



9 April 2026

Committee Chairperson: Councillor B Webb

Committee Vice-Chairperson: Councillor H Magill

Committee Members: Aldermen – P Bradley, L Clarke and M Cosgrove

Councillors – J Burbank, S Cosgrove, H Cushinan, P Dunlop, M Goodman, N Kelly, A McAuley, T McGrann, V McWilliam and A O'Lone

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 14 April 2026 at 6.30pm.**

You are requested to attend.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard Baker".

Richard Baker, GM MSc
Chief Executive, Antrim and 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

memberservices@antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk

A G E N D A

1 APOLOGIES

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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3.1 Equality Scheme 2026-2030 Presentation

4 ITEMS FOR DECISION

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7 ITEMS IN CONFIDENCE

7.1 Wide Area Network (WAN) Upgrade

**REPORT ON BUSINESS TO BE CONSIDERED AT THE
POLICY AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE MEETING ON
TUESDAY 14 APRIL 2026**

3 PRESENTATION

3.1 CCS/EDP/029 EQUALITY SCHEME 2026-2030 PRESENTATION

1. Purpose

A presentation will be delivered on the Council's updated Equality Scheme, alongside the Equality Action Plan (EAP) and Disability Action Plan (DAP) for the period 2026–2030.

2. Equality Scheme, Equality Action Plan and Disability Action Plan

The presentation will outline key priorities, statutory obligations, and proposed actions aimed at promoting equality of opportunity and addressing disability-related barriers across Council services.

3. Recommendation

It is recommended that the presentation be noted.

Prepared by: Lesley Millar, Head of Organisation Development

Approved by: Liz Johnston, Director of Organisation Development (Interim)

4 ITEMS FOR DECISION

4.1 CCS/EDP/029 DRAFT EQUALITY SCHEME 2026-2030, EQUALITY ACTION PLAN AND DISABILITY ACTION PLAN

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to recommend to Members to approve the draft Equality Scheme 2026-2030, draft Equality Action Plan and draft Disability Action Plan for consultation.

2. Background

Members are advised that the Council's Equality Scheme, Equality Action Plan, and Disability Action Plan are due for review.

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires the Council, when carrying out its functions in relation to Northern Ireland, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between the nine categories of persons specified 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.

3. Draft Equality Scheme 2026-2030

The Council's Equality Scheme describes the arrangements that, as a public authority, the Council must establish and apply as a means of fulfilling the statutory requirements of Section 75(1) and (2), i.e., the duties to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and regard to the desirability of promoting good relations.

The draft Equality Scheme 2026–2030 is **enclosed**.

4. Draft Equality Action Plan and Draft Disability Action Plan 2026-2030

The Council's Equality Action Plan and Disability Action Plan have been comprehensively reviewed to ensure continued alignment with the Council's statutory obligations and corporate priorities.

As part of this review, the Council undertook engagement with relevant stakeholders and internal services to ensure that the proposed actions are robust, evidence-informed, and reflective of current and emerging needs.

The revised Plans present a strengthened framework through which the Council will continue to advance equality, accessibility, and inclusion during the period 2026–2030.

The draft Equality Action Plan and draft Disability Action Plan 2026–2030 are **enclosed**.

5. Consultation

The Scheme and Actions Plans will be subject to a 12-week public consultation, which will commence in May 2026. Following consultation, the final Equality Scheme and Action Plans will be brought back to Members for approval.

The approved Equality Scheme, Equality Action Plan, and Disability Action Plans (2026–2030) will be submitted to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland and reported on annually.

6. Recommendation

It is recommended that the Draft Equality Scheme 2026-2030, Draft Equality Action Plan and Draft Disability Action Plan be approved for consultation.

Prepared by: Lesley Millar, Head of Organisation Development

Approved by: Liz Johnston, Director of Organisation Development (Interim)

4.2 CCS/EDP/11 EQUALITY SCHEME FIVE YEAR REVIEW

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to recommend to Members to approve the Five-Year Review of the Councils Equality Scheme for submission to the Equality Commission, for the period 2020-2025.

2. Background

Members are 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 concludes that the Council made measurable progress in advancing equality and inclusion. While challenges remain, the foundations put in place over the past five years provide a strong platform for continued improvement. The next phase will focus on deepening community involvement, tackling persistent inequalities, and ensuring that fairness remains central to all Council activities.

The Five-Year Review document for the period 2020 to 2025 is **enclosed**.

3. Recommendation

It is recommended that the Five-Year Review of the Equality Scheme for the period 2020-2025 be approved.

Prepared by: Claire Webb, Accessibility and Inclusion Officer

Agreed by: Lesley Millar, Head of Organisation Development

Approved by: Liz Johnston, Director of Organisation Development (Interim)

4.3 PT/CI/073 BUSINESS PLAN 2026/27 - ORGANISATION DEVELOPMENT DIRECTORATE

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to recommend to Members to approve the Organisation Development Directorate Business Plan 2026/27.

2. Background

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

In January 2026 the Council approved a strategic performance framework as part of the Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan 2026/27 (draft for consultation).

4. Business Planning

Business planning plays a vital role in the Council's performance management and delivery processes. It offers a more efficient and cohesive approach to monitoring and evaluating performance while improving overall visibility.

The purpose of the Directorate Business Plans are to:

- Demonstrate how each of the Directorates are supporting and achieving Council's priorities.
- Provide a clear sense of purpose of the Directorate and the challenges it faces.
- Illustrate how it is aligning its resources to meet the challenges ahead.
- Measure performance and hold ourselves to account to ensure we deliver for the Council and its residents.

Business Plan for; Organisation Development Directorate is **to follow.**

5. Governance

Progress reports on the Council's Directorate Business Plans 2026/27 will be reported quarterly to CLT and biannually to relevant Committees.

6. Recommendation

It is recommended that the Organisation Development Directorate Business Plan 2026/27 be approved.

Prepared by: Allen Templeton, Performance Improvement Officer

Agreed by: Lesley Millar, Head of Organisation Development

Approved by: Liz Johnston, Director of Organisation Development (Interim)

4.4 PT/CI/073 BUSINESS PLAN 2026/27 - FINANCE DIRECTORATE

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to recommend to Members to approve the Finance Directorate Business Plan 2026/27.

2. Background

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

In January 2026 the Council approved a strategic performance framework as part of the Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan 2026/27 (draft for consultation).

4. Business Planning

Business planning plays a vital role in the Council's performance management and delivery processes. It offers a more efficient and cohesive approach to monitoring and evaluating performance while improving overall visibility.

The purpose of the Directorate Business Plans are to:

- Demonstrate how each of the Directorates are supporting and achieving Council's priorities.
- Provide a clear sense of purpose of the Directorate and the challenges it faces.
- Illustrate how it is aligning its resources to meet the challenges ahead.
- Measure performance and hold ourselves to account to ensure we deliver for the Council and its residents.

Business Plan for; Finance Directorate is **to follow.**

5. Governance

Progress reports on the Council's Directorate Business Plans 2026/27 will be reported quarterly to CLT and biannually to relevant Committees.

6. Recommendation

It is recommended that the Finance Directorate Business Plan 2026/27 be approved.

Prepared by: Allen Templeton, Performance Improvement Officer

Agreed by: Lesley Millar, Head of Organisation Development

Approved by: Liz Johnston, Director of Organisation Development (Interim)

4.5 CCS/EDP/025 DUAL LANGUAGE STREET SIGN APPLICATIONS

1. Purpose

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

Stage 1

- Cargin Road, Toomebridge, BT41 3NS be approved.
- Hollybrook Gardens, Newtownabbey, BT36 3ZS be approved.
- Loup Road, Toomebridge, BT41 3TW be approved.

Stage 2

- Longlands Walk, Newtownabbey, BT36 7NQ be noted.
- Longlands Park, Newtownabbey, BT36 7NG be noted.

Stage 3

- No applications at stage 3 be noted.

2. Introduction/Background

Members are reminded that in accordance with the Dual Language Street Sign Policy, adopted by Council on 30 May 2022 (**enclosed**), the following update outlines the current status of applications received.

3. Application Update

STAGE 1: PETITION VERIFICATION - there are three applications at Stage 1.

1. CARGIN ROAD, TOOMEBRIDGE, BT41 3NS
2. HOLLYBROOK GARDENS, NEWTOWNABBEY, BT36 3ZS
3. LOUP ROAD, TOOMEBRIDGE, BT41 3TW

Three new applications have been received for the above streets. Following a visit to the Electoral Office NI, the occupiers signing the petition were verified against the Electoral Register and satisfy the one-third threshold as required within the approved Policy. Approval is requested to proceed to Stage 2.

STAGE 2: RESIDENTS CANVASS – there are two applications at Stage 2.

1. LONGLANDS WALK, NEWTOWNABBEY, BT36 7NQ
2. LONGLANDS PARK, NEWTOWNABBEY, BT36 7NG

Two applications are at Stage 2 and canvass letters have been issued following a visit to the Electoral Office NI. An update will be provided in the next report.

STAGE 3: STREET SIGN INSTALLATION – there are no applications at Stage 3.

Maps and costs are **enclosed** for information.

4. Recommendation

It is recommended that Dual Language Street Sign applications at:

Stage 1

- **Cargin Road, Toomebridge, BT41 3NS be approved.**
- **Hollybrook Gardens, Newtownabbey, BT36 3ZS be approved.**
- **Loup Road, Toomebridge, BT41 3TW be approved.**

Stage 2

- **Longlands Walk, Newtownabbey, BT36 7NQ be noted.**
- **Longlands Park, Newtownabbey, BT36 7NG be noted.**

Stage 3

- **No applications at stage 3 be noted.**

Prepared by: Claire Webb, Accessibility and Inclusion Officer

Agreed by: Lesley Millar, Head of Organisation Development

Approved by: Liz Johnston, Director of Organisation Development (Interim)

4.6 G/MSMO/1 SCHEME OF ALLOWANCES PAYABLE TO COUNCILLORS 2026-27

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to recommend to Members to approve the updated Scheme of Allowances Payable to Councillors 2026-27.

2. Introduction/Background

Members are reminded that Council is required under the Local Government (Payments to Councillors) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2019 to make a scheme for the payment of allowances to Councillors and Committee Members in respect of each year. The scheme may be amended at any time.

3. Key Issues

The current Scheme of Allowances for 2025/26 was approved by Council in November 2025.

The revised Scheme of Allowances for 2026/27 **enclosed** effective from 1 April 2026 has been revised to incorporate an increase in the Dependant's Carers' Allowance. This allowance is linked to the National Living Wage which from 1 April 2026 increased to £12.71 per hour and has therefore been increased in the scheme to this amount for standard care and to £25.41 per hour for specialised care. The maximum monthly amounts have also been revised to reflect the increase in hourly rates.

There are no other changes to allowances at this time.

Any future notifications from the DfC in relation to changes to the allowances payable for the 2026/27 financial year shall be reported to Members for their approval.

4. Recommendation

It is recommended that the updated Scheme of Allowances Payable to Councillors for 2026/27 be approved.

Prepared by: Richard Murray, Head of Finance

Approved by: John Balmer, Director of Finance

5 ITEMS FOR NOTING

5.1 G/DPFI/2 QUARTERLY REPORT ON FOI/EIR/DPA REQUESTS

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to recommend to Members to note the Quarter 3 statistics relating to FOI/EIR/DPA requests.

2. Introduction/Background

A report has been prepared on requests received and completed in the third quarter of the year (1 October to 31 December 2025) under the Freedom of Information Act (FOI), Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) and the Data Protection Act (DPA) and this is **enclosed**.

3. Summary

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

- The number of requests received was higher than the number in the same period the previous year – an increase of 52%.
- Of the 128 requests received, 79 were under FOI, 42 under EIR and 7 under DPA.
- 120 requests were completed within the quarter.
- 92% 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 that received the most requests in the quarter were Environmental Health (36), Finance (32), Planning (21), Waste (16) and HR (16).
- Five appeals were received during the quarter. The Council's original decision was upheld on 3 occasions and additional information was provided on 2 occasions. One appeal was underway at the end of the quarter.
- No complaints to the ICO were notified within the quarter.

4. Recommendation

It is recommended that the Quarter 3 statistics relating to FOI/EIR/DPA requests be noted.

Prepared by: Helen McCreight, Lead Information Governance Officer

Approved by: Paul Casey, Borough Lawyer, Legal, Land, Governance & Policy

5.2 CCS/EDP/028 EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION CONFERENCE 2026

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to recommend to Members to note the delivery of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Conference for parents and carers of children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) on Wednesday 27 May 2026.

2. Background

Council continues its commitment to improving inclusion, accessibility, and support for families across the Borough. Parents and carers of children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) consistently report challenges in navigating services, securing appropriate educational support, and accessing reliable information.

To address these needs, officers, working closely with the Mayor, propose the development and delivery of a half-day EDI Conference focused on shining a light on parents and carers of SEN children, making them feel seen, and providing advice and support on key topics.

The Conference will also strengthen partnership working across statutory bodies, the community/voluntary sector, and Council services.

3. Conference Details

Title: We See You – Stronger Together
Date/Time: Wednesday 27 May 2026, 10.00am–1.00pm
Venue: Theatre at The Mill

The Conference will include keynote speakers, panel discussions and an information marketplace, alongside dedicated support spaces to ensure accessibility for all attendees. The conference agenda will be circulated to Members, staff, and the Community in due course.

4. Financial Implications

Costs will be met from within existing budgets, as agreed through the rate setting process.

5. Recommendation

It is recommended that delivery of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Conference for parents and carers of children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) on Wednesday 27 May 2026 be noted.

Prepared by: Lesley Millar, Head of Organisation Development

Approved by: Liz Johnston, Director of Organisation Development (Interim)

6 ANY OTHER RELEVANT BUSINESS

Any Other Relevant Business (AORB) may be taken at this point.