



**MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE MEETING OF THE POLICY AND GOVERNANCE
COMMITTEE HELD IN THE ROUND TOWER CHAMBER, ANTRIM CIVIC CENTRE
ON TUESDAY 2 DECEMBER 2025 AT 6.30 PM**

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| In the Chair | : | Councillor B Webb |
| Members Present (In person) | : | Aldermen – L Clarke Councillors – S Cosgrove, P Dunlop, N Kelly, H Magill, A McAuley and A O'Lone |
| Members Present (Remote) | : | Alderman – P Bradley Councillors - M Goodman, T McGrann, V McWilliam |
| Non Committee Members: (Remote) | : | Councillors – R Lynch and L O'Hagan |
| Officers Present (In person) | : | Director of Finance & Governance – S Cole Director of Organisation Development (Interim) – H Hall Deputy Director of Governance – L Johnston Borough Lawyer – P Casey Head of Human Resources – J Clarke ICT Helpdesk Officer –J Wilson Member Services Officer – S Fisher PA to Mayor & Deputy Mayor – L Molyneaux |

CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

The Chairperson welcomed everyone to the December Meeting of the Policy and Governance Committee and reminded all present of recording requirements.

1 APOLOGIES

Alderman M Cosgrove

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Item 4.6 – Councillor T McGrann

Item 6.1 – Councillors S Cosgrove, V McWilliam, B Webb

3 ITEMS FOR DECISION

3.1 PT/CI/066 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE AND IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2025/26, PERFORMANCE PROGRESS REPORT QUARTER 2

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to recommend to Members to approve the Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan 2025/26, Quarter 2 Performance Progress Report.

2. Background

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

3. Previous Decision of Council

The Council's Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan 2025/26 had been approved in June 2025. This set out a range of robust performance targets, along with identified improvement objectives and several Statutory Performance Targets.

4. Performance Progress Reports

Second Quarter Performance Progress Report were circulated for Members' information.

5. Governance

Quarterly performance progress reports were reported to relevant Committees.

Proposed by Councillor Kelly

Seconded by Councillor Cosgrove and agreed that

the Quarter 2 Performance Progress Report be approved.

ACTION BY: Allen Templeton, Performance Improvement Officer

3.2 PT/CI/066 BUSINESS PLAN 2025/26, PERFORMANCE REPORTING TEMPLATE QUARTER 2

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to recommend to Members to approve the Business Plan 2025/26, Performance Reporting Template for Organisation Development and Finance and Governance.

2. Background

Members were reminded that Part 12 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 put in place a framework to support the continuous improvement of Council services. Specifically, the duties in the Act relate to Section 84(1), 85(2) and 85(9) whereby the Council had a statutory duty to make arrangements to:

- Secure continuous improvement
- Secure achievement of its improvement objectives
- Exercise its functions so that any Departmental specified standards were met.

3. Previous Decision of Council

In June 2025 the Council had approved a strategic performance framework as part of the Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan 2025/26.

4. Business Planning

Business planning played a vital role in the Council's performance management and delivery processes. It offered a more efficient and cohesive approach to monitoring and evaluating performance while improving overall visibility.

The purpose of the Directorate Business Plans was to:

- Demonstrate how each of the Directorates were supporting and achieving Council's priorities.
- Provide a clear sense of purpose of the Directorate and the challenges it faced.
- Illustrate how it was aligning its resources to meet the challenges ahead.
- Measure performance and to hold ourselves to account to ensure we delivered for the Council and its residents.

Business Plans Quarter 2 Performance Reporting Templates for; Organisation Development and Finance & Governance Directorates 2025/26 were circulated for approval.

5. Financial Position / Implications

As agreed, as part of the Council's rate setting process.

Proposed by Councillor Kelly
Seconded by Councillor Cosgrove and agreed that

the Business Plan 20225/26 Quarter 2 Performance Reporting Template for Organisation Development and Finance and Governance be approved.

ACTION BY: Allen Templeton, Performance Improvement Officer

*Councillor McAuley joined the meeting and left the Chamber during Item 3.3
Councillor Goodman joined the meeting during Item 3.3.*

3.3 G-LEG-18-45 REQUEST TO CHANGE THE NAME OF AN ADDRESS

1. Purpose

Officers received a request to change the spelling of an address of a housing development at Marion Hill, Toomebridge, Antrim to Marian Hill, Toomebridge, Antrim.

Officers conducted a number of land searches on the housing development at Maria(o)n Hill. The results show that the spelling of Marian/Marion Hill varied even relating to the same property, for example, one property listed different spellings on different documents, and another property appeared to have amended the spelling on their documentation by hand from an 'o' to an 'a'.

It appeared the spelling had been interchangeable.

The requester believed that the correct spelling for the address was Marian Hill (i.e. with an 'a') as he stated that the housing development was built in 1954 which was a 'Marian year' hence the name. The term 'Marian year' of 1954 had religious historical origins.

The Council did not have a specific policy in relation to changing the names of addresses in this instance.

2. Legislation

The statutory basis for the Councils powers in relation to the provision of street names and the numbering of buildings in Northern Ireland was contained within Article 11 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Northern Ireland) Order 1995.

Therefore, the Council had the power to make the change to the address as requested. However, as per the 1995 Order referred to above a Council should have regard to any views on the matter expressed by the occupiers of premises in that street.

3. Suggested Process

As the change in the spelling of an address could have an effect on the details contained on, for example, passports, driving licences, title deeds, bank details etc., Officers recommend in this instance that only where 100% of those affected by the change in the spelling of the address agreed, that Members should consider to proceed to change the spelling of the address as requested.

If Members were minded to proceed with the request, Officers recommended that Officers canvass by post all of those appearing on the current Electoral Register of the affected addresses and seek their views on the request. Officers would also canvass the Northern Ireland Housing Executive who owned some of the properties.

Those affected would be informed of the following: that 100% agreement of all affected was required; the potential consequences in relation to certain documents which contain an address; to seek their own legal advice in respect of the matter; and that the Council would not be responsible for any liability whatsoever and howsoever caused if the Council changed the name of the address if there was 100% agreement.

Those canvassed would be given 4 weeks to respond in writing from the date of the letter being issued by the Council.

If there were some no responses and or responses stating they did not agree, then Officers would recommend that Members did not make the change to the address.

Officers would bring a report back to Members providing an update regarding the responses received.

Proposed by Alderman Clarke

Seconded by Councillor O'Lone and agreed that

Officers write to those in the 16 affected properties giving a four-week response time and following this, bring back a report to Committee for further consideration.

ACTION BY: Paul Casey, Borough Lawyer

Councillor McAuley returned to the Chamber during Item 3.4

3.4 G/GEN/019 CODE OF GOVERNANCE (NOVEMBER 2025)

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to seek Members' approval of the Code of Governance (November 2025).

2. Introduction

Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council was committed to the principles of good governance and had a Code of Governance to reflect this.

The document consolidated the key governance practices within the Council, demonstrated the Council's governance structures were consistent with the core and supporting principles contained in the Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework (April 2016).

3. Key Points

The Code of Governance, (circulated), once approved, would be uploaded to the Council website to provide details of Council's existing processes and documentation to demonstrate compliance with the framework.

Proposed by Councillor Kelly

Seconded by Councillor O'Lone and agreed that

the Code of Governance (November 2025) be approved.

ACTION BY: Liz Johnston, Deputy Director Governance

4 **ITEMS FOR NOTING**

4.1 **OD/OD/006 WORK SMART PILOT - FEEDBACK RESULTS**

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to recommend that Members note the feedback results from both Line Managers and Employees regarding the Work Smart Pilot.

2. Previous Council Decision

Members were reminded that in March 2025 it was agreed that a one-year pilot of the Work Smart Scheme would commence on 1 April 2025. During this pilot, eligible employees could avail of one day of home working per week, or occasional location flexibility.

3. Survey Approach

Two surveys were conducted with eligible employees (total of 149 responses were received):

- Line Manager Survey: issued to managers overseeing staff participating in the pilot, focusing on performance, communication, wellbeing and service continuity.
- User Pulse Survey: issued to all participating employees to understand their experience to date.

4. Key Findings

a) Line Manager Feedback

The survey highlighted strongly positive outcomes, and Work Smart supported:

- Enhanced morale, engagement and wellbeing

- Increased focus and capacity for complex tasks
- Greater autonomy and ownership of performance
- Sustained delivery standards and productivity levels
- **88.89%** of managers reported feeling confident in managing team performance under Work Smart.
- **80.56%** confirmed a positive impact on their own wellbeing, with reduced commuting and fewer distractions which contributed to more effective working.

b) User Pulse Survey Feedback

Overall Experience

- **91%** rated their experience as Positive Impact on Work and Wellbeing

| Statement | Agree/ Strongly Agree |
|---|--------------------------|
| I continue to do my job effectively | 96% |
| Work Smart has had a positive impact on my wellbeing | 94% |
| Team communication and collaboration remain effective | 96% |
| My manager supports Work Smart arrangements | 94% |

What Is Working Well

- Improved focus and productivity due to fewer interruptions.
- Better work-life balance, particularly through reduced commuting.
- Wellbeing benefits, including reduced stress and improved energy.
- Business continuity, especially during adverse weather or appointments.
- Positive environmental impact through reduced travel.

5. Next Steps

- Additional surveys would be carried out throughout the pilot period.
- Findings would continue to be reviewed by OD and reported to the appropriate Committee ahead of pilot conclusion.
- Work would continue to support consistency of support and application where feasible and appropriate.

In response to questions from Members, the Director of Organisation Development (Interim), advised she would revert to Members with further information on the feedback received.

Proposed by Councillor Dunlop

Seconded by Councillor Cosgrove and agreed that

the feedback results from both Line Managers and Employees regarding the Work Smart Pilot be noted and, that following a complete analysis in March, a further report be brought back to a future committee.

ACTION BY: Sarah Fenton, Organisation Development Officer

4.2 OD/OD/004 LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE 2026

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to provide an update and invite Members to 'hold the date' – Wednesday 11 February 2026 - for the in-house joint Elected Member and Officer Leadership Conference.

2. Introduction

Following on from the success of last year's Leadership Conference, this year's event had been shaped around the evolving issues that continue to influence leadership today and into the future. With a focus on digital transformation, wellbeing, and the shifting expectations placed on leaders, the conference – *Connect, Inspire, Lead: People, Purpose and Digital Evolution* – brought together insight, innovation, and practical learning to support leaders in navigating a rapidly changing landscape.

3. Conference Overview

Conference Details: Diary invites to follow
Date: Wednesday 11 February 2026
Venues: Theatre at The Mill and Mossley Mill
Time: 9:30 AM – 4:30 PM

Content Highlights: -

- Inspirational and thought-provoking keynote speaker
- Practical workshops:
 - The Future Leader's Toolkit – Coaching Conversations that Drive Performance
 - AI Literacy at Work – Using Technology Safely, Ethically and Effectively
 - Building Psychological Safety and Trust in Teams
- Networking and shared learning opportunities

By the end of the conference, participants would be able to:

- Understand the evolving leadership landscape, including key trends influencing current and future leadership practice.
- Recognise the impact of digital transformation on organisational culture, service delivery, and leadership behaviours.
- Apply practical strategies to enhance wellbeing—both personally and within their teams—to build resilient, high-performing environments.
- Strengthen their ability to lead with purpose, aligning people, values, and organisational priorities in times of change.

In response to a question from a Member, the Director of Organisation Development (Interim) clarified the date of the Conference.

Proposed by Councillor Kelly

Seconded by Councillor O'Lone and agreed that

Members note the update and 'hold the date' – Wednesday 11 February 2026 - for the in-house joint Elected Member and Officer Leadership Conference (diary invites to follow).

NO ACTION

4.3 HR/ER/002 DISSOLUTION OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT STAFF COMMISSION

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to recommend to Members to note the correspondence received from the Department for Communities, Minister Gordon Lyons MLA regarding the Dissolution of the Local Government Staff Commission.

2. Correspondence from Minister Gordon Lyons MLA

The Minister for Communities had formally advised Council Chief Executives of the decision to dissolve the Local Government Staff Commission (LGSC) with effect from 31 March 2027 (correspondence circulated).

This followed the Executive's original decision in 2014 to dissolve the Commission, based on consultation outcomes at that time, though implementation was delayed for various reasons.

A subsequent consultation in 2021 reaffirmed broad support for the 2014 decision. The matter was deferred during the suspension of the Assembly in 2022, and the dissolution date was later provisionally extended to 2027.

After reviewing the Commission's current role, statutory functions, and previous consultation outcomes, as well as the Commission's May 2024 position paper, the Minister had now confirmed his decision to proceed, with the Executive's agreement. He acknowledged the Commission's valuable service to local government over the past 50 years but noted that legislative and organisational developments had significantly reduced the need for such a statutory body.

To oversee the process, the Minister had instructed officials to re-establish the Local Government Staff Commission Dissolution Board (originally formed in 2015) to review the transfer or cessation of the Commission's functions and address any related issues.

The report was presented for Members' information and noting.

Proposed by Councillor Kelly

Seconded by Alderman Clarke and agreed that

the correspondence received from the Department for Communities, Minister Gordon Lyons MLA regarding the Dissolution of the Local Government Staff Commission be noted.

NO ACTION

4.4 CCS/CS/011 CUSTOMER SERVICES QUARTER 2 UPDATE

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to note the Quarter 2 Customer Service report for the period July to September 2025

2. Introduction/Background

The Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan 2025-26 had set out the performance improvement objective; *'We will provide best-in-class services for our residents and make them feel valued and engaged. By fostering trust, engagement and increased satisfaction, we are committed to elevating the customer service experience.'*

Four indicators were set as measures of success and the Customer Services Report for Quarter 2 2025-26 (circulated) provided an update on performance.

In addition, there was an update on key consultations to serve the Plan, and the performance of the Complaints Handling Procedure, during the period July to September 2025.

Proposed by Councillor Cosgrove
Seconded by Councillor Kelly and agreed that

the Quarter 2 Customer Service report for the period July to September 2025 be noted.

NO ACTION

4.5 CCS/EDP/7 QUARTERLY SCREENING REPORT SECTION 75 AND RURAL SCREENING

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to recommend to Members to note the quarterly Section 75 and Rural screenings which have taken place within the period of August and October 2025.

2. Background

Members were 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 had made 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.

3. Section 75 and Rural Screenings

The policies noted below had been screened between August and October 2025.

| POLICY | SCREENING DECISION |
|--|--------------------|
| Update on Local Development Plan 2030 | 1 |
| Bonfire Management Programme | 1 |
| Light Up Civic Buildings Policy | 1 |
| 25/26 Good relations Action Plan | 1 |
| Age Friendly "Silver Summer Scheme" | 1 |
| ASK Mentoring Pilot Capital Grants and Tender Appointment | 1 |
| Glengormley Public Realm Scheme | 1 |
| Review of Standing orders – Use of a Language Other than English at Council Meetings | 1 |

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

In response to a Member's question regarding the criteria for an EQIA, the Director of Organisation Development (Interim) agreed to revert to the Member with further information.

Proposed by Councillor Kelly
Seconded by Councillor Cosgrove and agreed that

the quarterly screening report for August - October 2025 be noted.

ACTION BY: Claire Webb, Accessibility and Inclusion Officer

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

1. Purpose

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

Stage 1

- **No applications be noted**

Stage 2

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

Stage 3

- **No applications be noted**

2. Background

Members were reminded that in accordance with the Dual Language Street Sign Policy, adopted by Council on 30 May 2022 (circulated), the following update outlined the current status of applications received.

3. Application Update

STAGE 1: PETITION VERIFICATION - there are no applications at Stage 1.

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

1. ARTHUR CRESCENT, BT36 7AL

Canvass letters had been issued to residents of the above street, and the outcome would be reported to Members.

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

Maps and costs were circulated for information.

Proposed by Councillor Kelly

Seconded by Councillor O'Lone and agreed that

the Dual Language Street Sign applications at:

Stage 1

- **No applications be noted.**

Stage 2

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

Stage 3

- **No applications be noted.**

NO ACTION

4.7 HR/GEN/019 MANAGING ATTENDANCE QUARTER 2 JULY 2025 – SEPTEMBER 2025

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to provide Members with a Managing Attendance update report for the period July 2025 to September 2025 (Quarter 2) and associated Action Plan for 2025/26.

2. Attendance management performance against other NI Councils 2023-24

Members were advised that the Northern Ireland Audit Office recently provided benchmarking data illustrating the 'number of days lost to sickness absence per year'. In the 2023-24 year the Council ranked 3rd with 13.6 days against a NI average of 17 days.

3. Managing Attendance Quarter 2 update

Overall absence at the end of Quarter 2 2025/26 was above the set target of 7.01 days per employee for quarter 2, sitting at 7.37 days per employee.

Short term absence had risen; however the average long-term days lost per employee had notably reduced sitting at 1.96 against a target of 5.82.

A comprehensive action plan was in place to manage absence, with further details provided in the Managing Absence Report (circulated) and updated Attendance Management Action Plan.

Proposed by Councillor McAuley
Seconded by Councillor Kelly and agreed that

the Quarter 2 Managing Attendance update for the period of July 2025 to September 2025, and associated Action Plan for 2025/26 be noted.

NO ACTION

5 ANY OTHER RELEVANT BUSINESS

Due to connectivity issues in the Chamber, a Member requested that a review be carried out by the IT team.

ACTION BY: Graham Smyth, Head of ICT

PROPOSAL TO PROCEED 'IN CONFIDENCE'

Proposed by Councillor O'Lone
Seconded by Councillor Cosgrove and agreed

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

Having declared an interest in Item 6.1, Councillor Webb left the meeting and Councillor Magill assumed the role as Chairperson for the remainder of the meeting. Councillors Cosgrove left the Chamber and Councillor McWilliam left the meeting remotely.

6 ITEM IN CONFIDENCE

6.1 IN CONFIDENCE OD/OD/002 ELECTED MEMBER DEVELOPMENT – CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT APPLICATION

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to recommend to Members to approve the Elected Member Continuous Professional Development Application.

2. Background

In April 2023, Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council introduced its Elected Member Continuous Professional Development Policy.

Funding would be available each year through the Member Development budgets to support the following:

- Mandatory and core training costs would be met in full.
- Part-Time study would be met in full (anything up to and including degree level)
- Each Elected Member would have an entitlement to an individual development budget of £800 per year (£3,200 per term) to be used on continuous learning and development activities, best practice/innovation/study visits etc. or re-allocated to meet a specific Member development need.
- 75% of costs would be met for approved Continuous Professional Development (CPD) applications.
- 50% of costs would be met for approved Professional Fees Re-imbursement applications.

3. CPD Application

A cross-party application had been received to support Member's learning, which was circulated for Members' approval.

| Elected Member | Study visit | Duration | Indicative Costings | Proposed funding |
|-----------------------|--|------------------------|----------------------------|---|
| 5 representatives | Sister City Best Practice Study Visit | 4 days January 2026 | £10,000 | £10,000 (£2,000 per each individual development allowance) |

4. Financial Position

There were no additional cost implications, request could be met in line with current budget expenditure.

5. Governance

The Elected Member Development Working Group were circulated the CPD application to review, assessing it against the policy, and recommended it for approval.

A Member expressed his concern regarding the use of the individual development allowance for this purpose. The Director of Organisation Development (Interim) clarified that the proposal was policy compliant.

Proposed by Councillor Kelly

Seconded by Councillor McAuley and agreed that

the Elected Member Continuous Professional Development Application be approved.

ACTION BY: Katherine Young, Organisation Development and Employee Engagement Manager

Councillors Cosgrove and McWilliam returned to the meeting.

PROPOSAL TO PROCEED OUT OF 'IN CONFIDENCE'

Proposed by Alderman Clarke
Seconded by Councillor Dunlop 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 6.57 pm.

MAYOR