



**MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE MEETING OF THE POLICY AND GOVERNANCE  
COMMITTEE HELD IN THE ROUND TOWER CHAMBER, ANTRIM CIVIC CENTRE  
ON TUESDAY 4 FEBRUARY 2025 AT 6.30 PM**

<b>In the Chair</b>	:	Councillor A O'Lone
<b>Members Present (In person)</b>	:	Aldermen – L Boyle, L Clarke and J Smyth  Councillors – A Bennington, J Burbank, M Cooper, S Cosgrove, H Cushinan, H Magill and E McLaughlin
<b>Members Present (Remote)</b>	:	Alderman Bradley and Councillor O'Hagan
<b>Non Committee Members: (In person)</b>	:	Councillors – R Lynch and B Webb
<b>Officers Present (In person)</b>	:	Director of Finance & Governance – S Cole Director of Organisation Development (Interim) – H Hall Borough Lawyer and Head of Legal Services – P Casey Deputy Director of Finance – J Balmer Head of Finance – R Murray ICT Helpdesk Officer – J Wilson Member Services Officer – C McGrandle

**CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS**

The Chairperson welcomed everyone to the February Meeting of the Policy and Governance Committee and reminded all present of recording requirements, she expressed her sincere condolences to the family of the former Mayor and Councillor, Jim Montgomery who passed away suddenly.

## **1 APOLOGIES**

Councillor A McAuley  
Councillor V McWilliam

## **2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None

## **3 ITEMS FOR DECISION**

### **3.1 FI/FA/7 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2025/26 TO 2027/28**

#### **1. Purpose**

The purpose of this report was to provide updates and obtain approvals on the Council's future financial planning (and treasury management activities), as required by the Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.

#### **2. Background**

#### **LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE ACT (NORTHERN IRELAND) 2011**

Under the requirements of the Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 and the Prudential Code, Council was required to have regard to a number of reports and to approve a range of indicators and strategies prior to the prescribed date for striking the rates, 15 February 2025.

#### **MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2025/26 TO 2027/28**

The Prudential Code required Council to develop three-year revenue forecasts and three-year capital expenditure plans. These were shown in the Medium Term Financial Plan 2025/26 to 2027/28, a copy of which was circulated.

Proposed by Councillor Burbank  
Seconded by Councillor Cosgrove and agreed that

**the Medium Term Financial Plan 2025/26 to 2027/28 be approved.**

*ACTION BY: Richard Murray, Head of Finance*

### **3.2 FI/FA/8 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY**

#### **1. Purpose**

The purpose of this report was to provide updates and obtain approvals on the Council's future financial planning (and treasury management activities), as required by the Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.

#### **2. Background**

The Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 and the Local Government (Capital Finance and Accounting) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2011 required Council, in carrying out its capital finance functions, to have regard to the current editions of the CIPFA Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice and Cross-Sectoral Guidance Notes and the Prudential Code.

Council was therefore required to set out its Treasury Management Policy and Strategy and to prepare an Annual Investment Strategy which set out Council's policies for managing its investments and for giving priority to the security and liquidity of those investments.

Copies of the above policy and strategies were circulated.

Proposed by Councillor McLaughlin  
Seconded by Alderman Smyth and agreed that

- a) the Treasury Management Strategy 2025/26 be approved**
- b) the Annual Investment Strategy 2025/26 be approved**

*ACTION BY: Richard Murray, Head of Finance*

### **3.3 FI/FA/5 CAPITAL STRATEGY**

#### **1. Purpose**

The Prudential Code required Council to develop a Capital Strategy which would provide a high-level overview of the long-term context of capital expenditure and investment decisions and their associated risks and rewards, along with an overview of how risk would be managed for future financial sustainability.

A copy of the Capital strategy was circulated.

In response to a Member's query, the Director of Finance and Governance agreed that an update on project delivery would be brought back to a future Policy and Governance Committee.

Proposed by Councillor Cooper  
Seconded by Councillor Cosgrove and agreed that

**the Capital Strategy 2025/26 be approved.**

*ACTION BY: Richard Murray, Head of Finance*

### **3.4 FI/FA/9 REPORT BY THE CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER ON THE ROBUSTNESS OF THE ESTIMATES AND ADEQUACY OF RESERVES**

#### **1. Purpose**

**The purpose of this report was to ensure robustness of the estimates and**

**adequacy of reserves for the next financial year.**

2. Background

Section 4 and 6 of the Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 required Council to have regard to a report, a copy of which was circulated, from the Chief Financial Officer on the robustness of the estimates and adequacy of reserves.

Proposed by Councillor Bennington  
Seconded by Alderman Clarke and agreed that

**the report by the Chief Financial Officer on the Robustness of the Estimates and Adequacy of the Reserves be approved.**

*ACTION BY: Richard Murray, Head of Finance*

**3.5 G/IG/7 SECURE DESK POLICY**

1. Purpose

**The purpose of this report was to advise Members of the updated Secure Desk Policy and obtain approval in accordance with the agreed Policy Framework.**

2. Introduction/Background

The Secure Desk Policy had been reviewed in accordance with the agreed Policy Framework and schedule. The policy was last reviewed in January 2023 (two-year review cycle).

3. Key Issue

The review had identified a number of minor amendments which were required:

- Deputy Director of Governance job title updated
- Section 5-8 strengthened regarding Data Breach Notification
- Contact details for Policy amended

These amendments had been made to the circulated draft of the policy.

The reviewed policy had been approved by CLT.

4. Governance

It was essential that Council had a suite of up-to-date policies/procedures which were reviewed on a regular basis.

Proposed by Councillor Cosgrove

Seconded by Councillor McLaughlin and agreed that

**the updated Secure Desk Policy in accordance with the agreed Policy Framework be approved.**

*ACTION BY: Helen McBride, Information Governance Manager*

### **3.6 HR/ER/002 LOCAL GOVERNMENT STAFF COMMISSION CONTINUING OPERATIONS 2025/26**

#### **1. Purpose**

**The purpose of this report was to recommend to Members to approve the Local Government Staff Commission continuing apportionment arrangements of £23,662 for 2025/26.**

#### **2. Previous Decision of the Council**

The Department for Communities previously informed the Commission that it had extended the provisional date for dissolution to 31 March 2027.

In May 2024, Council agreed to write to the Minister for Communities asking for a review of the decision to extend the date of dissolution and reiterate that the Commission should be wound up immediately, however there was no response to this correspondence.

#### **3. Apportionment Arrangements 2025/26**

Correspondence (circulated) had been received from the Local Government Staff Commission (LGSC) confirming the apportionment arrangements for 2025/26.

The Department for Communities had informed the Commission that they had no new information in relation to the Dissolution Order to wind up the Commission and as such, in order to implement its statutory functions, it was necessary for the Commission to determine a financial scheme up to 31 March 2026.

In accordance with the 2025/26 Management and Dissolution Plan, the Commission had estimated its total financial requirement to be £427,924 for the year ahead. Income from ongoing operations, which would be offset against this figure was estimated at £40,000, leaving an amount of £387,924 to be raised from District Councils and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

By virtue of the apportionment arrangements, Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council was required to pay 6.1% of £387,924, namely £23,662.

The Director of Organisation Development (Interim) agreed that she would endeavour to obtain a copy of the financial plan.

The Director of Organisation (Interim) confirmed that, as a Dissolution Order had not been signed, the Local Government 1972 Act remained extant.

Proposed by Alderman Smyth

Seconded by Councillor O'Hagan and agreed that

**the Local Government Staff Commission continuing apportionment arrangements of £23,662 for 2025/26 be approved.**

**It was further agreed that Council would write to the Local Government Staff Commission to express its discontent in meeting this financial commitment.**

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

*Councillor Magill joined the meeting at this point.*

### **3.7 CCS/EDP/025 DUAL LANGUAGE STREET SIGN APPLICATIONS**

#### **1. Purpose**

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

**Stage 1 – There were no applications at Stage 1.**

#### **Stage 2**

- **Longlands Avenue, Newtownabbey, BT36 7NE, be noted.**
- **Ballytromery Avenue, Crumlin, BT29 4ZN, be noted.**
- **Camlin Park, Crumlin, BT29 4HE, be noted.**

#### **Stage 3**

- **Longlands Road, Newtownabbey, BT36 7LU, be approved.**

#### **2. Background**

In accordance with the Dual Language Street Sign Policy, adopted by Council on 30 May 2022, circulated at Appendix 1, the following update outlined the status of applications received.

#### **3. Application Update**

#### **STAGE 1: PETITION VERIFICATION**

There were no applications at Stage 1.

#### **STAGE 2: RESIDENTS CANVASS**

Three applications had progressed to Stage 2.

1. **BALLYTROMERY AVENUE, CRUMLIN, BT29 4ZN**

2. CAMLIN PARK, CRUMLIN, BT29 4HE
3. LONGLANDS AVENUE, NEWTOWNABBAY, BT36 7NE

Canvass letters had been issued to residents of the above streets, with January and February return dates. The outcome would be reported to Members in due course.

### **STAGE 3: STREET SIGN INSTALLATION**

One application had progressed to Stage 3.

1. LONGLANDS ROAD, NEWTOWNABBAY, BT36 7LU

The occupiers of the above street had been canvassed and the threshold of two-thirds or more in favour of the installation of a dual language street sign had been met. A map and outline costings were circulated at Appendix 2.

In response to Members' queries regarding the process of the new dual language signage and the potential cost of their total replacement, the Director of Organisation Development (Interim) confirmed that she would liaise with the Estates Services team and return to committee with further information.

Proposed by Councillor Cosgrove  
Seconded by Councillor Burbank and agreed that

#### **the Dual Language Street Sign applications at:**

##### **Stage 1 -**

**No applications at Stage 1, be noted.**

##### **Stage 2 -**

- Longlands Avenue, Newtownabbey, BT36 7NE be noted.
- Ballytromery Avenue, Crumlin, BT29 4ZN, be noted.
- Camlin Park, Crumlin, BT29 4HE, be noted.

##### **Stage 3 -**

- Longlands Road, Newtownabbey, BT36 7LU, be approved.

*ACTION BY: Lesley Millar, Head of Organisation Development*

### **3.8 PT/CI/067 CHARTERED INSTITUTE OF PERSONNEL AND DEVELOPMENT (CIPD) AWARDS NORTHERN IRELAND 2025**

#### **1. Purpose**

**The purpose of this report was to note the outcome of Council's submissions to the CIPD Awards in Northern Ireland 2025 and approval be sought for attendance at the Awards Ceremony.**

#### **2. Background**

The CIPD is the professional body for Human Resources and People Management. These prestigious awards celebrate and reward outstanding achievements and contributions made by leading organisations.

### 3. Award Finalists and Ceremony

The CIPD had announced the shortlist for its 2025 Northern Ireland Awards, recognising more than 30 employers who were leading the way in shaping better work and working lives.

The awards celebrated the outstanding achievements of HR professionals and people teams who play a leading role in delivering workplace initiatives and strategies to better support employees and improve business performance.

Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council had been nominated as finalists in the following categories:

- **Best Learning and Development Initiative** – iLead Programme
- **Rising Star of the People Profession** – Katherine Young, Organisation Development & Employee Engagement Manager

Category winners would be announced at the Awards Ceremony on Thursday 6 March 2025 at the Titanic Belfast.

### 4. Financial Implications

The cost of attending the Awards Ceremony for a half table of five would be £650+vat, which would be met within existing budgets.

### 5. Attendance

It was proposed that the Mayor and Chair of Policy and Governance Committee, or their nominee, attend along with three Officers from the Organisation Development Team.

Proposed by Councillor Bennington  
Seconded by Alderman Smyth and agreed that

- a half table of 5 be reserved at the Awards Ceremony**
- the Mayor and Chair of Policy & Governance Committee, or their nominees, attend as an approved duty**
- the remaining 3 places be reserved for Officers from the Organisation Development Team**

*ACTION BY: Allen Templeton Performance Improvement Officer*



### 3.9 OD/OD/004 ELECTED MEMBER AND OFFICER LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE 2025 – HOLD THE DATE, WEDNESDAY 26 MARCH 2025

#### 1. Purpose

**The purpose of this report was to invite Members to hold the date for attendance at the in-house joint Elected Member and Officer Leadership Conference on Wednesday 26 March 2025.**

#### 2. Introduction

Council remained committed to fostering dynamic leadership, a cornerstone of the *Corporate Plan*, *Elected Member Development Strategy* and the 'iLead' pillar of the Employee Engagement Framework. This proposed leadership conference directly aligned with these commitments and offered an opportunity to enhance leadership skills, share innovative practices, and engage in strategic discussions.

The proposed leadership conference aligned with Council's strategic priorities, strengthened leadership capacity, enhanced organisational collaboration and supported succession planning.

#### 3. Conference Overview

Event Details:

- Date: 26 March 2025
- Venue: Theatre at the Mill
- Participants: Approx. 100 attendees, including Councillors, senior leaders, line managers, and aspiring leaders.

Content Highlights:

- Keynote Speakers to inspire and provide thought leadership.
- Innovation Workshops focusing on:
  - Digital Transformation in Local Government,
  - Multigenerational Leadership,
  - Commercial Thinking, and
  - Cultivating a resilient mindset.
- Networking Opportunities: A platform to foster cross-departmental collaboration and knowledge sharing.

Conference Objectives:

- Equip participants with actionable leadership tools to address key challenges.
- Promote the sharing of knowledge and best practices across the Council.
- Support succession planning through the identification and development of emerging leaders.

Proposed by Councillor Cooper

Seconded by Alderman Clarke and agreed that

**Members hold Wednesday 26 March 2025 for attendance at this in-house Leadership Conference, with diary invites to follow.**

*ACTION BY: Sarah Fenton, Organisational Development Officer*

#### **4 ITEMS FOR NOTING**

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

###### **1. Purpose**

**The purpose of this report was to inform Members on the Quarter 3 statistics relating to FOI/EIR/DPA Requests.**

###### **2. Introduction/Background**

A report had been prepared on requests received and completed in the third quarter of the year (1 October to 31 December 2024) under the Freedom of Information Act (FOI), Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) and the Data Protection Act (DPA) which was circulated.

###### **3. Summary**

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

- The number of requests received was higher than the number in the same period the previous year – an increase of 12%.
- Of the 102 requests received, 84 were under FOI, 14 under EIR and 4 under DPA.
- 114 requests were completed within the quarter.
- 95% of the requests received within the quarter 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 which received the most requests in the quarter were Finance (28), Governance (23), Environmental Health (22) and Estate Services (13).
- Five appeals were received during the quarter. In all of these appeals, Council's original decision was upheld, although Council was able to provide additional information for two of the responses due to the requesters refining their requests.
- No complaints to the ICO were notified within the quarter. However, two complaints notified in Quarter 1 were still under consideration by the ICO.

The Borough Lawyer and Head of Legal Services responded to queries in relation to FOI requests.

Proposed by Councillor Bennington  
Seconded by Alderman Boyle and agreed that

**Members note the Quarter 3 statistics relating to FOI/EIR/DPA Requests.**

NO ACTION

#### **4.2 G/MSMO/2 CHANGE IN GROUP LEADER FOR SINN FÉIN**

##### **1. Purpose**

**The purpose of this report was for Members to note the change in group leader for Sinn Féin.**

##### **2. New Nomination**

The Chief Executive had received notification from the Sinn Féin General Secretary that Councillor Maighréad Ní Chonghaile would replace Councillor Michael Goodman as the Group Leader for Sinn Féin on Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council with immediate effect.

Proposed by Councillor Cushinan  
Seconded by Councillor McLaughlin and agreed that

**the change in Group Leader for Sinn Féin be noted.**

NO ACTION

#### **6 ANY OTHER RELEVANT BUSINESS**

In response to a Member's query regarding the implementation of the Cycle to Work Scheme and the request that this be expedited, the Director of Organisation Development (Interim) confirmed that she would look into this matter and return to Committee with an update.

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

##### **PROPOSAL TO PROCEED 'IN CONFIDENCE'**

Proposed by Alderman Boyle  
Seconded by Councillor Bennington and agreed

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

*Councillor Lynch left the meeting at this point.*

#### **5 ITEMS IN CONFIDENCE**

##### **5.1 IN CONFIDENCE CP/GEN/049 FUNDING UNIT STRUCTURE**

## 1. Purpose

**The purpose of this report was to seek approval for the proposed new Grants Funding Unit Structure.**

## 2. Introduction/Background

Council issued approximately £1.5 million in grant funding, with programmes operated by various Departments and Sections of the Council.

A review of this approach had concluded that:

- The approach to grant funding varied across Departments and could be described as more reactive than proactive.
- There was a significant resource requirement, both in terms of the dispersal of funds outside the organisation and the securing of funding into the organisation. This work was in the main financial and administrative and was currently resourced across relevant Council Departments and Sections by a variety of officers, and was in addition to the core role of these Officers.
- Successful funding applications could and did require time, expertise and knowledge.
- There were opportunities to improve governance, streamline processes, build relationships with funders, remove duplication of effort and maximise external funding, thereby delivering more for the community.

## 3. Previous Decision of Council

At the Policy and Governance Committee in April 2024, it was agreed to establish a Grant Funding Unit which would be initiated by recruitment of the Funding Unit Manager.

On 19 December 2024 a Corporate Workshop on Grant Funding was held in Mossley Mill when the now appointed Grant Funding Unit Manager supported by relevant officers outlined the proposed approach to the operation of the funding unit which would provide a central support service to all Departments and Sections delivering grant funding.

At the Policy and Governance Committee in January 2025, the Grant Funding Policy was approved along with the outcome of the Section 75 Equality, Screening and Rural Proofing exercises.

## 4. Proposed Grant Funding Unit

The Grant Funding Unit would have had the following key functions:

- Management and Administration of Councils Grant Funding – to operate as a central support service by delivering the management and administration of all the Councils Grant Funding Programmes.
- Securing Funding – to secure increased levels of funding to support the delivery of Council Corporate and Business Plans.
- Business Support – to provide business support for the specialist funding programmes, such as SEUPB Peace Plus.
- External engagement – to develop and manage external working relationships and support organisations and community groups to source additional funding.

In summary, the Grant Funding Unit would provide a central support service to the various Sections who retain full responsibility and ownership of the various grant funding programmes operated by the Council.

All decision making in relation to grant funding programmes would remain the responsibility of the relevant Committee and the relevant reports would continue to come before Members at the appropriate Committee.

The central support of a Grant Funding Unit would achieve significant economies of scale and release officers from an administrative burden, whilst retaining their expertise in relation to the operation of funding programmes including assessment of applications.

At the December 2024 Workshop a draft Grant Funding Unit structure was included within the overall workshop presentation and was circulated for Members' information.

Members were advised that it was intended to resource this section from within the existing Council workforce therefore, no additional cost to Council.

The Grant Funding Unit Manager was appointed in July 2024 and had to date been supported within the Community Development Section. There was a requirement to now move the Funding Unit to within the Finance Department, given its central support role providing synergy with work of some finance officers in relation to grant claims/payments and to allocate some dedicated staff resource to enable the Unit to function as outlined.

## 5. Governance

It was proposed that the Grant Funding Unit commenced as a central support service within the Finance and Governance Department from 1 April 2025 and that the Funding Unit Manager report to the Head of Finance, supported by a team, as per the structure.

## 6. Financial Position/Implication

It was proposed that the Grant Funding Unit would operate at no additional cost to Council, with the structure to be filled internally on a phased basis from within Council's existing workforce. The budgets for all grant funding programmes would be retained by the respective Section and Directorates who would be accountable for all spend as directed by the relevant Committee.

## 7. Summary

Council approved the establishment of a Grant Funding Unit in April 2024, with a Grant Funding Policy approved by the Policy and Governance Committee in January 2025. It was proposed that the Grant Funding Unit commenced as a central support service from 1 April 2025, as part of the Finance and Governance Department. It was also proposed that the Grant Funding Unit staff structure be approved and the internal recruitment, initially of two staff consisting of one FTE Grants and Funding Officer and one FTE Grant Funding Support Assistant, to commence.

Proposed by Councillor Cooper  
Seconded by Alderman Smyth and agreed that

**the Grant Funding Unit staff structure be approved, effective from 1 April 2025.**

*ACTION BY:* Anna Boyle, Funding Unit Manager

## 5.2 **IN CONFIDENCE** FC/G/2 **BANKING ARRANGEMENTS**

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Proposed by Councillor Cooper  
Seconded by Alderman Boyle and agreed that

[REDACTED]

*ACTION BY: Richard Murray, Head of Finance*

**PROPOSAL TO PROCEED OUT OF 'IN CONFIDENCE'**

Proposed by Alderman Clarke  
Seconded by Councillor Cosgrove 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 thanked everyone for their attendance and the meeting concluded at 7.05 pm.

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**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.***