



30 December 2021

Committee Chair: Alderman P Michael

Committee Vice-Chair: Councillor T McGrann

Committee Members: Councillors – M Cooper, H Cushinan, R Foster, S Flanagan, N Kelly, A McAuley, M Magill, B Mallon, N Ramsay, V Robinson, M Stewart, B Webb and R Wilson

Dear Member

MEETING OF THE POLICY & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

A remote meeting of the Policy & Governance Committee will be held in The **Chamber, Mossley Mill on Wednesday 5 January 2022 at 6.30pm.**

You are requested to attend.

Yours sincerely

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

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

For any queries please contact Member Services:

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**REPORT ON BUSINESS TO BE CONSIDERED AT THE
POLICY AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE MEETING ON
WEDNESDAY 5 JANUARY 2022**

3. PRESENTATION

3.1 PRESENTATION – CAPITAL PROJECTS SUPPORTING CORPORATE RECOVERY

Members are advised that the Head of Capital Projects will make a presentation at the meeting.

4. ITEMS FOR DECISION

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

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.

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 will know 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 have agreed that we will measure and monitor the performance of the corporate indicators as set out in the Recovery Plan 2021-23.

A progress report for quarter two is **enclosed** for Members' attention. Members are advised that the quarter two report was reviewed by the Audit Committee on 14 December 2021.

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

Prepared by: James Porter, Performance and Transformation Officer

Agreed by: Helen Hall, Head of Performance and Transformation

Approved by: Sandra Cole, Deputy Chief Executive of Finance & Governance

4.2 G/MSMO/008/VOL2 DAERA DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL STRATEGY- PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The Department of Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs (DAERA), on behalf of the Northern Ireland Executive, has published a consultation on the Draft Environmental Strategy (**enclosed**). 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 consider 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 outworking's 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 Extender 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.

RECOMMENDATION: 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.

Prepared by: Rebecca Clulow, Climate Change and Sustainability Officer

Agreed by: Liz Johnston, Head of Governance

Approved by: Sandra Cole, Deputy Chief Executive of Finance & Governance

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

Members are 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 is **enclosed**.

RECOMMENDATION: that the MRP Policy 2022/23 be approved.

Prepared & Agreed 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 is **enclosed**.

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

Prepared & Agreed by: Richard Murray, Head of Finance

(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 are **enclosed**.

RECOMMENDATION: 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.**

Prepared & Agreed 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 is **enclosed**, from the Chief Financial Officer on the robustness of the estimates and adequacy of reserves when considering the estimates for the next financial year.

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

Prepared & Agreed by: Richard Murray, Head of Finance

Approved by: Jacqui Dixon, Chief Executive

(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 is **enclosed**.

RECOMMENDATION: that the Capital Strategy 2022/23 be approved.

Prepared by: Ann Hamilton, Financial Controller

Agreed 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 are advised that correspondence has been received (**enclosed**) 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 17th December and will close at 5.00pm on 14th 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 are advised that they may wish to respond on a corporate, individual or party political basis.

Members' instructions are requested.

Prepared by: Denise Lynn, PA to the Deputy Chief Executive of Finance & Governance

Approved by: Sandra Cole, Deputy Chief Executive of Finance & Governance

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, are enclosed.

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

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

Prepared by: Liz Johnston, Head of Governance

Approved by: Sandra Cole, Deputy Chief Executive of Finance & Governance

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

Members are advised that correspondence has been received (**enclosed**) 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 are advised that they may wish to respond on a corporate, individual or party political basis.

Members' instructions are requested.

Prepared by: Denise Lynn, PA to the Deputy Chief Executive of Finance & Governance

Approved by: Sandra Cole, Deputy Chief Executive of Finance & Governance

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

Correspondence (**enclosed**) has been received from the Department for Infrastructure seeking views on an options paper (**enclosed**) 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 may wish to respond on a corporate, individual or party political basis.

Council's instructions are requested.

Prepared by: Member Services

Approved by: Jacqui Dixon, Chief Executive

5 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

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

A budget report for November 2021 – Period 8 is enclosed 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.

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, Deputy Chief Executive of Finance & Governance

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

Members are 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

RECOMMENDATION: that the report be noted.

Prepared by: Ellen Boyd, Accessibility and Customer Services Officer

Agreed by: Nicola McCullough, Head of Communications and Customers

Approved by: Debbie Rogers, Director of Organisation Development

5.3 HR/HR/019 - AGENCY STAFF 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

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 (see [Appendix 1](#)).

[Appendix 2](#) sets out expenditure on agency workers in November 2021.

The cost of agency staff has 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.

RECOMMENDATION: that the report be noted.

Prepared by: Victoria Stewart, HR Systems and Data Analyst

Agreed by: Pauline Greer, Human Resources Manager

Approved by: Jennifer Close, Head of Human Resources

5.4 HR/GEN/019 MANAGING ATTENDANCE UPDATE

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

April 2021 – November 2021 - Attendance Update

Members are 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 are 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

RECOMMENDATION: that the report be noted.

Prepared by: Victoria Stewart, HR Systems and Data Analyst

Agreed by: Jennifer Close, Head of Human Resources

Approved by: Debbie Rogers, Director of Organisation Development