



**MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE MEETING OF THE POLICY AND GOVERNANCE
COMMITTEE HELD IN THE ROUND TOWER CHAMBER, ANTRIM CIVIC CENTRE ON
TUESDAY 7 JANUARY 2025 AT 6.30 PM**

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| In the Chair | : | Councillor A O'Lone |
| Members Present (In person) | : | Aldermen – L Boyle, L Clarke and J Smyth Councillors – A Bennington, J Burbank, M Cooper, H Cushinan, H Magill and L O'Hagan |
| Members Present (Remote) | : | Alderman P Bradley Councillors - A McAuley, E McLaughlin, V McWilliam |
| Non Committee Members (In person) | : | Councillor B Webb |
| Non Committee Members (Remote) | : | Councillors - M Brady and R Lynch |
| Officers Present (In person) | : | Director of Finance and Governance – S Cole Director of Community Development – U Fay Deputy Director of Finance – J Balmer Deputy Director of Governance – L Johnston Head of Organisation Development – L Millar Borough Lawyer and Head of Legal Services – P Casey Funding Hub Manager – A Boyle ICT Helpdesk Officer – J Wilson Member Services Officer – C McGrandle |

CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

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

1 APOLOGIES

None.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

3 PRESENTATION

3.1 FI/FIN/11 ESTIMATES UPDATE PRESENTATION

1. Purpose

An update on the 2025/26 Estimates for the Organisation Development, Finance and Governance and Chief Executive's Departments was presented at the meeting by the Deputy Director of Finance and the Director of Finance and Governance.

Proposed by Councillor Burbank
Seconded by Alderman Smyth and agreed that

the presentation be noted.

NO ACTION

4 ITEMS FOR DECISION

4.1 G/MSMO/1 SCHEME OF ALLOWANCES PAYABLE TO COUNCILLORS 2024-25

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to update the Scheme of Allowances Payable to Councillors 2024-25 for approval.

2. Introduction/Background

Council was required under the Local Government (Payments to Councillors) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2019 to make a scheme for the payment of allowances to Councillors and Committee Members in respect of each year.

3. Key Issues

Circular LG 15/2024 Consolidated Councillor Allowances – Updated December 2024, circulated, had been received from the Department for Communities (DfC) reflecting an increase in the maximum rates for Basic and Special Responsibility Allowance from 1 April 2024 and an increase in the maximum rates for Dependants' Carers' Allowance applicable from 1 April 2025. Council's Scheme of Allowances Payable to Councillors had been updated to show the new maximum rates applied from the valid dates.

All previously agreed Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Special Responsibility Allowances circulated had been increased by 2.50%, in-line with the increase in the Basic Allowance.

Any future notifications from the DfC in relation to changes to the allowances payable for the 2024-25 financial year should be reported to Members for their approval.

In response to a request from a Member, the Director of Finance and Governance agreed to provide further information in relation to the review of Councillors' Allowances once received from the Department.

Proposed by Councillor Bennington
Seconded by Alderman Smyth and agreed that

the Scheme of Allowances Payable to Councillors for 2024-25 be approved.

ACTION BY: Richard Murray, Head of Finance

Alderman Boyle left the Chamber at Item 4.2.

4.2 CP/GEN/049 NEW GRANT FUNDING POLICY

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to seek Members' approval for the new Grant Funding Policy.

2. Introduction/Background

Council issued 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.

Council did not have a policy in relation to grant funding. Through the establishment of a Grant Funding Policy, there were opportunities to improve governance, streamline processes, remove duplication of effort, thereby delivering more for the community in funding support.

3. Previous Decision of Council

The establishment of a Grant Funding Hub, initiated by the recruitment of a Grant Funding Hub Manager was approved at the Policy and Governance Committee in April 2024.

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.

An update on this was presented to Members at a Corporate Workshop on Grant Funding held in Mossley Mill on 19 December 2024.

4. Key Issues

The purpose of the Grant Funding Policy was to set out the principles, criteria and governance procedures for the funding of external bodies and to support delivery of the Council's strategic aims and objectives.

The Grant funding policy aimed to have a streamlined, equitable, customer-focused process, encompassing appropriate assessment, evaluation and monitoring systems.

In consultation with various departments, the Grant Funding Policy had been developed by Officers and a draft of the policy was circulated for Members' information.

5. Governance

There was a range of grant funding programmes in place across Council. A single grant funding policy for Council and individual grant programme guidance and procedures which were service-specific but also compliant with policy would support the delivery of a robust, consistent and corporate approach to grant funding.

Officers would review the Policy on an annual basis. Any further proposed updates to the Policy would be brought to a future Committee meeting for approval.

6. Equality Impact Assessment and Rural Proofing

A Section 75 Equality Screening exercise and Rural Proofing of the Grant Funding Policy had been carried out with the forms circulated; there was no requirement to carry out full Equality Impact or Rural Needs Assessments.

7. Summary

Council approved the establishment of a Grant Funding Hub in April 2024. A new Grant Funding Policy was recommended for approval. The Policy would be reviewed on an annual basis and any updates to the Policy brought to Committee for approval. A Section 75 Equality Screening and Rural Proofing exercise on the Grant Funding Policy had been carried out.

In response to Members' queries in relation to the detail of the Grant Funding Schemes, the Director of Community Development clarified that the policy was an overall principle-based approach and that the detail of each grant funding programme would be brought to the relevant Committee in February 2025 for Members' consideration.

Proposed by Councillor McWilliam
Seconded by Councillor Cooper and agreed that

(a) the draft Grant Funding Policy be approved.

(b) the outcome of the Section 75 Equality Screening and Rural Proofing

carried out for the Grant Funding Policy be approved.

ACTION BY: Anna Boyle, Funding Hub Manager

Councillors Cushinan and Webb left the Chamber at Item 4.3.

4.3 PT/CI/066 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE AND IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2025/26 DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to recommend to Members to approve the draft Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan 2025/26 for consultation.

2. Background

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

3. Previous Decision of Council

Annually, Council would produce a draft Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan for consultation. This would set out a range of robust performance targets, along with identified improvement objectives and a number of Statutory Performance Targets.

4. Key Points

The draft Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan 2025/26 (circulated) sets out 7 statutory targets, 31 performance targets and 6 improvement objectives.

The draft Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan 2025/26 was subject to a 12-week public consultation, which would commence on 6 February 2025, for the purpose of obtaining feedback on improvement objectives from stakeholders.

A summary of the consultation responses would be presented for Members' information at the June 2025 Policy and Governance Committee. The feedback from the consultation would be considered for incorporation into the Plan prior to the publication of the final approved Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan 2025/26, which would be published on Council's website before 30 June 2025.

Proposed by Councillor Burbank

Seconded by Councillor O'Hagan and agreed that

the draft Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan 2025/26 for consultation be approved.

ACTION BY: Allen Templeton, Performance Improvement Officer

4.4 CCS/EDP/025 DUAL LANGUAGE STREET SIGN APPLICATIONS

1. Purpose

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

Stage 1

- Longlands Avenue, Newtownabbey, BT36 7NE be approved.
- Glebecooile Park, Newtownabbey, BT36 6HX be noted.

Stage 2

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

Stage 3

- No applications at stage 3 be noted.

2. Background

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

3. Application Update

STAGE 1: PETITION VERIFICATION

Two applications were at Stage 1.

1. LONGLANDS AVENUE, NEWTOWNABBEY, BT36 7NE

The occupiers signing the petition for the street above had been verified against the current Electoral Register and satisfied the one-third threshold as required within the approved Policy.

2. GLEBECOOILE PARK, NEWTOWNABBEY, BT36 6HX

The occupiers signing the petition for the street above had been verified against the current Electoral Register and did not satisfy the one-third threshold as required within the approved Policy.

STAGE 2: RESIDENTS CANVASS

Three applications were at Stage 2.

1. LONGLANDS ROAD, NEWTOWNABBEY, BT36 7LU
2. BALLYTROMERY AVENUE, CRUMLIN, BT29 4ZN
3. CAMLIN PARK, CRUMLIN, BT29 4HE

Canvass letters had been issued to residents of the above streets with January 2025 return dates and the outcome would be reported to Members in due course.

STAGE 3: STREET SIGN INSTALLATION

There were no applications at stage 3.

Proposed by Councillor McLaughlin
Seconded by Councillor Burbank and agreed that

the Dual Language Street Sign applications at:

Stage 1

- **Longlands Avenue, Newtownabbey, BT36 7NE be approved.**
- **Glebecoole Park, Newtownabbey, BT36 6HX be noted.**

Stage 2

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

Stage 3

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

ACTION BY: James Porter, Customer Services Manager

Alderman Boyle returned to the Chamber during Item 4.5.

4.5 FI/FA/6 MINIMUM REVENUE PROVISION POLICY 2025/26

1. Purpose

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

2. Background

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

Under Regulation 6 of the Local Government (Capital Finance and Accounting) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2011, Councils had a statutory requirement to charge to their general fund an amount of Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) which it considered to be 'prudent' in respect of the financing of capital expenditure.

A copy of Council's MRP Policy 2025/26 was circulated.

Proposed by Councillor McLaughlin
Seconded by Councillor Burbank and agreed that

the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy 2025/26 be approved.

ACTION BY: Richard Murray, Head of Finance

Councillors Cushinan and Webb returned to the Chamber at Item 4.6.

4.6 FIN/GEN/2 COUNCIL RESERVES POLICY

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to approve Council's Reserves Policy (circulated).

2. Background

Council maintains a number of reserves that were categorised as 'usable' and 'non-usable'. Non-usable reserves were maintained for statutory purposes and proper accounting practice. Usable reserves comprise General Reserves and various other reserves that had a specific purpose. It was important that General Reserves were maintained at an appropriate level to provide:

- a working balance;
- a contingency for unexpected events; and
- a means of building up funds to meet an expected requirement.

A listing of the current value, adequacy and use of all Council's reserves was described in the policy.

Proposed by Alderman Bradley
Seconded by Alderman Smyth and agreed that

the Council Reserves Policy be approved.

ACTION BY: John Balmer, Deputy Director of Finance

4.7 FI/FIN/032 ADDITIONAL REPRESENTATION TO THE BELFAST HILLS PARTNERSHIP

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to seek an additional nomination to the Belfast Hills Partnership for the year 2024/2025.

2. Background

The Belfast Hills Partnership was established to assist in the protection and conservation of the Belfast Hills, including Carnmoney Hill, for the benefit of the public and those who live, work and own land in the area. The

Partnership would meet approximately four times per year at various locations.

Councillor McAuley was nominated as Council's representative for the year 2024/2025 at the Annual Meeting held in June 2024.

3. Previous Decision of Council

At the Annual Meeting on 30 May 2023, it was requested that Council write to a number of outside bodies including Belfast Hills Partnership to request if there would be an opportunity to afford additional representation. Belfast Hills Partnership had responded at the time that this request required a change in their Articles of Association.

4. New Nomination

Correspondence had been received from Belfast Hills Partnership to confirm that they would be delighted to offer Council **two** places on their Board.

Members were requested to nominate an additional representative for the remainder of the year.

Councillor McLaughlin proposed that he be considered as the additional nominee.

| Body | No of Positions | Agreed Term | Nomination |
|---------------------------|-----------------|-------------|-------------------------|
| Belfast Hills Partnership | 2 | Annual | Councillor A McAuley |
| | | | Councillor E McLaughlin |

Proposed by Councillor McLaughlin
Seconded by Councillor Cushinan and agreed that

Councillor McLaughlin would fill the additional position afforded to Council on the Belfast Hills Partnership for the year 2024/2025.

ACTION BY: Member Services

5 ITEM FOR NOTING

5.1 G/MSMO/41 MEMBERS' ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS – JUNE TO NOVEMBER 2024

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to provide a summary of Members' attendance for each of the Council meetings and Committee Member attendance for each of the Committee meetings, from June to November 2024, prior to publication on the Council's website.

2. Introduction/Background

At the Policy and Governance Committee meeting in February 2017, it had been agreed that six monthly attendance records for each of the Council and Committee meetings would be summarised and published on Council's website.

At the Policy and Governance Committee meeting in September 2024, it was agreed that the summary attendance sheet would be updated to record in-person and remote attendance at meetings.

A summary sheet had been prepared which showed the total attendance for each of the Council and Committee meetings for the period from 1 June to 30 November 2024 (circulated).

Proposed by Alderman Bradley

Seconded by Councillor Bennington and agreed that

the summary sheet recording Members' attendance for each of the Council meetings, and Committee Member attendance for each of the Committee meetings for the period from 1 June to 30 November 2024 be noted.

ACTION BY: Member Services

Alderman Clarke left and returned to the Chamber at this point during the meeting.

The Chairperson advised that Any Other Relevant Business would be taken at this point.

7 **ANY OTHER RELEVANT BUSINESS**

- 7.1 In response to a Member's suggestion that all Members be provided with a copy of the Standing Orders at each meeting, the Director of Finance and Governance confirmed that this could be accommodated.

The Borough Lawyer and Head of Legal Services provided clarification on the protocol in respect of 'Point of Order' within the Standing Orders and confirmed that refresher training would be available for Members.

ACTION BY: Member Services and Paul Casey, Borough Lawyer and Head of Legal Services

- 7.2 The Director of Finance and Governance provided clarification on a Member's query in relation to VAT monies received in 2024 and confirmed that Council had a reserve in the 2024/25 Financial Statements showing the remaining VAT monies.

NO ACTION

PROPOSAL TO PROCEED 'IN CONFIDENCE'

Proposed by Councillor Burbank
Seconded by Councillor Bennington and agreed

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

6 ITEM IN CONFIDENCE

6.1 IN-CONFIDENCE G/LAN/8 LAND AT 10 ORCHARD WAY

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to seek Members' permission for the installation of EV charging points at 10 Orchard Way, Antrim by Royal Mail.

2. Introduction/Background

Antrim Borough Council approved a 15-year lease for the premises at 10 Orchard Way, Antrim to Royal Mail as a delivery and warehouse office in September 2013.

The tenant, Royal Mail, had written to Council as Landlord, seeking consent for the installation of EV charging points at these premises.

3. Matters for Consideration

Royal Mail had committed to electrify their fleet as part of their Net Zero commitment. To do this, they would install EV charging points across their portfolio.

Royal Mail proposed to install 16 charging posts in the yard at 10 Orchard Way. The works would involve increasing the electrical infrastructure on-site and further details of the proposed works were included in the circulated drawing.

All costs associated with the installations would be borne by Royal Mail and Royal Mail would also pay Council's reasonable costs in dealing with matter.

In response to a Member's query in relation to exploring the potential for Council Vehicles availing of the EV charging points, the Director of Finance and Governance agreed to liaise with the Property Services department.

Proposed by Alderman Smyth
Seconded by Alderman Clarke and agreed that

the installation of EV charging points at the leased premises at 10 Orchard Way, Antrim by Royal Mail be approved, subject to the satisfactory resolution of all legal matters.

ACTION BY: Liz Johnston, Deputy Director of Governance

PROPOSAL TO PROCEED OUT OF 'IN CONFIDENCE'

Proposed by Councillor Burbank
Seconded by Alderman Clarke 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 7.18 pm.

MAYOR