



31 August 2023

Committee Chair: Alderman L Clarke  
Committee Vice-Chair: Councillor M Stewart

Committee Members: Aldermen – L Boyle, P Bradley and P Michael  
Councillors – M Brady, S Cosgrove, H Cushinan,  
S Flanagan, N Kelly, H Magill, E McLaughlin, L O'Hagan,  
A O'Lone and B Webb.

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 5 September 2023 at 6.30 pm.**

You are requested to attend.

Yours sincerely

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

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

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

**For any queries please contact Member Services:**  
Tel: 028 9448 1301

[memberservices@antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk](mailto:memberservices@antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk)

## **A G E N D A**

### **1 APOLOGIES**

### **2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

### **3 INTRODUCTION OF NEW STAFF**

### **4 PRESENTATIONS**

4.1 Digital Transformation – Graham Smyth

4.2 Customer Engagement – Jennifer Close/Lesley Millar

### **5 ITEMS FOR DECISION**

5.1 Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA)

5.2 Schedule of meetings of Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council

5.3 Policy and Governance Committee Terms of Reference

5.4 Association of Democratic Services Officers (ADSO) NI Branch

### **6 ITEMS FOR NOTING**

6.1 Prompt Payment Performance

6.2 Performance and Improvement Plan 2023/24 – Performance Progress Report Quarter 1 – Policy and Governance

6.3 Budget Report – Quarter 1 April to June 2023

6.4 Introducing the Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) Bill

6.5 Review of Policy Framework 2023

6.6 Year End Report on FOI/EIR/DPA Requests

6.7 Summer Scheme Funding and Inclusive Summer Scheme Update

6.8 Quarterly Screening Report and Rural Screening

6.9 Managing Attendance April 2022 - March 2023

6.10 Managing Attendance April 2023 – July 2023

6.11 Agency Update

6.12 Customers Channel Report

6.13 Customer Experience - Consultation & Survey Report

6.14 Local Government Training Group

**7 ITEMS IN CONFIDENCE**

7.1 Capital Projects Progress Report to 31<sup>st</sup> July 2023

**8 ANY OTHER RELEVANT BUSINESS**

**REPORT ON BUSINESS TO BE CONSIDERED AT THE  
POLICY AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE MEETING ON  
TUESDAY 5 SEPTEMBER 2023**

**4 PRESENTATIONS**

**4.1 DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION**

Members are advised that the Head of ICT will make a presentation on Digital Transformation at the meeting.

## **4.2 CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT**

Members are advised that the Head of Organisation Development and Director of Organisation Development will make a presentation on Customer Engagement at the meeting.

## 5 ITEMS FOR DECISION

### 5.1 CE/OA/005 NORTHERN IRELAND LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION (NILGA)

Members may recall at the Council meeting in May a query was raised in relation to the services delivered for Council's annual subscription to NILGA. Please find **enclosed** NILGA's Annual Accounts for 22/23, providing detail on NILGA's income and expenditure, along with an overview document which summarises the services and activities provided by them.

In addition, correspondence from Alison Allen, NILGA's Chief Executive is **enclosed**. This refers to the 4-year fee agreement which was approved at May 2023 Council and a request to make a presentation to Councillors on what NILGA have done to date and their future direction.

Mrs Allen has confirmed she has already made similar presentations to Derry City and Strabane Policy and Governance Committee and Belfast Group Leaders Forum and would be particularly keen to present to Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council as two Councillors are part of the NILGA Office Bearer team (Councillor Webb and Councillor Bennington).

**RECOMMENDATION: that the information in relation to NILGA's income and expenditure be noted and that approval be granted for representatives from NILGA to present at a future Council meeting.**

Prepared by: Liz Johnston, Deputy Director of Governance

Approved by: Sandra Cole, Director of Finance and Governance

5.2

**A/GEN /13 SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS OF ANTRIM AND NEWTOWNABBEY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

The following schedule of dates for Council and Committee meetings are proposed for the period 1 January – 31 December 2024.

**Meetings marked in red are held at Antrim Civic Centre, while those in black are held at Mossley Mill. All meetings commence at 6.30 pm with the exception of Planning Committee which will start at 6 pm.**

| <b>Council / Committee Meetings</b> | <b>Date of Meeting</b>   |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
|                                     |                          |
| Operations Committee                | Monday 8 January 2024*   |
| Policy & Governance Committee       | Tuesday 9 January 2024   |
| Community Planning Committee        | Monday 15 January 2024   |
| Planning Committee                  | Monday 22 January 2024   |
| Council Meeting                     | Monday 29 January 2024   |
|                                     |                          |
| Operations Committee                | Monday 5 February 2024   |
| Policy & Governance Committee       | Tuesday 6 February 2024  |
| Community Planning Committee        | Monday 12 February 2024  |
| Special Council Meeting             | Monday 12 February 2024  |
| Planning Committee                  | Monday 19 February 2024  |
| Council Meeting                     | Monday 26 February 2024  |
|                                     |                          |
| Operations Committee                | Monday 4 March 2024      |
| Policy & Governance Committee       | Tuesday 5 March 2024     |
| Community Planning Committee        | Monday 11 March 2024     |
| Planning Committee                  | Tuesday 19 March 2024*   |
| Audit and Risk Committee            | Wednesday 20 March 2024* |
| Council Meeting                     | Monday 25 March 2024     |
|                                     |                          |
| Operations Committee                | Monday 8 April 2024*     |
| Policy & Governance Committee       | Tuesday 9 April 2024*    |

|                               |                           |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Community Planning Committee  | Monday 15 April 2024      |
| Planning Committee            | Monday 22 April 2024      |
| Council Meeting               | Monday 29 April 2024      |
|                               |                           |
| Operations Committee          | Tuesday 7 May 2024*       |
| Policy & Governance Committee | Wednesday 8 May 2024      |
| Community Planning Committee  | Monday 13 May 2024        |
| Planning Meeting              | Monday 20 May 2024        |
| Council Meeting               | Tuesday 28 May 2024*      |
|                               |                           |
| Annual Council Meeting        | Monday 3 June 2024        |
| Operations Committee          | Monday 10 June 2024       |
| Policy & Governance Committee | Tuesday 11 June 2024      |
| Community Planning Committee  | Wednesday 12 June 2024    |
| Planning Committee            | Monday 17 June 2024       |
| Audit and Risk Committee      | Tuesday 18 June 2024      |
| Council Meeting               | Monday 24 June 2024       |
|                               |                           |
| Planning Committee            | Monday 22 July 2024       |
| Council Meeting               | Monday 29 July 2024       |
|                               |                           |
| Planning Committee            | Monday 19 August 2024     |
| Council Meeting               | Tuesday 27 August 2024*   |
|                               |                           |
| Operations Committee          | Monday 2 September 2024   |
| Policy & Governance Committee | Tuesday 3 September 2024  |
| Community Planning Committee  | Monday 9 September 2024   |
| Planning Committee            | Monday 16 September 2024  |
| Audit and Risk Committee      | Tuesday 17 September 2024 |
| Council Meeting               | Monday 30 September 2024  |



|                               |                            |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
|                               |                            |
| Operations Committee          | Monday 7 October 2024      |
| Policy & Governance Committee | Tuesday 8 October 2024     |
| Community Planning Committee  | Monday 14 October 2024     |
| Planning Committee            | Monday 21 October 2024     |
| Council Meeting               | Monday 28 October 2024     |
|                               |                            |
| Operations Committee          | Monday 4 November 2024     |
| Policy & Governance Committee | Tuesday 5 November 2024    |
| Community Planning Committee  | Monday 11 November 2024    |
| Planning Committee            | Monday 18 November 2024    |
| Council Meeting               | Monday 25 November 2024    |
|                               |                            |
| Operations Committee          | Monday 2 December 2024     |
| Policy & Governance           | Tuesday 3 December 2024    |
| Community Planning Committee  | Wednesday 4 December 2024* |
| Planning Committee            | Monday 9 December 2024*    |
| Audit and Risk Committee      | Tuesday 10 December 2024*  |
| Council Meeting               | Monday 16 December 2024*   |

\* Denotes change of date due to bank/public holiday.

**RECOMMENDATION: that the 2024 Schedule of Meetings for Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council be approved.**

Prepared by: Liz Johnston, Deputy Director of Governance

Approved by: Sandra Cole, Director of Finance and Governance

### **5.3 G/MSMO/140 POLICY AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE**

Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council conducts its business through a traditional committee system, where business is initially considered by one of its Committees forming a key component of Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council's corporate governance framework.

In line with good governance arrangements Terms of Reference (TOR) are required for each Committee. The previous terms TOR have been reviewed and updated to outline the Committee's core functions and define authority limits using a standardised format.

A copy of the revised draft Policy and Governance Committee Terms of Reference is **enclosed** with tracked changes for approval by Members prior to publication on the Council website.

**RECOMMENDATION: that Members approve the Policy and Governance Committee Terms of Reference**

Prepared By: Liz Johnston, Deputy Director of Governance

Approved By: Sandra Cole, Director of Finance and Governance and  
Jennifer Close, Director of Organisation Development

#### 5.4 G/MSMO/140 ASSOCIATION OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES OFFICERS (ADSO) BRANCH IN NI

At the NILGA Elected Member Development network meeting in January 2023, the Network requested that a letter be addressed to Council Chief Executives regarding the establishment of an Association of Democratic Services Officers (ADSO) branch in NI (**enclosed**).

The Association of Democratic Services Officers (ADSO) is the professional body which represents and supports all staff who work or have worked within the Democratic Services sector in Principal Local Authorities, Joint/Combine Authorities, Fire & Rescue Authorities and other similar governance organisations.

ADSO provide a range of services to support the democratic service function including

- Relevant democratic services training;
- Networking opportunities and participation in partnership initiatives with international partners
- Webinars
- Membership (the current membership rate is £55 per person with possible discount of up to 15% if subscriptions paid by Council)

The letter seeks endorsement from the Council for the establishment of a NI branch of ADSO. In doing so the Council would also be committing to

- Representation on the National ADSO Branch
- Democratic Services Officer ADSO Membership and Membership fee

Having reviewed the documentation provided, Officers are of the view that Membership of this professional body, if established in NI, would benefit the Council by providing support and capacity building for the Member Services and Mayoral Office team.

**RECOMMENDATION: that Members endorse the establishment of a branch of ADSO in NI and in doing so commit to supporting appropriate democratic services officers participation and membership of the professional body.**

Prepared by: Liz Johnston, Deputy Director of Governance

Approved by: Sandra Cole, Director of Finance and Governance

## 6 ITEMS FOR NOTING

### 6.1 FI/FIN/9 PROMPT PAYMENT PERFORMANCE

Members are reminded that 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 April 2023 to 30 June 2023** 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 invoices totalling £19,076,334

The Council paid 5,868 invoices within the 30-day target. (83%)

The Council paid 5,008 invoices within the 10-day target. (71%)

The Council paid 1,182 invoices outside of the 30-day target. (17%)

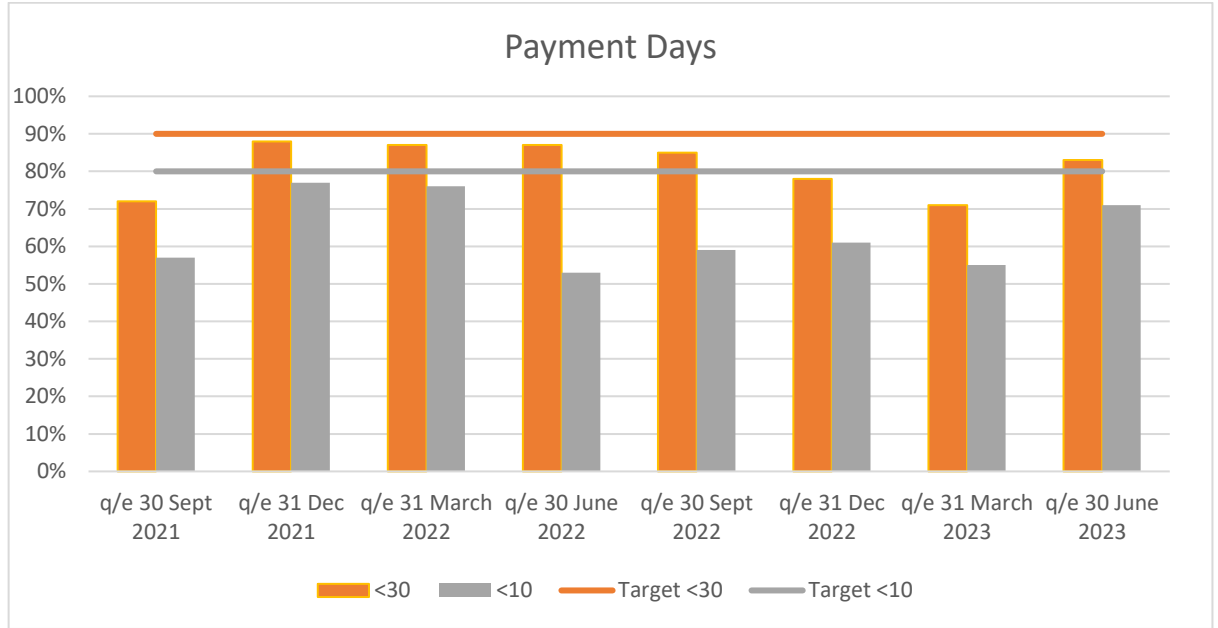
The Council has set a target of paying 90% of invoices within 30 days and 80% within 10 days.

| <b>Period</b>         | <b>Total Number of Invoices Paid</b> | <b>% Paid Within 30 Days</b> | <b>% Paid Within 10 Days</b> |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <b>Target</b>         |                                      | <b>90%</b>                   | <b>80%</b>                   |
| q/e 30 September 2021 | 5,867                                | 72%                          | 57%                          |
| q/e 31 December 2021  | 6,575                                | 88%                          | 77%                          |
| q/e 31 March 2022     | 5,539                                | 87%                          | 76%                          |
| q/e 30 June 2022      | 4,254                                | 87%                          | 53%                          |
| q/e 30 September 2022 | 6,090                                | 85%                          | 59%                          |

|                      |       |     |     |
|----------------------|-------|-----|-----|
| q/e 31 December 2022 | 5,780 | 78% | 61% |
| q/e 31 March 2023    | 5,558 | 71% | 55% |
| q/e 30 June 2023     | 7,050 | 83% | 71% |

This compares to previous quarterly results as below:

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



The table and graph above show the performance over the last two years. In comparison with previous quarters, performance levels have been maintained for the 30-day figure and regained for the 10-day figure. There is now a full complement of staff within the Finance section and work is ongoing with all departments to make further 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 30 June 2023 is shown (enclosed); the Council's performance for Quarter 1 against the average performance for the other Councils for Quarter 1 of 2023/24 is set out in the table below:

| <b>Council</b>                             | <b>% Paid Within 30 Days</b> | <b>% Paid Within 10 Days</b> |
|--|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Antrim & Newtownabbey BC (Quarter 1 23/24) | 83%                          | 71%                          |
| All Councils (Quarter 1 23/24)             | 91%                          | 71%                          |

**RECOMMENDATION: that the report be noted.**

Prepared by: Richard Murray, Head of Finance

Approved by: John Balmer, Deputy Director of Finance and Governance

## **6.2 PT/CI/049 PERFORMANCE AND IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2023/24 - PERFORMANCE PROGRESS REPORT QUARTER 1 – POLICY AND GOVERNANCE**

As agreed at the August Council meeting, quarterly performance reports will be presented to the relevant Committee or Working Group

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 Performance and Improvement Plan 2023-24 was approved in June 2023. This set out a range of robust performance targets, along with six identified improvement objectives and a number of Statutory Performance Targets.

First Quarter progress reports for Finance and Governance and Organisation Development **enclosed** and the overall Council Corporate Performance and Improvement 2023-24 are **enclosed** for Members' information.

A short presentation of performance reports will be provided by the relevant Director.

**RECOMMENDATION: That the report be noted.**

Prepared by: Allen Templeton, Performance Improvement Officer

Agreed by: Lesley Millar, Head of Organisation Development

Approved by: Jennifer Close, Director of Organisation Development

### **6.3 FI/FIN/4 BUDGET REPORT – QUARTER 1 APRIL TO JUNE 2023**

As agreed at the August Council meeting, quarterly budget reports will be presented to the relevant Committee or Working Group. All financial reports will be available to all Members. A short presentation outlining the Finance & Governance and Organisation Development Summary Budget Report will be provided by the relevant Director.

The overall financial position of the Council will be presented to the Policy & Governance Committee. Budget reports for Finance & Governance and Organisation Development for Quarter 1 – April to June 2023 are **enclosed** for Members' information.

**RECOMMENDATION: that the report be noted.**

Prepared by: Richard Murray, Head of Finance

Agreed by: John Balmer, Deputy Director of Finance

Approved by: Sandra Cole, Director of Finance & Governance



#### **6.4 INTRODUCING THE ECONOMIC ACTIVITY OF PUBLIC BODIES (OVERSEAS MATTERS) BILL**

Members are advised that correspondence **enclosed** has been received from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, relating to the introduction of the economic activity of public bodies (overseas matters) bill, fulfilling a manifesto commitment to “ban public bodies from imposing their own direct or indirect boycotts, disinvestment or sanction campaigns against foreign countries”.

The Bill is designed to stop public bodies pursuing their own foreign agenda, including;

- With public money
- Through divisive boycotts
- Divestment and sanctions campaigns

Further details relating to the Bill are also available through the parliaments website: [Introducing the Economic Activity of Public Bodies \(Overseas Matters\) Bill](#)

**RECOMMENDATION: that the report be noted.**

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

Approved by: Sandra Cole, Director of Finance and Governance

## 6.5 G/IG/7 REVIEW OF POLICY FRAMEWORK 2023

The Policy Framework has been reviewed in accordance with the agreed schedule. The Framework was last reviewed in 2021 (two year review cycle).

The review has identified a number of minor amendments as being required:

- clarification that when a policy is being reviewed not all steps of the policy making cycle will be required
- policy making cycle graphic updated
- request to publish policy on NetConsent to be approved by Deputy Director/Director rather than Head of Service
- update regarding changes in organisational structure
- version control table added.

The amendments to the Policy Framework have been approved by CLT. The Policy Framework with the amendments incorporated is **enclosed**.

**RECOMMENDATION: that the reviewed Policy Framework be noted.**

Prepared by: Helen McBride, Information Governance Manager

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

Approved by: Sandra Cole, Director of Finance and Governance

## 6.6 G/DPFI/2 YEAR END REPORT FOIR/EIR/DPA REQUESTS

A report has been prepared on requests received from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023 under the Freedom of Information Act (FOI), Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) and the Data Protection Act (DPA) and this is enclosed.

A summary of the statistics for the year is:

- The number of requests has increased by 21% on the previous year. Provision of responses has remained very resource intensive due to their complex nature and the levels of approval required.
- The percentage of requests answered within the 20 day deadline has decreased slightly from 95% to 94%. The KPI set by Council is 100%, although the ICO has in the past indicated that a figure of over 90% is to be highly commended.
- Of the 358 requests received, 271 were under FOI, 77 under EIR and 10 under DPA.
- The sections that received most requests were Environmental Health (88), Finance (82), Planning (58), Governance (52) and HR (44).
- Ten appeals were received within the financial year which was the same number as the previous year. In nine of the appeals the Council's original response was upheld. The customer failed to provide clarification when requested regarding the tenth appeal.
- One complaint to the ICO was notified within the year compared to three in the previous year. A response was provided to the ICO and to the requester. The ICO confirmed that no further action was required.
- Sixteen data breaches were reported during the year. One was considered of sufficiently high risk to require reporting to the ICO. Seven data breaches were reported in the previous year with one requiring notification to the ICO.
- To address the increase, responsibilities of staff under GDPR/the Data Protection Act 2018 are being reinforced via NetConsent, including a reminder that a GDPR module is available on the Learning Pool.

**RECOMMENDATION: that the report be noted.**

Prepared by: Helen McBride, Information Governance Manager

Agreed by: Liz Johnston, Deputy Director of Governance

Approved by: Sandra Cole, Director of Finance and Governance

## **6.7 CCS/GEN/007 SUMMER SCHEME FUNDING AND INCLUSIVE SUMMER SCHEME UPDATE**

### Summer Scheme Funding

Members are reminded that annually the Council provides funding of up to £5000 to the Special Schools in the Borough to support equitable access to Summer Schemes and Programmes across the Borough for children and young people with special needs.

We are delighted to report that all 5 Special Schools in the Borough have availed of the funding this year. The schools have thanked the Council for this valuable support which has enabled them to extend the provision or provide additional activities to support the pupils. Please see quotes below, from two of the Schools:

Jordanstown School Principal, Dr Catherine Scully said; "The pupils of Jordanstown School have had a fantastic week at our Summer Scheme funded by Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council. The funding allowed the school to really tailor the activities to meet the children's needs, and ranged from craft, cookery and horticulture through to sports, drama and sensory play. The highlight of the week was the visit by Kidz Farm, where the children got to meet lots of animals including alpacas, hedgehogs, rabbits and even a snake!"

Thornfield School Acting Principal, Jessica Morgan said; "The Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council Fund for Summer Schemes has been a fantastic addition to our schools summer scheme. It has allowed us to purchase valuable resources to support the arts and physical education of our pupils as well as allowing them to enjoy trips and new experiences. We had a brilliant uptake for Summer Scheme this year and through the support of the Department of Education and the Council, we have been able to create a fun, engaging and inclusive scheme that suits the needs of all our pupils"

### Inclusive Summer Scheme

Following the continued success of our annual Inclusive Summer Scheme this year's provision was extended by one day each week and a further one week added.

The Schemes took place in Antrim Forum, Lilian Bland Pavilion and Crumlin Leisure Centre. The locations were chosen to be more intimate venues due to the specific complex disability and medical needs of the children and based upon feedback received from their Parents.

The scheme was delivered with the support of the Mae Murray Foundation to provide personal care support such as toileting, feeding and medical needs. This enabled all of the children to attend independently. Activities included Inclusive games and biking, Arts and crafts, Sensory messy play, Kidz farm visits, Exploris visits and their favourite the bubble bike.

Children who attended had a variety of disabilities or conditions such as Downs Syndrome, Cerebral Palsy, Autism/ ADHD, Aicardi Syndrome and Epilepsy. Parental feedback has all been positive, some of the comments received to date are below:

|   |
|---|
| <p>A super experience had by my little boy. Thank you so much for giving him this experience and the love and time you gave him.<br/>Thank you also from a tired mummy who was able to get some 'me' time.</p>                                |
| <p>I love how they took a keen interest in my little son's interests. The love and care they show is next to none.<br/>Also, during drop off and pick up the staff were so attentive to my little daughter (who didn't attend the scheme)</p> |
| <p>My daughter really enjoyed the summer scheme. I can't tell you how excited she was every morning. It's the first thing of this nature that's been suitable for her and it was amazing.</p>   |
| <p>I don't see how it could be improved, it was excellent.</p>  |
| <p>Happy week all round – Thank you for everything</p>  |
| <p>A great week for my son, he had so much fun thank you so much for including him.</p>   |
| <p>Amazing week! My son had the best time. Thank you very much!</p>   |
| <p>My son really enjoyed it</p>   |
| <p>Lovely venue great staff super ideas well done thank you very much</p>   |
| <p>The programme of activities was very varied and excellent. My boys thoroughly enjoyed themselves. It meant so much that my three children got to experience summer scheme with this being the first experience for one on them.</p>        |

**RECOMMENDATION: that the report be noted.**

Prepared by: Ellen Boyd, Accessibility and Inclusion Officer

Agreed by: Lesley Millar, Head of Organisation Development

Approved by: Jennifer Close, Director of Organisation Development

## 6.8 CCS/EDP/7 QUARTERLY SCREENING REPORT AND RURAL SCREENING

Members are 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.

### **SECTION 75 AND RURAL SCREENINGS**

The policies noted below have been screened between January to March 2023.

| <b>POLICY</b>  | <b>SCREENING DECISION</b> |
|--|---------------------------|
| Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan 2023 – 2024   | 1                         |
| Coronation of His Majesty King Charles III Sub Committee | 1                         |
| Royal Ulster Constabulary George Cross Centenary         | 1                         |
| Entertainment Licensing Policy                           | 1                         |
| Mossley Park 3G Pitch and Changing Facilities            | 1                         |

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

**RECOMMENDATION: that the quarterly screening report be noted.**

Prepared by: Ellen Boyd, Accessibility and Inclusion Officer

Agreed by: Lesley Millar, Head of Organisation Development

Approved by: Jennifer Close, Director of Organisation Development

## 6.9 HR/GEN/019 MANAGING ATTENDANCE UPDATE APRIL 2022 – MARCH 2023

The purpose of this report is to update Members on the management of attendance for April 2022 to March 2023 (**enclosed**).

### **100% attendance**

60% of our workforce achieved 100% attendance.

Members are advised that absence at the end of March was above target by 3.51 days with 15.51 average days lost per employee against a target of 12.0 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 March 2023 would have been 13.47 days.

There continues to be a positive return to work of short term cases and a notable 11 long term cases returning in March 2023.

Further analysis of Absence Figures for March 2023 indicates the following:

### **Formal Case Reviews to date**

Formal Case reviews (FCRs) are normally held where all possible steps have been taken and have failed to secure the employee's return to work within a maximum of 9 months.

- **Concluded cases – 11**, with employees either returning to work, obtaining ill health retirement or leaving the organisation.
- **In Progress – 5**, this includes 2 Ill Health Retirement cases approved by NILGOSC/NICS and a further case that is pending outcome shortly.
- **Approaching – 0**,

### **Long Term Absence – 87% of the overall absence figures**

Long term absence is defined as continuous absence greater than 20 days. There was a slight increase in long term absence from 86% to 87% compared to the previous month. We continue our efforts to address complex long term absence cases, conduct regular wellbeing meetings with employees, utilise Occupational Health services, and hold timely absence review meetings.

- **% of Challenging long term cases – 43%**, this includes absence related to hospital procedures, disability related illness, and general injuries.
- **Exhausted sick pay – 4 employees**

- **Returned to work – 11 cases**, total to date, 62 long-term cases have successfully returned to work.

### **Short Term Absence – 13% of the overall absence figures**

Short term absence is defined as absence less than 20 working days. Whilst it is understood that short term absences are inevitable, it is crucial for Managers/Supervisors, Human Resources and employees to work together to minimise the impact of these absences on service delivery.

- **Main Reasons:**
  - Cold/flu, stomach bug, infection (accounting for 37% of short term absence)
  - Stress Depression, Mental Health
  - Chest and respiratory issues
  - Musculoskeletal problems
  - Back and neck problems

### **Overall Absence**

Stress-related absence (including work related stress) has increased from 47% to 48% of total absence which includes work related stress. Proactive work is ongoing to address this by:

- Encouraging open communication to address stress and mental health concerns in wellbeing meetings.
- Providing mental health awareness training for employees.
- Providing access to mental health support services, through Inspire Counselling service, the Council's Occupational Health service and additional information available through STAYWELL.
- Implementing flexible working arrangements, supporting phased returns and reasonable adjustments where possible in the workplace.
- Encouraging physical activity through the promotion of the Council's employee subsidised Gym Membership Scheme.
- Encouraging participation in our wellness programme with regular wellbeing activities and health advice promoted weekly through the STAY MORE CONNECTED kudoboard.
- Partnering with legal advisors and Employers for Disability NI to arrange awareness sessions on mental health illnesses, to provide training to managers on managing stress and how to encourage open communication to reduce stress-related absence and to promote a healthy work environment.

### **To improve absence rates and encourage earlier returns to work, the following actions are being undertaken.**

- Regular case management discussions are held with legal advisors to support a targeted approach for complex cases. These help Directors, Heads of Services, and HR to review cases, consider reasonable adjustments, and understand the legal context, enabling specific action plans for individual cases.



- Meetings held with directorates with high or complex absence cases have been increased to analyse cases and agree on next steps, with attendance from relevant Directors, Deputy Directors, and Heads of Service. Formal case reviews are scheduled as needed.
- The HR Business Partnership team is working closely with managers and Occupational Health on an individual case management basis. This ensures prompt action is taken to keep absences within target and provides support to managers in absence review trigger meetings for fair and consistent approach.
- Monthly case management discussion meetings are scheduled as needed to review complex cases with an Occupational Health consultant. Case managers attend these sessions to ensure effective use of the Occupational Health service and support earlier returns to work where possible.
- The Corporate and Human Resources Risks registers have been reviewed to reflect the current absence rate position, with actions and interventions recorded to mitigate risks.
- Managers within Parks have received training on effectively managing absence caseloads. Absence management toolkits are under development, and best practice toolkits have been identified and shared on STAYWELL to further assist managers and employees.
- Targeted training is being planned in areas of high absence provided by Human Resources, legal advisors, and in partnership with employers for disability or other relevant organisations.
- Development continues on an online training module to promote the importance of attending work. This will be rolled out to new staff initially and then across the wider organisation in 2023.
- The use of the Wellbeing Calendar is being continued to support employee wellbeing.
- Physiotherapy services are being provided for appropriate cases of back and musculoskeletal-related absence.
- Completion of an Internal Audit with recommendations for further improvement to be identified.

**RECOMMENDATION: that the report be noted.**

Prepared by: Victoria Stewart, HR Systems and Data Analyst

Approved by: Jennifer Close, Director of Organisation Development

## 6.10 HR/GEN/019 MANAGING ATTENDANCE UPDATE APRIL 2023 – JULY 2023

The purpose of this report is to update Members on the management of attendance from the period April 2023 to July 2023 (enclosed).

### 100% Attendance

The 100% attendance rate continues to be high with 81% of our workforce achieving this to the end of July 2023 against a target of 60%.

Members are advised that absence at the end of July 2023 was above target by 0.46 of a day with 4.55 average days lost per employee against a target of 4.09 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 July 2023 would have been 4.37 days.

There continues to be a positive return to work of short term cases along with 11 long term cases ending in July 2023, 4 of which left the Council's employment.

Further analysis of Absence Figures for July 2023 indicates the following:

### Formal Case Reviews to date

Formal Case reviews (FCRs) are normally held where all possible steps have been taken and have failed to secure the employee's return to work within a maximum of 9 months.

- **Concluded cases – 9**, with employees either returning to work, obtaining ill health retirement or leaving the organisation.
- **In Progress – 0**
- **Approaching – 3**, there are 3 others approaching this stage with 1 who will exit under vs

### Long Term Absence – 86% of the overall absence figures

Long term absence is defined as continuous absence greater than 20 days. Although there was a slight increase in long term absence from 85% to 86% compared to the previous month, it is expected that this figure will decrease in the coming year. This is due to our continued efforts to address complex long term absence cases, conduct regular wellbeing meetings with employees, utilising Occupational Health services, and holding timely absence review meetings.

- **% of Challenging long term cases – 46%**, this includes absence related to road traffic accidents, disability related illness, and general injuries.

- **Returned to work – 7 cases** have successfully returned to work with a further 4 leaving the Council's employment.

### **Short Term Absence – 14% of the overall absence figures**

Short term absence is defined as absence less than 20 working days. Whilst it is understood that short term absences are inevitable, it is crucial for Managers/Supervisors, Human Resources and employees to work together to minimise the impact of these absences on service delivery.

#### **Main Reasons:**

- Cold/flu, stomach bug, infection (accounting for 40% of short term absence)
- Stress Depression, Mental Health
- Chest and respiratory issues
- Musculoskeletal problems
- Back and neck problems

### **Overall Absence**

Stress-related absence (including work related stress) remains at 59% of total absence. Proactive work is ongoing to address this by:

- Encouraging open communication to address stress and mental health concerns in wellbeing meetings.
- Providing mental health awareness training for employees.
- Providing access to mental health support services, through Inspire Counselling service, the Council's Occupational Health service and additional information available through STAYWELL.
- Implementing flexible working arrangements, supporting phased returns and reasonable adjustments where possible in the workplace.
- Encouraging physical activity through the promotion of the Council's employee subsidised Gym Membership Scheme.
- Encouraging participation in our wellness programme with regular wellbeing activities and health advice promoted weekly through the STAY MORE CONNECTED kudoboard.
- Partnering with legal advisors and Employers for Disability NI to arrange awareness sessions on mental health illnesses, to provide training to managers on managing stress and how to encourage open communication to reduce stress-related absence and to promote a healthy work environment.

### **To improve absence rates and encourage earlier returns to work, the following actions are being undertaken.**

- Regular case management discussions are held with legal advisors to support a targeted approach for complex cases. These help Directors, Heads of Services, and HR to review cases, consider reasonable adjustments, and understand the legal context, enabling specific action plans for individual cases.
- Meetings held with directorates with high or complex absence cases have been increased to analyse cases and agree on next steps, with

attendance from relevant Directors, Deputy Directors, and Heads of Service. Formal case reviews are scheduled as needed.

- The HR Business Partnership team is working closely with managers and Occupational Health on an individual case management basis. This ensures prompt action is taken to keep absences within target and provides support to managers in absence review trigger meetings for fair and consistent approach.
- Monthly case management discussion meetings are scheduled as needed to review complex cases with an Occupational Health consultant. Case managers attend these sessions to ensure effective use of the Occupational Health service and support earlier returns to work where possible.
- The Corporate and Human Resources Risks registers have been reviewed to reflect the current absence rate position, with actions and interventions recorded to mitigate risks.
- Managers within Parks have received training on effectively managing absence caseloads. Absence management toolkits are under development, and best practice toolkits have been identified and shared on STAYWELL to further assist managers and employees.
- Targeted training is being planned in areas of high absence provided by Human Resources, legal advisors, and in partnership with employers for disability or other relevant organisations.
- Development continues on an online training module to promote the importance of attending work. This will be rolled out to new staff initially and then across the wider organisation in 2023.
- The use of the Wellbeing Calendar is being continued to support employee wellbeing.
- Physiotherapy services are being provided for appropriate cases of back and musculoskeletal-related absence.
- HR will design and develop an Absence action plan
- Following the recent Managing Attendance Audit which was generally satisfactory there are a number of with noted actions that will be undertaken by HR including: review of the absence notification/return to work form, monitoring of absence triggers

Additionally, in response to recent high absence days figures reported in other Councils, approval is sought to seek information from all 11 Councils on absence recording and reporting processes including their absence figures to ensure consistency in approach particularly in relation to Covid absence with an update report provided to Committee in due course.

**RECOMMENDATION: that the report be noted.**

Prepared by: Victoria Stewart, HR Systems and Data Analyst

Agreed by: Pauline Greer, HR Manager

Approved by: Jennifer Close, Director of Organisation Development

## 6.11 HR/HR/019 AGENCY 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
- Seasonal Events

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 in July 2023 compared to July 2022. It excludes limited ad-hoc agency cover, which is necessary to provide operational cover, at short notice (**enclosed**).

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

- 20 Seasonal Operatives (GMO Driver) commenced in March 2023 for 26 weeks to Sept 2023
- 15 Seasonal Operatives (GMO Non Driver) commenced in June & July 2023 for 26 weeks
- 47 Seasonal Summer Scheme Leaders covered the Summer Schemes from 17 July 2023 for 5 weeks
- 10 Waste Resource Management Operative vacancies that have been covered by agency workers have been recruited with 8 of the agency workers securing permanent contracts and commencing in post on 1 August 2023 and recruitment ongoing to fill the remaining 2 vacancies

### **Cost of Agency**

Appendix 2 (**enclosed**) sets out the expenditure on agency workers in July 2023.

The cost of agency staff has remained the same for the period from 1 April 2023 to July 2023 and April 2022 – July 2022 at 7% of all staffing costs.

### **Current recruitment:**

Following recent recruitment exercises within Waste Operations a number of posts that have been covered by agency workers have been recruited and are being filled by permanent employees. Specifically:

- 8 x Waste Resource Management Operatives have been offered posts with start dates in early August 2023

Further recruitment exercises are ongoing to fill the remaining posts within Waste Operations that are currently being filled by agency workers and this will further decrease our reliance on agency cover.

We are committed to reducing our dependence on agency workers and will continue to recruit directly for vacant positions. However, we may still use agency workers for more ad hoc, seasonal, or temporary coverage as needed.

**RECOMMENDATION: that the report be noted.**

Prepared by: Pamela Boyd, Human Resources Officer

Agreed by: Pauline Greer, Human Resources Manager

Approved by: Jennifer Close, Director of Organisation Development

## 6.12 CCS/CS/006 CUSTOMERS CHANNEL REPORT

Members are reminded that the Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan for 2023-2024 sets out the following Performance Improvement Target, "We will achieve high levels of customer satisfaction".

The purpose of this report is to provide a quarter one performance update on the indicators that the Plan sets 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. In addition, further surveys throughout the year will request feedback on satisfaction with Council services and other areas of interest.

Quarter one included surveys within the May issue of Borough Life, "Our Beautiful Borough", Coronation events and Garden Show Ireland (Residents). There were a total of 210 responses.

Additional surveys will be undertaken in quarter two for digital services (Borough Life), Six Mile Festival and Spinning Yarns.

| 2021-22 | 2022-23 | Target 2023-24 | Quarter 1 |
|---------|---------|----------------|-----------|
| 87.5%   | 92.9%   | 80%            | 91.9%     |

### **The percentage of abandoned calls will be 6.5% (or less):**

A total of **45,464** calls were presented during April to June, a decrease of **1.3%** compared to **46,067** in quarter four of 2022-2023. The percentage for abandoned calls for the quarter was **6.0%**. Although still within target, a number of technical issues have been addressed and additional reporting provided to improve performance and reduce the percentage of calls abandoned.

| 2021-22 | 2022-23 | Target 2023-24 | Quarter 1 |
|---------|---------|----------------|-----------|
| 6.0%    | 5.1%    | 6.5%           | 6.0%      |

### **We have achieved at least 650,000 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 including:

- Caravan bookings

- Online theatre and events bookings
- Leisure bookings
- Dog licensing applications
- Bulky waste bookings

| 2021-22 | 2022-23 | Target<br>2023-24 | Quarter 1 |
|---------|---------|-------------------|-----------|
| 652,593 | 874,100 | 650,000           | 151,743   |

**There are at least 8,000 downloads of the Residents App:**

Downloads of the ANBorough App are measured through official app stores (Google and Apple) and totalled **13,963** in 2022-23.

There were **3,355** downloads during quarter one, representing **41.9%** of target for the year. 45.45% of downloads being for iOS devices and 54.55% for Android.

| 2021-22 | 2022-23 | Target<br>2023-24 | Quarter 1 |
|---------|---------|-------------------|-----------|
| 14,481  | 13,963  | 8,000             | 3,355     |

Progress on the Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan 2023-2024 is reported on a quarterly basis to the Policy & Governance and Audit & Risk Committees. Final validated figures are contained within the Annual Report on Performance 2023-2024 (Self-Assessment) which will be reviewed by Council and published on the Council's website by 30 September 2024.

**RECOMMENDATION: that the report be noted.**

Prepared by: James Porter, Customer Services Manager

Agreed by: Lesley Millar, Head of Organisation Development

Approved by: Jennifer Close, Director of Organisation Development



## 6.13 CCS/CS/009 CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE – CONSULTATION AND SURVEY REPORT

The significance of customer experience is vital for Council. As the primary interface between residents and essential services, councils play a pivotal role in shaping the quality of life for communities. Prioritising a seamless and positive customer experience is not only integral to meeting residents' needs but also instrumental in shaping service delivery strategies.

An initial review of the Council's consultation approach has been initiated. Currently, throughout the year Council proactively gathers feedback via consultations and surveys. Consultations provide a structured method for receiving valuable feedback on particular projects and events, while surveys contribute to enhancing our services. The insights gathered from these interactions empower our residents to influence the way we provide our services.

Council's consultations and surveys can be in various formats and primarily use a data collection software package, Citizen Space, accessible through the Council's website. Listen 360 is used for obtaining immediate feedback from our leisure customers, offering real-time insights into customer experiences within the Leisure. This analytical tool additionally supports the collation and interpreting of data for specific services.

In quarter one, a number of public consultations and surveys were undertaken that generated 1401 responses. A detailed report for each consultation or survey is issued to the relevant Officer including a summary of comments with appropriate actions developed to respond where necessary. Appendix one (enclosed) provides an overview of quarter one consultations and surveys including Council's performance against the Corporate Performance Improvement Plan 2023-2024 indicators and action being taken.

Listen 360 feedback from Leisure customers is (enclosed) at Appendix 2. This indicates a much higher Net Promoter Score (NPS) of 64 against the UK leisure standard of 34. Although NPS is not a current Corporate Performance Indicator within Leisure, it is positive indicator of customer experience. Planned consultations and surveys for quarter 2 and 3 are (enclosed) at Appendix 3. Results and feedback from the surveys will be reported through the relevant committee when complete.

Following the recent appointment of the new Director of Organisation Development and Head of Organisation Development, it has become evident that a more comprehensive evaluation of the customer experience is warranted. This Customer Experience Audit will encompass an analysis of consultation methods, feedback channels, our customer journeys and touchpoints including the website, Residents App, telephony, receptions and customer hubs etc., to further identify outcomes that will serve as the foundation for well-informed recommendations aimed at enhancing the overall customer experience.

Officers will undertake exploratory research in relation to a Customer Experience Audit. A follow up report will be brought back to Committee with informed recommendations in due course.

**RECOMMENDATION: that the report be noted.**

Prepared by: James Porter, Customer Services Manager

Agreed by: Lesley Millar, Head of Organisation Development

Approved by: Jennifer Close, Director of Organisation Development

#### 6.14 HR/LD/004 LOCAL GOVERNMENT TRAINING GROUP

Members are advised that a request was made for a detailed breakdown of spend for the Local Government Training (LGTG) for consideration by Members in the new mandate. This has been provided by the LGTG and is enclosed for information.

The Council's contribution for 2023-2024 is £15981.32

The Council currently benefits from the following elements which are provided by the Local Government Training Group:

- **LGTG e-learning platform**  
The Covid-19 pandemic greatly impacted the physical delivery of training and highlighted the importance for provision of on-line programmes and the growth in e-learning delivery. The LGTG e-learning portal has enabled Council to be agile during disruption of service and ensured effective delivery of employee training going forward. The collective procurement by LGTG of the e-learning platform encourages open and collaborative working between Councils and provides a significant cost saving. The individual procurement of an e-learning platform would cost in the region of 40k.
- **LGTG Call Off Framework**  
Enabling a centralised approach for key learning and development modules, Council benefits from the economies of scale for collaborative procurement of approx. 37 soft skills.
- **Funding towards NILGA Elected Member Learning and Development**  
10k of funding provided to support Regional Elected Member Learning and Development and Leadership programmes

**RECOMMENDATION: that the report be noted.**

Prepared by: Lesley Millar, Head of Organisation Development

Approved by: Jennifer Close, Director of Organisation Development