



**MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE MEETING OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE HELD IN
ANTRIM CIVIC CENTRE ON TUESDAY 15 SEPTEMBER 2015 AT 6.30 PM**

- In the Chair** : Councillor T Beatty
- Committee Members Present** : Councillors - M Maguire, N McClelland and M Rea
- Non Committee Members Present** : Councillor J Montgomery
- Officers Present** : Director of Finance & Governance - Mrs C McFarland
Head of Human Resources - Mrs J Cowan
Head of Governance - Mrs L Johnston
Internal Auditor - Mr P Caulcutt
Internal Auditor - Ms C Archer
Acting Risk Manager - Mr P Donaldson
Senior Mayor & Member Services Officer - Mrs K Smyth
- In Attendance** : Independent Audit Committee Member - Mrs G Nesbitt

CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS

At the request of the Chairman, a minute's silence was observed in memory of Charlotte Hayes.

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Montgomery, Mrs Grace Nesbitt and Mr Perry Donaldson to the Meeting.

1. APOLOGIES

Councillor D Hollis.
Mr P O'Sullivan, Northern Ireland Audit Office.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

3.1 FG/AUD/1 PRESENTATION - RISK MANAGEMENT UPDATE

Members were reminded that the Governance Section and Internal Audit had been working with Heads of Service to facilitate the development of the new Corporate and Service risk registers.

A presentation was given by Perry Donaldson (Acting Risk Manager) updating Committee on progress on the development of the new risk registers, one for each of the 13 service areas.

Mr Donaldson spoke in detail to the 18 risks identified on the Corporate Risk Register, a copy of which had also been circulated, and outlined the inherent risk scores and residual risk scores applied.

The Director of Finance and Governance reassured Committee on ongoing work going forward to continue to reinforce and embed a positive risk management culture across the organisation.

ACTION BY: Liz Johnston / Perry Donaldson.

3.2 FG/AUD/1 PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT AUDIT AND ASSESSMENTS OF ANTRIM AND NEWTOWNABBEY BOROUGH COUNCIL FOR 2015

Members were advised that Council had received correspondence (a copy of which was circulated) from the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) which set out the basis on which the Local Government Auditor (LGA) would conduct her programme of Performance Improvement audit and assessment work for 2015 as required in the statutory 'Guidance for Local Government Performance Improvement 2015' issued by the Department of the Environment.

This would involve a limited performance improvement assessment in order to ascertain whether the Council had met its statutory performance improvement responsibilities for the year.

The programme of work would be conducted with the objective of the LGA expressing her opinion, in a 'Letter of Assurance', on whether the Council had made arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions in the first introductory year.

Proposed by Councillor Rea
Seconded by Councillor McClelland and agreed

that the NIAO's correspondence be noted in relation to the Performance Improvement Audit and Assessment of the Council for 2015.

ACTION BY: Paul Caulcutt.

3.3 FG/AUD/1 INTERNAL AUDIT UPDATE REPORT

A detailed report containing a summary of Internal Audit activity, including details of fraud/whistleblowing investigations, for Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council, for the period June 2015 to September 2015 was circulated.

The report included the objectives and conclusions reached for each completed assignment and management comments as applicable.

Proposed by Councillor Maguire
Seconded by Councillor McClelland and agreed

that the Internal Audit Update Report be noted.

ACTION BY: Paul Caulcutt.

3.4 ST/G/215 REPORT ON ABSENTEEISM

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 30 June 2015. For comparison purposes the same period for 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 had been included.

ABSENCE UPDATE

There had been an increase in short term absence by 116.05 days and a decrease in long term absence of 122.10 days and both would continue to be managed. The reduction in long term absence would remain a priority and this would be reflected in our Occupational Health specification and contract.

	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/16	
Month	1 April to 30 June 2013	1 April to 30 June 2014	1 April to 30 June 2015	Variance from period last year.
No. FTE	693.94	694.22	712.92	+18.7
No. of days lost to sickness	1859.53	1581.80	1575.75	-6.05
Days lost to Long Term Absence	1347.53	1144.22	1022.12	-122.10
Day lost to Short Term Absence	512.00	437.58	553.63	+116.05

Average Days Lost per Employee	2.68	2.28	2.21	-0.07
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The increase in employee numbers was attributed to 35 transferred staff from Planning and Group Environmental Health. This increase had been offset by employees leaving the organisation through the voluntary severance scheme.

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

Reason	Action
Other Category Examples of the absence includes: Cancer Related Illness, Surgery and Post Op Debility etc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well being Action plans for individual cases. • Phased returns variety of reduced hours, alternative work and/or adjusted duties. • Use of leisure facilities to help with returns from surgery in suitable cases. Eg Pool
Musculo-Skeletal problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manual Handling Training • Referrals to Nurse Led Clinic and/or OH doctor, • Regular Welfare Review Meetings to agreed action plans,
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to Physiotherapy subject to OH recommendation. • Wellbeing action plans. • Phased returns variety of reduced hours, alternative work and/or adjusted duties. • Work station/ergonomical assessments • Taster sessions of pilates • Investigation of workplace accidents and implementation of any appropriate recommendations
Stress, depressions, mental health and Fatigue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staffcare, confidential counselling to all staff. • Cognitive behavioural Therapy (CBT) sessions for staff in appropriate cases. • Delivery of training on Emotional Resilience, Sessions to all Staff • Immediate letter sent to advise of Staffcare, • Immediate Meeting with employee and line manager alternative person if issue is with the Line Manager in WRS cases. • Referrals to Nurse Led Clinic and/or OH doctor • Regular Welfare Review Meetings to agreed action plans, Use of the Leisure Facilities, • Referral to Occupational Health • Piloting of the Wellness Recovery Action Plan, this plan helps staff recognise stress earlier and the interventions that can be put in place to help • Organised health fairs • Talks arranged from Cruse Bereavement Services

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Harassment advisors available in all departments and various locations• The joint Health and Wellbeing initiative, the £ for Ib Challenge, was launched in January 2015 for twelve weeks. 37 Newtownabbey employees and 17 Antrim Employees participating in this initiative to lose weight and raise money for charity. At the half way point our staff had lost 184.9 lbs (12.49 stones).
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Proposed by Councillor Maguire
Seconded by Councillor Rea and agreed that

- (a) The report be noted;**
- (b) An absence update be submitted to the Policy and Governance Committee.**

ACTION BY: Member Services.

There being no further Committee business the Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance and the meeting concluded at 7.35pm.

MAYOR