



MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE MEETING OF THE POLICY AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE HELD AT MOSSLEY MILL ON WEDNESDAY 5 JANUARY 2022 AT 6.30 PM

- In the Chair:** Alderman P Michael
- Members Present:** Councillors – M Cooper, H Cushinan, R Foster, N Kelly, A McAuley, T McGrann, M Magill, B Mallon, N Ramsay, V Robinson, M Stewart, B Webb and R Wilson
- Non Committee Members:** Councillors – A Bennington, M Brady, V McWilliam and J Montgomery
- Officers Present:** Deputy Chief Executive of Finance & Governance – S Cole
Director of Organisation Development – D Rogers
Deputy Director of Finance – J Balmer
Head of Governance – L Johnston
Head of Capital Development – R Hillen
Head of ICT – G Smyth
ICT Manager – P Allan
ICT Helpdesk Officer – J Wilson
Member Services Officer – S Boyd

CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

The Chairperson welcomed everyone to the January Meeting of the Policy and Governance Committee, wished them a happy New Year, 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 S Flanagan

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

3. PRESENTATION

3.1 PRESENTATION – CAPITAL PROJECTS SUPPORTING CORPORATE RECOVERY

A presentation on how Capital Projects contributed to the Corporate Recovery Plan was provided by the Head of Capital Development, Reggie Hillen.

The Head of Capital Development responded to Members' questions.

A Member requested that a report be brought back to a future meeting on Social Value Scoring, and that the presentation is shared with all Members of the Policy & Governance Committee.

ACTION BY: John Balmer, Deputy Director of Finance

Following a query from a Member regarding Capital Project risks, the Deputy Chief Executive of Finance & Governance clarified that all risks were managed according to the Council Risk Management Strategy and if required included on the Corporate Risk Register which was brought to the Audit Committee.

The Chairperson thanked the Head of Capital Development for his presentation and he left the meeting.

4. ITEMS FOR DECISION

4.1 PT/CI/038 RECOVERY PLAN - PERFORMANCE PROGRESS REPORT QUARTER TWO

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

In response to the pandemic, Council produced a Corporate Recovery Plan 2021-23 which was approved in August 2021. This serves to ensure the recovery of our services and meeting the requirements of our statutory duties.

Members were aware that the Council normally produces an annual Corporate Improvement Plan, however, given the uncertainty in the short term about recovery, we are unable to set targets for improvement. Members had agreed that we measure and monitor the performance of the corporate indicators as set out in the Recovery Plan 2021-23.

A progress report for quarter two was circulated for Members' attention. Members were advised that the quarter two report was reviewed by the Audit Committee on 14 December 2021.

Proposed by Councillor Webb
Seconded by Councillor Magjill and agreed

that the 2021-22 Performance Progress Report Quarter Two be approved.

ACTION BY: James Porter, Performance and Transformation Officer

4.2 G/MSMO/008 Vol 3 DAERA DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL STRATEGY – PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The Department of Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs (DAERA), on behalf of the Northern Ireland Executive, had published a consultation on the Draft Environmental Strategy (circulated). Responses to the consultation are to be made at the NIDirect Consultation Hub Citizen Space:

<https://consultations.nidirect.gov.uk> by Tuesday 18 January 2022.

Council previously provided feedback in January 2021 to a DAERA public consultation on Environmental Plans, Principles and Governance for Northern Ireland. The new Environment Strategy builds on this and is noted as intending to be an overarching document setting out Northern Ireland's environmental priorities for the coming decades and will form part of the Green Growth agenda.

As per DAERA, the Environment Strategy will form the basis for a coherent and effective set of interventions that can deliver real improvements in the quality of the environment and thereby improve the health and well-being of all who live and work here; elevate Northern Ireland to an environmental leader; create opportunities to develop our economy; and enable us to play our part in protecting the global environment for decades to come.

Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council welcomes the opportunity to engage and respond to the consultation on the Draft Environment Strategy for Northern Ireland. The Council positively embraces its publication and to working with DAERA on its delivery.

The Strategy sets out six Strategic Environment Outcomes (SEOs) and the following comments are provided in relation to the proposals made against the SEOs.

SEO1 : *'Excellent air, water, land & neighbourhood quality'*;

- It is noted in relation to Air Quality that a Clean Air Strategy is currently out for public consultation and the Ammonia Strategy will be DAERA led as it relates to farming.
- Council already implement improved monitoring and data collection through our extensive diffusion tube sampling as well as our air quality monitoring stations.
- Water (Quality and Quantity) actions will be led by DAERA and NI Water.
- Regarding Neighbourhood Environment Quality, Council would highlight that any additional powers to vary fines for Litter offences would be welcomed.
- Councils currently are monitoring the large scale import and use of F-Gases and Ozone Depleting Substances in relation to chemicals;

- Engagement continues with DAERA on the Environmental Permitting Regulations with a view to setting up an EHNI subgroup in January 2022 to take this forward.
- Sustainable development is promoted by our overarching Spatial Growth Strategy (Strategic Objective 1.6 – 1.12), which sets out our Council's approach to accommodating growth across our settlements within the Borough. Our DPS also contains a bespoke Strategic Objective, SP 10 entitled '*Environmental Resilience and Protection*' which is supplemented by a range of Detailed Management policies (DM 46-54) to promote environmental resilience and help mitigate and adapt to the ongoing challenges of climate change. SP 10 contains a bespoke DM policy, DM 47 '*Sustainable Water Drainage & Sustainable Drainage Systems*' which seeks to encourage the use of SuDs to help promote a sustainable approach to drainage and flood risk management.
- Council considers that the Environmental Strategy is consistent with the SPPS and our Plan Vision, Strategic Objectives, Strategic Policies (SPs) and Detailed Management Policies (DMs) contained within our Draft Plan Strategy (DPS). Our holistic policy approach set out in our DPS will help assist in the delivery of the outworkings of the Environmental Strategy in furthering sustainable development as well as addressing the ongoing challenges of climate change.
- The establishment of our Local Development Plan will identify the areas where growth is projected and manages spatial growth sustainably will help to enable the co-ordination of waste water infrastructure upgrades (where necessary) and aid in the delivery of Sustainable Water - A Long-Term Water Strategy for NI (and potentially also the Living with Water Programme). However, the delivery of waste water treatment is outside the scope of our LDP.

SEO2 – '*Healthy & accessible environment & landscapes everyone can connect with & enjoy*';

- In relation to Next Generations there is agreement with the proposed outcome, however clear targets and timelines should be identified. Funding packages should be readily available to all schools to develop curriculum and enable contribution towards this recognition, as currently it is reliant on local Council's to provide match funding which is not harmonised across NI.

SEO3 - '*Thriving, resilient and connected nature and wildlife*';

- Council is in agreement with the need to protect, maintain and enhance a clean and healthy environment for all. The Strategy would benefit from further information regarding a framework for effective protection and enhancement of nature including timescales and targets.

SEO4 – '*Sustainable production & consumption on land and at sea*';

- Council is in agreement with the requirement for producer responsibility, reducing of Single-Use Plastic and Carrier Bags. Further legislation on bans and levies must be set out to enable enforcement, along with education and awareness. The Department must provide

support, including education, for market, producers and businesses to establish the means to increase recyclable content or alternative packaging for consumers. All regulations including Extended Producer Responsibility and Deposit Return Schemes should be supported when the strategy is developed.

SEO5 – *'Zero waste & highly developed circular economy'*;

- The Circular Economy requires further information regarding targets and timelines to be achieved in line with different sections. Requirement for a clear focus on locality and sustainability of circular economy in a Northern Ireland context.
- Funding from Department is required for local Councils to implement changes in waste collection methods and cost of processing. Details of timeframes for targets required.
- Regarding Illegal Waste Disposal & Fly Tipping, the commencement of Sections 4 and 5 of the Waste and Contaminated Land Amendment Act (NI) 2011 would be welcomed. However, the level of implementation would rely on an assessment of existing resources and what additional provision may be required, from an enforcement perspective. These powers should be used by both DAERA and Councils as necessary and this 'levelling up' not seen purely as an opportunity for DAERA to offload its responsibilities. A separate protocol to address this issue would be very beneficial. The current Fly Tipping Protocol is inadequate in this regard and not signed up to by all Councils – something that would need to be addressed if consistency of approach is to be achieved.

SEO6 – *'Fair Contribution to UK net-zero greenhouse gas emissions & improved climate resilience and adaptability'*.

- Further detail on requirements and targets should be produced to enable organisation to provide strategic mitigations towards net zero. Also detail on how Northern Ireland will contribute towards UK Net Zero welcomed.

Proposed by Councillor Webb

Seconded by Councillor Foster and agreed

that Members endorse the points outlined and agree these be submitted by Tuesday 18 January 2022 on Citizen space as Council's response to the Draft Environment Strategy consultation.

ACTION BY: Rebecca Clulow, Climate Change and Sustainability Officer

4.3 FI/FA/5-9 LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE ACT (NORTHERN IRELAND) 2011

Members were reminded that under the requirements of the Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 and the Prudential Code, the Council is 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, **15 February 2022**.

(a) FI/FA/6 Minimum Revenue Provision Policy 2022/23

Under Regulation 6 of the Local Government (Capital Finance and Accounting) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2011, councils have a statutory requirement to charge to their general fund an amount of Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) which it considers to be 'prudent' in respect of the financing of capital expenditure.

A copy of the Council's MRP Policy 2022/23 was circulated.

Proposed by Councillor Webb
Seconded by Councillor Kelly and agreed

that the MRP Policy 2022/23 be approved.

ACTION BY: Richard Murray, Head of Finance

(b) FI/FA/7 Medium Term Financial Plan 2022/23 to 2024/25

The Prudential Code requires the Council to develop three-year revenue forecasts and three-year capital expenditure plans. These are shown in the Medium Term Financial Plan 2022/23 to 2024/25, a copy of which was circulated.

Proposed by Councillor Webb
Seconded by Councillor Kelly and agreed

that the Medium Term Financial Plan 2022/23 to 2024/25 be noted.

NO ACTION

(c) FI/FA/8 Treasury Management Strategy

The Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 and the Local Government (Capital Finance and Accounting) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2011 requires the council, in carrying out its capital finance functions, to have regard to the current editions of the CIPFA Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice and Cross-Sectoral Guidance Notes and the Prudential Code.

The Council is therefore required to set out its Treasury Management Policy and Strategy and to prepare an Annual Investment Strategy which sets out the council's policies for managing its investments and for giving priority to the security and liquidity of those investments.

Copies of the above policy and strategies were circulated.

Proposed by Councillor Webb
Seconded by Councillor Kelly and agreed

that

i) the Treasury Management Policy be approved

ii) the Treasury Management Strategy 2022/23 be approved

iii) the Annual Investment Strategy 2022/23 be approved

ACTION BY: Richard Murray, Head of Finance

(d) FI/FA/9 Report by the Chief Financial Officer on the Robustness of the Estimates and Adequacy of Reserves

Section 4 and 6 of the Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 requires the Council to have regard to a report, a copy of which was circulated, from the Chief Financial Officer on the robustness of the estimates and adequacy of reserves when considering the estimates for the next financial year.

Proposed by Councillor Webb
Seconded by Councillor Kelly and agreed

that the Report by the Chief Financial Officer on the Robustness of the Estimates and Adequacy of the Reserves be noted.

NO ACTION

(e) FI/FA/5 Capital Strategy

The Prudential Code requires the Council to develop a Capital Strategy which provides a high-level overview of the long-term context of capital expenditure and investment decisions and their associated risks and rewards along with an overview of how risk is managed for future financial sustainability. A copy of the Capital strategy was circulated.

Proposed by Councillor Webb
Seconded by Councillor Kelly and agreed

that the Capital Strategy 2022/23 be approved.

ACTION BY: Richard Murray, Head of Finance

4.4 FI/GEN/017 CONSULTATION ON PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE HUMAN MEDICINES REGULATIONS 2012 RELATING TO PATIENT GROUP DIRECTIONS

Members were advised that correspondence had been received (circulated) from the Department of Health in relation to the launch of a public consultation on proposed amendments to the Human Medicines Regulations 2012 (HMRs) that relate to the supply of medicines in accordance with Patient Group Directions (PGDs) in light of the organisational changes taking place as a result of the closure of the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB).

The consultation will be open for 4 weeks from 17 December and will close at 5.00pm on 14 January 2022.

Details of the consultation including the consultation response form can be accessed via the website link:

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/consultations/consultation-proposals-legislative-changes-human-medicines-regulations-2012>

Members were advised that they may wish to respond on a corporate, individual or party political basis.

Proposed by Councillor Magill
Seconded by Councillor Kelly and agreed

that Members respond on an individual or party political basis.

NO ACTION

4.5 G/BCEP/009 CLIMATE CHANGE WORKING GROUP MINUTES

The minutes of the seventh Climate Change Working Group, which took place on the 7th December 2021, were circulated.

In summary, Members were updated on progress made to mitigate against climate change including:

- Waste and Fleet Strategy Update
- Energy and EV Charging Update
- Local COP26 Activities

Proposed by Councillor Magill
Seconded by Councillor Webb and agreed

that the minutes of the Climate Change Working Group be approved.

ACTION BY: Liz Johnston, Head of Governance/Rebecca Clulow, Climate Change and Sustainability Officer

4.6 FI/GEN/017 DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH ADVANCE CARE PLANNING POLICY FOR ADULTS - PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Members were advised that correspondence had been received (circulated) from the Department of Health in relation to the launch of a public consultation on the draft Advance Care Planning Policy for Adults (aged 18 and over) for Northern Ireland.

The consultation will run from 17 December 2021 until 5pm on Friday 11 March 2022.

Details of the consultation including the consultation response form can be accessed via the website link:

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/consultations/consultation-draft-advance-care-planning-policy-adults-northern-ireland-and-draft-equality-impact>

Members were advised that they may wish to respond on a corporate, individual or party political basis.

Proposed by Councillor Webb
Seconded by Councillor Kelly and agreed that

that Members respond on an individual or party political basis.

NO ACTION

4.7 G/MSMO/008 (Vol 3) DEPARTMENT FOR INFRASTRUCTURE CONSULTATION – INCONSIDERATE PAVEMENT PARKING – AN OPTIONS PAPER

Correspondence (circulated) had been received from the Department for Infrastructure seeking views on an options paper (circulated) on inconsiderate pavement parking.

Full details of the consultation and a link to the survey are available at <https://consultations2.nidirect.gov.uk/dfi-1/pavement-parking-consultation>.

The survey will be open until Friday, 18 March 2022. Alternative methods of response are also detailed in the correspondence.

Members were advised that they may wish to respond on a corporate, individual or party political basis.

Proposed by Councillor Webb
Seconded by Councillor Kelly and agreed

that Members respond on an individual or party political basis.

NO ACTION

5 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

5.1 FI/FIN/4 BUDGET REPORT – NOVEMBER 2021 – PERIOD 8

A budget report for November 2021 – Period 8 was circulated for Members' information.

The Council's financial position at the end of November 2021 shows a favourable variance of £1.35m before exceptional costs.

Including net exceptional costs of £346k the Council's overall position is £1.0m favourable.

Should the favourable position continue until the end of the financial year, contributions may be made to Reserves to offset future operational or rates losses, or for Borough Recovery and Strategic Projects.

Proposed by Councillor Webb
Seconded by Councillor Magill and agreed

that the report be noted.

NO ACTION

5.2 CCS/GEN/007 SPECIAL SCHOOLS SUMMER SCHEME FUNDING UPDATE

Members were reminded that Council agreed to support equitable access to Summer Schemes and Programmes across the Borough for children and young people with special needs via a contribution of up to a maximum of £5k to each Special School in the Borough that delivers a Summer Scheme/Programme.

Of the five special schools two have applied for the funding – Hill Croft School and Riverside School. Rostulla and Jordanstown Schools are not making submissions this year. Thornfield House School do not provide a Summer Scheme Programme for pupils and therefore did not apply. The majority of their pupils board during school term due to the travel time from their family home.

A summary of the benefits of the funding for children, parents and staff for the two schools is listed below:

- Respite during holidays when routines are difficult to maintain in a familiar setting and aid the “recovery” process following the impact of Covid-19 pandemic
- A wider programme of activities including, yoga, sensory play, circus skills, virtual theatre, face painting, drums, jungle pets, cooking and art workshops
- Provide equipment such as iPads, tricycles and Lego
- Support with Covid-19 related costs such as buying rapid result test kits

Proposed by Councillor Webb

Seconded by Councillor Magill and agreed

that the report be noted.

NO ACTION

5.3 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 provides an update for Members on the use of agency staff as at November 2021 as compared to November 2020. It excludes limited ad-hoc agency cover, which is necessary to provide operational cover, at short notice (Appendix 1 circulated).

Appendix 2 (circulated) set out expenditure on agency workers in November 2021.

The cost of agency staff had increased for the period of 1 April 2021 to 30 November 2021 at 8% of all staffing costs compared to 4.28% for the same period last year. It should be noted that agency expenditure was significantly reduced last year following the release of agency workers in May 2020. This year's costs have also increased due to the late application of the April 2020 pay award and the respective back charges incurred.

Proposed by Councillor Webb
Seconded by Councillor Magill and agreed

that the report be noted.

NO ACTION

5.4 HR/GEN/019 MANAGING ATTENDANCE UPDATE

The purpose of this report was to update Members on the management of attendance from April 2021 – November 2021 (summary circulated).

April 2021 – November 2021 - Attendance Update

Members were advised that absence at the end of November 2021 was 1.35 days above target. The average number of day's absence per employee was 9.56 against a target of 8.21 days. (Target days for 2021/22 is 12 average days lost per employee).

The number of employees with 100% attendance was 70% with the corporate target set this year at 60%.

Projected figures

Absence days between December and March commonly represent 28% of the total days realised for the full reporting year (based on comparative data from 2018/19 and 2019/20). On this basis, projected figures have been prepared as follows:

Absence days at 30 Nov	Average days lost at 30 Nov	Projected average days lost at 31 Mar
4760.72	9.56	12.24

Members were advised for information that these figures include days lost for employees who were not in receipt of sick pay for part of their absence. No additional cost is incurred by the Council during the 'no pay' periods.

If days lost to employees who were not in receipt of sick pay were not included in these figures, the projected days lost at 31 March 2021 would be 11.39 days (within the corporate target of 12 days).

Reasons for absence

Long term cases (in excess of 20 days) account for 87% of absence, currently representing 23 employees. 61% of these long term cases are due to a stress related absence and are predominantly in operational areas. Long-term absences are more challenging to manage, as these require increased support, target setting, review meetings and medical referrals and are often disability related.

Short term cases account for 23% of absence. The main reason for short term cases is minor illnesses including colds, stomach upsets, migraines etc. Stress related absence is the second most common reason for short term absence.

Actions to improve absence levels

The Council's Employee Engagement and Wellbeing Strategy continues to support the management of attendance with the Council establishing a holistic approach by providing a wide range of interventions across the organization including:

- Improved management reporting
- Improved HR Business Partnering arrangements
- Management training
- Filling posts on structures
- Health and Wellbeing Initiatives

Proposed by Councillor Webb
Seconded by Councillor Magill and agreed

that the report be noted.

NO ACTION

The Chairperson took the Supplementary Report at this point of the meeting.

4.8 G-LEG-321/15 – PROPOSED 20MPH PART TIME SPEED LIMIT

Members were advised that correspondence had been received from the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) regarding a proposed 20mph part-time speed limit at Hazelwood Integrated Primary School, which includes part of Arthur Road.

A copy of the correspondence and map was circulated for Members' information.

Members were advised that they may wish to respond on a corporate, individual or party political basis.

Proposed by Councillor Webb

Seconded by Councillor Foster and agreed that

Members respond on an individual or party political basis.

NO ACTION

PROPOSAL TO PROCEED 'IN CONFIDENCE'

Proposed by Councillor Ramsay

Seconded by Councillor Magill and agreed

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

6 ITEMS IN CONFIDENCE

6.1 IN CONFIDENCE HR/LD/014 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S MID YEAR PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL

Members were reminded that it was agreed that the Group Leaders Forum would conduct the Performance Appraisal of the Chief Executive and that any concerns or issues would be reported to Council.

Performance objectives for 2021/22 were considered at the Chief Executive's mid-year Performance Appraisal which was completed on 16 December 2021.

Proposed by Councillor Webb

Seconded by Councillor Robinson and agreed

that the report be noted.

NO ACTION

PROPOSAL TO PROCEED OUT OF 'IN CONFIDENCE'

Proposed by Councillor Robinson

Seconded by Councillor Webb 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 7.19 pm.

MAYOR