



MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE MEETING OF THE POLICY AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE HELD IN THE ROUND TOWER CHAMBER, ANTRIM CIVIC CENTRE ON TUESDAY 6 JANUARY 2026 AT 6.30 PM

- In the Chair** : Councillor B Webb
- Members Present (In person)** : Alderman L Clarke
Councillors – S Cosgrove, P Dunlop and H Magill
- Members Present (Remote)** : Alderman P Bradley
Councillors – J Burbank, H Cushinan, M Goodman, A McAuley, T McGrann, V McWilliam, and A O'Lone
- Non Committee Members: (Remote)** : Councillor L O'Hagan
- Officers Present (In person)** : Director of Finance & Governance – S Cole
Deputy Director of Finance – J Balmer
Deputy Director of Governance – L Johnston
Head of Finance – R Murray
ICT Helpdesk Officer – J Wilson
Member Services Officer – C McGrandle
- Officers Present (Remote)** : Borough Lawyer (Legal, Land, Governance and Policy) – Paul Casey

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

Councillor N Kelly

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Item 4.5 - Councillor T McGrann

3 PRESENTATION

3.1 FI/FIN/11 ESTIMATES UPDATE PRESENTATION

1. Purpose

An update on the 2026/27 Estimates for the Organisation Development, Finance and Governance and Chief Executive's Directorates and Capital Financing was presented at the meeting.

A summary of the financial position for the 2025/26 financial year and the current financial estimates for 2026/27 were circulated.

In response to a Member's query, the Head of Finance provided clarification on a potential Grants software package.

In response to a Member's query about a product called Social Value Engine, the Director of Finance and Governance confirmed that this would be considered further by Officers and the outcome reported to a future committee.

Proposed by Councillor Burbank

Seconded by Councillor Cosgrove and agreed that

the presentation be noted.

NO ACTION

4 ITEMS FOR DECISION

4.1 FI/FA/6 MINIMUM REVENUE PROVISION POLICY 2026/27

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to provide updates and obtain approvals for the 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, the 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 2026.

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 the Council's MRP Policy 2026/27 was circulated along with relevant screening forms (circulated) for information.

Proposed by Councillor Cosgrove
Seconded by Councillor McAuley and agreed that

the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy 2026/27 be approved.

ACTION BY: Richard Murray, Head of Finance

4.2 **FIN/GEN/2 COUNCIL RESERVES POLICY**

1. Purpose

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

2. Background

Council maintained a number of reserves that were categorised as 'usable' and 'unusable'. Unusable reserves were maintained for statutory purposes and proper accounting practice. Usable reserves comprised 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 reserves was described in the policy.

All relevant screening had been completed and was circulated for information.

Proposed by Alderman Clarke
Seconded by Councillor Cosgrove and agreed that

the Council Reserves Policy be approved.

ACTION BY: John Balmer, Deputy Director of Finance

4.3 G-LEG-11 SURVEILLANCE CAMERA POLICY

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to inform Members of the updated surveillance Camera Policy (circulated).

2. Main report

The review of the Policy by Officers did not entail major changes to the substance of the Policy. The following was a summary of the changes made to the Policy: updating the request forms; legislative updates; changes to Officer job titles; and reference to technology changes.

3. Governance

This policy had been equality screened, a copy of which was circulated.

Proposed by Councillor Cosgrove
Seconded by Councillor McAuley and agreed that

the updated Surveillance Camera Policy be approved.

ACTION BY: Deirdre Nelson, Paralegal

4.4 G-LEG-14/560 REQUESTS FROM NIE NETWORKS TO CARRY OUT WORKS ON COUNCIL LAND

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to inform Members about the requests from NIE Networks for access to Council land to carry out works at Springfarm Road, Antrim subject to them agreeing to the following (maps circulated).

2. Introduction/Background

Officers had received two requests from NIE Networks to carry out works on Council land at Springfarm Road, Antrim. The requests from NIE Networks to carry out works were part of the upgrading of the existing electricity network and would ensure a more robust and resilient network within the Council area.

3. The proposed works

NIE Networks had proposed to remove a large section of 33000-volt overhead line currently crossing the playing fields at Springfarm Road, Antrim. This section of overhead line would then be replaced with 33000-volt underground cable, part of which would be on Council land. To facilitate these works, NIE Networks needed to secure with Council an easement and the location of the easement was hatched green on the circulated map.

An independent valuation was undertaken by Land and Property Services (LPS) who were appointed by NIE Networks to act as a 'fair and honest broker.' LPS had assessed the value of the proposed easement at £2,000.

NIE Networks also proposed re-positioning the double pole, numbered 338 on the circulated map, plus 2 stay wires on Council land as the underground cable would need this to connect to. NIE Networks assured officers that the re-positioning of the double pole would be well away from the playing pitches that were currently on site. To facilitate these works, a wayleave agreement would be required with Officers from Parks, Facilities and Capital Development having said they had no issues with the works being undertaken on Council land.

The works were scheduled to commence Monday 13th April 2026 and would last for approximately 2 weeks.

Proposed by Councillor Dunlop
Seconded by Councillor Cosgrove and agreed that

the requests from NIE Networks for access to Council land to carry out works at Springfarm Road, Antrim subject to them agreeing to the following:

- (a) A Grant of Easement is agreed between the parties be approved.**
- (b) A Wayleave Agreement is agreed between the parties be approved.**
- (c) Indemnify the Council for any liabilities associated with the works be approved.**

ACTION BY: Deirdre Nelson, Paralegal

4.5 **CCS/EDP/025 DUAL LANGUAGE STREET SIGN APPLICATIONS**

1. Purpose

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

Stage 1

- No applications be noted**

Stage 2

- **Arthur Crescent, Newtownabbey, BT36 7AL be approved**

Stage 3

- **No applications 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 - there were no applications at Stage 1.

STAGE 2: RESIDENTS CANVASS - there was one application at Stage 2.

1. ARTHUR CRESCENT, BT36 7AL

The occupants of the above streets had been canvassed and met the two thirds or more in favour of the erection of the second language street signs.

STAGE 3: STREET SIGN INSTALLATION – there were no applications at Stage 3.

Maps and costs were circulated for information.

Proposed by Councillor McAuley

Seconded by Councillor Burbank and agreed that

the Dual Language Street Sign applications at:

Stage 1

- **No applications be noted.**

Stage 2

- **Arthur Crescent, Newtownabbey, BT36 7AL be approved**

Stage 3

- **No applications be noted.**

ACTION BY: Claire Webb, Accessibility and Inclusion Officer

4.6 PT/CI/071 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE AND IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2026/27 DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to recommend to Members to approve the draft Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan 2026/27 for consultation.

2. Background

Members were reminded that 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, the Council produced a draft Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan for consultation. This 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 2026/27 (circulated) set out a range of 7 Statutory targets, 6 improvement objectives and 37 performance targets.

The draft Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan 2026/27 was subject to a 12-week public consultation, which would commence on 2 February 2026, 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 2026 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 2026/27, which would be published on the Council's website by 30 June 2026.

5. Section 75 Equality Screening

The Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan 2026/27 had been equality screened, a copy of which was circulated for information.

Proposed by Councillor Cosgrove

Seconded by Councillor McWilliam and agreed that

the draft Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan 2026/27 for

consultation be approved.

ACTION BY: Allen Templeton, Performance Improvement Officer

5 ITEMS FOR NOTING

5.1 G/MSMO/41 MEMBERS' ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS (JUNE 2025 – NOVEMBER 2025)

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 2025 to November 2025, prior to publication on the Council's website.

2. Introduction/Background

In February 2017 at the Policy and Governance Committee meeting it was agreed that monthly attendance records for each of the Council and Committee meetings would be summarised on a six-monthly basis and published on the Council's website.

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

A summary sheet had been prepared showing the total attendance for each of the Council and Committee meetings for the period 1 June 2025 to 30 November 2025 (circulated).

Proposed by Councillor McAuley

Seconded by Councillor Burbank 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 2025 to 30 November 2025 be noted and published on Council's website.

ACTION BY: Member Services

6 ANY OTHER RELEVANT BUSINESS

Members were advised that any Other Relevant Business (AORB) would be taken at this point.

6.1 The Director of Finance and Governance provided clarity on the reasons for the social media policy being brought to the Community Development

Committee and confirmed that she would consider the Member's points in respect of appropriate placement of policies within committee structures.

ACTION BY: Sandra Cole, Director of Finance and Governance

PROPOSAL TO PROCEED 'IN CONFIDENCE'

Proposed by Councillor Cosgrove
Seconded by Councillor McAuley and agreed that

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

7 ITEMS IN CONFIDENCE

7.1 IN CONFIDENCE G-LEG-455 LETTING OF LAND FOR GRAZING/CUTTING AT CHURCH ROAD, RANDALSTOWN

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to seek Members' approval of the letting of land for grazing/cutting at Church Road, Randalstown (map circulated).

2. Introduction/Background

Members were reminded underutilised lands were let for grazing/cutting via an appointed agent in previous years. The purpose of this approach being to raise income, as well as protecting lands from potential future adverse possession claims and/or illegal grazing.

3. Previous Decision of Council

Members were reminded that the letting of lands for grazing/cutting for the 2025 season at several Council sites were approved at the June 2025 Full Council meeting.

4. Update

Members had previously approved the letting of lands for grazing/cutting to [REDACTED] for the land at Church Road Randalstown for the 2025 season. However, Council's letting agent, Frazer Kidd, have said that [REDACTED] had not engaged with the process to date and the land was readvertised.

Frazer Kidd received three offers for letting the land and had recommended the land be let to Alexandria and Caine Mills for a term of two years at an annual rent of £[REDACTED]. The prospective tenants proposed to use the land to graze their horses. The Mills' offer was selected as they have shown a sustained interest in the site and were well placed to secure the land promptly.

The Borough Lawyer answered a number of queries in respect of the proposal to let the land for grazing purposes and undertook to provide Members with details of any outstanding debt.

Proposed by Councillor Cushinan
Seconded by Councillor McAuley and agreed that

the letting of land for grazing/cutting at Church Road, Randalstown to Alexandria and Caine Mills for the term of two years at an annual rent of £ [REDACTED] to graze their horses be approved.

ACTION BY: Deirdre Nelson, Paralegal

PROPOSAL TO PROCEED OUT OF 'IN CONFIDENCE'

Proposed by Councillor Cosgrove
Seconded by Councillor McAuley 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 6.55 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.