at the August 2023 Council meeting, quarterly performance reports would be presented to the relevant Committee.

4. Key Points

Quarter 2 Performance Progress Reports for Finance and Governance, Organisation Development and the overall Council Corporate Performance and Improvement 2024/25 had been circulated.

In response to a Member's query relating to accident forms being submitted outside the agreed time limit of 5 days, the Deputy Director of Governance confirmed that these had mainly occurred during a period of increased user activity during Summer Scheme events.

Proposed by Alderman Clarke

Seconded by Councillor Cosgrove and agreed that

the Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan 2024/25, Quarter 2 Performance Progress Reports for Finance and Governance, Organisation Development and overall Council be approved.

ACTION BY: Allen Templeton Performance Improvement Officer

3.4 **CCS/EDP/025 DUAL LANGUAGE STREET SIGN APPLICATIONS**

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to recommend to Members to approve the Dual Language Street Sign applications as follows:

Stage 1 Glebecoole Park, Newtownabbey, BT36 6HX be noted.

Ballytromery Avenue, Crumlin, BT29 4ZN and Camlin Park, Crumlin, BT29 4HE be approved.

Stage 2 Longlands Road, Newtownabbey, BT36 7LU be noted.

Stage 3 Old Mill Drive, Newtownabbey, BT36 7XP be approved.

2. Background

In accordance with the Dual Language Street Sign Policy, adopted by Council on 30 May 2022 (circulated), the following update outlined the current status of applications received.

3. Application Update

STAGE 1: PETITION VERIFICATION

Three applications had been received at Stage 1.

1. GLEBECOOLE PARK, NEWTOWNABBAY, BT36 6HX

Officers would verify the petition associated with the above application at the Electoral Office for Northern Ireland.

2. BALLYTROMERY AVENUE, CRUMLIN, BT29 4ZN
3. CAMLIN PARK, CRUMLIN, BT29 4HE

The occupiers signing the petition for streets 2 and 3 above, had been verified against the current Electoral Register and had satisfied the one-third threshold.

STAGE 2: RESIDENTS CANVASS

One application had progressed to Stage 2.

1. LONGLANDS ROAD, NEWTOWNABBAY, BT36 7LU

Canvass letters would be issued to residents of the above street and the outcome would be reported to Members.

STAGE 3: STREET SIGN INSTALLATION

One application had progressed to Stage 3:

1. OLD MILL DRIVE, NEWTOWNABBAY, BT36 7XP

The occupiers of the above street had been canvassed and the threshold of two thirds or more in favour of the erection of a second language street sign had been met; a map and outline costings were circulated.

Proposed by Councillor McAuley

Seconded by Councillor Cushinan and agreed that

the Dual Language Street Sign applications at:

Stage 1 Glebecooole Park, Newtownabbey, BT36 6HX be noted.

Ballytromery Avenue, Crumlin, BT29 4ZN and Camlin Park, Crumlin, BT29 4HE be approved.

Stage 2 Longlands Road, Newtownabbey, BT36 7LU be noted.

Stage 3 Old Mill Drive, Newtownabbey, BT36 7XP be approved.

ACTION BY: Lesley Millar, Head of Organisation Development

3.5 G/GEN/019 CODE OF GOVERNANCE (OCTOBER 2024)

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to seek Members' approval of the Code of Governance (October 2024).

2. Introduction

Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council is committed to the principles of good governance and has a Code of Governance to reflect this.

The document consolidates the key governance practices within Council, demonstrating the Council's governance structures were consistent with the core and supporting principles contained in the Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework (April 2016).

3. Key Points

The Code of Governance (circulated), once approved, would be uploaded to the Council website to provide details of Council's existing processes and documentation to demonstrate compliance with the framework.

Proposed by Alderman Smyth

Seconded by Councillor McWilliam and agreed that

the Code of Governance (October 2024) be approved.

ACTION BY: Liz Johnston, Deputy Director Governance

4 ITEMS FOR NOTING

4.1 G/BCEP/3 COUNCIL SEVERE WEATHER PROCEDURE

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to inform Members of the updated Severe Weather Procedure.

2. Background

The Severe Weather procedure had been put in place to ensure sufficient warning and information was delivered to allow the management of an effective Council response to ensure minimal disruption to Council facilities and provide warning and service updates to Elected Members, key staff and members of the public. The procedure would include Tasks Lists providing clear direction to Officers when responding to events involving rain, thunder, lightning, ice, snow, wind and extreme heat.

The procedure was reviewed at least annually and also when there were learnings to be taken from recent weather events, to ensure it remained fit for

purpose.

3. Key Issues

Recent named storms (Isha, Jocelyn and Ashley) all resulted in damage and clean-up across the Borough. In October, the impacts from Storm Ashley across the country resulted in delayed flights, cancelled sporting matches, closed parks and widespread traffic disruption.

4. Implication

As approved by CLT on 14 October 2024, identified wind hotspots would be closed to protect staff, contractors and members of the public from injury during an extreme weather event involving wind, where wind speeds were forecast to be 60 mph+ in the Borough; these were noted at Section 4.4 on page 10 of the Procedure (circulated).

In response to a Member's query concerning sandbag accessibility during the recent floods, the Head of Health, Safety and Resilience confirmed that the recent incident where a container was not accessible had since been rectified.

Proposed by Councillor Magill
Seconded by Alderman Clarke and agreed that

the updated Council Severe Weather Procedure be noted.

ACTION BY: Elaine Girvan, Head of Health Safety and Resilience

4.2 CCS/CS/010 QUARTER 2 CUSTOMER SERVICES UPDATE

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to recommend to Members to note the Quarter 2 Customer Service report for the period July to September 2024.

2. Introduction/Background

The Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan 2024-25 sets out the performance improvement target; 'we will achieve high levels of customer satisfaction', with four indicators set as measures of success.

The Customer Services Report for Quarter 2 2024-25 (circulated) provided an update on performance.

In addition, there was an update on key consultations during 2024-25 to serve the Plan and the performance of the Complaints Handling Procedure during July to September 2024.

The Director of Organisation Development (Interim) confirmed to a Member of the continued development of the live chat feature in addressing

telephone call enquiries. She agreed to respond to a Member's query in relation to specific performance information from the Quarter Two progress report following the meeting.

Proposed by Alderman Smyth
Seconded by Alderman Clarke and agreed that

the Quarter 2 Customer Service report for the period July to September 2024 be noted.

*ACTION BY: James Porter, Customer Services Manager sand Helen Hall,
Director of Organisation Development (Interim)*

4.3 CCS/EDP/7 QUARTERLY SECTION 75 AND RURAL SCREENING UPDATE

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to recommend to Members to note the quarterly Section 75 and Rural Screenings for the period July 2024 to October 2024.

2. Background

As part of the Council's 2023-2026 Equality Scheme and Action Plan, quarterly updates on policy screenings under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 would be conducted for all new and revised policies.

When necessary and appropriate, these policies may also be subject to additional equality impact assessment.

3. Section 75 and Rural Screenings

There were no policies screened between July 2024 and October 2024.

Proposed by Councillor Magill
Seconded by Councillor Burbank and agreed that

the quarterly Section 75 and Rural Screenings for the period July 2024 to October 2024 be noted.

NO ACTION

4.4 HR/GEN/019 QUARTER 2 MANAGING ATTENDANCE UPDATE

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to recommend to Members to note the Quarter 2 Managing Attendance update for the period April 2024 to September 2024.

2. Managing Attendance Update Summary

Absence at the end of Quarter 2 2024/25 was above target by 0.63 of a day with 5.71 average days lost per employee against a target of 5.08 days. Members are advised that the Council's 2024/25 annual target for absence is 12 average days lost per employee.

The Quarter 2 Managing Attendance Performance summary had been circulated for Members' information.

Proposed by Alderman Smyth
Seconded by Alderman Clarke and agreed that

the Quarter 2 Managing Attendance update for the period April 2024 to September 2024 be noted.

NO ACTION

4.5 PT/CI/065 BUSINESS PLAN 2024/25, PERFORMANCE PROGRESS UPDATE REPORT

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to recommend to Members to note the performance progress against the 2024/25 Business Plans for Finance and Governance and Organisation Development.

2. Background

Members were 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.

Specifically, the duties in the Act relate to Section 84(1), 85(2) and 85(9) whereby the Council has a statutory duty to make arrangements to:

- Secure continuous improvement;
- Secure achievement of its improvement objectives; and
- Exercise its functions so that any Departmental specified standards are met.

3. Previous Decision of Council

The 2024/25 Business Plans for Organisation Development and Finance and Governance were approved in March 2024, with a subsequent agreement to provide performance updates against the Business Plans every six months.

4. Key Points

A six-month performance update on the 2024/25 Business Plans for Finance and Governance and Organisation Development, as of September 2024 had been circulated.

Proposed by Alderman Smyth
Seconded by Councillor Cosgrove and agreed that

the performance progress update against the 2024/25 Business Plans for Finance and Governance and Organisation Development be noted.

NO ACTION

4.6 G/MSMO/2 & ED/LMP/002 CHANGES IN NOMINATIONS BY SINN FÉIN TO THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COUNCILLORS AND THE LABOUR MARKET PARTNERSHIP

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was for Members to note the change in nominations by Sinn Féin to the National Association of Councillors and Labour Market Partnership.

2. Introduction

Appointments were made at the Annual Meeting in May 2023, for the term of Council, to the National Association of Councillors and the Labour Market Partnership. Councillor Goodman had written to the Chief Executive to advise of changes in nominations for his party to these bodies.

3. New Nominations

Councillor Goodman had advised of the undernoted changes in nominations:

Body	Nomination made in May 2023	New Nomination
National Association of Councillors	Councillor Eamonn McLaughlin	Councillor Michael Goodman
Labour Market Partnership	Councillor Lucille O'Hagan	Councillor Michael Goodman

Proposed by Councillor McAuley

Seconded by Councillor Cushinan and agreed that

the changes in nominations to the National Association of Councillors and the Labour Market Partnership by Sinn Féin be noted.

ACTION BY: Member Services

6 ANY OTHER RELEVANT BUSINESS

6.1 Councillor Cosgrove requested that the following policies be explored:

1. Car parking;
2. Street signage in new developments;
3. Income generation around a tourist tariff.

In response to this request for the development of Policies, the Director of Finance and Governance agreed to further consider development of a corporate pricing policy. She advised that work was already being

undertaken by Officers in relation to income generation and agreed to consider this being progressed in collaboration with Members in a relevant Working Group.

ACTION BY: Sandra Cole, Director of Finance and Governance

- 6.2** The Director of Finance and Governance agreed to address a Member's concern over use of the split screen facility on Member's IT equipment to allow access to the raised hand function whilst navigating meeting papers.

ACTION BY: Graham Smyth, Head of ICT

PROPOSAL TO PROCEED 'IN CONFIDENCE'

Proposed by Councillor Magill

Seconded by Councillor Cushinan and agreed

that the following Committee business be taken In Confidence and the livestream and audio recording would cease.

5 ITEM IN CONFIDENCE

5.1 IN CONFIDENCE OD/OD/006 PROPOSAL FOR THE INTRODUCTION OF AGILE WORKING ARRANGEMENTS CONSULTATION EXERCISE

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to recommend to Members to approve the proposal to carry out a consultation exercise on the introduction of agile working arrangements.

2. Introduction

Following the Group Leaders' meeting on 14 November 2024, it was recommended that a formalised report be submitted to Members for approval regarding the introduction of agile working arrangements, tailored to the organisation's specific needs.

Significant research and benchmarking had been conducted across the UK and it was proposed that a new approach to agile working was explored which would be non-contractual and service-area-specific.

The proposed 'Work Smart' Initiative was progressive and designed to enhance workplace agility by introducing more agile working arrangements, while maintaining high standards of productivity and service delivery.

This initiative aligned with Council's corporate values and commitment to fostering a modern, inclusive, and sustainable work environment that prioritised employee wellbeing and organisational success.

3. Background

Building upon the Council's success as winners of the APSE UK Council of the Year 2024, the proposed Work Smart Initiative aimed to enhance Council's employee value proposition while addressing key challenges reflected in employee attrition and retention data.

Insights from recent and past recruitment campaigns revealed that one of the primary reasons prospective employees declined roles within the Council, was the absence of agile working options. Similarly exit interview data evidenced employees citing reasons such as 'lack of agile working arrangements' as reasons for leaving Council employment.

There had been a notable decline in the number of applicants from pre-COVID to post-COVID, as shown in the table below.

Job Role	2018/19 Number of Applicants (pre-Covid)	2024/25 Number of Applicants (post-Covid)
██████████	35	8
██████████	27	1
██████████	19	8
██████████	7	3
██████████	28	2
██████████	8	1
██████████	13	2
██████████	13	5
██████████	28	3

4. Work Smart Initiative (One Year Pilot) Consultation Options

It was proposed to consult with staff and Trade Unions regarding the Work Smart Initiative.

The initiative was dependent on meeting business requirements, maintaining high performance standards and the availability of IT equipment, including secure connectivity.

The 'Work Smart' options outlined below would be subject to ongoing review and may be modified or withdrawn as necessary to align with organisational priorities.

Proposal for Consultation:

- a) One Day Work-from-Home: eligible employees may work remotely one day per week with prior approval, ensuring no disruption to team or service needs (continuous review, and can be withdrawn at any point).

Or

- b) Compressed Hours: employees may choose to complete their weekly hours over fewer days (continuous review, and can be withdrawn at any point).
- c) Occasional Location Policy: develop an Occasional Location Policy to accommodate flexibility of location. This could be used for example to facilitate home working before or after a medical appointment.

The consultation aimed to explore the feasibility of offering more in terms of agile working arrangements e.g. offer A and B or any combination of both (e.g. half-day working from home/half-day compressed working week).

The consultation period would allow Officers to:

- Gather feedback
- Manage expectations
- Develop Smart Working guidelines
- Provide a clear understanding of how it would work practically within each service area
- Assessment of IT arrangements

5. Timeline

A comprehensive consultation process was proposed, adopting a collaborative approach with Elected Members, Trade Unions, and employees to ensure any approved arrangements were robust, fair, and maintained service delivery standards.

Consultation Timeline:

November 2024 – January 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committee Approval (December 2024) • Consultation and the development of Work Smart Guidelines for Managers & Staff • Consultation and engagement with Trade Unions and Staff
January 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CLT review of proposed operational and service delivery arrangements
February 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trade Union Agreement • Committee Approval
March 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Line Manager Training
April 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch Work Smart Initiative

The Director of Organisation Development (Interim) confirmed that any arrangement would constitute a non-contractual change. She addressed a Member's concerns regarding the availability of agile working opportunities to operational staff and the potential impact on absence figures.

Proposed by Councillor Cooper
Seconded by Councillor Burbank and agreed that

the proposal to carry out a consultation exercise on the introduction of agile working arrangements be approved.

ACTION BY: Helen Hall, Director of Organisation Development (Interim)

PROPOSAL TO PROCEED OUT OF 'IN CONFIDENCE'

Proposed by Alderman Smyth
Seconded by Councillor Cushinan and agreed

that the remainder of Committee business be taken in Open Session.

The Chairperson advised that audio-recording would recommence at this point.

There being no further Committee business, the Chairperson wished all Members a Happy Christmas and New Year and thanked everyone for their attendance. The meeting concluded at 7.12pm.

MAYOR

Council Minutes have been redacted in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 2018, the General Data Protection Regulation, and legal advice.