



29 September 2022

Committee Chair: Councillor M Magill
Committee Vice-Chair: Alderman M Girvan

Committee Members: Aldermen – T Burns and P Michael

Councillors – H Cushinan, S Flanagan, R Foster, M
Goodman, B Mallon, A McAuley, T McGrann, N Ramsay,
V Robinson, B Webb and R Wilson

Dear Member

MEETING OF THE POLICY AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Policy and Governance Committee will be held in the **Round Tower Chamber, Antrim Civic Centre on Tuesday 4 October 2022 at 6.30 pm.**

You are requested to attend.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jacqui Dixon".

Jacqui Dixon, BSc MBA
Chief Executive, Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council

PLEASE NOTE: Refreshments will be available in the Café from 5.20

For any queries please contact Member Services:

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**REPORT ON BUSINESS TO BE CONSIDERED AT THE
POLICY AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE MEETING ON
TUESDAY 4 OCTOBER 2022**

4 PRESENTATION

4.1 Digital Marketing Service - presentation

5 ITEMS FOR DECISION

5.1 **CCS/REG/025 & CCS/REG/026 APPLICATION FOR TEMPORARY APPROVAL OF PREMISES FOR CIVIL MARRIAGE / CIVIL PARTNERSHIP CEREMONIES**

Under the terms of the Marriage (NI) Order 2003 and the Civil Partnership Act (2004), the Council has the responsibility to approve appropriate applications for Place Approvals for Civil Marriages and Civil Partnerships.

The owner(s) of the following specified premises have submitted an application for the temporary approval of an area (Garden(s)):-

31 Browns Road, Newtownabbey, BT36 4TD

28 Ballysculty Road, Muckamore, BT41 4QU

Part of the process requires that a Notice of Interest be displayed for a three-week period in a prominent place at the complex to allow for public objection.

No objections have been received to any of the notifications to apply for Place Approval and the premises have been formally inspected and no problems have been found with regard to the application.

RECOMMENDATION: that the named premises are approved to hold a Civil Marriages under the terms of the Marriage (NI) Order 2003 and Civil Partnerships under the Civil Partnership Act (2004)

Prepared by: Emma Thompson, Registrar

Approved by: Debbie Rogers, Director of Organisation Development

5.2 A/GEN/13 MOTIONS AND PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO MOTIONS

A report on amendments to motions was deferred at the September Policy and Governance Committee for further consideration.

The Mayor has requested that Amendments to Motions be provided to Member Services in written form prior to a Council meeting to ensure that there is no misinterpretation re the amendment.

Officers have therefore reviewed the current procedures in relation to Motions and Amendments, contained within Section 20 & 21 of the Council's Standing Orders and consider the following addition appropriate.

In order to support the Mayor in his role as Chair it is suggested that as Motions are provided in advance, all proposed Amendments to Motions should also be provided in advance. However, as Amendments may not be finalised until closer to the meeting date, it is suggested that all proposed Amendments to motions be provided to Member Services by 12 noon, at the latest, on the day of the Council meeting. These should be provided in writing and include the name of the proposer(s) and seconder(s). Both the Motion and the proposed Amendments will be provided to the Mayor in advance of the meeting. This is only to assist the Mayor and the Amendments to Motions will not be read out at the Council meeting or circulated to other Members. This will not prevent new Amendments to be made at the Council meeting. The normal process for proposing an Amendment to a Motion will be unaffected.

Recommendation: that Members approve the incorporation of items listed in point 1 to Section 20 of the Standing Orders

Prepared by: Liz Johnston, Deputy Director of Performance and Governance (Interim)

Approved by: Sandra Cole, Deputy Chief Executive of Finance and Governance

5.3 FI/GEN/018 SALARY SACRIFICE PENSION AVC SCHEME

Members are reminded that it was agreed in April 2022 that the Council would introduce an additional voluntary contributions (AVC) scheme for NILGOSC members in the form of a "Shared Cost AVC" scheme.

The introduction of this scheme requires an amendment to the Council's Pension Discretions Policy Statement, **enclosed**. Section 6 has therefore been amended to permit the Council to enter into a "shared cost" AVC arrangement as provided for under Regulation 19 of the Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014.

RECOMMENDATION: that the amendment to the Council's Pension Discretions Policy Statement be approved.

Prepared by: Richard Murray, Head of Finance and Jennifer Close, Head of Human Resources

Agreed and Approved by: Sandra Cole, Deputy Chief Executive of Finance & Governance

5.4 PT/CI/038 CORPORATE RECOVERY AND IMPROVEMENT PLAN – PERFORMANCE PROGRESS REPORT QUARTER ONE

Members are 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.

The Council's Corporate Recovery and Improvement Plan 2022-23 was approved in June 2022. This set out a range of challenging performance targets, along with four identified improvement objectives and a number of Statutory Performance Targets.

A first quarter progress report is **enclosed** for Members' attention. This was noted by the Audit & Risk Committee on 20 September 2022

RECOMMENDATION: that the Corporate Recovery and Improvement Plan 2022-23 Quarter 1 progress report be approved.

Prepared by: Allen Templeton, Performance and Transformation Officer

Agreed by: Liz Johnston, Deputy Director of Performance and Governance (Interim)

Approved by: Sandra Cole, Director of Finance and Governance

6 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

6.1 G-LEG-325/19 DEPARTMENT FOR INFRASTRUCTURE - THE PRIVATE STREETS (NORTHERN IRELAND) ORDER 1980 – DEVELOPMENT AT CLEMENTS HALL, BALLYCLARE

Correspondence has been received from the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) advising that streets at the above development have now been adopted by DfI Roads (**copy correspondence enclosed**).

RECOMMENDATION: that the correspondence be noted.

Prepared by: Deirdre Nelson, Paralegal

Approved by: Paul Casey, Borough Lawyer and Head of Legal Services

6.2 CE/OA/012 LOCAL GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIP PANEL MEETING

The Local Government Partnership Panel provides a structured, political relationship between central and local government to discuss strategic policy and operational matters of mutual interest and concern.

The Partnership Panel met on the 2nd August 2022, minutes and actions points received in relation to this meeting are **enclosed** for Members' Information.

The next meeting of the panel is planned for 19th October 2022.

RECOMMENDATION: that the report be noted.

Prepared by: Denise Lynn, PA to the Director of Finance and Governance

Agreed by: Sandra Cole, Director of Finance and Governance

6.3 HR/HR/019 AGENCY STAFF UPDATE

Members are reminded that agency staff are used across the Council to provide temporary cover for absence such as:

- Maternity leave
- Secondments
- Sickness absence
- Vacant posts

The use of agency staff is subject to a rigorous approval process, which requires the approval of the Corporate Leadership Team and there is budgetary provision for the majority of posts filled via departmental salary budgets, salary contingency and grant funding.

Current Agency staff

The table appended provides an update for Members on the use of agency staff as at August 2022 compared to August 2019 (pre covid-19). It excludes limited ad-hoc agency cover, which is necessary to provide operational cover, at short notice (see [Appendix 1](#)). Given the exceptional nature of 2020/21; 2019/20 agency figures have been used for comparison.

In reviewing the number of agency workers it should be noted that:

- the number of agency workers has reduced from 133 August 2019 to 104 in August 2022
- there are less agency workers covering sickness absence and vacancies on structures
- agency workers are used more to provide ad-hoc cover

Cost of Agency

[Appendix 2](#) sets out expenditure on agency workers in August 2022.

The cost of agency staff has remained the same for the period of 1 April 2022 to 31 August 2022 at 7% of all staffing costs compared to 7% for the same period in 2019/2020 (pre-covid).

The increased costs are impacted by:

- the 1.75% NJC pay increase that is also applicable to agency workers
- increase in National Insurance of 1.25% from 6 April 2022

In 2022/2023

While there are currently 25 Seasonal Grounds Maintenance workers in place, this cover is anticipated to finish in October 2022 and the reduction in numbers will be apparent in November's update report.

As the Summer Schemes resumed in July and August 2022 one agency was engaged to recruit 50 Summer Scheme Leader roles to support these schemes, 46 were recruited in July with the schemes ending on 19 August 2022. The reduction in numbers will be shown in the next update report for September.

It continues to be challenging to fill roles through the agencies due to the current labour market and we are directly recruiting and filling operational vacancies that are currently covered by agency workers.

We will continue to recruit to fill vacancies across all sections and reduce the number of agency workers covering the vacancies with agency workers used for more ad hoc, seasonal, temporary cover when required.

RECOMMENDATION: that the report be noted.

Prepared by: Kirsty Clarke, Human Resources Advisor (Systems)

Agreed by: Jennifer Close, Head of Human Resources

Approved by: Debbie Rogers, Director of Organisation Development

6.4 HR/GEN/019 MANAGING ATTENDANCE

The purpose of this report is to update Members on the management of attendance from April 2022 – August 2022 (summary enclosed).

ABSENCE – 1 APRIL 2022 TO 31 AUGUST 2022

Members are advised that absence at the end of July was above target by 1.74 days with 6.83 average days lost per employee against a target of 5.09 days. Covid absence is not included in the reported figures.

A number of long term absence cases have resulted in employees exhausting their sick pay entitlement and although no additional cost is incurred by the Council during the 'no pay' periods – these days lost are still included in the absence figures.

If days lost to employees who were not in receipt of sick pay were not included in the absence figures, the average days lost per employee at the end of August 2022 would have been 5.74 days.

There has been a small decrease in 100% attendance with 80% of staff achieving this compared to 83% for the same period in 2021/22.

Analysis of this month's absence figures has highlighted the following:

Long term absence

- Accounts for 91% of the absence figures.
- The main reason for long term absence remains within the “other category” of absence. Types of absence include:
 - Absence following family bereavement
 - Stress/Work related stress
 - Surgery
 - Road Traffic Accident
 - Heart related issues
- 42% of these long term cases are deemed unpreventable and therefore more challenging to manage including hospital procedures, broken bones, road traffic accidents and heart attacks.
- To date, 2 Formal Case Review cases have been concluded with 1 at appeal stage. This leaves 7 absence cases at Formal Case Review stage with 2 cases heard with outcomes pending, 1 in progress (potential ill health retirement) and 4 to be progressed to Formal Case review (2 of which are pending Employee Relations case outcomes).
- 9 long term cases have exhausted their sick pay entitlement
- To date, 15 long term cases returned to work.

Short term absence

- Accounts for 9% of the absence figures.

- The main reasons for absence are
 - Other - Cold/flu, vomiting
 - Musculoskeletal problems
 - Back and neck problems
 - Stress Depression, Mental Health
 - Infection
- To date, 21 short term cases of absence returned to work.

It is noted that absence related to stress (including work related stress) currently accounts for 46% of the overall absence (both long term and short term). The Council remains focused on encouraging health and wellbeing in the workplace, and continues to promote the Employee Assistance Programme through Inspire offering 24/7 confidential support in addition to other wellbeing initiatives in place.

Ongoing actions

- The Head of HR and HR Manager have held several bi-monthly meetings to date with the directorates with the highest levels of absence, namely Parks & Leisure, Waste Operations and Community Planning. The relevant Directors, Deputy Directors & Heads of Service attend. These meetings cover in depth analysis of absence cases and the associated reasons, to agree next steps for complex cases and to schedule formal case reviews where appropriate. General feedback has been positive with the targeted focus valued.
- Contract Management meeting have recently taken place with Independent Occupational Health, with feedback provided including the quality/standard of reports being received by the Council and general appointment availability. Following this meeting, we note an improvement in the standard of reports received from IOH which in turn, supports more focussed case management.
- A contract management meeting has also taken place with Inspire to discuss current waiting times and challenges along with discussions around further promotion of the service and additional support materials available. Follow-up meetings are due to take place in December 2022. It should be noted that waiting times for Inspire have subsequently reduced following this recent meeting.
- Monthly case management discussion meetings scheduled to review complex cases with an Occupational Health consultant. Case managers will attend these sessions to ensure effective use of the Occupational Health service and to support earlier returns to work where possible.
- Training has commenced for managers within Parks on how to effectively manage their absence caseloads. Absence management toolkits are also under development to further assist managers.
- Development of online training module on the importance of attending work, to be rolled out to new staff initially and then across the wider organisation.

- Delivery of the Wellbeing Calendar with access to the flu vaccine for staff and Elected Members promoted in September for delivery 18-19 October 2022.
- Mental Health Awareness training scheduled for 27 September 2022, delivered by Inspire.
- Continued provision of physiotherapy services for appropriate cases (back and musculoskeletal related absence)

RECOMMENDATION: that the report be noted.

Prepared by: Victoria Stewart, HR Systems and Data Analyst

Reviewed by: Jennifer Close, Head of Human Resources

6.5 CCS/CS/006 COMMUNICATIONS & CUSTOMERS CHANNEL REPORT

Members are reminded that the Corporate Recovery & Improvement Plan for 2022-23 sets out the following Performance Improvement Target, "We will achieve high levels of customer satisfaction".

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the indicators that the Plan set out as measurements of progress towards this target.

We achieve at least 80% satisfaction with overall Council services.

Each issue of the Borough Life magazine has a specific, themed survey, and within each one, residents are asked to rate their satisfaction with Council services.

The July issue, on Digital Services, which ran from 1st July to 5th August returned an **89%** rating. The next issue will be published in October.

2021-22	Target 2022-23	April	May	June	July	August
87.5%	80%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	89%

The percentage of abandoned calls will be 6.5% (or less).

A total of **76,627** calls were presented from 1st May to 31st August 2022, a **20.5%** increase on the same period in 2021 (**63,608**).

The percentage of abandoned calls during the same five month period, improved from **5.7%** in 2021 to **5%** in 2022 as the Customer Services team developing support plans for each service.

2021-22	Target 2022-23	April	May	June	July	August
6.1%	6.5%	5.5%	4.6%	5.1%	5.2%	4.7%

We have achieved at least 600,000 online transactions.

Officers continue to promote and monitor the shift of transactions to an online basis, where practical and beneficial.

For the purposes of maintaining consistency with previous benchmarks, this indicator focuses upon the number of online transactions for the following:

- Caravan bookings
- Theatre bookings
- Leisure bookings
- Dog licensing applications
- Bulky waste bookings

By the end of August 2022, there had been **290,724** online transactions. This is on track to meet our annual target.

2021-22	Target 2022-23	April	May	June	July	August
652,593	600,000	67,844	60,947	48,091	52,203	61,639

There are at least 5,062 downloads of the Residents App.

Downloads of the ANBorough App through the official app stores to date in 2022-23 total **5,909**, this is **16.7%** above target for the year.

There was a total of **14,481** downloads in 2021-22, which peaked following a leisure update which enabled MORE members to book and manage their leisure membership. Since the launch of the app in September 219 a total of **29,938** downloads have taken place (to the end of March 2022).

2021-22	Target 2022-23	April	May	June	July	August
14,481	5,062	1,104	1,241	1,130	1,207	1,227

The performance of the Corporate Recovery & Improvement Policy 2022-23 will be reported on a quarterly basis to the Policy & Governance and Audit Risk Committees, and within the Annual Report on Performance 2022-23 (Self-Assessment), which will be reviewed by Council and published on the Councils website by 30 September 2023.

RECOMMENDATION: that the report is noted.

Prepared by: James Porter, Customer Services Manager

Agreed by: Nicola McCullough, Head of Communications and Customers

Approved by: Debbie Rogers, Director of Organisation Development

6.6 FI/FIN/4 BUDGET REPORT – AUGUST 2022 – Period 05

A budget report for August 2022 – Period 05 is enclosed for Members information.

The Council's financial position at the end of August 2022 shows a favourable variance on Net Cost of Services of £182k.

RECOMMENDATION: that the report be noted.

Prepared by: Richard Murray, Head of Finance

Agreed by: John Balmer, Deputy Director of Finance and Capital

Approved by: Sandra Cole, Deputy Chief Executive of Finance & Governance

6.7 FI/GEN/015 EXTENSION TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT REMOTE MEETINGS LEGISLATION

Members are advised that correspondence **enclosed** has been received from the Department for Communities in relation to the extension to Local Government Remote Meetings Legislation.

Section 78 (local authority meetings) of the Coronavirus Act 2020 contained the provision to provide Councils with the flexibility to hold meetings by remote or hybrid means during the Coronavirus emergency.

This was scheduled to expire on 24 September 2022, however the Department has now brought a further extension order to extend section 78 of the Coronavirus Act for a further 6 months, until 24 March 2023.

RECOMMENDATION: That the report be noted.

Prepared by: Denise Lynn, PA to the Director of Finance and Governance

Agreed by: Sandra Cole, Director of Finance and Governance