



MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE MEETING OF THE POLICY AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE HELD IN THE ROUND CHAMBER, ANTRIM CIVIC CENTRE ON TUESDAY 9 APRIL 2024 AT 6.30 PM

- In the Chair** : Alderman L Clarke
- Members Present** : Aldermen – P Bradley and P Michael
Councillors – M Brady, H Cushinan, E McLaughlin, H Magill, L O’Hagan, N Kelly, M Stewart and B Webb
- Officers Present** : Director of Finance & Governance – S Cole
Director of Corporate Strategy – H Hall
Director of Community Planning – U Fay
Deputy Director of Finance – J Balmer
Deputy Director of Governance – L Johnston
Head of Internal Audit – P Caulcutt
Head of Finance – R Murray
Head of ICT – G Smyth
Head of Health, Safety & Resilience – E Girvan
ICT Helpdesk Officer – J Wilson
Member Services Officer – S Boyd

CHAIRPERSON’S REMARKS

The Chairperson welcomed everyone to the April Meeting of the Policy and Governance Committee, and reminded all present of recording requirements.

1. APOLOGIES

Councillors Flanagan and O’Lone

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

3 PRESENTATION

3.1 FI/AUD/03 RISK MANAGEMENT PRESENTATION

1. Purpose

The purpose of the presentation was to provide Members with an overview of what Risk Management was and why it is done.

2. Background

Risk Management was a key element of the Councils' Governance Framework.

A Risk Management Strategy and associated procedures were in place which enabled the management of threats which may impact on the achievement of Council objectives.

A presentation was provided by the Head of Internal Audit.

In response to queries from Members, the Head of Internal Audit provided clarification relating to Risk Registers, reputational risk and links with Legal Services.

Proposed by Councillor Kelly
Seconded by Councillor Brady and agreed

that the Risk Management Presentation be noted.

NO ACTION

4 ITEMS FOR DECISION

4.1 G/IG/7 REVIEW OF FREEDOM OF INFORMATION POLICY

1. Purpose

This report sought Members approval of the review of the Freedom of Information Policy in accordance with the agreed Policy Framework.

2. Introduction/Background

The Freedom of Information Policy had been reviewed in accordance with the agreed Policy Framework and schedule. The policy was last reviewed in March 2022 (two year review cycle).

3. Key Issues

The review had identified a number of minor amendments as being required:

- update regarding changes in organisational structure
- website link for complaints to ICO added.

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

4. Governance

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

5. Summary

The Freedom of Information Policy had been reviewed in accordance with the agreed Policy Framework and schedule. The policy was last reviewed in March 2022 (two year review cycle).

The review had identified a number of minor amendments as being required:

- update regarding changes in organisational structure
- website link for complaints to ICO added.

These amendments had been made to the circulated draft of the policy. The reviewed policy had been approved by CLT.

Proposed by Councillor Webb
Seconded by Alderman Bradley and agreed

that Members agree the review of the Freedom of Information Policy in accordance with the agreed Policy Framework.

ACTION BY: Helen McBride, Information Governance Manager

4.2 **G/LEG/044 STANDING ORDERS WORKING GROUP MINUTES**

1. Purpose

This report sought Members approval of the minutes of the first meeting of the Standing Orders Working Group held on 22 February 2024.

2. Background

Following the decision to conduct a review of the Standing Orders at the December 2023 Policy and Governance Committee, Members agreed to the establishment of a Working Group (task and finish) to review Council's current Standing Orders.

The purpose of the Working Group, consisting of Members and relevant Officers was to make recommendations, on a task and finish principle, to the Policy and Governance Committee in relation to the revision of the Council's Standing Orders to make them relevant to the current modern governance arrangements.

The first meeting of the group took place on 22 February 2024.

3. Outcome

Terms of Reference for the working group were agreed (circulated), along with the appointment of the Mayor as Chairperson and Deputy Mayor as Vice Chairperson of the group

A copy of the minutes of the Standing Orders Working Group meeting was circulated for Members' consideration. These minutes were reviewed by the second Standing Orders Working Group held on 21 March 2024.

The Director of Finance and Governance advised Members following the second meeting of the working group on 21 March 2024 that it was agreed Officers would consider further wording options. These would be discussed at the next meeting of the working group on 25 April 2024 prior to full consultation and review with all Members to agree the revised Standing Orders.

Proposed by Councillor Brady
Seconded by Councillor Webb and agreed

that the minutes of the first meeting of the Standing Orders Working Group on 22 February 2024 be approved as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

ACTION BY: Liz Johnston, Deputy Director of Governance

4.3 **G/HSWB/4 HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY – REVIEWED AND UPDATED**

1. Purpose

This report was to recommend to Members the approval of a reviewed and updated Health and Safety Policy.

2. Introduction/Background

It was a legal requirement under Health and Safety at Work Act (HSWA) 1974 to have a written Health & Safety Policy if you employed five or more people. In addition to having a written policy, the Act placed certain obligations on employers to their employees whilst at work.

The Health and Safety Policy is the over-arching principle document outlining the arrangements for the Council's approach to managing Health and Safety.

This Policy was supported by a range of detailed subject specific Health and Safety related Procedures, which gave more detail on the management approach for that particular subject.

The associated Health and Safety Policy Statement was a statement of intent, listing what the Council and its employees would do to keep a safe and healthy environment for our employees and others affected by our activities. This was a requirement of the Health and Safety at Work Act and was signed by the most senior person in the Council, the Chief Executive.

3. Previous Decision of Council

The Policy, first agreed in 2015, was reviewed and approved by the Policy and Governance Committee in June 2019.

4. Review

As part of the review process, the updated Health and Safety Policy had been consulted with the Union Safety Representatives from NIPSA, GMB and UNITE in January 2024, and with the Health Safety and Wellbeing Committee and CLT. The Policy had also been screened with guidance from the Accessibility Officer.

A copy of the reviewed Health and Safety Policy (with and without tracked changes) along with the associated screening documents was circulated.

5. Implication

The updated Policy and Statement of Intent were not only required by law, but were a requirement of other accreditations held by Council, e.g. Quest+

6. Governance

Once approved, the Policy would be shared with all relevant stakeholders and uploaded onto iConnect. The Health and Safety Policy Statement would also be on display in all Council premises.

Proposed by Alderman Bradley
Seconded by Councillor O'Hagan and agreed

that Members approve the reviewed and updated Health and Safety Policy.

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

4.4 HR/ER/002 LOCAL GOVERNMENT STAFF COMMISSION

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to approve the Local Government Staff Commission continuing apportionment arrangements of £23,718 for 2024/25.

2. Apportionment Arrangements

Correspondence had been received from the Local Government Staff Commission (LGSC) confirming the apportionment arrangements for 2024/25. A copy of the correspondence was circulated for information.

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

In accordance with the 2024/25 Management and Dissolution Plan, the Commission had estimated its total financial requirement to be £418,661 for the year ahead. Income from ongoing operations, which was offset against this figure, was estimated at £40,000, leaving an amount of £378,661 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 6.26% of £378,661, namely £23,718.

Proposed by Councillor Webb

Seconded by Councillor Kelly and agreed that

- a) the Local Government Staff Commission continuing apportionment arrangements of £23,718 for 2024/25 be approved, and;**
b) Council writes to the Department for Communities Minister requesting a review of the decision to extend the date of dissolution and express the Council view that the Local Government Staff Commission should be wound up immediately.

ACTION BY: Helen Hall, Director of Corporate Strategy

4.5 CP/GEN/049 ESTABLISHMENT OF A GRANT FUNDING HUB

1. Purpose

This report sought Members approval for the establishment of a Grant Funding Hub for the Council starting with the recruitment of a Grant Funding Hub Manager to commence the project.

2. Background

The Council currently issues approximately £1.5 million in grant funding to individuals, groups and organisations through a range of grant funding programmes operated by various Departments and Sections of the Council. (see Appendix 1 circulated).

A significant portion of the funding issued by the Council comes to the organisations from external organisations including Government Departments such as the Department for Communities and The Executive Office.

In addition, Council Officers from all Departments proactively sought other opportunities to secure revenue and capital funding to support relevant projects and to date examples of this ranged from £5.1 million from Levelling Up for Glengormley and Antrim projects to £10,000 for delivery of a heritage project from the Historic Environment Division of the Department for Communities.

Officers had reviewed the current approach to grant funding and had concluded that:

- The approach to grant funding varies 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 of the organisation and the securing of funding into the organisation. This work was in the main financial and administrative and was currently resourced across the relevant Council Departments and Sections, and was additional to the core role of 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 our community.

3. Project Proposal

Given the issues outlined it was proposed to develop a Central Grant Funding Hub for the Council with the aims of:

1. Having a consistent customer focused approach with relevant assessment and evaluation procedures for the administration of grant funding.
2. Maximising the amount of external funding achieved to deliver the Councils Strategic and Business Plans.

It was proposed that this Hub would have the following key functions:

- a. Management and Administration of Councils Grant Funding – to deliver the management and administration of all of the Councils Grant Funding Programmes.
- b. Securing Funding – to secure increased levels of funding to support the delivery of Councils Corporate and Business Plans.
- c. Business Support – to provide business support for specialist funding programmes, such as SEUPB Peace Plus.
- d. External engagement – to develop and manage external working relationships and support organisations as to source funding.

4. Governance

There were currently a range of grant funding policies and programmes in place across the Council. A key element of this project would include the development of a single grant funding policy for the Council and individual grant programme guidelines and procedures which were service specific but also compliant with the policy and would deliver a robust, consistent and corporate approach to grant funding.

5. Financial Position/Implication

In order to take this project forward it was proposed to internally recruit a Grant Funding Hub Manager at the earliest opportunity. Once appointed this Officer would be responsible for the development of the Grant Funding Hub including Grant Policy and Grant Programme guidelines for all funding streams and the following specific areas of work as part of this:

- A review of Best Practise in relation to grant funding
- An in-depth review of the Council's existing arrangements and funding mechanisms
- The development of the Council's Grant Funding Policy
- The development of the Council's Grant Funding Programmes including criteria, eligibility and outcomes
- The structure and resourcing of the proposed Grant Funding Hub.

6. Summary

The issue of grant funding dispersal and securing of additional grant income into the Council was a significant function across all Council Departments.

The establishment of a Grant Funding Hub for the Council presented an opportunity for improved efficiency and effectiveness in relation to all aspects of funding work.

It was proposed to recruit a Grant Funding Hub Manager to commence this project. A six month progress report would be brought back to a future meeting.

Following questions from Members the Director of Community Planning advised Members that the key aim of the Hub was to provide opportunities to improve governance, streamline processes, remove duplication of effort, maximise external funding and allow relevant Officers more time for direct Community engagement.

Proposed by Alderman Michael
Seconded by Councillor Magill and agreed

that the establishment of a Grant Funding Hub, initiated by the recruitment of a Grant Funding Hub Manager, be approved with a six month progress report to be brought to a future meeting.

ACTION BY: Ursula Fay, Director of Community Planning

4.6 **CCS/EDP/023 DEAF FRIENDLY COUNCIL – DFC SIGN LANGUAGE PARTNERSHIP GROUP (SLPG) FUNDING**

1. Purpose

This report provided an update to Members on the funding application submitted to DFC Sign Language Partnership Group (SLPG).

2. Introduction/Background

Members were reminded of Council's commitment to become a Deaf Friendly Council through our signing of the BSL & ISL Deaf Charter. In support of the Charter and our deaf community, an application was submitted to the DFC Sign Language Partnership Group (SLPG) for 100% funding of £9150 to run BSL Level One Sign Language Training for Elected Members, Council Staff and Borough Residents. It was anticipated that an

expression of interest would be circulated to Staff and Elected Members to ascertain interested participants. Externally promoted to residents through social media channels and community groups.

Members were advised that a formal letter of offer had been received for the £9150 to deliver this training (Appendix 1 circulated).

Proposed by Councillor Brady
Seconded by Councillor Kelly and agreed

that Members approve the Letter of Offer received from DFC Sign Language Partnership Group (SLPG).

ACTION BY: Ellen Boyd, Accessibility and Inclusion Officer

5 ITEMS FOR NOTING

5.1 FI/ICT/4 ICT UPDATE

1. Purpose

This report provided Members with an update on the recent projects and helpdesk activity within Council's ICT Department to ensure business continuity and protection for Council's digital transactions.

2. Introduction

The ICT Team (currently 6.4 FTE) deliver a diverse number of services, many unseen, to our 624 staff and 40 Elected Members, supporting all areas of Council to deliver services. The ICT department had an agreed operational budget of £1,039,257 for 2024/25 and a capital provision of £190K. The ICT department was responsible for technology assets totalling over 1 Million pounds across all 35 connected Council sites.

ICT Helpdesk

The ICT Helpdesk received, an average of 300 calls per month (see Appendix 1 circulated). Calls ranged from user technical issues, requests for additional equipment and permissions changes to more challenging, Council wide issues.

The calls would be prioritised according to impact on Officers, departments or Council, and a SLA assigned. Currently the team were achieving 100% against the Response Time SLA and 99.9% against the Fix Time SLA (see Appendix 2 circulated).

Capital Projects

During 2023/24, the ICT Team delivered several capital projects. These key infrastructure projects ensured that the Council's ICT systems were continually available, fit for purpose and secure. Two significant recent projects were:

3. Storage Area Network Replacement

The Storage Area Network (SAN) is the main storage that is connected to our Virtual Server infrastructure. A SAN could be described as multiple high capacity, high performance hard drives, similar to those found in a laptop or desktop PC connected together and controlled by software. The SAN is the backbone of Council's two data centres located in Antrim Civic Centre and Mossley Mill and is a critical component in delivering ICT services to Council.

The current SAN was delivered in 2014 and was no longer supported by the vendor, therefore a procurement exercise was undertaken to replace this essential infrastructure

Total capital cost: £116,000

Time: 4 Weeks

Resources: 2 Senior ICT Officers

4. Network Switch Replacement

Network Switches are the core technology that makes up the Council's network infrastructure, with 96 Switches located throughout 35 Council sites that allow all devices to connect to Council ICT network.

During the merger period in 2015, the existing two Council networks were joined together, however no investment was made to upgrade at that time. The Network switch environment was well beyond its operational life expectancy.

This project had been planned to be delivered in 2020, however due to Covid, ICT resource had to be reprioritised.

The Network Replacement Project was highly complex and required a significant amount of planning and preparation in order to minimise disruption to our users and Council Services. The Council's network infrastructure spans over 35 sites, therefore detailed planning was essential before installation could take place, with much of this work taking place outside core hours. This significant project was successfully delivered without our users knowing the work had taken place and without any major complications.

Total capital cost: £309,000

Time: 12 Weeks

Resources: 4 ICT Officers

It was important to note that to reduce the cost of delivering these projects, the majority of the technical configuration, implementation and migration work was carried out internally by the ICT Team.

The outcome of those projects was that the Council had a modern, fit for purpose core ICT infrastructure that would help ensure the delivery of Council services. The expected life span of the projects was 5 years.

Cyber Security

Cyber Security remained a priority for the ICT Team, with 10% of the ICT operating budget allocated to cyber security systems that protect Councils data and assets.

Several IT security systems were used to provide a multi layered approach to protecting Council from a cyber-incident. The table below highlighted some of the key statistics and aims to provide an insight into cyber activity over the first 3 quarters of 2023/24.

	Q1 23-24	Q2 23-24	Q3 23-24
Firewall			
Intrusions blocked by Intrusion Protection System	986	429	13 *
Trend Micro Cloud App Security			
Total number of emails scanned	896,451	756,303	974,168
Ransomware detected and blocked	0	0	0
High Risk Malicious Files blocked	179	125	11
Web Reputation – Malicious URLs blocked (Credential Phishing/Scam/Malware)	95	79	40
Phishing emails blocked	295	85	95
Malicious URL Detection	36	62	43
Office 365 Advanced Threat Detection			
Phishing File Protection	489	6,312	6,675
Anti-malware engine	389	190	285
Edge Protection (IP & Domain Reputation)	75,145	23,610	22,305
Trend Micro Apex Security			
Viruses detected and cleaned	3	3	3

*Significant reduction following the installation of new firewalls in October 2023

The ICT Team would continue to monitor and enhance IT Security systems to ensure Council is as protected as possible against a cyber-security incident.

5. Members IT

Following the Local Government Elections in May 2023, ICT began the process of issuing ICT equipment to all Members. 40 iPads had been issued, which not only allowed Members access to email, but also allowed facilitates access to all Committee and Council papers through the Flux application.

For the first time, those Members who wished to avail of a Council mobile phone were given the choice between an iPhone or equivalent Android phone. 17 iPhones had been issued and 5 Android phones issued.

During the process of issuing devices, ICT took the opportunity to enrol all Members in Multi Factor Authentication, further enhancing the security of their devices and email accounts.

Additional training was also provided on the use of Flux, iPad and mobile phones and Members were reminded that this offer was always available, should any additional assistance be required.

Members recognised and thanked the ICT Officers for the work and support provided to them.

Proposed by Councillor Webb
Seconded by Magill and agreed

that Members noted the update on the recent projects and helpdesk activity within Council's ICT Department to ensure business continuity and protection for Council's digital transactions.

NO ACTION

5.2 HR/HR/019 AGENCY WORKERS UPDATE

1. Purpose

This report provided an update on the engagement of agency workers across the Council for February 2024.

2. Background

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

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

Recruitment exercises were ongoing to fill a number of vacant positions, which would further reduce our reliance on agency workers. While the Council was committed to minimising the dependency on agency cover, it may on occasions be the most appropriate and prudent method of recruitment.

3. Use of Agency Workers

The engagement of agency workers was subject to a rigorous approval process, which included the approval of the Corporate Leadership Team.

The use of agency workers in February 2024 compared to February 2023 was circulated Appendix 1. It was noted that there is a significant decrease in the

number of agency workers in February 2024 (18) compared to February 2023 (39).

4. Finance

The expenditure on agency workers in February 2024 was circulated at Appendix 2, which represented 6% (of all staff costs) for the period April 2023 to February 2024.

Proposed by Alderman Bradley
Seconded by Councillor Brady and agreed

that the update on the engagement of agency workers across the Council for February 2024 be noted.

NO ACTION

5.3 **HR/GEN/019 MANAGING ATTENDANCE UPDATE APRIL 2023 – FEBRUARY 2024**

1. Purpose

This report provided an update on the management of attendance for the period April 2023 to February 2024 (summary circulated).

2. Introduction/Background

The significance of managing employee sickness absence with diligence and empathy was paramount to achieving our corporate target of 12 average days per employee (2023/24). The following report summarized the current status of our sickness absence, and outlines the interventions and initiatives in place to support operational efficiency, promote a healthy working environment, and ensure sustained productivity levels.

Robust attendance management is essential, not only for meeting our corporate target but also for reinforcing our dedication to the welfare of our employees.

3. Current status to date

Summary of absence to date

- Absence was above target by 1.41 days with 12.53 average days lost per employee against a target of 11.12 days. (Covid absence is not included in the reported figure as a significant number of these cases worked from home during the isolation period)
- 3 of the 7 Directorates, and 14 of the 22 services, were within the corporate target.
- Stress-related absence (including work related stress) was the main reason and accounted for 43% of absence during this period

- 100% attendance – 58% of employees had full attendance (60% for same period 2022/23)
- Long term absence (20 days or more) accounted for 83% of absence
- 75% of long term cases were challenging including absence related to road traffic accidents, surgery, disability related illness and general injuries
- 8 long term cases successfully returned to work

Interventions and Initiatives in place to support attendance management

- Big Bus appointments released for March with Health Check appointments all taken within 8 minutes and Breast Screening appointments gone in 2 days
- Call for blood donors – 65 applications received to date (100 required for site visit)
- Benenden would be delivering a free session on Neurodiversity awareness in March
- Line Managers attended 2nd online session led by Inspire on “Managers Promoting Positive Mental Health” in February 2024
- Inspire led 2nd online session on “Mental Health Awareness” in February 2024
- Case management discussions held with legal advisors
- Meetings held with Directorates with high or complex absence cases
- HR Business Partners worked closely with managers and Occupational Health on an individual case management basis
- Monthly case management discussion meetings scheduled as needed to review complex cases with an Occupational Health consultant
- The Corporate and Human Resources Risk registers reviewed in line with absence levels
- Physiotherapy services provided for appropriate cases
- Promotion of Inspire, STAYWELL and Northern Recovery College resources
- Weekly STAY MORE CONNECTED communication used to share and promote information on up and coming Wellness events and courses
- Regular wellness meetings, OH appointments and trigger meetings arranged where appropriate.
- An extensive programme of training and support was scheduled to take place (both mandatory and core training) during the 2024/25 year. This is designed to support employees and managers in building and maintaining a positive, supportive and inclusive culture motivating employees to be present and engaged.

Following questions from Members the Director of Finance and Governance advised that staffing was considered within Business Continuity Plans which were in place across all Directorates.

The Director of Corporate Strategy advised that a presentation would be brought back to the next Policy and Governance Committee meeting on attendance management best practice.

Proposed by Councillor Webb
Seconded by Councillor Brady and agreed

that the management of attendance for the period April 2023 to February 2024 be noted.

ACTION BY: Victoria Stewart, HR Systems and Analytics Manager

5.4 CCS/CS/010 CUSTOMER SERVICES QUARTERLY REPORT

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to provide an update on Customer Service performance, April 2023 to February 2024.

2. Introduction/Background

The Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan 2023/24 sets out the performance improvement target; 'we will achieve high levels of customer satisfaction', with four indicators set as measures of success. The Plan also contained a number of targets to measure customer satisfaction against service areas.

The (circulated) Customer Services Quarterly Report provided an update on customer service measures as set out in the Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan.

Proposed by Alderman Bradley
Seconded by Councillor Kelly and agreed

that the update on Customer Service performance, April 2023 to February 2024, be noted.

NO ACTION

5.5 HR/LD/015 LEARNING DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES - iLEAD

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to provide an update on an element of the Council's iLead Programme.

2. Background

Members were reminded of the Employee Engagement Framework as illustrated below with particular reference to the iLead component of the Framework.



3. iLead Leadership Development Programmes

Members were advised that a number of innovative leadership development programmes had been designed and developed to enrich leadership, talent management, and succession planning across the Council. A copy was circulated for Members' information.

The leadership programmes included elements such as:

iManage: Commercial Acumen, Leadership and Engagement; Personal Effectiveness; Presentation and Communication Skills; Conflict Resolution; Managing Disciplinary and Grievance

iSupervise: Personal Effectiveness; Communication Skills, Conflict Resolution; Managing Disciplinary and Grievance; Team Working

iAspire: Communication Skills; Presentation Skills; Building Resilience and Personal Well-Being; Personal Effectiveness and Customer Service Excellence. The Programme consisted of three innovative leadership programmes which were being rolled out, iAspire, and, each were tailored to meet specific needs. A total of 40 staff members from various service areas were enrolled in the programmes, scheduled to conclude in June for the 2023/24 cohorts.

4. Evaluation

It was planned that an evaluation of the iLead programmes would be conducted and reported to Members for information.

5. Financial Position/Implication

Members were advised that these programmes are delivered within normal budget provision.

Proposed by Councillor Kelly
 Seconded by Alderman Bradley and agreed

that the iLead Programme update be noted.

NO ACTION

5.6 OD/OD/004 PERSONAL REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT PLAN (PRDP) - iTHRIVE

1. Purpose

This report provided an update on the Council's Personal Review and Development Plans for employees.

2. Background

A Personal Review and Development Plan (PRDP) constitutes an ongoing process involving planning, monitoring, assessment and support, all aimed at aiding colleagues in the development of their capabilities and unlocking their potential to successfully fulfil their job roles and objectives. The approach was designed to enhance the overall effectiveness of the organisation by fostering continuous, constructive dialogue, ensuring that every individual's growth and contribution align seamlessly with the organisational goals.

During the Pandemic the PRDP process lapsed for most employees however employees continued to be supported by the Council's Learning and Development Policy.

3. Previous Decision of Council

The Council approved a Performance Management Framework in June 2015 and is an integral part of Strategic Performance Management Framework as set out in the annual Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan as outlined below:



Additionally, one of the objectives in the Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan 2024-25 was to "Continue to monitor, report and review performance and proactively respond to emerging needs." To achieve this a self-imposed measure of success of 75% of employees would have a personal development plan agreed as part of the Organisation Development Business Plan approved at Policy and Governance Committee in March 2024.

4. iThrive

The Personal Review and Development process forms part of the overall Employee Engagement Framework and was named iThrive.



5. Best Practice

Officers had worked in conjunction with Trade Unions to review and align the personal review and development process in line with best practice, and pilot the updated documentation for 2024-25 which was circulated for Members' information.

The revised format created a process which lent itself to create an opportunity for a genuine conversation which would contribute to employees 'thriving' within the workplace and alignment with the Council's objectives.

An evaluation of the pilot would be carried out to refine/perfect the process for subsequent years.

6. Training and Support

A programme of training and support was also planned to embed the new format as follows:-

- 2 hour face-to-face training for Managers/Supervisors
- E-Learning module (Manager/Supervisor)
- Line Manager toolkit
- Information/Training sessions scheduled for all employees
- Employee video available for employees
- Employee toolkit

7. Timeline

The PRDP pilot would be conducted during 2024/25 and an evaluation of the updated process would be undertaken.

Proposed by Councillor Webb
Seconded by Councillor Brady and agreed

that the updated Council's Personal Review and Development Process be noted.

NO ACTION

PROPOSAL TO PROCEED 'IN CONFIDENCE'

Proposed by Councillor Brady
Seconded by Councillor Webb and agreed

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

6 ITEMS IN CONFIDENCE

6.1 **IN CONFIDENCE** FI/PRO/GEN/044 PROCUREMENT ANALYSIS 23/24

1. Purpose

This report presented an analysis of Council spend and its contribution to the local economy and provided an update on the latest developments in procurement.

The report was presented under the following headings:

- Spend Categorisation
- Geographic Analysis
- Procurement Routes
- Procurement Developments
- Summary

2. Spend Categorisation

Council spent approximately £49 million annually on goods and services including construction. A split of this and the approximate number of suppliers within each spend category based on 23/24 data was tabled below:

Table 1: Spend Categorisation

	Est. Annual Spend £'000	Number of Suppliers
Energy	2,628	12
Waste Collection Treatment and Disposal	14,274	18

Financial Services	1,600	10
Transport	1,153	40
IT Infrastructure and Comms	1,402	60
Construction Project Costs	8,431	68
Other services costs	12,683	1,144
Facility Costs	6,826	208
Total	48,997	1,560

The points below help in the explanation of the distribution of spend and number of suppliers attributed to each category.

- Energy provision was limited to regional suppliers
- Waste contracts tend to be high value and limited to specialist suppliers due to the infrastructure required to operate such contracts
- Financial services e.g. loans, insurance, banking and credit card services were provided by both government and multi-national suppliers
- Facility Costs e.g. cleaning and maintenance services tend to be provided by local or regional suppliers
- Construction costs including professional consultancy services tend to be provided by regional suppliers for construction and consultancy services from within the greater Belfast area. These would generally be higher value contracts.

3. Geographic Spend Analysis

Procurement decisions impacted on the people and communities of the Borough. The geographic split of the 23/24 spend is shown below:

Table 2: Geographic breakdown of spend

Region	£'000	% by £	Number of Suppliers	% by number
ANBC	7,961	16	486	31
Other NI	39,823	81	961	62
Outside NI	1,213	2	113	7
Total	48,997	100	1,560	100

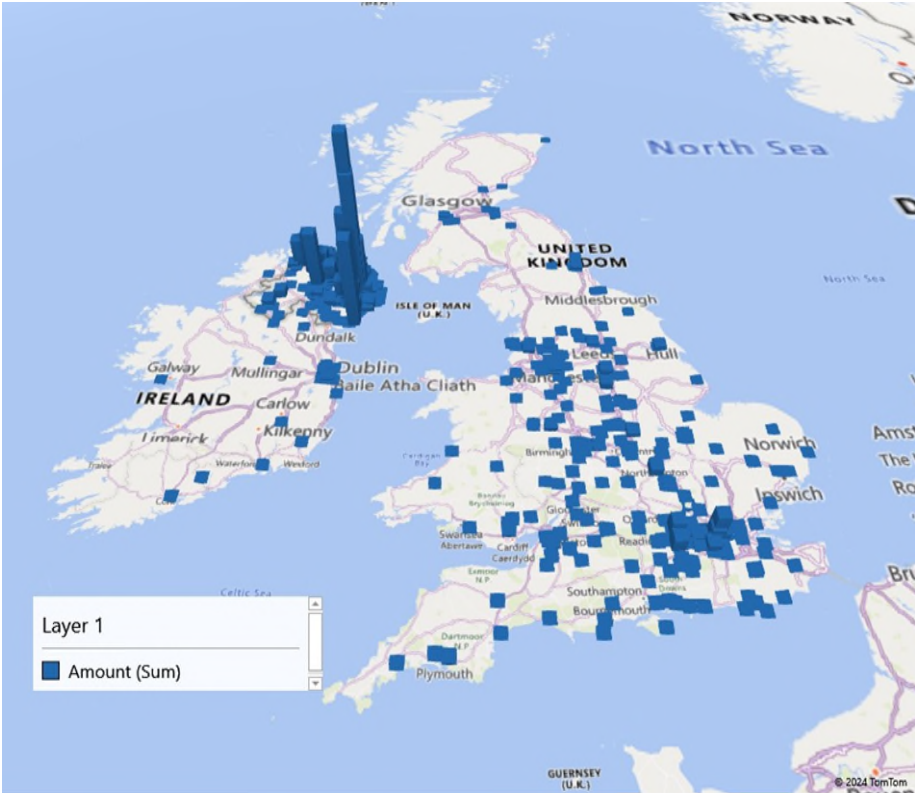
97% of spend by value is within NI (16% ANBC) and 83% by volume of suppliers to Council are located within NI (31% ANBC).

Data for ANBC comprises postcodes as below:

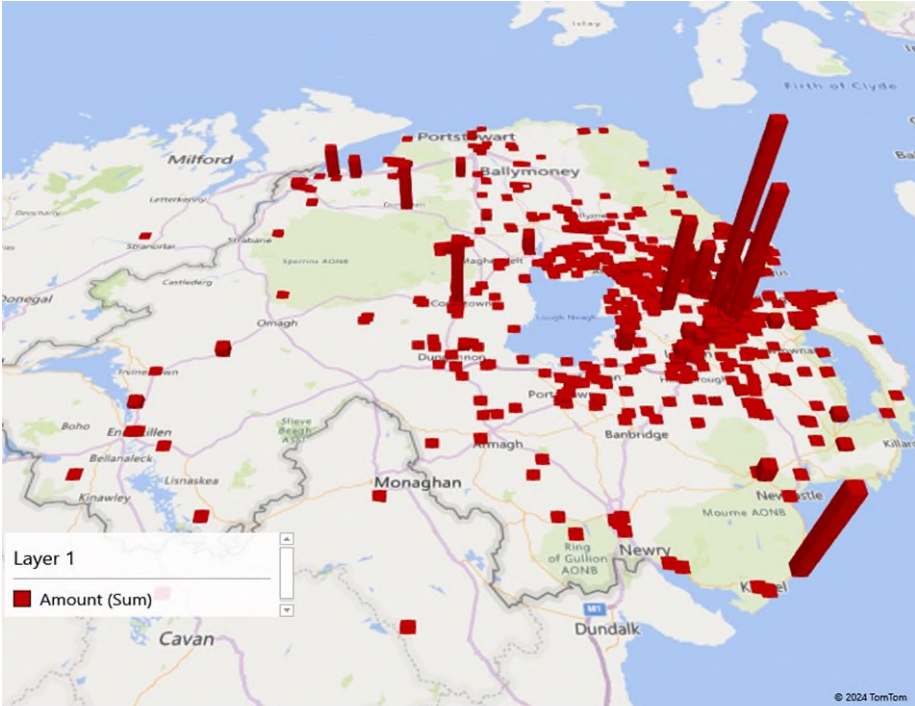
Postcode District	Area
BT29	Crumlin, Aldergrove, Dundrod, Glenavy, Nutts Corner
BT36	Newtownabbey, Mossley, Glengormley
BT37	Newtownabbey
BT39	Ballyclare, Ballynure, Doagh, Parkgate, Straid, Templepatrick.
BT41	Antrim, Dunadry, Muckamore, Randalstown, Toomebridge.

'Geo' maps of the spend value show graphically the regional distribution of Council spend (UK: Map1 and NI: Map 2):

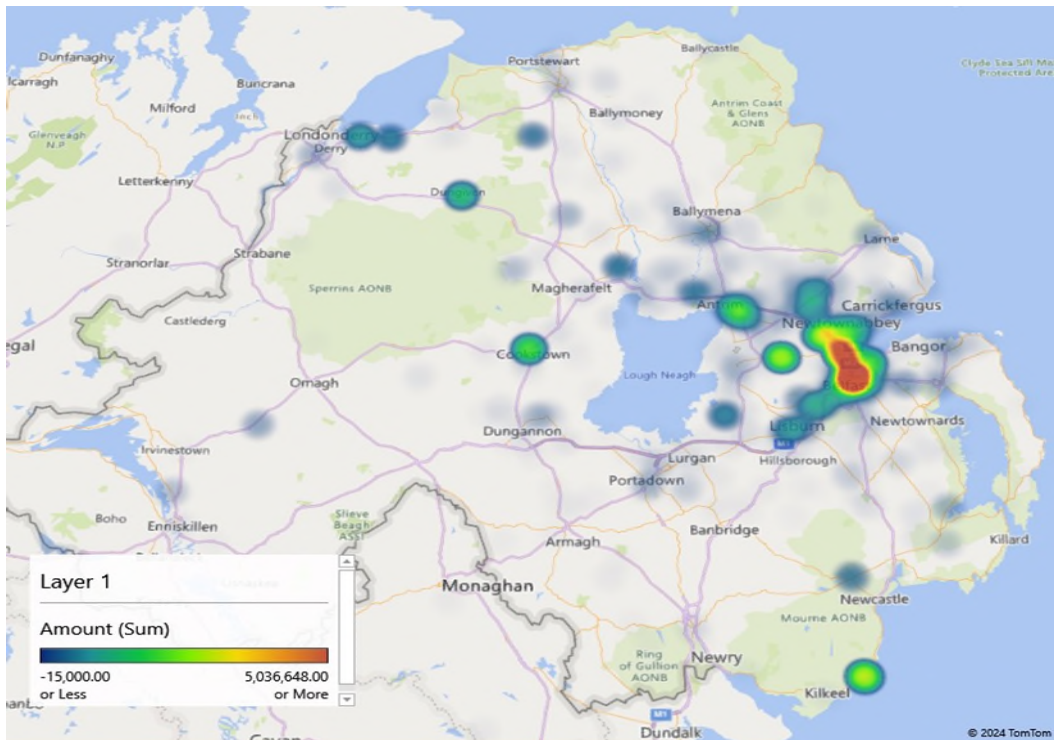
Map 1- UK Spend Distribution



Map 2(a) - NI Spend Distribution



Map 2(b) - NI Spend Distribution



4. Procurement Routes

In all of Council's procurement, the aim was to get the most advantageous mix of cost, quality and sustainability that enables Council to deliver services.

Council was obliged to achieve this in an efficient but transparent and consistent way. Council procurement is therefore subject to high levels of scrutiny especially from suppliers.

A number of mechanisms were used to buy goods and services and these were listed below along with indicative values:

Procurement Route	%	Approx. Annual Value £'000
National Framework	6	3,158
Regional Framework	15	7,135
ANBC Tenders/Quotation	61	30,046
Proprietary Items	6	2,737
Below threshold	6	2,955
Direct Award	6	2,966
	100	48,997

Frameworks are generally used for specialised goods or services or where value for money can be gained from a collaborative procurement exercise e.g. electricity and gas is procured through a NI Council regional contract to maximise the buying power of Councils directly.

There were also several government procurement organisations that Council used that try to maximise the buying power of the whole of government; items like vehicles, and specialist IT services would be commonly bought through these national frameworks.

Council's most common procurement route, however, was to invite tenders and quotations from the open market.

5. Procurement Developments

Members were reminded that currently, Public Sector procurement activity was governed through the Public Contract Regulations 2015 (PCR 2015). Upon leaving the EU, the UK Government decided to overhaul public procurement law through the introduction of the Procurement Act 2023. The Act endeavours to simplify procurement in the public sector, increase transparency, and provide greater flexibility for Contracting Authorities.

The Procurement Act 2023 received Royal Assent in October 2023 and implementation was indicatively set for October 2024, though this is still to be confirmed by the Cabinet Office. Regulations based on the Procurement Act 2023 were pending publication, likely in Spring 2024, and these would provide further details on how the Act will work in practice.

While there were a number of Northern Ireland specific exemptions, the Procurement Act 2023 did introduce a significant number of changes to current procurement law. Some of the key changes were detailed below.

Simpler Structure and Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New objectives: delivering value for money, maximising public benefit, acting with integrity, equal treatment unless otherwise justified • Reduced procurement procedures from four to two; Open Procedure and Competitive Flexible Procedure • Move from 'MEAT' (most economically advantageous tender) to 'MAT' (most advantageous tender)
Greater Transparency and Notices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased requirement for publicly published notices – pre-tender notices, pipeline notices, direct award contract notices and contract change notices, among others. • Contracting Authorities must set and publish a minimum of three KPIs for contracts above a specified threshold value and report at least annually on the Contractor's performance against the published KPIs

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes to the required debrief information from relative advantages of the successful tenderer to include feedback on rationale for the scores
More Flexibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New 'Competitive Flexible Procedure' allows Contracting Authorities to design their own procedure • Allows changes to terms of a procurement after it is advertised • Increased circumstances for modifying and directly awarding contracts

In preparing for the changes introduced by the Act, the Procurement team had availed of the information sessions and training that the Cabinet Office had provided which included participation in a Super User Group for Public Sector Procurement professionals, web-based knowledge drops and an online certified training course. However, it was anticipated that further more detailed training would be required and this could take the form of a multi-Council workshop in late Spring and other "deep dive" seminars later in the year. To date the training and support offered by CPD had been limited.

Following the publication of the Regulations and confirmation of the implementation date for the new legislation, the Procurement team would ensure the Council's contractual documents, policies and procedures were updated to accurately reflect the provisions of the Procurement Act and provide further training for Officers involved in procurements.

6. Summary

Council operates in a very regulated procurement environment to ensure fairness and equitable treatment of all suppliers. It did however have a significant 'buying' role within the local economy as demonstrated by the annual spend and the current distribution of suppliers.

With the new Procurement Act 2023 and a greater emphasis on maximising public benefit through value for money and social value, it is hoped to derive even more local benefit from Council's buying power.

Proposed by Councillor Webb
 Seconded by Councillor McLaughlin and agreed

that Council spend analysis contribution to the local economy and the latest procurement developments be noted.

NO ACTION

PROPOSAL TO PROCEED OUT OF 'IN CONFIDENCE'

Proposed by Councillor Brady
Seconded by Councillor Magill 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 7.11pm.

MAYOR