



**MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF A MEETING OF THE POLICY AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE HELD IN ANTRIM CIVIC CENTRE ON TUESDAY 6 SEPTEMBER 2016 AT 6.30PM**

**In the Chair** : Councillor B Duffin

**Members Present** : Aldermen - F Agnew, P Barr and W DeCourcy  
Councillors - J Bingham, P Brett, P Hamill, N Kells, A Logue,  
M Maguire, N McClelland, P Michael and B Webb

**Non-Committee Members Present** : Councillor D Arthurs

**Officers Present** : Chief Executive - Mrs J Dixon  
Director of Organisation Development - Mrs A McCooke  
Head of Communications & Customer Service - Mrs T White  
Management Accountant - Mr R Murray  
ICT Officer - Mr C Bell  
Senior Administrative Officer - Mrs K Smyth

**CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the September Meeting of the Policy and Governance Committee and reminded all present of recording requirements.

On behalf of the Committee, the Chairman conveyed condolences to Councillor Cushinan and his family on their recent bereavement and lead the meeting in a minute's silence.

**1 APOLOGIES**

Councillors D Hollis and M Goodman.

**2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

### **3.1 G/MSMO/1 COUNCILLORS ALLOWANCES: DEFINITION OF 'CARER' IN RESPECT OF DEPENDENTS' CARERS' ALLOWANCE**

Members were advised of receipt of correspondence from the Department for Communities, a copy of which was circulated.

This allowance was open to all Councillors who were the main carers of a dependent where care is required to enable the Councillor to perform a Council approved duty.

The Department proposed to widen the definition of a qualifying carer, with the particular intention of trying to encourage those with caring responsibilities to engage in public service.

The deadline for receipt of responses by the Department was 13 September 2016.

Proposed by Councillor Kells  
Seconded by Councillor Hamill and agreed that

**Members respond on an individual/party political basis.**

*ACTION BY: John Balmer, Head of Finance*

### **3.2 FI/GEN/2 ANTRIM AND NEWTOWNABBEY BOROUGH COUNCIL RESERVES POLICY**

#### **Introduction**

Financial reserves are held for three main purposes:

- A working balance to reduce the impact of uneven cash flows and avoid unnecessary temporary borrowing.
- A contingency to cushion the impact of unexpected events or emergencies.
- A means of building up funds, often referred to as earmarked reserves to meet known or predicted requirements.

The following reserves policy document explains:

- the legislative background to holding reserves
- an explanation of the types of reserve
- the principles to consider in assessing the adequacy of reserves

Summary protocols conclude the policy.

#### **Legislative Background**

The requirement for financial reserves is acknowledged in statute; Section 6 of the Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 requires authorities to have regard to the level of reserves when calculating the budget requirement.

There are also a range of safeguards in place that help prevent local authorities over-committing themselves financially. These include:

- The balanced budget requirement
- The statutory duty of the chief financial officer to report on the robustness of estimates and adequacy of reserves when the authority is considering its budget requirement (Sections 4 and 6, Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011)
- The legislative requirement for each local authority to make arrangements for the proper administration of their financial affairs and that the chief financial officer has responsibility for the administration of those affairs as set out in Sections 1, Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.
- The requirements of the Prudential Code.

These safeguards are reinforced by section 7 of the Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 which requires the chief financial officer to report to council if there is or is likely to be inadequate reserves and what remedial action is necessary to prevent recurrence of this situation. This would include situations where reserves have become seriously depleted and it is forecast that the council will not have resources to meet its expenditure in a particular financial year.

Additionally the external auditor reports on the going concern of council and of its financial position; it is not however their responsibility to prescribe the optimum or minimum level of reserves for council.

The Prudential Code requires the Chief Financial Officer to have full regard to affordability when considering the capital programme; not only the initial capital cost but also the associated revenue commitments for at least three years.

### **Types of Reserve**

As stated in the introduction reserves can be held for three main purposes:

- A working balance to reduce the impact of uneven cash flows and avoid unnecessary temporary borrowing -this forms part of the general fund reserve;
- A contingency to cushion the impact of unexpected events or emergencies - this also forms part of the general fund reserve.
- A means of building up funds, often referred to as earmarked reserves to meet known or predicted requirements -The Local Governance Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, Section 9 empowers the Council to establish any other fund, outside of the general fund, that it considers necessary.

Earmarked reserves that would be common include:

<b>Category of Earmarked Reserve</b>	<b>Rationale</b>
Sums set aside for major schemes, such as capital developments or asset purchases, or to fund major reorganisations	Where expenditure is planned in future accounting periods, it is prudent to set aside resources in advance
Insurance reserves	Self-insurance is a mechanism used by a number of local authorities. In the absence of any statutory basis, sums held to meet potential contingent liabilities are reported as earmarked reserves where these liabilities do not meet the definition of a provision under the requirements of the Code's adoption of IAS 37 Provisions, Contingent Assets and Liabilities.
Reserves of trading and business units	Surpluses arising from in-house trading may be retained to cover potential losses in future years, or to finance capital expenditure.
Reserves retained for service departmental use	Authorities may have internal protocols that permit year-end underspending at departmental level to be carried forward.
Reserves for unspent revenue grants	Where revenue grants have no conditions or where conditions are met and expenditure has yet to take place. Best practice recommends that these sums are held in earmarked services.
Reserves for repairs and renewals	Where expenditure is planned in future periods for significant repairs or renewals or as a contingency for unforeseen works.
Election Reserves	To fund future by-election or main election costs

The General Fund reserve and earmarked reserves like the above form what are called collectively council's 'usable reserves'

When establishing an earmarked reserve Council should set out:

- The reason and purpose of the reserve.
- How and when the reserves can be used.
- Procedures for the management and control of the reserves.
- A process and timescales for review to ensure continuing relevance and adequacy.

A further category of reserves, 'unusable reserves' also prevails. These arise out of the interaction of legislation and proper accounting practice to store revaluation gains or as adjustment accounts to reconcile accounting requirements driven by reporting standards to statutory requirements. These reserves, which are not resource backed, cannot be used for anything other than their defined purpose.

Examples of such unusable reserves would include:

- Revaluation Reserves- this records unrealised gains and losses in the value of property, plant and equipment
- Capital Adjustment Account-this is a specific accounting mechanism used to reconcile between how assets are depreciated and how they are funded.

### **Principles to Assess the Adequacy of Reserves**

To assess the adequacy of the usable reserves, council should take account of the strategic, operational and financial risks facing council both currently and in the medium term.

Assessment of risk should include external risks e.g. flooding, as well as internal risks, e.g. the ability to deliver planned efficiency savings.

Factors that require consideration include:

- Budget assumptions for inflation and interest rates
- Estimates of the level and timing of capital receipts
- Councils track record in budget and financial management
- Demand led pressures- e.g. waste tonnage
- The treatment of planned efficiency savings/productivity gains
- Risks inherent in any significant new funding arrangements, major outsourcing arrangements or major capital developments
- The financial impact should major contingent liabilities crystallise
- The adequacy of Councils insurance arrangements
- Councils virement and end of year procedures in relation to budget under and over spends
- The general financial climate and future funding arrangements
- Changes or potential changes to the rate base within the Borough
- The profile of cash flows experienced by Council.

Whilst all of these factors are considered in setting the annual budget, the level of risk and uncertainty that is assigned to each factor is relevant in determining an appropriate level of reserves

In principle, balancing the annual budget by applying monies from reserves is a legitimate short-term option. However, it is not normally prudent for reserves to be deployed to finance recurrent expenditure.

Other factors influencing the level of reserves include:

- Political desire to constrain rates increase
- Transfer to Council of central government functions

A considerable level of judgement is therefore required, in conjunction with council's risk management process in determining an appropriate level of reserve.

Best practice guidance advises that Council should establish a clear protocol for the establishment of reserves and the level of those reserves. Reserves should not be held without a clear purpose. It is accepted that the level of reserves should reflect all relevant local circumstances and therefore as a result, Council will operate within a broad range of levels and types of reserves.

### **Protocols**

When establishing an earmarked reserve Council will set out:

- The reason and purpose of the reserve.
- How and when the reserves can be used.

Council will review annually, as part of the budgetary process, the adequacy of the General Fund and each earmarked reserve taking into account the strategic, operational and financial risks facing the council.

The continued relevance of each earmarked reserve will also be reviewed as part of the annual budgetary process.

In light of Councils financial management processes, predicted cashflows, capital spending plans and risks around government funding and rateable valuations, officers recommend keeping general reserves equating to at least 10% of gross revenue and capital spend.

Appendix 1 (circulated) shows the Council Reserves Position at the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016.

Proposed by Councillor Kells

Seconded by Councillor Bingham and agreed that

**the policy be approved and reserve levels kept under review.**

*ACTION BY: John Balmer, Head of Finance*

### **3.3 HR/LD/5 EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AND WELLBEING STRATEGY 2016-2020**

Members were advised that an Employee Engagement and Wellbeing Strategy had been developed to support transformational change across the Council (circulated).

The Strategy framework design was based on the Steps to Wellbeing developed by the New Economic Foundation from evidence gathered in the UK Government's Foresight Project on Mental Capital and Wellbeing. It also supported the domains of Wellbeing outlined by the Chartered Institute of Personnel Development in 'Growing the Health and Wellbeing agenda: From Steps to full potential.'

The Strategy underpins the corporate themes of Place, People, Prosperity and Performance and the achievement of the corporate objectives and connects to improving employee engagement, reducing absenteeism, driving innovation and service improvement.

The Employee Engagement and Wellbeing Strategy 2016-2020 had been equality screened.

Proposed by Alderman Barr  
Seconded by Alderman Agnew and agreed that

**the Employee Engagement and Wellbeing Strategy 2016-2020 be approved and implemented.**

*ACTION BY: Jennifer Buckley, Human Resources Manager*

### **3.4 CCS/CCPRM/5 EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION AND MARKETING PLAN**

#### **1.1 Background**

Members were reminded that a report in December 2015 outlined an update plan external communications and marketing. Following the centralisation of the Marketing and PR services into one team, it was agreed to streamline the main publications to maximise the engagement of our residents and realise efficiency savings.

As a result, it was agreed that the resident's magazine, Borough Life, would be issued six times per year to businesses and residents and would incorporate a section on Active Life. In addition, Cultural Life would be issued three times per year with a combined offering of theatres, workshops, exhibition and heritage.

#### **1.2 Update**

There were two phases to the review of publications; consolidation of publications and change of schedule and content, followed by a conversion to digital media over a 12 month period.

Borough Life had been scheduled six times per year to meet the seasonality of the events and projects that are taking place.

To date the magazine has been issued in:

- January 2016
- March 2016
- May 2016
- August 2016

Plans are in place to deliver

- October 2016
- November 2016
- Then to continue these dates in into 2017

The magazine has changed in format slightly from the first edition, to include Active Life which is no longer printed as a separate publication. With each magazine key information is provided and a survey carried out to consult with our residents on key service based issues.

### **Cultural Life**

Cultural Life sections, Applaud, Create, Discover and Engage have been combined into one cultural offer in a single brochure. There are three issues within the year as follows:

May 2016 - This covered the summer period which is lighter than autumn and winter schedules.

August 2016 - This was the first of the larger brochures issued and covers the period up until Christmas

December 2016 – this will cover theatre performances and workshops to May 2017.

Cultural Services databases have been cleansed and combined and brochures mailed to those on the list, both within and outside the Borough (total database of approx. 15,000).

As a part of an integrated marketing plan, officers will explore options for the inclusion of Cultural Life within Borough Life with an additional print run of brochures to be distributed to customers outside the Borough.

Within the latest edition, we are encouraging customers to sign up for digital formats of the Cultural Life which will bring the brochure to life with video content. It will also allow customers to link directly into the booking system for tickets.



A new combined box office system for Cultural Services is currently being procured and will support further digital communications and enable us to be more targeted in our marketing activity.

On completion of a full twelve month cycle of publications, it is proposed that a further report be submitted to Council in January 2017 outlining options to integrate Cultural Life within Borough Life, and providing a full update of the Council's external communications and marketing strategy.

Proposed by Councillor McClelland  
Seconded by Councillor Hamill and agreed that

**that a report be made in January 2017 outlining options to integrate Cultural Life within Borough Life.**

*ACTION BY: Tracey White, Head of Communications and Customer Services*

### **3.5 CCS/EDP/7 ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT TO THE EQUALITY COMMISSION**

Section 75 requires public authorities to have due regard for the need to promote equality of opportunity between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation, men and women generally persons with a disability and persons without and persons with dependants and persons without.

The Council's Equality Scheme describes certain arrangements that as a public authority Council has set-up and is obliged to apply and follow as a means of fulfilling the duties imposed on it by 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.

This 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. On an annual basis Council must provide a progress report to the Equality Commission to 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 progress report was circulated in Appendix 1 for Members' consideration.

Members were reminded that 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 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 Scheme was formally approved by the Equality Commission in November 2014. The Scheme outlines how we propose to fulfil our statutory duties under Section 75. Within the Scheme, the Council gave a commitment to apply screening methodology, noted in Appendix 2, to all new and revised policies and where necessary and appropriate to subject new policies to further equality impact assessment.

Members were advised that in view of the merger and to ensure full compliance, a policy screening audit is almost finished to ensure that all formal screening has been completed across the Council. The formal screening exercises completed to date are summarised in Appendix 3 and the screening exercises were circulated in Appendix 4.

To regularise the preparation and publication of screening exercises, a further report will be made on the remaining equality screening, soon to be completed, and a quarterly report will be made thereafter, commencing from January 2017. Equality training has also been organised for the relevant staff which includes further practical training in relation to the equality screening of policies.

Proposed by Councillor Kells  
Seconded by Councillor Webb and agreed that

**Members (1) note the screening exercises and (2) approve the draft Annual Progress Report for submission to the Equality Commission.**

*ACTION BY: Tracey White, Head of Communications and Customer Services*

### **3.6 CE/GEN/40 PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT POLICY**

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

The Council had agreed a performance management framework and is committed to driving transformation, continuous service improvement, innovation and performance across all areas of the organisation.

An overarching Performance Improvement Policy had been developed which will support transformation and improvement and fulfills the requirements of the new responsibilities of Council under the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

A copy of the draft Performance Improvement Policy was circulated for Members' consideration.

Proposed by Alderman Barr  
Seconded by Councillor Bingham and agreed that

**the Performance Improvement Policy be approved.**

*ACTION BY: Helen Hall, Business Change Manager*

### **3.7 HR/SG/2 ANBC DOMESTIC VIOLENCE POLICY**

#### **BACKGROUND**

Members were reminded that a report was made to the Committee in June 2016 in relation to a Domestic Violence Policy. This report provided a further update on the development of the new Domestic Violence Policy.

#### **POLICY UPDATE**

The purpose of the Domestic Violence Policy was to raise awareness of the issue and to provide support to those affected.

This policy demonstrated the Council's commitment as a Safe Employer, having Safe Towns within the Borough and maintaining Gold Workplace Charter Status, by providing guidance for employees and managers to address the occurrence of domestic violence and its effects on the workplace.

The Policy Development and Review working group met on the 27 July 2016 to review the Draft Domestic Violence Policy (circulated). The Council's current work with ONUS to address Domestic Violence is ongoing and the implementation of this and related training is to achieve Safe Borough status.

The Domestic Violence Policy will be implemented across the Council and reviewed in line with legislative changes and/or procedural updates. Training will be coordinated at the appropriate levels across the Council for all staff and Members.

Proposed by Councillor McClelland  
Seconded by Alderman Barr and agreed that

**the Domestic Violence Policy be approved and implemented.**

*ACTION BY: Jennifer Buckley, Human Resources Manager*

Councillor Logue joined the meeting.

### **3.8 HR/SG/1 ANBC SAFEGUARDING POLICY**

#### **BACKGROUND**

Members were reminded that a report was made to the Committee in June 2016 in relation to Safeguarding. This report provided a further update on the development of the new Child and Adult Safeguarding Policy.

## **POLICY UPDATE**

The purpose of the Child and Adult Safeguarding Policy was to convey that 'safeguarding is everyone's business' and that as a Council, Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council will strive to prevent and protect children and adults at risk from harm.

The Policy Development and Review working group met on the 27 July 2016 to review the Draft Child and Adult Safeguarding Policy (circulated). This was a progressive meeting with the Trade Unions who were informed of the changes in Adult Safeguarding as directed by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety and the Department for Justice in Northern Ireland.

Members were advised that revised Adult Reporting Procedures are pending; therefore this section of the policy will be updated following release of the revised procedures by the Northern Health Trust representative for Adult Safeguarding.

The Child and Adult Safeguarding Policy will be implemented across the Council and reviewed every three years or in line with legislative changes and/or procedural updates. Training will be coordinated at the appropriate levels across the Council for all staff and Members.

Proposed by Councillor Webb  
Seconded by Councillor Bingham and agreed that

**the Child and Adult Safeguarding Policy be approved and implemented, subject to the policy identifying a named designated Officer.**

*ACTION BY: Jennifer Buckley, Human Resources Manager*

### **3.9 FI/ICT/11 ICT - ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY**

Members were reminded that the circulated ICT Acceptable Usage Policy was approved in March 2015 and as outlined in the scope of the Policy, it applied to all Employees and Members using Council IT equipment and networks.

The purpose of the ICT Acceptable Usage Policy is to outline the acceptable use of computer equipment and networks at Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council. The parameters within the Policy are in place to protect both Employees, Members and Council. Inappropriate use exposes Council to risks including virus attacks, compromise of network systems and services, reputational damage, legal issues regarding data protection and time spent recovering information.

It is proposed that Members sign up to the ICT Acceptable Usage Policy and that the relevant form be made available to each Member, requesting that Members sign to indicate agreement to adhering to the Policy.

Members were advised that all staff will be shortly required to sign up to Policy adherence.

Proposed by Councillor Kells  
Seconded by Councillor Webb and agreed that

**an ICT Acceptable Usage Policy Form be issued to all Members for completion.**

*ACTION BY: Member Services*

### **3.10 G/BCEP/2 SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT - EMERGENCY PLANNING COORDINATOR**

#### **Background**

In November 2015 the *Review of Civil Contingencies Arrangements in Local Government in Northern Ireland* was published, seeking to clarify local government's role in relation to civil contingencies at a Council, sub regional and regional level, and to identify a suitable framework for delivery of the emergency planning function by councils. This review was reported to the Policy and Governance Committee in December 2015.

Further to the on-going discussions in regard to the implementation of the recommendations within the review, and consultation with the 3 Councils involved (Antrim & Newtownabbey, Mid and East Antrim and Causeway Coast & Glens), agreement in principle has now been reached on the nature and scope of the shared specialist service of the Emergency Planning Coordinator (EPCO) to be delivered and the corresponding financial arrangements across the three councils. A copy of the Service Level Agreement was circulated. This agreement had been reviewed by our in-house legal advisor and is deemed to be fit for purpose.

In addition to assisting with the Council's role in supporting communities throughout emergency situations, the EPCO role includes facilitating the effective functioning of the multi-agency Northern Emergency Preparedness Group with regard to emergency planning and response arrangements. The post provides for a coordinated and consistent approach to multiagency planning, training, exercising and response.

If approved, the Agreement will apply from 01 April 2016 and shall remain in force unless, further to review by the Chief Executives, the provision of a shared service is no longer deemed necessary.

The three Councils propose to operate the shared service model on an equal split basis, with each contributing 33.3% to the costs, whether or not Central

Government funding is available for the EPCO post. At this time, the total cost is estimated at £68,000 for the year, with each council contributing an equal share of approximately £23,000 each.

Proposed by Councillor Webb  
Seconded by Councillor Hamill and agreed that

**Members agree to enter into a shared service arrangement with Mid and East Antrim and Causeway Coast and Glens councils for the provision of an Emergency Planning Coordination Officer (EPCO) on the basis of the agreed Service Level Agreement along with the provision of the associated shared costs estimated at £23,000 per Council, should Central Government funding be unavailable.**

*ACTION BY: Liz Johnston, Head of Governance*

### **3.11 HR/HR/12 SEMINAR FOR DIVERSITY CHAMPIONS - UNCONSCIOUS BIAS IN THE WORKPLACE**

Members were advised of receipt of correspondence from the Local Government Staff Commission (LGSC) highlighting a seminar for Diversity Champions on Monday 12<sup>th</sup> September 2016 from 10.15am to 1pm in Magherafelt Offices, Mid Ulster District Council (*a light lunch is provided*).

There was no delegate fee for attendance.

The Seminar hosted by Mid Ulster District Council, would be facilitated by Dan Robertson (regarded as a subject matter expert in the areas of diversity, including management and unconscious bias) and Paula Fox from STEP (South Tyrone Empowerment Partnership) will also do a presentation on some diversity partnership work underway with the Council.

Council currently has three Diversity Champions as follows -

- Councillor J Blair
- Alderman M Girvan
- Councillor M Goodman

Proposed by Alderman Barr  
Seconded by Councillor McClelland and agreed that

**Council's three Diversity Champions, or their nominees, be approved to attend the LGSC Seminar as an approved duty along with a relevant officer.**

*ACTION BY: Kim Smyth, Senior Mayor & Member Services Officer*

### 3.12 HR/GEN/17 COLLABORATIVE HR REVIEW

Members were advised that following the Ministerial decision to close the Local Government Staff Commission (LGSC) in March 2017, SOLACE commissioned a review, via iESE, a public sector transformation partner, to determine options for Councils to collaborate in the field of Human Resources and Organisational Development. For Members' information, a copy of the full report was circulated in Appendix 1.

Additionally, the circulated report highlighted to Council a number of matters which required decisions in relation to the closure of the LGSC.

The work completed by iESE set out to determine the range of HR matters where collaboration would be beneficial on the basis of need and critical gaps, and additionally consider these against what has worked well within current HR operations.

Work was also completed to define the objectives of any new operating model including the definition of core aims and objectives of the function to provide a means of testing strategic fit.

Following consideration the SOLACE group recommends the establishment of a Collaborative HR Model, to deliver the following primary function:

- Independent Advisory Service (including the commissioning of policy development)
- Learning and Development (the commissioning of support to Councils as determined by SOLACE)

If approved, Members were advised that any new operating model would be subsequently reported for final approval and which would include final costings and related governance arrangements.

A summary of the core recommendations from the Collaborative HR Review, completed by iESE, was set out in Appendix 2 (in relation to Collaborative HR) and Appendix 3 (in relation to LGSC Dissolution), with noted commentary for Members' consideration.

Proposed by Councillor Brett  
Seconded by Councillor Webb and agreed that

**subject to a further report being made in relation to the confirmation of final costings and clarification on TUPE related issues, approval be given in principle to the:**

- 1) **establishment of a Collaborative HR model, which is owned and led by the councils, subject to review after 12 months**
- 2) **Chief Executives group (SOLACE) developing the cost and operating model and the related governance framework**
- 3) **establishment of the necessary resource to progress (2) above**

- 4) **Council contributing to its proportion of the dissolution costs of the LGSC and agreeing to the sale or transfer to new ownership of the LGSC premises.**

*ACTION BY: Andrea McCooke, Director of Organisation Development*

**3.13 G/GEN/1 MALLUSK POST OFFICE, UNIT 8-9 BUILDING 10, CENTRAL MALLUSK PARK, MALLUSK ROAD, NEWTOWNABBEY, BT36 4FS - PROPOSED MOVE TO NEW PREMISES AND BRANCH MODERNISATION**

Correspondence had been received from the Post Office advising that previous proposals to move Mallusk Post Office to new premises at Henderson Retail Spar, 45 Mallusk Road, Newtownabbey will not now go ahead as the proposed new operator had decided not to progress their application to operate the branch (*copy circulated*).

The branch would therefore continue to operate from the current location for the time being. A further local consultation on another location may be carried out in the near future.

Proposed by Councillor Bingham  
Seconded by Councillor Kells and agreed that

**the correspondence be noted.**

*NO ACTION*

**3.14 G/GEN/1 CHANGES TO BALLYNURE POST OFFICE, 27 MAIN STREET, BALLYNURE, BALLCLARE, BT39 9TU**

Correspondence had been received from the Post Office advising that plans to change Ballynure Post Office to one of the new-style local branches had now been finalised (*copy circulated*).

The new-look Post Office was scheduled to open at the current location on Tuesday 13 September 2016 at 13:00. The Post Office will close for refurbishment on Saturday 10 September 2016 at 12:30 during which services will be provided at:

- Doagh Post Office, 10 Station Road, Doagh, Ballyclare, BT39 0QT, and
- Ballyclare Post Office, Watt & Son Garage, 4 Ballynure Road, Ballyclare, BT39 9AG

Proposed by Councillor Bingham  
Seconded by Councillor Kells and agreed that

**the correspondence be noted.**



NO ACTION

**3.15 G/GEN/1 CRUMLIN POST OFFICE - MODERNISING**

Correspondence had been received from the Post Office advising of proposals to change Crumlin Post Office at Russell's Shop For You Now, 61-63 Main Street, Crumlin, BT29 4UR to one of their new main style branches (*circulated*).

The new-look post office was scheduled to open on Thursday 6 October 2016 at 13:00 and will therefore close for refurbishment on Tuesday 27 September 2016 at 17:30.

Proposed by Councillor Bingham  
Seconded by Councillor Kells and agreed that

**the correspondence be noted.**

NO ACTION

**3.16 ST/G/215 REPORT ON ATTENDANCE**

**BACKGROUND**

Members were advised that the table below outlined the sickness absence for Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council. The purpose of this report was to provide an update on absence for the period from 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016. For comparison purposes the same period for 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 had been included.

**ABSENCE UPDATE**

Full attendance had improved and at year end 48.26% of employees had 100% attendance for the 1 April 2015 – 31 March 2016 period.

Short Term absence had reduced by 66.7 Days compared to 2014/15 figures. There was an increase in long term absence of 559.94 days. Both will continue to be managed and reducing the long term absence remains a priority.

	<b>2013/2014</b>	<b>2014/2015</b>	<b>2015/2016</b>	
<b>Month</b>	1 Apr to 31 March 2014	1 Apr to 31 March 2015	1 Apr to 31 March 2016	Variance from period last year
<b>No. FTE *</b>	681.92	706.88	693.17	-13.71
<b>No. of days lost to sickness</b>	7786.69	7910.34	8403.61	+493.27

<b>Days lost to Long Term Absence</b>	5383.77	5626.41	6186.35	+559.94
<b>Day lost to Short Term Absence</b>	2402.92	2283.93	2217.26	-66.67
<b>Average Days Lost per Employee</b>	11.42	11.19	12.12	+0.93

**\* Number of full time equivalent staff employed by the Council based on the total days available for work in the period under review.**

The top three reasons for absence were noted below with current action being taken to address these.

<b>Reason</b>	<b>Action</b>
<b>Stress, depression, mental health and Fatigue</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staffcare, confidential counselling to all staff.</li> <li>• Cognitive behavioural Therapy (CBT) sessions for staff in appropriate cases.</li> <li>• Immediate letter sent to advise of Staffcare,</li> <li>• Immediate Meeting with employee and line manager alternative person if issue is with the Line Manager in WRS cases.</li> <li>• Referrals to Nurse Led Clinic and/or OH doctor</li> <li>• Regular Welfare Review Meetings to agreed action plans, Use of the Leisure Facilities,</li> <li>• Piloting of the Wellness Recovery Action Plan, helping staff to recognise stress earlier and the interventions that can be put in place to help</li> <li>• Harassment advisors available in all departments and various locations</li> </ul>
<b>Other Category E.g: Cancer Related Illness, Surgery and Post Op Debility etc</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Well being Action plans for individual cases.</li> <li>• Phased returns variety of reduced hours, alternative work and/or adjusted duties.</li> <li>• Use of leisure facilities to help with returns from surgery in suitable cases. Eg Pool</li> </ul>
<b>Musculo-Skeletal problems</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manual Handling Training</li> <li>• Referrals to Nurse Led Clinic and/or OH doctor,</li> <li>• Regular Welfare Review Meetings to agreed action plans,</li> <li>• Access to Physiotherapy subject to OH recommendation.</li> <li>• Wellbeing action plans.</li> <li>• Phased returns variety of reduced hours, alternative work and/or adjusted duties.</li> <li>• Work station/ergonomical assessments</li> <li>• Taster sessions of pilates</li> <li>• Investigation of workplace accidents and implementation of any appropriate recommendations</li> </ul>

### **LONG TERM ABSENCE CASES AT 31 MARCH 2016**

At 31 March 2016 there were 27 long term absence cases, as summarised below.

Community Planning and Regeneration	Finance and Governance	Chief Executive	Organisation Development	Operations
7	1	0	1	18

## EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT & WELLBEING PLAN

Work is underway to develop an Employee Engagement and Wellbeing Strategy and this will be reported in due course. Encouraging staff to focus on their own health and wellbeing is vitally important at this time. Absence is managed through the managing attendance policies in order to provide earlier interventions and increase self-awareness for staff of their own health and wellbeing, a range of Health and Wellbeing initiatives are being delivered during learning week from the 20 to 24 June 2016. The programme includes the following:

- Mental Wellbeing – Mindfulness session, Information for Line Managers in Managing Stress, Meditation and Yoga Taster Sessions.
- Health and Wellbeing –
  1. Health Checks to include Blood pressure, heart rate, cholesterol or blood sugar testing. 5
  2. Cancer Prevention Talks – with an element focusing on Care in the Sun Talk – Skin Scanner
  3. Action Cancer Big Bus – Breast Screening and MOT Health Checks –
  4. Cancer Focus - Keeping Well Van – Blood Pressure, Blood Glucose check, information on smoking cessation, body composition, nutritional information and general cancer advice.

## GENERAL UPDATE

An unusually high level of absence this year had resulted from Employee Relations issues. This had included a period of significant unrest at CSD Newtownabbey and other significant periods of absence that have come as a direct result of Disciplinary/Grievance related investigations.

No of Days absence due to cases at CSD	683.5
No of days absence due to other Employee Relations issues e.g. Disciplinary & Grievance	409
<b>Total Days lost due to Employee Relations issues</b>	<b>1,092.5</b>

Had these Employee Relations factors not been present, a reduction of 6% absence on the previous year would have been achieved.

The HR team continued to manage absence closely, reviewing procedures and making improvements where appropriate to enhance the managing of

attendance. HR have continued to provide a monthly update to CLT and Heads of Service.

Long term cases have continued to be closely monitored and a number of staff have recently returned from long term absences. In addition, five employees have had employment with the Council terminated due to ill health. Referrals to Occupational Health are made as appropriate and formal case reviews are being actioned where all possible steps have been taken and have failed to secure regular and sustained attendance.

Proposed by Councillor Webb  
 Seconded by Councillor Michael and agreed that

**the report be noted.**

NO ACTION

**3.17 ST/HS/207 AGENCY STAFF UPDATE**

Members were reminded that agency staff are used across the Council to provide temporary cover for absence such as maternity leave, secondments and temporary and permanent vacancies due to restructuring.

The table below provided an update for Members on the use of agency staff as at July 2016.

Reason for Agency Worker	Number of Agency Workers	Position Covered
Additional Resource	46	28 x Seasonal Grounds Maintenance 2 x Operatives, Bruslee & O'Neill Road Sites 2 x Operatives, Bruslee & O'Neill Road Sites IT System Support Officer Cleaner, Sentry Hill Community Development Assistant Events Assistant Administrative Assistant, Cleansing Building Control Surveyor Graphic Designer Pavilion Attendant Financial Accounting Officer Environmental Health Officer Admin Assistant, Antrim CC Leisure Attendant HR Officer Caravan Park Attendant
Filling Funded Posts	4	Clerical Assistant Affordable Warmth Project Affordable Warmth Project Officer x2

		Grange Community Project Officer
Covering Sickness/Maternity	10	Environmental Health Officer x2 Accounts Assistant x2 Finance Assistant Receptionist/Administrator IT Systems Assistant Customer Services Assistant Central Services Supervisor * Household Recycling Attendant *
Covering vacancies until structures filled	10	Clerical Officer, Environment & Leisure Enforcement Officer Facilities Officer, Property & Building Property Asset Management Assistant Project Manager, Capital Development Human Resources Assistant x2 Human Resources Assistant Conferencing Administrator Leisure Interim Support Manager
Covering career breaks/ secondments	7	Heritage Assistant Playzone Assistant Environmental Health Officer Technical Officer (Building Control) Specialist Driver, Parks IT System Support Assistant Borough Warden
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>77</b>	

The table above excluded limited ad-hoc agency cover which was necessary to provide operational cover, at short notice.

A report setting out expenditure for payments made to agencies in the period under review was circulated.

Proposed by Councillor Maguire  
Seconded by Alderman Barr and agreed that

**the report be noted.**

*NO ACTION*

### **3.18 FC/G/25 PAYMENTS REPORT**

The schedule of payments for Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council dated 05 August to 12 August 2016 and schedule of manual payments for June and July 2016 were circulated with any payments over £5,000 having been analysed in more detail.

Proposed by Councillor Kells  
Seconded by Councillor Webb and agreed that

**the report be noted.**

*NO ACTION*

### **3.19 FI/FIN/4 BUDGET REPORT - APRIL 2016 TO JULY 2016**

A budget report for the period April 2016 to July 2016 was circulated for Members information.

For the period the Council's variance on Net Cost of Services was £902k favourable, being £689k favourable on Expenditure and £213k favourable on Income. After applying the credit balance of £757k used in calculating the District Rates on a pro-rata basis, this results in a favourable surplus for the period of £650k

Overall, all of the departments were showing favourable variances with the vast majority of services also showing favourable variances.

Favourable variances had arisen in Premises costs and Supplies and Services during the period.

The major favourable income variances are within Environmental Health £125k, due to additional grants received in year (which will be matched by additional expenditure during the year) and within Property and Building Services £153k due to the volume of applications being higher than originally budgeted for.

The Council has incurred £233k in severance expenses in the period to date and has, similarly to the previous financial year, submitted an application to the Department of Communities to capitalise these costs and spread the cost over future years. On the assumption that this application will be successful, these costs will not impact on the financial performance of the Council in the 2016/17 financial year.

An estimate was also made, of £325k, of the savings which would be generated during the year as staff leave under the voluntary severance scheme. As the officers leave the Council, this budget shall be transferred to the relevant department and matched against the service where the savings are being generated.

Proposed by Councillor Maguire  
Seconded by Alderman Agnew and agreed that

**the report be noted.**

NO ACTION

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

Members were reminded the Department for Communities (DfC) previously Department of Environment (DOE) issued revised guidance (Local Government Circular 17/2013) on prompt payments and the recording of invoice payments in July 2013. This guidance requested councils to record specific performance targets of 10 working days and 30 calendar days and established a cycle of quarterly reporting on prompt payment performance by councils to the DOE and its publication on their website.

The council's prompt payment performance for the period 1 April 2016 to 30 June 2016 is set out below:

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

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

During the above period the Council paid 5,273 invoices totalling £9,079,290

The Council paid 4,272 invoices within the 30 day target. (81%)

The Council paid 2,394 invoices within the 10 day target. (45%)

The Council paid 1,001 invoices outside of the 30 day target. (19%)

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

The council recognised the importance of paying our suppliers promptly. As previously reported to improve performance; resources within the section had been re-allocated, procedures are being reviewed, new software is being introduced and staff training within and external to the section is on-going.

We continue to keep our procedures and performance under review.

Proposed by Councillor Kells  
Seconded by Councillor Bingham and agreed that

**the report be noted.**

NO ACTION

**3.21 CE/GEN/60 CORPORATE OBJECTIVES**

Members were advised that an update of Council performance against Corporate Objectives had been produced for 2015/2016.

A copy was circulated for Members' attention.

Proposed by Councillor Kells  
Seconded by Councillor Webb and agreed that

**the report be noted.**

NO ACTION

**3.22 G/MSMO/18 CONSULTATION - SINGLE JURASDICTION IN NORTHERN IRELAND**

Correspondence had been received from the Courts and Tribunals Service, a copy of which was circulated, regarding a recent consultation entitled 'Redrawing the Map: A consultation on Court Boundaries in Northern Ireland, The Lord Chief Justice was consulting on the listing direction to operate within a single jurisdiction'.

The consultation document can be accessed at [www.courtsni.gov.uk](http://www.courtsni.gov.uk) and clicking on 'Lord Chief Justice Direction: Single Jurisdiction' in the key matters section.

Following the conclusion further information will be issued confirming the new arrangements and the final date for commencement.

Proposed by Councillor Hamill  
Seconded by Alderman Agnew and agreed that

**the report be noted.**

NO ACTION

**3.23 G/MSMO/1 LOCAL GOVERNMENT POLICY DIVISION - PPP LETTER TO INTERESTED PARTIES SEEKING VIEWS ON PROVIDING COUNCILS WITH FLEXIBILITY FOR COUNCILLOR IT COSTS**

Correspondence had been received (circulated) from the Department for Communities and was proposing to provide Councils with the flexibility to pay for broadband, telephone calls and mobile data costs as required for Councillors to carry out their duties.



Addendum No. 3 to the guidance on Councillor Allowance, Local Government Circular 4/2015, had previously advised that consumables, for which Councillors receive £1,000 per year which was incorporated into the basic allowance, was intended to cover all of those costs.

Having considered further the Department was minded to provide Councils with the flexibility to decide the best approach for their Councillors. It was for each Council to ensure any decision taken was backed up by a sound internal business case.

Views on the revision are to be submitted before 14<sup>th</sup> September 2016.

Proposed by Councillor Brett  
Seconded by Councillor Kells and agreed that

**the Council responds welcoming the flexibility from the Department, including satisfaction with the assurance associated with a robust Business Case.**

*ACTION BY: Member Services*

### **3.24 CE/GEN/61 CORPORATE PLANNING WORKSHOP**

Members were reminded that the annual Corporate Planning Workshop was being held on Thursday 13 October 2016, from 9.30 am - 4.30 pm in the Council Chamber, Mossley Mill.

A draft programme was circulated for Members' consideration.

Proposed by Councillor McClelland  
Seconded by Councillor Webb and agreed that

**that the report be noted.**

*NO ACTION*

### **3.25 CE/OA/10 PUBLICATION OF BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR NORTHERN IRELAND'S PROVISIONAL PROPOSALS: 2018 REVIEW OF PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES**

Provisional Proposals for new Parliamentary constituencies in Northern Ireland were published on 6 September for consultation. The proposals follow a review by the Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland which began on 24 February 2016. As a result of the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011 (as amended), the number of constituencies in Northern Ireland had reduced from 18 to 17 and this had required a redrawing of the existing constituency boundaries.

The publication of the Commission's proposals triggered a 12-week public consultation period which would include four public hearings.

Copies of the Commission's Provisional Proposals Report and the accompanying map had been published on the Commission's website - [www.boundarycommission.org.uk](http://www.boundarycommission.org.uk) - and would also be placed on display at each of the 11 District Councils, public Libraries, Area Electoral Offices and the offices of the Electoral Commission.

Written representations in respect of the proposals were made from today until **Monday 28 November 2016**. Representations can be made online, by e-mail, post or at one of the Commission's public hearings.

The Commission had organised 4 public hearings to give an opportunity for the public to make representations on the Provisional Proposals. The hearings will be conducted by independent Chairs and will be held as follows:

- 5 October:** Tullyglass House Hotel, Ballymena
- 11 October:** Silverbirch Hotel, Omagh
- 20 October:** Ramada Plaza Hotel, Shaw's Bridge, Belfast
- 25 October:** Seagoe Hotel, Portadown

Information on how to register to attend a public hearing can be found on the Commission's website.

Proposed by Councillor Brett  
Seconded by Councillor Kells and agreed that

- (a) Council formulates a corporate response to the provisional proposals from the Boundary Commission (the closing date being Monday 28 November 2016);**
- (b) any Members wishing to attend the above public hearing events do so as an approved duty.**

*ACTION BY: Member Services*

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

With the Chairman's permission, Councillor Michael raised the public announcement earlier in the day from Belfast International Airport that their annual target of 5million passengers had been surpassed. The Committee agreed that the Mayor's Office should communicate with Belfast International Airport to commend and congratulate it and their staff.

*ACTION BY: Karen Hood, Personal Assistant to the Mayor*

There being no further Committee business the Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance and the meeting concluded at 7.07pm.

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**MAYOR**

***Council Minutes have been redacted in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 1998 and legal advice.***

