



**MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE MEETING OF THE POLICY AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE HELD AT MOSSLEY MILL ON TUESDAY 8 JUNE 2021 AT 6.30 PM**

- In the Chair:** Alderman P Michael
- Members Present:** Councillors – M Cooper, H Cushinan, G Finlay, R Foster, S Flanagan, P Hamill, N Kelly, A McAuley, T McGrann, M Magill, N Ramsay, V Robinson and M Stewart
- Non Committee Members:** Councillors – A Bennington, V McWilliam and B Webb
- Officers Present:** Deputy Chief Executive of Finance & Governance (Interim) – S Cole  
Director of Communications and Customers (Consultant) (Interim) – S Hope  
Head of Corporate Recovery – L Johnston  
Head of Finance (Interim) – R Murray  
Head of Human Resources – J Close  
ICT Helpdesk Officer – J Wilson  
Member Services Officer – S Boyd

**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 physically attend the meeting. The public and the press can access those parts of the meeting which they are entitled to attend via livestream (a link to which is on the Council website). The meeting minutes and audio recording would be published on the Council's website.

**1. APOLOGIES**

Councillor R Wilson

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None

### **3. ITEMS FOR DECISION**

#### **3.1 G/IG/7 REVIEW OF POLICY FRAMEWORK**

The purpose of the Policy Framework is to provide policy authors with guidance and templates to review policies regularly in line with assigned deadlines. Each Head of Service is responsible for developing and reviewing relevant policies under their departmental remit.

The Policy Framework has been reviewed and the following changes made:

- amendments to the Policy Making Cycle to reflect the use of NetConsent (a Policy management system) and iConnect (a portal for employees to access internal and external resources),
- statements to be included in each policy relating to Rural Needs Impact Assessment and Data Protection Impact Assessment, and
- the requirement to report policy reviews to the Committee which approved the original policy whether or not amendments are required.

A copy of the reviewed Policy Framework was circulated.

Proposed by Councillor Foster  
Seconded by Councillor McAuley and agreed

**that the reviewed Policy Framework be approved.**

*ACTION BY: Helen McBride, Information Governance Manager*

#### **3.2 PT/CI/035 CORPORATE PLANNING WORKSHOP 2021**

Members were reminded that an annual Corporate Planning Workshop is held to review strategic performance.

It was proposed that the Corporate Planning Workshop be held between 9.15 am and 4 pm on Friday 12 November 2021, in the Council Chamber, Mossley Mill, and via Zoom.

Proposed by Councillor Kelly  
Seconded by Councillor Finlay and agreed

**that the Corporate Planning Workshop is held on Friday 12 November 2021.**

*ACTION BY: Helen Hall, Head of Performance and Transformation*

#### **3.3 G-LEG-321/14 RE-CLASSIFICATION OF A8 AT BALLYNURE VILLAGE TO B58**

Members were advised that correspondence had been received from a consultant for the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) regarding the proposed

reclassification of the Belfast Road and Larne Road in Ballynure from the A8 to the B58.

The proposed reclassification will enable a diversion route to be created for the newly constructed A8 dual carriageway. A copy of the correspondence and map was circulated for Members' information.

Officers had no issues with the proposal and felt that the change in status would potentially make it easier to obtain direct access onto this stretch of road.

DfI Roads were therefore requesting comments in relation to the proposal.

Proposed by Councillor Magill  
Seconded by Councillor Foster and agreed

**that the correspondence be noted.**

*ACTION BY: Deirdre Nelson, Paralegal*

### **3.4 FI/FIN/049 NILGA COUNCIL POLICY CONSULTATION – VISION AND DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT (PHASE ONE) 2021-2023**

Members were advised that correspondence (circulated) had been received from NILGA in relation to the Vision and Development of Local Government to prioritise activity up to the Stormont and Council Elections scheduled in 2022 and 2023 respectively.

The framework (circulated) flows from existing work already contributed to by Council Members and Officers working alongside NILGA as response to the COVID19 pandemic and other strategic changes affecting Councils and citizens.

Council Officers had reviewed the vision statement, main themes and actions within the consultation document and were content that these will lead to better democracy and improved public services across Northern Ireland.

The document also aligns with the Council's two-year recovery plan.

Proposed by Councillor Hamill  
Seconded by Councillor Flanagan and agreed

**that Members agree with the vision, themes and actions within the NILGA 11 Council Policy Consultation.**

*ACTION BY: Sandra Cole, Deputy Chief Executive of Finance and Governance (Interim)*

### 3.5 FI/PRO/GEN/044 PROCUREMENT TENDER REPORTS AND AWARD OF CONTRACTS

Currently, tender reports are brought to the relevant Committee for approval prior to any contract award. Award is then ratified at the subsequent Full Council meeting. This process can add up to four weeks to the delivery timeframe for service or project delivery.

The Governance process of Council in the form of the Constitution of Council and Scheme of Delegation contained within, does however allow for the;

*'Authorising of a contract for the procurement of goods, services or works following economic appraisal/business case is in line with Council approval'*

This delegated authority is given to the Corporate Leadership Team providing that it ensures that any award is in line with Council Governance and Council's Financial Regulations.

It was proposed that this delegated power be now utilised and that all contract awards be reported retrospectively each month providing they are in line with the Scheme of Delegation.

This will allow service or project delivery to be expedited more efficiently and facilitate timely delivery actions against the Councils Recovery plan.

It was noted that if the tender process is not in line with the economic appraisal/business case for a project then a Council report will be prepared to request relevant permissions.

The Deputy Chief Executive of Finance & Governance (Interim) answered a number of Members queries in relation to the proposed change.

Proposed by Councillor Magill  
Seconded by Councillor Ramsay and agreed

**that the Council Scheme of Delegation be used for the award of contracts and Members updated retrospectively.**

*ACTION BY: John Balmer, Deputy Director of Finance (Interim)*

### 3.6 CCS/EDP/7 ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT 2020/21, EQUALITY COMMISSION

Members were reminded that Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires public authorities to have due regard for the need to promote equality of opportunity between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation, men and women generally, persons with a disability and persons without and persons with dependants and persons without.

The Council's Equality Scheme describes certain arrangements that as a public authority, the Council has set-up and is obliged to apply and follow as a means of fulfilling the duties imposed on it by Section 75(1) and (2) (i.e. the

duties to have regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity, and regard to the desirability of promoting good relations).

This includes arrangements for training staff, assessing and consulting on the likely impact of policies adopted or proposed to be adopted by the authority on the promotion of equality of opportunity, and monitoring any adverse impact of those policies that have been adopted.

The Council must provide an Annual Progress Report to the Equality Commission and outline how those arrangements have been applied and to assess how effective they have been in supporting the Council to comply with the Section 75 duties.

The progress report for March 2020 to April 2021 was circulated with Appendix 1 for Members' information.

Proposed by Councillor Kelly  
Seconded by Councillor McGrann and agreed

**that the report be approved.**

*ACTION BY: Ellen Boyd, Accessibility and Customer Services Officer*

#### **4. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

##### **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 2021 to 31 March 2021** was 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 4,611 invoices totalling £16,012,205.

The Council paid 4,007 invoices within the 30 day target. (87%)

The Council paid 3,284 invoices within the 10 day target. (71%)

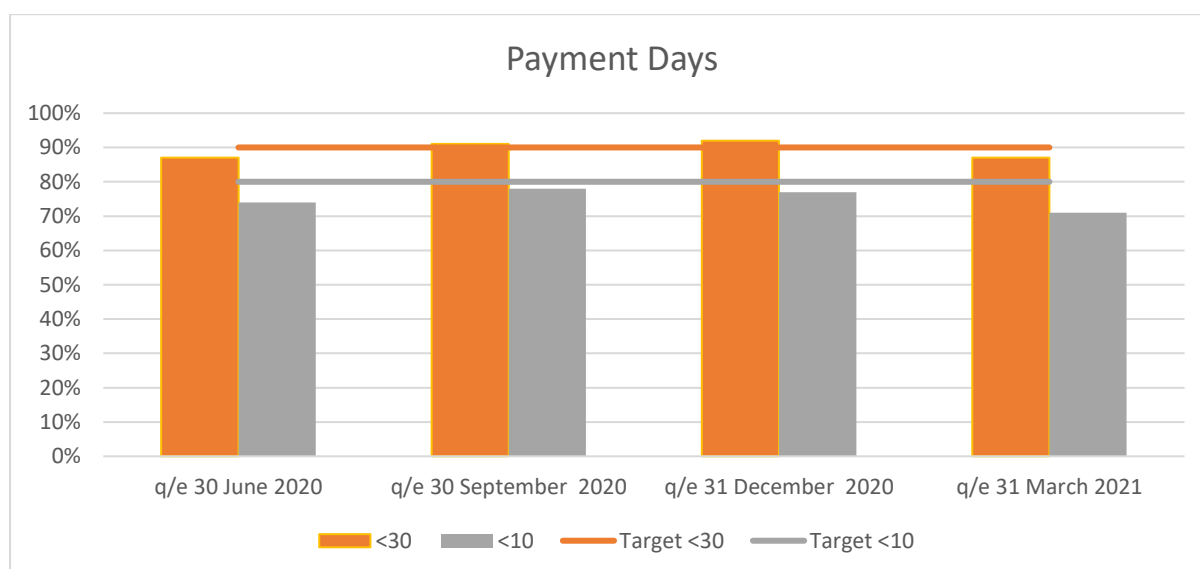
The Council paid 604 invoices outside of the 30 day target. (13%)

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

The quarterly results from June 2020 to date were as follows:

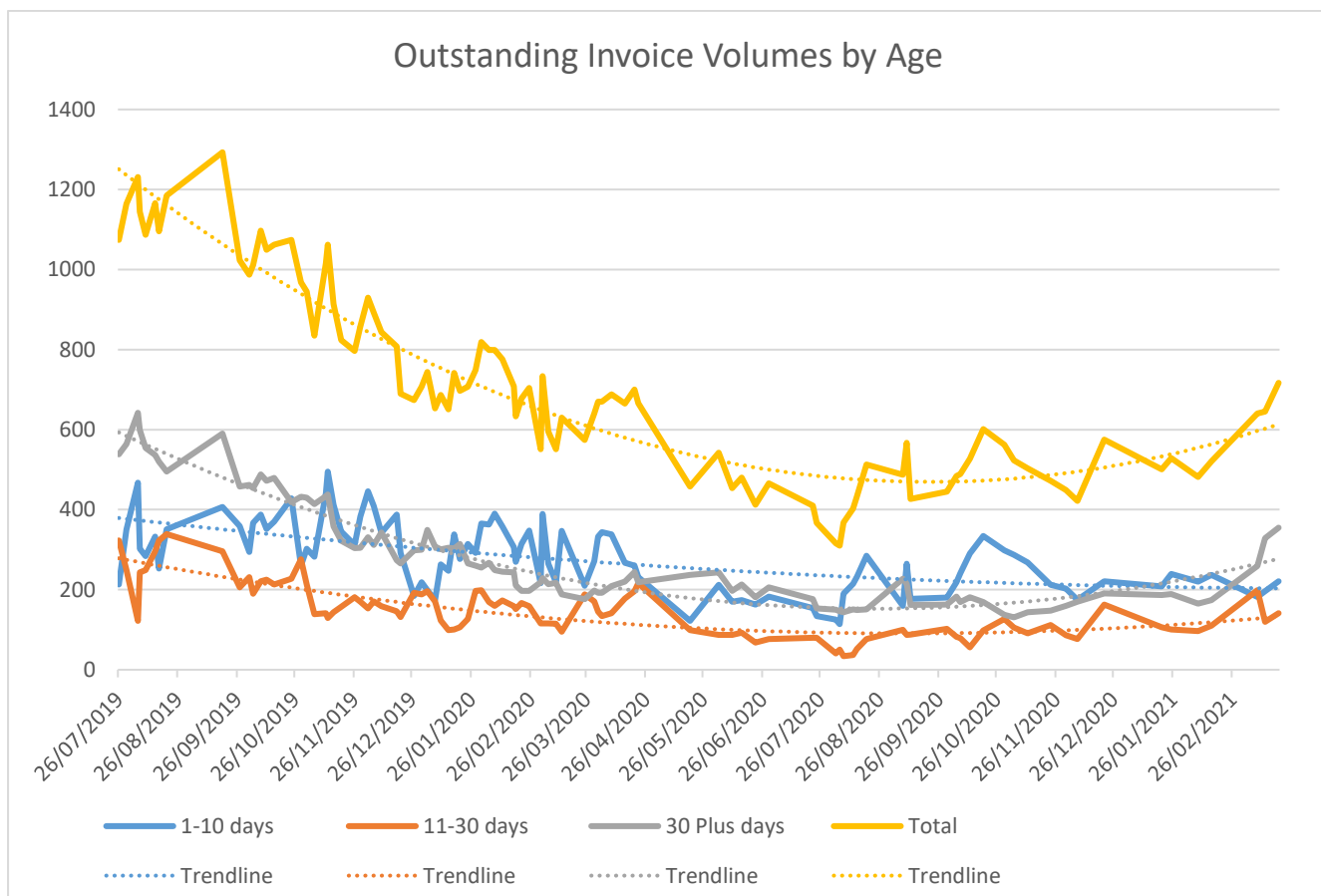
Period	Total Number of Invoices Paid	% Paid Within 30 Days	% Paid Within 10 Days
<b>Target</b>		<b>90%</b>	<b>80%</b>
q/e 30 June 2020	4,032	87%	74%
q/e 30 September 2020	3,799	91%	78%
q/e 31 December 2020	4,659	92%	77%
q/e 31 March 2021	4,611	87%	71%
<b>Total for 20/21</b>	<b>17,101</b>	<b>89%</b>	<b>75%</b>
<b>Total for 19/20</b>	<b>26,624</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>69%</b>

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



During both the second and third quarters of 2020/21 the target of paying 90% of invoices within 30 days was met, with performance for the 10 day target remaining similar to quarter 2. Performance for quarter 4 was down for both the 30 day and 10 day targets. This was mainly due to staff absences within the accounts processing section and staff in the finance section involved in the implementation of the new finance system, Ci Anywhere, going live in April 2021.

The volume of invoices paid (4,611 invoices) for Quarter 4 for 2020/21 compared to the same quarter for 2019/20 (6,308 invoices paid) was down by approx 27%, with some facilities closed or services reduced due to COVID-19. 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 had decreased markedly from over 1200 in August 2019 to now around 700.



Both indicators for the year show improvement on 19/20 with the paid within 30 days metric being above the average for all councils. A new corporate finance system was implemented in April 2021– it was expected that prompt payment performance would be adversely impacted as this system is embedded. However it was expected that in the medium term, performance levels will continue to improve from 20/21 levels as the enhanced functionality and flexibility of the new system is realised.

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 2020 was shown in **Appendix 1** (circulated); the Council's performance for Quarter 3 against the average performance for the other Councils for the same Quarter of 2020/21 was set out in the table below:

<b>Council</b>	<b>% Paid Within 30 Days</b>	<b>% Paid Within 10 Days</b>
Antrim & Newtownabbey BC (3rd Quarter 2020/21)	92%	77%
All Councils (3rd Quarter 2020/21)	91%	66%

Proposed by Councillor Hamill  
Seconded by Councillor Magill and agreed

**that the report be noted.**

*NO ACTION*

**4.2 G-LEG-325/11, 325/12, 325/13, 325/14, 325/15 & 325/16 DEPARTMENT FOR INFRASTRUCTURE - THE PRIVATE STREETS (NORTHERN IRELAND) ORDER 1980 – DEVELOPMENTS AT ANTRIM ROAD, NEWTOWNABBEY; DOUGLAS HILL, BURNSIDE; FAIRVIEW FARM, BALLYCLARE; DOAGH ROAD, NEWTOWNABBEY; LINEN GREEN, ANTRIM AND CASTLE ROAD, RANDALSTOWN**

Correspondence had been received from the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) advising that streets at the above developments had now been adopted by DfI Roads (copy correspondence circulated).

Proposed by Councillor Foster  
Seconded by Councillor Hamill and agreed

**that the correspondence be noted.**

*ACTION BY: Deirdre Nelson, Paralegal*

**4.3 G/MSMO/41 MEMBERS' ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS**

Members were advised that during the previous term of Council, it was agreed that attendance records for each of the Council and Committee meetings be summarised on a six monthly basis and published on the Council's website.

A summary sheet had been prepared showing the total attendance for the period December 2020 to May 2021 and, was circulated for Members' information prior to publication on the Council's website.

Proposed by Councillor Hamill  
Seconded by Councillor Kelly 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 December 2020 to May 2021 be noted.**



*ACTION BY: Member Services*

#### **4.4 G/MSMO/27 ELECTED MEMBER DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP**

Members were advised that a meeting of the Member Development Working Group took place on Tuesday 4 May 2021 and a copy of the minutes were circulated for Members' information.

Proposed by Councillor Kelly  
Seconded by Councillor Magill and agreed

**that the Minutes of the Member Development Working Group Meeting held on Tuesday 4 May 2021 be noted.**

*NO ACTION*

#### **4.5 HR/HR/019 AGENCY STAFF UPDATE**

Members were 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.

The table appended provided an update for Members on the use of agency staff as at April 2021 as compared to April 2020. It excluded limited ad-hoc agency cover, which was necessary to provide operational cover, at short notice (circulated).

Proposed by Councillor Magill  
Seconded by Councillor Kelly and agreed

**that the report be noted.**

*NO ACTION*

#### **4.6 G/DPFI/2 YEAR END REPORT ON FOI/EIR/DPA REQUESTS**

A report had been prepared on requests received from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021 under the Freedom of Information Act (FOI), Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) and the Data Protection Act (DPA) and this was circulated.

The process for dealing with FOI/EIR/DPA requests continued to operate in much the same way as the previous year although there were some added

complexities due to COVID-19. It was agreed by the Strategic Response Team on 20 March 2020 that the processing of FOI/EIR/DPA requests should be suspended as a non-essential service to permit resources to focus on the essential services. This decision was sustained by the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) who recognised that resources might be diverted away from usual compliance or information governance work due to COVID-19. Following the relaxation of COVID restrictions the process was reactivated once again on 1 June 2020.

A summary of the statistics for the year is:

- There was a 32.5% decrease in the number of requests received compared with the previous year. This was probably due to COVID-19.
- The percentage of requests answered within the deadline (20 days for FOI and EIR requests and a calendar month for requests under DPA) has improved from 98% to 100%. This is despite difficulty in obtaining information for FOI responses due to staff working from home or being furloughed.
- Of the 247 requests received, 162 were under FOI, 74 under EIR and 11 under DPA.
- The sections that received most requests were Governance (57), Environmental Health (56), Planning (51) and Finance (44).
- One appeal was received during the year but the Council did not hold the information requested.
- One complaint to the ICO was notified during the year regarding an EIR. The Council provided a full response to the ICO. The Commissioner's decision was that the Council had correctly applied regulation 12(4)(b) under EIR – manifestly unreasonable request and required no steps to be taken.

Proposed by Councillor Kelly  
Seconded by Councillor Hamill and agreed

**that the report be noted.**

*NO ACTION*

#### **4.7 HR/ER/002/VOL2 LOCAL GOVERNMENT STAFF COMMISSION**

Members were advised that correspondence had been received (circulated) in relation to the dissolving of the Local Government Staff Commission.

In July 2012, the Department of the Environment initiated a review of the Commission. Following consultation, the Minister of the Environment concluded that, although the commission had performed well in a necessary challenging role for 40 years, other developments meant that a statutory

body of that type was no longer required. As a consequence, in 2014 the Executive agreed that the Commission should be dissolved on 31 March 2017.

Given the time that had passed since the review, the Minister had decided to carry out a follow-up consultation in order to ascertain if there are any reasons that the Executive decision to dissolve the Commission should be reconsidered.

Legislation will only be taken forward when a decision is made on when/whether the Commission is to be dissolved.

Proposed by Councillor Kelly  
Seconded by Councillor Hamill and agreed

**that the report be noted.**

*NO ACTION*

#### **4.8 FI/FIN/044 FINANCE AND PAYROLL SOFTWARE IMPLEMENTATION PROJECT UPDATE**

Members recalled that approval was given for the implementation of the new Finance and Payroll finance system at February 2020 Policy & Governance meeting.

It was agreed that Members would be kept updated on the progress and a project update report was circulated for Members' information.

Proposed by Councillor Kelly  
Seconded by Councillor Hamill and agreed

**that the report be noted.**

*NO ACTION*

#### **4.9 CE/OA/012 NORTHERN IRELAND PARTNERSHIP PANEL LOCAL GOVERNMENT MEETING**

Members were advised that correspondence had been received in relation to the Northern Ireland Partnership Panel Local Government Meeting. The next meeting is due to be held on Wednesday 20 October 2021.

A copy of the draft Partnership Panel minutes held on 21 April 2021 was circulated for Members' information.

Proposed by Councillor Kelly  
Seconded by Councillor Hamill and agreed

**that the report be noted.**

*NO ACTION*

## 6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chairperson requested that going forward any other business be notified to the Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, and lead Officer by 12.00 noon the day before the meeting.

*ACTION BY: Member Services*

### **PROPOSAL TO PROCEED 'IN CONFIDENCE'**

Proposed by Councillor Hamill

Seconded by Councillor Flanagan and agreed

**that the following Committee business be taken In Confidence and the livestream and audio recording would cease at this point.**

## 5 ITEMS IN CONFIDENCE

### 5.1 **IN-CONFIDENCE** G/LAN/18 – LETTING OF LANDS FOR GRAZING/CUTTING 2021 SEASON

Members recalled that in previous years underutilised lands had been let for grazing/cutting.

The appointed agent recommends the following arrangements for 2021 season:

<b>Land</b>	<b>Tenant</b>	<b>Fee (pro-rata)</b>
Lands at Church Road, Randalstown 4.4 acres	██████████	£████
Lands at O'Neill Road, Newtownabbey South side land let for cutting (part year)	██████████	£████
Lands at Sentry Hill, Newtownabbey 17.5 acres cutting and grazing	██████████	£████

Total rent for the lands for grazing/cutting for the 2021 season including the agents fee is £██████.

Lands at Doagh Road, Newtownabbey

This 1.5 acre site has not been let since 2018 and the situation remains unchanged for the 2021 season.

Following a question from a Member the Head of Corporate Recovery provided clarity to Members on the current position with regard to surplus land, and advised a report would be brought back to Members for decision.

Proposed by Councillor Foster

Seconded by Councillor Kelly and agreed

that Members approve the letting of lands for grazing/cutting as outlined for the 2021 season.

ACTION BY: Liz Johnston, Head of Corporate Recovery

## 5.2 **IN CONFIDENCE** CCS/CEA/013 CEMETERY BURIAL CAPACITY UPDATE

Members were reminded that in January 2018 the Council agreed that the policy relating to the pre-sale of new burial rights be amended so that, with immediate effect, these will only be sold for immediate burial and that pre-selling will end, except in cases where terminal illness has been confirmed.

The burial capacity within Council cemeteries is noted in the table below (as at **31/05/2021**).

<b>Cemetery</b>	<b>No. of plots remaining</b>	<b>Average no. of plots sold (based on 3yr average)</b>	<b>Estimated remaining burial capacity (years)</b>
Carnmoney	0	156	0
Ballyclare	841	30	28.0
Rashee	453	9	50.3
Sixmile	2301	53	43.4
Crumlin	473	10	47.3
	<b>4068 plots</b>	<b>258 plots</b>	<b>15.77 years</b>

<b>Garden of Remembrance Plots</b>	<i>(for burial of ashes only)</i>
------------------------------------	-----------------------------------

Carnmoney	The review due to land conditions is almost complete. An update will be provided in due course.		
Ballyclare	130	5	26
Mallusk	15	1	15

The estimated burial capacity for the entire Borough is currently just over **15 years**.

Following a question from a Member requesting an update relating to investigating new land opportunities the Director of Communications and Customers (Consultant) (Interim) agreed to provide an update.

Proposed by Councillor Hamill  
Seconded by Councillor Foster and agreed

**that the report be noted.**

ACTION BY: Simon Hope, Director of Communications and Customers (Consultant) (Interim)

**PROPOSAL TO PROCEED OUT OF 'IN CONFIDENCE'**

Proposed by Councillor Hamill  
Seconded by Councillor Foster 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 6.59 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.***