



## **MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE MEETING OF THE POLICY AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE HELD AT MOSSLEY MILL ON WEDNESDAY 2 DECEMBER 2020 AT 6.30 PM**

**In the Chair:** Alderman P Brett

**Members Present:** Alderman F Agnew  
Councillors – H Cushinan, S Flanagan, R Foster,  
P Hamill, L Irwin, N Kelly, N Ramsay, S Ross, M Stewart  
and R Wilson

**Non Committee Members:** Councillors – A Bennington, V McWilliam and B Webb

**Officers Present:** Director of Finance & Governance – S Cole  
Director of Organisation Development – A McCooke  
Head of Governance – L Johnston  
Head of Internal Audit – P Caulcutt  
ICT Projects Officer – J Higginson  
Member Services Officer – S Boyd

### **CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS**

The Chairperson welcomed everyone to the December 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**

Aldermen - M Cosgrove and P Michael  
Councillor V McAuley  
Borough Lawyer and Head of Legal Services P Casey

#### **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None

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

#### **3.1 FI/AUD/79 RAISING CONCERNS POLICY**

Members were advised that in June 2020, the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) released their Raising Concerns: A Good Practice Guide for Northern Ireland Public Sector. This guide was circulated to the Corporate Leadership Team and the Audit Committee for information.

Officers have undertaken a review of this guidance and considered its implications for the Council's Whistleblowing Policy that has been in place since April 2015.

As a result, a new Raising Concerns Policy (circulated) has been developed, aligning to the new guidance, and will replace the Whistleblowing Policy. The new Policy has been reviewed and approved by the Corporate Leadership Team.

The main notable difference between the outgoing Whistleblowing Policy and the new Raising Concerns Policy is the change in terminology.

'Whistleblowing' has been replaced with 'raising concerns' in an attempt to soften the language used and to promote a culture of raising concerns as part of normal business. In addition, the new Policy also focuses on providing a formal route for members of the public to raise concerns with the Council.

The overall aim of the Policy is to encourage employees and members of the public to understand the value of an open and honest reporting culture, where their concerns can be raised and dealt with effectively as part of normal business, leading to strengthened governance. The Policy also provides guidance on how to raise a concern and how that concern will be dealt with by the Council.

The Raising Concerns Policy has been screened for the need for an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) and it was decided that an EQIA was not recommended.

The Policy has also been screened for the need to carry out a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) and it was decided that a DPIA was required due to the potential risk of personal harm to individuals in the event of a security breach.

Completion of the DPIA has indicated that all necessary steps have been taken to ensure that the data is held securely and so processing can proceed. The DPIA will be kept under review by the Head of Internal Audit.

The Head of Internal Audit provided clarity to Members that a report on concerns raised under the Raising Concerns Policy would be provided to the Audit Committee and that anonymity would be preserved.

Proposed by Councillor Foster  
Seconded by Councillor Irwin and agreed that

**the Committee approves the Raising Concerns Policy.**

ACTION BY: Paul Caulcutt, Head of Internal Audit

**3.2 PT/GEN/40 NILGA CONSULTATION – TRANSFORMATION AND DRIVING PRACTICAL CHANGE IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

Members were advised that correspondence (circulated) was received from NILGA inviting the Council to complete a questionnaire to ascertain the Council's views in relation to reform to date and developing additional and improving existing powers, resources and services of local government in Northern Ireland. The questionnaire is set in the context of what is needed to sustain councils and revitalise communities as part of post-pandemic recovery and towards a more driven suite of policies and resources for Northern Ireland.

A response had been prepared and was circulated for Members' consideration.

Proposed by Councillor Hamill  
Seconded by Alderman Agnew and agreed that

**the response be approved.**

ACTION BY: Helen Hall, Head of Performance and Transformation

**3.3 G-LEG-319/10 LAND ABANDONED BY THE DEPARTMENT – CASTLE LODGE, RANDALSTOWN**

Members were advised that correspondence had been received from the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) concerning the proposed abandonment of roadway at Castle Lodge, Randalstown under Article 68(1) of the Roads (Northern Ireland) Order 1993.

The Council has no interest in the lands.

The circulated correspondence outlined the proposal and highlighted the area considered for abandonment. DfI Roads were requesting comments in relation to this proposal and had granted Council an extension after 2 December to make any comments on this matter.

Proposed by Councillor Foster  
Seconded by Councillor Flanagan and agreed that

**Council responds to DfI and indicates it has no interest in the lands.**

ACTION BY: Deirdre Nelson, Paralegal

### **3.4 CCS/EDP/7 EQUALITY COMMISSION ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT**

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 2019 to April 2020 was circulated for Members' information.

Proposed by Councillor Foster  
Seconded by Councillor Kelly and agreed that

**the report be approved.**

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

## **4 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

### **4.1 G-LEG-325/4 DEPARTMENT FOR INFRASTRUCTURE - THE PRIVATE STREETS (NORTHERN IRELAND) ORDER 1980 – DEVELOPMENT AT GULLIVERS LANE, BALLYNURE**

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

Proposed by Councillor Hamill  
Seconded by Councillor Flanagan and agreed that

**the correspondence be noted.**

ACTION BY: *Deirdre Nelson, Paralegal*

#### **4.2 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 circulated provided an update for Members on the use of agency staff as at October 2020 as compared to October 2019. It excluded limited ad-hoc agency cover, which was necessary to provide operational cover, at short notice (Appendix 1).

Appendix 2 (circulated) set out expenditure on agency workers in October 2020.

The cost of agency staff had decreased for the period of 1 April 2020 to 31 October 2020 at 4% of all staffing costs compared to 7% for the same period last year.

Agency expenditure had significantly reduced following the release of agency workers in May 2020.

Proposed by Councillor Wilson

Seconded by Alderman Brett and agreed that

**the report be noted.**

NO ACTION

#### **4.3 HR/ER/002 LOCAL GOVERNMENT STAFF COMMISSION DISSOLUTION**

Members were advised that correspondence had been received from the Local Government Staff Commission (LGSC) in relation to the dissolution of the Commission and a copy of the correspondence was circulated for Members' information.

Early indications were that the date for the Commission to be dissolved is 31 March 2022 and the Department had advised that the Commission plan accordingly. On this basis it would be necessary for the Commission to determine a financial scheme up to 31 March 2022.

The Commission would advise the Council early in the New Year of its apportioned contribution for the financial year 2021/2022.

Proposed by Councillor Wilson  
Seconded by Alderman Brett and agreed that

**the report be noted.**

NO ACTION

#### **4.4 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 would only be sold for immediate burial and that pre-selling would end, except in cases where terminal illness had been confirmed.

The burial capacity within Council cemeteries was noted in the table below (as at **31/10/2020**)

<b>CEMETERY</b>	<b>AVAILABLE PLOTS REMAINING</b>	<b>AVERAGE BURIAL PLOTS SOLD</b> (based on previous 3 years sales)	<b>ESTIMATED REMAINING BURIAL CAPACITY</b> (years)
Carnmoney	0	156	0.0
Ballyclare	903	30	30.8
Rashee	479	9	53.7
Sixmile	2346	53	44.6
Crumlin	475	10	47.7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4262</b>	<b>258</b>	<b>16.52</b>

<b>GARDEN OF REMEMBRANCE, (for the burial of ashes only)</b>	<b>AVAILABLE PLOTS REMAINING</b>	<b>AVERAGE BURIAL PLOTS SOLD</b> (based on previous 3 years sales)	<b>ESTIMATED REMAINING BURIAL CAPACITY</b> (years)
Carnmoney	Under review due to land conditions. An update will be provided in the next report.		
Ballyclare	131	5	26.20
Mallusk	15	1	15.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1120</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>29.47</b>

The estimated burial capacity for the entire Borough was currently just over **16 years**.

Proposed by Councillor Wilson  
Seconded by Alderman Brett and agreed that

**the report be noted.**

NO ACTION

## **4.5 HR/GEN/019 MANAGING ATTENDANCE**

The purpose of this report was to update Members about the position relating to the management of attendance from April 2019 – October 2020 (summary circulated)

### **1. April 2020 – October 2020 - Attendance Update**

Excluding COVID-19 sickness absences, attendance had improved during this current financial year. The average days' absence per employee was 4.86 against a target of 7.20 days, which represents 2.34 days within target.

The number of employees with 100% attendance was 87%, which marked an improvement when compared to the same period the previous year (75% of employees had full attendance). Our 100% attendance target this year is 60%

### **2. Employee Engagement and Wellbeing Strategy**

The Council's Employee Engagement and Wellbeing Strategy had supported its management of attendance as it recognises the correlation between employee engagement, wellbeing and organisational performance. It is rooted in the understanding that health & wellbeing is about proactively avoiding illness, and optimising employees' physical and mental health. The Council had established a holistic approach, with a range of interventions across the organisation to include:

- Training for line managers on absence management
- Streamlining staff sickness reporting procedures
- Communication of occupational health service, employee assistance programmes and counselling
- Delivery of health events linked to the top three reasons for absence each year
- Commencement of the roll out of a Mental Health Toolkit
- 100% attendees get a letter of recognition for full attendance, from the Mayor
- Low cost staff leisure membership
- On-site access to cancer screening via the Action Cancer 'Big Bus' twice yearly.

HR Partners would continue to work with Heads of Service and Managers to monitor long term absence cases, to proactively accomplish employee health and wellbeing and improve the ongoing management of attendance.

Proposed by Councillor Wilson  
Seconded by Alderman Brett and agreed that

**the report be noted.**

NO ACTION

#### **4.6 CCS/CPRM/5 COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING UPDATE**

The Communication and Marketing Plan is designed to provide an integrated approach to external communication, including marketing, and to protect and enhance the reputation of the Council.

Important to our progress is the innovative use of technology so that we communicate and engage with residents and customers in a way which meets their needs.

This report summarised the progress made so far and noted some new developments for 2020 and beyond, and the updates on the Council's current performance on digital communications.

#### **TARGETS AND PERFORMANCE**

Although due to the COVID-19 pandemic the Council was not carrying out its normal cycle of reporting we are still bench-marking against key targets set as part of the Corporate Performance process.

The table below noted our online audience size and the target identified for this year. Based on the current organic rates of growth we are projected to hit our Facebook target within the next 2 months, and had specific plans in place to ensure that we meet those of Twitter and Instagram also.

<b>Channel</b>	<b>Facebook</b>	<b>Twitter</b>	<b>Instagram</b>	<b>LinkedIn</b>	<b>Website hits</b>
<b>Current audience</b>	24,453	9,324	3,418	606	1.7m
<b>Target 2020/21</b>	25,000	10,000	5,000	500	>2.3m

The target for visits to Council's website during 2020-21 is >2.3m. Since April we have registered 1,736,664 visitors and at this point in the year we are ahead at 75% of the target.

During the early phase COVID-19 we implemented a new front end for the website to ensure that customers could navigate and access information quickly and easily. This funnelled customers into 4 key areas, Council Services & Facilities; Support for Business; Community Support; and Health & Wellbeing.

Our audience has steadily grown over the last year and we sit amongst the top three Councils outside Belfast.

When compared against peers our key platform Facebook performs well, particularly on how our audience engages with our content. This is something we want to retain and we remain mindful that the quality of our content (judged by engagement) has a key bearing on the amount of our audience that sees it (reach).

## **CURRENT AND FUTURE FOCUS**

Our digital media channels are performing well, growing steadily and on track to meet annual targets. We are aiming to improve the alignment of our demographics on digital media to the population breakdown of our Borough.

In this respect, the use of Instagram is a key area of focus as it presents an opportunity to better reach young people.

With Facebook we have a disproportionately high proportion of female followers across both Facebook and Instagram when compared to the demographic make-up of our Borough. We will seek to rebalance this with more targeted content towards males.

In addition, we could improve significantly the 18-24 age group (currently 4% of followers). Our strongest demographic is the 25-44 age group, with 35-44 year olds accounting for the highest proportion of this age bracket.

On our website, gender engagement is balanced with a fairly even split of users between male (47.6%) and female (52.4%).

Since the addition of our Digital Officer posts in 2019 we have improved our digital outputs, including increased use of video and designed assets to accompany materials to make it more visually appealing.

Officers were currently working on a system to catalogue the existing digital assets to make these easily searchable and useable for key teams within Council.

With the growth of online media, an additional option being considered is the use of a digital newsroom for media outlets where more of these enriched assets could be available to journalists on a convenient and self-serve basis. A key benefit for Council would be to gather better statistics on which assets journalists are accessing and refine our outputs to meet these trends.

Proposed by Councillor Wilson  
Seconded by Alderman Brett and agreed that

**the report be noted.**

NO ACTION

## **4.7 HR/GEN/004 STATUTORY HOLIDAY – QUEEN'S PLATINUM JUBILEE 2022**

Members were advised that the Government had announced that there will be an additional bank holiday to celebrate Her Majesty the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

The late May bank holiday will be moved to Thursday 2 June 2022 and the additional Jubilee bank holiday will be on Friday 3 June 2022.

Proposed by Councillor Wilson  
Seconded by Alderman Brett and agreed that

**the report be noted.**

NO ACTION

#### **4.8 CE/OA/012 LOCAL GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIP PANEL MEETING**

The Local Government Partnership Panel provides a structured, political relationship between central and local government to discuss strategic policy and operational matters of mutual interest and concern.

The next meeting of the Partnership Panel will take place in January 2021 with a meeting of the local government side of the Panel on 15 December 2020. Support material in relation to the meeting on 15 December was circulated for Members' information.

Members were invited to advise of any specific areas of importance which they feel should be raised at the meeting.

Proposed by Councillor Wilson  
Seconded by Alderman Brett and agreed that

**the report be noted.**

NO ACTION

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

Proposed by Councillor Hamill  
Seconded by Councillor Wilson and agreed that

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

Members were advised that the livestream and audio recording would cease at this point.

#### **5 ITEMS IN CONFIDENCE**

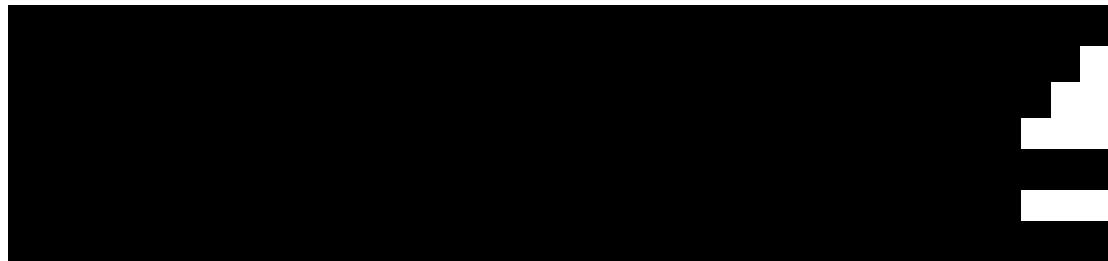
##### **5.1 IN CONFIDENCE FI/PRO/TEN/355 TENDER FOR THE PROVISION OF A BACKUP SOLUTION FOR COUNCIL DATA**

**CONTRACT PERIOD 3 YEARS WITH AN OPTION, BY THE COUNCIL, TO EXTEND FOR A FURTHER TWO PERIODS OF 12 MONTHS**

The Council has been using the Asigra backup solution for over the past 5 years. The minimum contract period had now expired, and the server hardware that the backup solution runs on was now end of life and no longer

supported by the hardware vendor. Therefore, it was necessary to go back to market and refresh the server hardware.

As the current Asigra backup solution performed well and had met all of the Council's requirements for protecting business critical data, the tender specified that we would only consider proposals for an Asigra backup solution. This was in order to avoid disruption that a migration to a new solution would bring to the backup and protection of business critical data.



This tender opportunity was made available on eSourcingNI on Friday 23 October 2020. One tender for the provision of a backup solution was opened via the eSourcingNI Portal on Friday 6 November 2020 and referred to the evaluation panel for assessment. The tender was evaluated on a two stage basis as follows:

### **STAGE 1 – SELECTION STAGE**

The tender was evaluated on a pass/fail basis for mandatory exclusion and financial compliance, economic and financial standing, previous relevant experience (organisation), management systems and practices and declarations and form of tender. The tender met the requirements of Stage 1 of the evaluation process and proceeded to Stage 2.

### **STAGE 2 – AWARD STAGE**

#### **Stage 1 – Technical Assessment**

The tender was evaluated on a pass/fail basis for confirmation that the proposal complied with the specification. The tender met the essential requirements and proceeded to the next stage of evaluation.

#### **Stage 2 - Quality/Commercial Assessment (30%/70%)**

The tender was evaluated on the basis of resilience and business continuity (15%), support and maintenance (15%) and cost (70%) and the recommendation is as follows:

<b>Supplier</b>	<b>Quality Assessment (out of 30%)</b>	<b>Cost Assessment (out of 70%)</b>	<b>Total % Score</b>	<b>Total Cost for 3 years (£) (Excl. VAT)</b>
<b>iomart Group PLC</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>£ [REDACTED]</b>

Whilst only one tender was received it was in line with pre-tender market testing and still represents value for money. Total cost for three years is within the available budget of £ [REDACTED] (excl. VAT).

Proposed by Councillor Foster  
Seconded by Councillor Hamill and agreed that

**having achieved a score of 100%, iomart Group PLC be appointed for the provision of a backup solution for a period of 3 years with an option, by the Council, to extend for a further two periods of 12 months (subject to review and performance).**

ACTION BY: Julia Clarke, Procurement Officer/Sharon Logue, Procurement Manager

**5.2 IN CONFIDENCE G/LAN/023, G/LAN/022 LANDS AT CRAIGMORE AND BALLYLURGAN ROAD, RANDALSTOWN**

Council leased five pieces of land for grazing or cutting in the 2020 season. The future use for the majority of these lands let for grazing were agreed by Council at the 2020 June Council meeting however consideration was not given to the former Antrim legacy landfill sites in Randalstown at Craigmore and Ballylurgan Road.

Site detail

**Craigmore Lands adjacent to Household Recycling Centre**  
(map circulated)



**Ballylurgan Road lands**  
(map circulated)



A large black rectangular redaction box covers the top portion of the page, obscuring several lines of text. A smaller white rectangular box is positioned in the upper right area of the redacted space.

Legal Services have confirmed both lands are held in fee simple and there are no restrictions in relation to future use. In addition they are not aware of any ongoing obligations that the Council would have post sale in terms of being the vendor of the land.

## Future Options

- 1. Do nothing**
  - 2. Lease both sites on a conacre agreement**
    - a. On a yearly agreement
    - OR
    - b. 10 Year Agreement

And make necessary repairs to the fences at Craigmore at an estimated cost of £ [REDACTED].
  - 3. Declare surplus -** initiate disposal via Council agent to the highest bidder

Members were advised that the outcome of the disposal process would be brought back to Council for approval.

Proposed by Councillor Foster

Seconded by Councillor Hamill that Option 3 be approved and

on the proposal being put to the meeting 11 Members voted in favour, 1 against, 0 abstentions, and it was agreed that

**Option 3 be approved.**

ACTION BY: Liz Johnston, Head of Governance/Sharon Logue, Procurement Manager

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

Proposed by Councillor Flanagan  
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 6.45 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.***