



MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE MEETING OF THE POLICY AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE HELD AT MOSSLEY MILL ON WEDNESDAY 3 JUNE 2020 AT 6.30 PM

In the Chair: Councillor P Dunlop

Members Present: Aldermen - F Agnew and D Kinahan
Councillors – H Cushinan, S Flanagan, M Goodman,
P Hamill, N Kelly, N McClelland, M Magill,
P Michael, V Robinson, B Webb and R Wilson

Non Committee Members: Councillors – A Bennington, L Irwin, V McWilliam and S Ross

Officers Present: Director of Finance & Governance – S Cole
Director of Organisation Development – A McCooke
Borough Lawyer and Head of Legal Services – P Casey
Head of Finance – J Balmer
Head of Governance – L Johnston
Head of ICT – Graham Smyth
Systems Support Officer – C Bell
ICT Helpdesk Officer - D Mason
ICT Change Officer – A Cole
Member Services Officer – S Boyd
Member Services Manager – V Lisk

CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

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

In order to protect public health during the current COVID-19 emergency it was not possible to allow the public or the press to attend the Policy and Governance Committee meeting. The minutes and audio recording would be published on the Council's website.

1. APOLOGIES

Councillor McAuley

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

3. ITEMS FOR DECISION

3.1 G/LEG/118/4 DISPOSAL OF LAND AT RATHBEG ROAD, ANTRIM

Members were advised that a D1 form (circulated) had been received from Land and Property Services regarding land declared surplus by the Department for Infrastructure Roads at Rathbeg Road, Antrim.

Officers have reviewed the information provided and have not identified a need for this asset.

Proposed by Councillor Flanagan
Seconded by Councillor Goodman and agreed that

the Council does not express an interest in this land.

ACTION BY: Majella McAlister, Director of Economic Development and Planning

3.2 G/BCEP/009 CLIMATE CHANGE WORKING GROUP

Members were aware that the first Climate Change Working Group took place on the 1 March 2020 (minutes circulated). It was agreed at this meeting that Councillor Webb would be appointed as the Chairperson and Councillor Lynch would be the Vice-Chairperson.

Due to COVID-19 the second meeting of the working group due to take place on 3 June was postponed. An alternative date will be arranged for later in the year.

Following questions from Members the Director of Finance and Governance provided clarity to Members on the frequency of, and attendance at, the Climate Change Working Group, and, advised that the work of the newly formed Working Group would continue with the next meeting to take place in September 2020.

Proposed by Councillor Webb
Seconded by Councillor Goodman and agreed that

the minutes of the Climate Change Working Group be approved.

ACTION BY: Liz Johnston, Head of Governance

4. ITEMS FOR NOTING

4.1 FI/FIN/9 PROMPT PAYMENT PERFORMANCE

Members were reminded the Department for Communities (DfC) issued revised guidance (Local Government Circular 19/2016) on prompt payments and the recording of invoice payments in November 2016. This guidance requested Councils to record specific performance targets of 10 working days and 30

calendar days and continue a cycle of quarterly reporting on prompt payment performance by councils to the DfC and its publication on their website.

The Council's prompt payment performance for the period **1 January 2020 to 31 March 2020** 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 6,308 invoices totalling £15,367,227.

The Council paid 5,654 invoices within the 30 day and achieved the 90% target set by the Council.

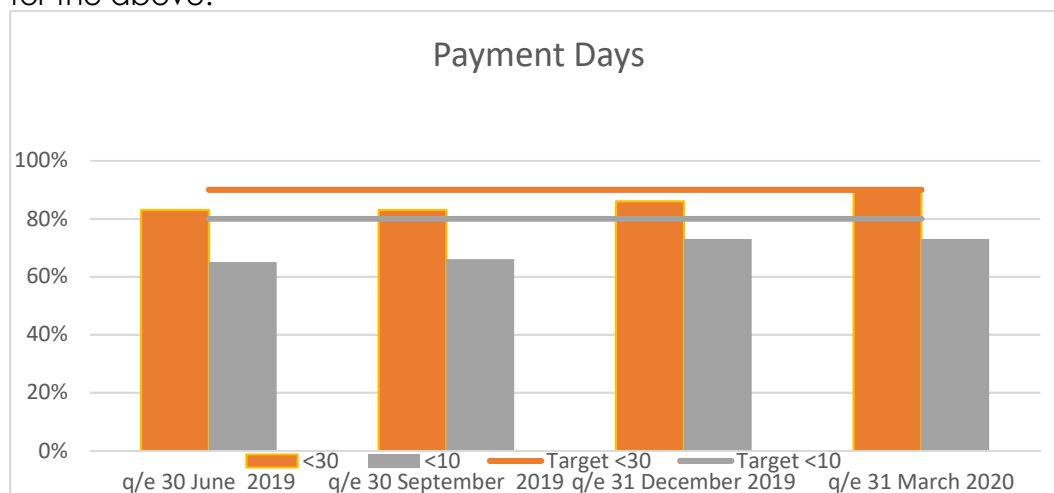
The Council paid 4,574 invoices within the 10 day target and achieved 73% of 80% target set by the Council.

The Council paid 654 invoices outside of the 30 day target. (10%)

The quarterly results from April 2019 to date are as follows:

Period	Total Number of Invoices Paid	% Paid Within 30 Days	% Paid Within 10 Days
Target		90%	80%
q/e 30 June 2019	6,680	83%	65%
q/e 30 Sept 2019	6,342	83%	66%
q/e 31 Dec 2019	7,240	86%	73%
q/e 31 March 2020	6,308	90%	73%

The performance presented graphically highlighted the performance metrics for the above.

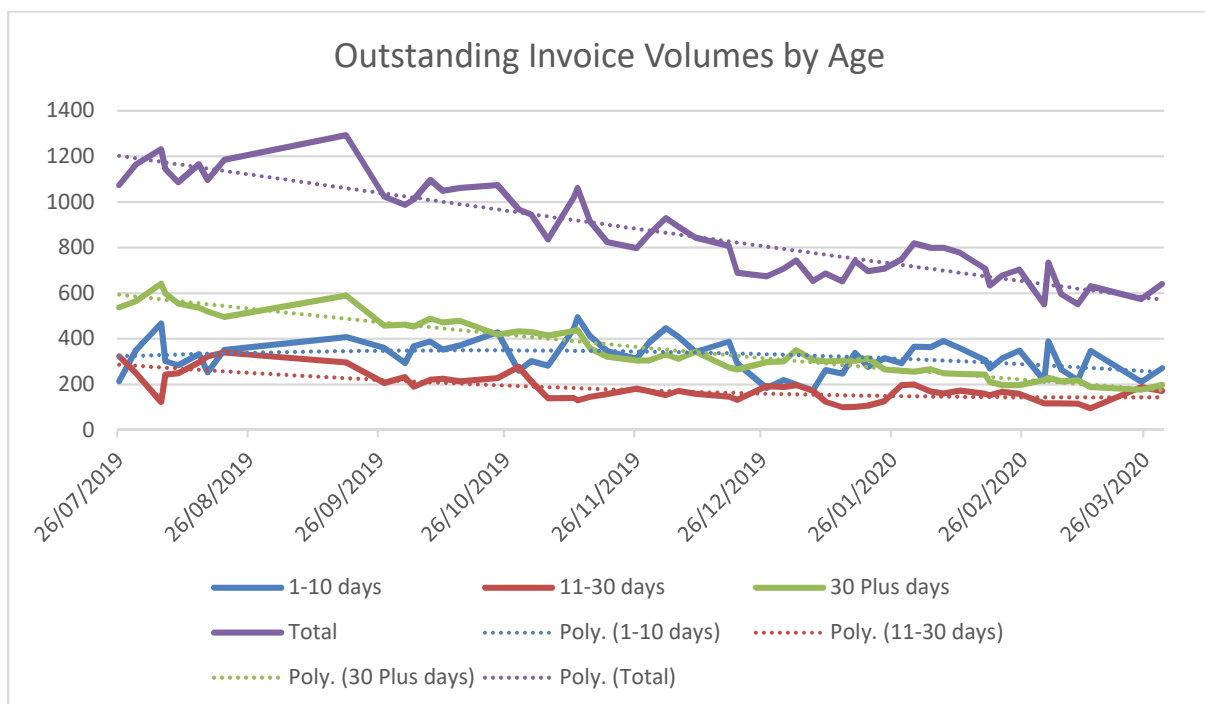


Performance for 2019/2020

Performance for quarter 1 and 2 of 2019/20 was similar for both the 30 day and 10 day targets with quarter 3 showing a marked improvement in performance for the 10 day target.

During the last quarter of 2019/20 the target of paying 90% of invoices within 30 days was met, with performance for the 10 day target remaining the same as the previous quarter.

Central to the performance improvement over the year has been the monitoring regime implemented by the Corporate Leadership Team. Another outturn of this is that the overall level of outstanding invoices has decreased markedly from over 1200 in August to now around 600.



Whilst both indicators for quarter 4 now sit above the average for all Councils we will continue to strive to sustain the 30 day target and further improve the 10 day performance whilst maintaining a high level of good governance and internal control in relation to supplier payments. Performance levels remain a priority for senior staff and other enhancements, for example, tolerance levels and further decreases to the overall outstanding volumes will bring additional improvements.

The prompt payment performance for Councils in Northern Ireland is published quarterly by the Department for Communities (DfC). The prompt payment performance for the quarter ended 31 December 2019 is shown in **Appendix 1** circulated; the Council's performance for Quarter 3 against the average performance for the other Councils for the third quarter of 2019/20 is set out in the table below:

Council	% Paid Within 30 Days	% Paid Within 10 Days
Antrim & Newtownabbey BC (4 ^{3rd} Quarter)	86%	73%
All Councils (3 rd Quarter)	89%	60%

Members congratulated the Director of Finance and Governance and Officers on the progress which had been made.

Proposed by Councillor Hamill
 Seconded by Councillor Webb and agreed that

the report be noted.

NO ACTION

4.2 G/MSMO/60 CORRESPONDENCE FROM SIMON HARRIS TD, MINISTER OF HEALTH

Members recalled that at the Council meeting of 25 November 2019 a Motion was unanimously carried regarding the introduction of soft opt-out donation legislation and, as requested, the Chief Executive wrote to the Permanent Secretary with a copy to the Minister of Health, Simon Harris TD. A copy of the response from the Minister of Health was circulated.

Proposed by Councillor Magill
 Seconded by Councillor Hamill and agreed that

the report be noted.

NO ACTION

4.3 SCHEME OF EMERGENCY FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE (SEFA) SCHEME – COVID-19

On 3 April the Department for Communities (DfC) activated a Scheme of Emergency Financial Assistance (SEFA) for Councils to provide financial support in relation to COVID-19. Similar SEFA schemes have been provided in the past for emergency incidents such as flooding.

The COVID-19 SEFA scheme runs from 3 April 2020 to 3 October 2020 and while Council activated its Emergency Plan on 4 March DfC confirmed that claims will not be eligible prior to 3 April.

Despite considerable challenge by the 11 Councils on eligibility of matters for reimbursement under the scheme, unfortunately many of the expenses incurred by Councils during the pandemic will not be eligible for claim. Examples include salaries and wages for those staff diverted from their normal duties to deal with COVID related matters, those redeployed to assist delivery of essential services, those involved in co-ordinating and administering the voluntary and community sector support and many other expenses such as IT costs to enable remote working.

The final confirmed list of areas of expenditure eligible for financial assistance under this scheme were listed in Table 1 (circulated). Finance Officers will commence compiling the claim, which can only be completed in full quarters, with the first claim period ending on 3 July. For the period 3rd April – 3rd May 2020 the approximate claim figure currently stands at £111,000. We will not receive any refund of our expenditure until July at the earliest. Members will be updated as the claims are processed.

Following questions from Councillor Ross the Director of Finance and Governance clarified when the Emergency Plan had been invoked, and would respond to Councillor Ross with the expenditure incurred between the period 4 March-3 April 2020 and, therefore not eligible within the criteria of the Scheme.

Proposed by Councillor Hamill
Seconded by Councillor Robinson and agreed that

the report be noted.

ACTION BY: Sandra Cole, Director of Finance and Governance

4.4 CE/GEN/032 SOLACE

Members recalled that the position of Chair of SOLACE NI is rotated by the 11 local council Chief Executives on an annual basis. In this regard, Jacqui Dixon, Chief Executive will assume the role of Chair of SOLACE NI from Friday 5 June 2020 for the incoming year.

The Chairperson congratulated the Chief Executive on her appointment.

Proposed by Councillor Hamill
Seconded by Councillor Robinson and agreed that

the report be noted.

NO ACTION

4.5 FI/FIN/4 BUDGET REPORT – CURRENT UPDATE

The Director of Finance and Governance provided a verbal update for Members on the current position and advised that a report would be provided to the Special Council meeting on 11 June 2020.

Proposed by Councillor Webb
Seconded by Councillor Wilson and agreed that

the cash position as a requirement of DfC funding for COVID-19 and a budget report be brought to the next meeting.

ACTION BY: Sandra Cole, Director of Finance and Governance

4.6 PT/CI/029 CORPORATE IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2020-21 UPDATE

Members were reminded that Part 12 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 puts in place a framework to support the continuous improvement of Council services, in the context of strategic objectives and issues.

Section 85 of the Act requires a Council, by the end of June each year, to set itself improvement objectives for improving the exercise of its functions and to have in place arrangements to achieve those objectives.

The Department however, is cognisant of the pressure placed on all councils in relation to statutory performance improvement duties for the coming months/year. To this end they are reviewing the legal context and are in discussion with the Northern Ireland Audit Office to decide the way forward for 2020-21.

Members will be kept informed of progress on this matter.

Proposed by Councillor Hamill
Seconded by Councillor Flanagan and agreed that

the report be noted.

NO ACTION

4.7 G/BCEP/008 EMERGENCY GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

Members are aware of the Emergency Governance Arrangements. Decision Logs were being circulated on a daily basis. The Decision Log as of 13 May 2020 was circulated to Members on Thursday, 14 May 2020.

Members thanked Officers for keeping them informed by providing them with the Decision Log.

Proposed by Councillor Goodman
Seconded by Councillor Robinson and agreed that

the report be noted.

NO ACTION

4.8 PT/GEN/037 NORTHERN IRELAND PROTOCOL - UPDATE

Members recalled that on 31 January 2020, the United Kingdom left the European Union and the Withdrawal Agreement concluded with the EU entered into force. Trading arrangements at the end of the transition period on 31 December 2020 will either be based on the Withdrawal Agreement only, or also on a Free Trade Agreement concluded with the EU.

A paper had been received from the Northern Ireland Office and was circulated for Members' information. This paper set out the Government's approach to the implementation of the Northern Ireland Protocol ('the Protocol') in the Withdrawal Agreement, including the Unilateral Declaration on Consent made by the UK Government.

A brief synopsis of the Protocol is as follows:

- The Government will meet legal obligations under the Protocol.
- The priority remains protecting Northern Ireland's place in the United Kingdom and preserving the huge gains from the peace process and the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement.
- The Protocol makes clear, it is for both the UK and the EU to respect Northern Ireland's integral place in the UK's customs territory and the internal market.
- It will be for democratically elected local politicians to decide its fate in a consent vote that can take place every four years.
- The implementation of the Protocol cannot mean a maximalist or inflexible application of EU law and it cannot mean new international borders or unwarranted burdens for NI's people or businesses.
- The approach outlined is to command the broadest possible support across communities, respecting the integral links across the UK.

Members were invited to discuss the Protocol with NIO Officials.

Proposed by Councillor Wilson

Seconded by Councillor Kelly and agreed that

Members respond on a party political basis.

NO ACTION

4.9 CCS/EDP/7 QUARTERLY SCREENING REPORT AND RURAL SCREENING

Members were advised that in line with the Council's Equality Scheme it was agreed to provide quarterly updates on the screening of policies under Section 75. Within the Scheme, the Council gave a commitment to apply screening methodology to all new and revised policies. Where necessary and appropriate, these new policies would be subject to further equality impact assessment.

The policies noted below have been screened between January and May 2020.

POLICY	SCREENING DECISION
Oil Stamp Policy	1
Non Statutory Charges Associated With Building Regulatory Function	1
PSCP Action Plan 2020-2021	1
Corporate Improvement Plan 2020-2021	1
Audio Visual Upgrades	1

COVID-19 Temporary Closure of a number of Council Facilities as a result of the Government Lockdown Restrictions (circulated)	1
COVID-19 Temporary Closure of Car-Parks as a result of the Government Lockdown Restrictions (circulated)	1

- (1) Screened with no mitigation
- (2) Screened with mitigation
- (3) Screened and EQIA required

Proposed by Councillor Robinson
 Seconded by Councillor Kelly and agreed that

the report be noted.

NO ACTION

The Chairperson advised that Any Other Business would be taken at this point of the meeting.

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Clarity around the postponement of the Annual Meeting was requested.

PROPOSAL TO PROCEED 'IN CONFIDENCE'

Proposed by Councillor Hamill
 Seconded by Alderman Kinahan and agreed that

the following Committee business be taken In Confidence.

Members were advised that the audio recording and livestream would cease at this point.

5. ITEMS IN CONFIDENCE

5.1 FI/ICT **IN CONFIDENCE** ACCESS TO COUNCIL MEETINGS

Members were aware of The Local Government (Flexibility of District Council Meetings) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 that have recently been introduced.

The interim protocol for remote Council meetings during COVID-19 was approved at the Special Meeting on 14 May 2020 and added to Standing Orders of Council

The protocol states at section 2d: those parts of the meeting which are open to the public will be live streamed and accessible via the Council website.

The Special Council Meeting on the 14th May was the first meeting to use Zoom; which facilitated the live streaming of the meeting to Council's YouTube channel. The live stream was stopped for the "In Confidence" portion of the meeting.

Through the use of Zoom, Council have been able maintain access to Council meetings for the press and public in order to ensure Council business is open and transparent.

The Zoom facility will be used for all Council, Special and Committee meetings until social distancing restrictions are eased. The access provided through technology for press and the public is the same as would have been available physically prior to social distancing.

The following section compares 3 options available for the access to Council and Committee meetings.

Option 1 - Zoom

Given the current guidelines around social distancing, using Zoom for virtual Council Meetings provides significant functionality for Council.

Zoom can be used for remote video conferencing and provides a mechanism to record both video and audio for all meetings.

The Zoom software also has the ability to highlight the Active Speaker, making it easier to see who is speaking when a large number of attendees are on the video call.

Live Streaming is also available to both YouTube and Facebook, giving the public live access to meeting proceedings.

Due to Zoom being a remote working tool, all those participating will be live streamed regardless of physical location.

Cost

Council has already purchased a Zoom pro licence at a cost of approximately £100.00

Option 2 - Discussion System with Video

Belfast City Council (BCC) live stream all of their meetings and subsequently make the recordings available on their website for future public review.

BCC currently use a sophisticated integrated microphone and multi-camera system which provides a live view of the current speaker regardless of their location with the chamber.

The live stream is made available on the Council website, however the system provides no mechanism for remote Elected Members to participate and only those physically present within the chamber will be part of the live stream.

Cost

Due to suppliers not operating at present, costs have been obtained through discussions with BCC.

Capital Cost: [REDACTED] (Per Chamber)

Annual Cost: [REDACTED]

Option 3 - Fixed Webcam

A webcam could be installed at a fixed location within the Council Chambers providing an “overview” of those present within the chamber. There would however, be no mechanism to automatically zoom in on who was speaking during the meeting.

Additional equipment would be purchased to take an audio feed from the existing microphone system.

The meeting would then be live streamed via YouTube to the Council YouTube Channel.

This option assumes all participants will be physically present within the chamber – no remote Councillors will be visible or heard on the livestream.

Cost

Costs are estimated to be approximately £2,000. (Per Chamber)

Proposed by Councillor Hamill

Seconded by Councillor Flanagan and agreed that

Option 1 be approved and Officers engage with AV industry experts to provide details of options, including costs, for a superior solution to facilitate remote access to and broadcast of Council and Committee meetings.

ACTION BY: Graham Smyth, Head of ICT

5.2 FI/PRO/TEN/286 IN CONFIDENCE TENDER FOR THE PROVISION OF A FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM

Members were reminded that an Economic Appraisal for replacement of core Finance and Human Resource systems was agreed by the Finance and Governance Committee in January 2020.

Officers had continued to research systems to meet the objectives of the Business Case along with appropriate procurement routes.

The main driver for the system replacement remained, ie cessation of software development by the incumbent finance software supplier and potential removal of support beyond 2023. The current pandemic had also strengthened the argument to move to “the cloud” to support Business Continuity by removing reliance on the current solution which had

demonstrated significant limitations when compared to modern financial software systems.

Research also indicated that a greater level of staff engagement was necessary for the choice of Human Resources software along with longer preparation and lead-in times. It was therefore decided to progress with the Financial Management element of the system due to the time bound requirements whilst allowing for future integration with Human Resources software.

Several software solutions were extensively reviewed in terms of capability and cost and were evaluated as follows:

Stage 1 – Capability Assessments

The software solutions were evaluated for compliance with specification, fit within the organisation, future proofing of product and ability to incorporate human Resources software either as an interface or additional module. Site visits were also undertaken to validate system capability, ease of implementation and support experience from users of a similar size to this Council.

Stage 2 – Pricing

The Crown Commercial Services (CCS) 'G – Cloud' Digital Marketplace (CCS Framework RM1557.11 G-Cloud 11) was used to minimise the procurement risk and timeframe. The preferred solution price following the capability assessment is tabled below:

Supplier	Total Implementation Costs plus contingency	Annual SaaS fees
Technology One Limited	██████████	██████████

Implementation costs (approximately 250 days) can only be confirmed following a detailed systems planning discussion and will be influenced by the extent of collaborative implementation work with other Councils. A Council contingency of ██████████ has therefore been included. The costs are in line with the Economic Appraisal.

Annual software as a service (SaaS) fees are per the CCS G Cloud Framework pricing.

A detailed implementation plan (pending approval) will be tabled at a future Policy and Governance Committee and regular updates will be provided to Elected Members as the implementation progresses.

Proposed by Councillor Robinson
Seconded by Councillor Webb that

Technology One Limited be appointed for the provision of Financial Management Information System for a 4-year period with contractual review after 4 years at the rates detailed within CCS Framework RM1557.11 G-Cloud 11.

On the proposal being put to the meeting 12 Members voted in favour, 2 against, 0 abstentions and it was agreed.

Councillor Wilson's opposition to the proposal was noted.

ACTION BY: John Balmer, Head of Finance

PROPOSAL TO PROCEED OUT OF 'IN CONFIDENCE'

Proposed by Councillor Hamill
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 IT Officers for their assistance. The meeting concluded at 7.45 pm.

MAYOR

Council Minutes have been redacted in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 2018, the General Data Protection Regulation, and legal advice.