



30 April 2026

Committee Chairperson: Councillor B Webb

Committee Vice-Chairperson: Councillor H Magill

Committee Members: Aldermen – P Bradley, L Clarke and M Cosgrove

Councillors – J Burbank, S Cosgrove, H Cushinan, P Dunlop, M Goodman, N Kelly, A McAuley, T McGrann, V McWilliam and A O'Lone

Dear Member

MEETING OF THE POLICY AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Policy and Governance Committee will be held in the **Round Tower Chamber, Antrim Civic Centre on Wednesday 6 May 2026 at 6.30pm.**

You are requested to attend.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard Baker".

Richard Baker, GM MSc
Chief Executive, Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council

PLEASE NOTE: Refreshments will be available in the Café from 5.20pm

For any queries, please contact Member Services:
Tel: 028 9448 1301/028 9034 0107
memberservices@antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk

A G E N D A

1 APOLOGIES

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

3 ITEMS FOR DECISION

- 3.1 Inclusive Summer Scheme Programme and Special Educational Needs (SEN) Schools Summer Scheme Funding 2026

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- 4.3 Prompt Payment Performance
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6 ITEMS IN CONFIDENCE

- 6.1 Remote Access Solution
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**REPORT ON BUSINESS TO BE CONSIDERED AT THE
POLICY AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE MEETING ON
WEDNESDAY 6 MAY 2026**

3 ITEMS FOR DECISION

3.1 CCS/EP/10 INCLUSIVE SUMMER SCHEME PROGRAMME AND SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS (SEN) SCHOOLS SUMMER SCHEME FUNDING 2026

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to recommend to Members to approve funding for the Inclusive Summer Scheme Programme and the Special Educational Needs (SEN) Schools Summer Scheme.

2. Council Decision

Members are reminded that the Council's Equality Action Plan demonstrates our commitment to creating a Borough where all individuals feel respected, represented, and able to participate fully in civic and community life. In addition, the Disability Action Plan features actions to be achieved to promote positive attitudes towards Disabled people and encourage participation by Disabled people in public life.

Furthermore, since April 2018 the Council approved the funding of up to £5,000 for Special Educational Needs (SEN) Schools in the Borough to support equitable access to Summer Schemes and Programmes across the Borough for children and young people with additional needs. This funding is provided from the Accessibility and Inclusion budget.

3. Review of Inclusive Summer Scheme Delivery Model

Members will be aware that the Inclusive Summer Scheme programme has been successfully delivered in partnership with the Mae Murray Foundation. In Autumn 2025 Mae Murray Foundation proposed that the Council run an 'Inclusive Summer Programme for All-abilities'.

In order to achieve this, Mae Murray Foundation recommended the Council expand the partnership provision to include other organisations, such as Sensory Kids NI who can offer their specialist expertise at their premises. The intention is to serve the needs of physically Disabled and Neurodivergent children, as well as children with intellectual disabilities. The model is to provide 'Stay and Play' events whereby parents remain onsite, and depending on the age group of the child, in a different room. This enables them to be available for any personal care and emergency medication needs but where appropriate, they can avail of leisure facilities, meet other parents/carers or spend time in a quiet space. In addition to reflecting the needs of Disabled children, the Inclusive Summer Scheme has been designed to provide some necessary respite for parents and carers.

4. Proposed Inclusive Summer Scheme Programme 2026

Location	Event	Date	Provider
Antrim Forum Leisure Centre	Stay and Play Tots (0-6) Stay and Play Kids (7-13) Stay and Play Teens (14-18)	15-17 July 2026	Mae Murray Foundation
Mossley Pavillion	Stay and Play Tots (0-6) Stay and Play Kids (7-13) Stay and Play Teens (14-19)	3-5 August 2026	Mae Murray Foundation
Crumlin Leisure Centre	All Age Family Day	28 July 2026	Mae Murray Foundation
Sensory Kids NI, The Junction	Stay and Play (6-10)	6 July 2026 12 August 2026	Sensory Kids NI

In addition to the above inclusive summer scheme offerings, work is ongoing to explore the feasibility of family day/summer scheme provision in a Ballyclare primary school.

5. Financial Implications

The costs associated are:

- The Inclusive Summer Scheme in partnership with the Mae Murray Foundation is £17,000.
- The Special Educational Needs (SEN) School Summer Scheme Funding is £25,000 (based on all five schools applying).

All costs are within agreed budget.

6. Recommendation

It is recommended that:

- a) The allocation of £17,000 for the Inclusive Summer Scheme Programme 2026 be approved.**
- b) The allocation of £25,000 for the Special Educational Needs Schools Summer Scheme 2026 be approved.**

Prepared by: Claire Webb, Accessibility and Inclusion Officer

Agreed by: Lesley Millar, Head of Organisation Development

Approved by: Liz Johnston, Director of Organisation Development (Interim)

4 ITEMS FOR NOTING

4.1 CCS/EDP/025 DUAL LANGUAGE STREET SIGN APPLICATIONS

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to recommend to Members to note the update on the current status of Dual Language Street Sign applications.

2. Introduction/Background

The Dual Language Street Sign Policy (**enclosed**) was adopted by Council in May 2022. This report provides an update on current applications and seeks approval where required in accordance with the Policy.

3. Applications Update

- Petition received

A new application has been received for Brecart Road, Toomebridge, BT41 3TH and BT41 3PJ. The petition will be verified following a visit to the Electoral Office NI.

- Stage 1 – Petition Verification (Approved at Policy and Governance Committee on 14 April 2026).

Three applications are at this stage. The occupiers signing the petition have been verified against the Electoral Register and the applications meet the required one-third threshold. Now approved, these will progress to the canvass stage after the current Stage 2 canvass exercise has been completed.

Cargin Road, Toomebridge, BT41 3NS
Hollybrook Gardens, Newtownabbey, BT36 3ZS
Loup Road, Toomebridge, BT41 3TW

- Stage 2 – Residents Canvass (For Noting)

Two applications have progressed to this stage. Canvass letters have been issued to occupiers, and the outcome will be reported at the next meeting.

Longlands Walk, Newtownabbey, BT36 7NQ
Longlands Park, Newtownabbey, BT36 7NG

- Stage 3 – Street Sign Installation (For Noting)

No applications are currently at this stage.

4. Map and Costs

Relevant maps and associated costs are **enclosed** for Members' information.

5. Recommendation

It is recommended that the Dual Language Street Sign update be noted.

Prepared by: Claire Webb, Accessibility and Inclusion Officer

Agreed by: Lesley Millar, Head of Organisation Development

Approved by: Liz Johnston, Director of Organisation Development (Interim)

4.2 CCS/EDP/023 DEAF FRIENDLY COUNCIL DFC SIGN LANGUAGE PARTNERSHIP GROUP (SLPG) FUNDING 1

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to recommend to Members to note the 2026 British Sign Language (BSL) training programme update.

2. Background

Members are reminded of the Council's commitment to become a Deaf Friendly Council through our signing of the BSL and ISL Deaf Charter.

Members are also reminded that an application was submitted to the Department for Communities (DFC) Sign Language Partnership Group (SLPG). Subsequently the Department for Communities offered by formal letter the Council funding of £10,708 to deliver BSL Level 1 and BSL Level 2 training for Elected Members, Council Staff and Borough Residents.

3. Governance

Following a procurement exercise, a three-year contract was awarded to Ruari Bradley, Sign Language Teacher, to deliver BSL training to Elected Members, Council Staff and Borough Residents on behalf of the Council. The current cohort of training is well underway, with positive feedback received and good attendance levels at sessions. 4 students dropped out of BSL Level One due to personal reasons and there are now 11 students working towards Level One accreditation. The course content includes topics such as meeting people, everyday life, personal information, environment and surroundings, and describing things. There are 12 students working towards BSL Level Two accreditation, and the course allows learners to participate in longer and more varied conversations than at Level One. The content includes everyday life, eating and drinking, spending and shopping, travel and holidays.

Following completion of the course and accreditation, a presentation of certificates will be arranged, and a social media post shall be shared to promote the Council's Deaf Friendly and inclusive ethos.

Members are asked to note that the Accessibility and Inclusion team intends to submit a new application to Department for Communities for funding when the SLPG scheme reopens in Summer 2026. The current programme of training was vastly oversubscribed, with a particularly high level of interest from community applicants. Therefore, a waiting list is being developed for use in the event we are successful in our grant application to roll out a fresh programme of training.

4. Recommendation

It is recommended that the 2026 British Sign Language training programme update be noted.

Prepared by: Claire Webb, Accessibility and Inclusion Officer

Agreed by: Lesley Millar, Head of Organisation Development

Approved by: Liz Johnston, Director of Organisation Development (Interim)

4.3 FI/FIN/9 PROMPT PAYMENT PERFORMANCE

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to recommend Members to note the Council's quarterly prompt payment performance.

2. Introduction/Background

Members are reminded that the Department for Communities (DfC) issued revised guidance (Local Government Circular 19/2016) on prompt payments and the recording of invoice payments in November 2016. This guidance requested Councils to record specific performance targets of 10 working days and 30 calendar days and continue a cycle of quarterly reporting on prompt payment performance by Councils to the DfC and its publication on their website.

3. Prompt Payment Performance

Council's prompt payment performance for the period **1st January to 31st March 2026** is set out below:

During the above period, the Council paid 5,803 invoices totalling £21,101,169.

Council paid 5,238 invoices within the 30 calendar days target (90.3%).

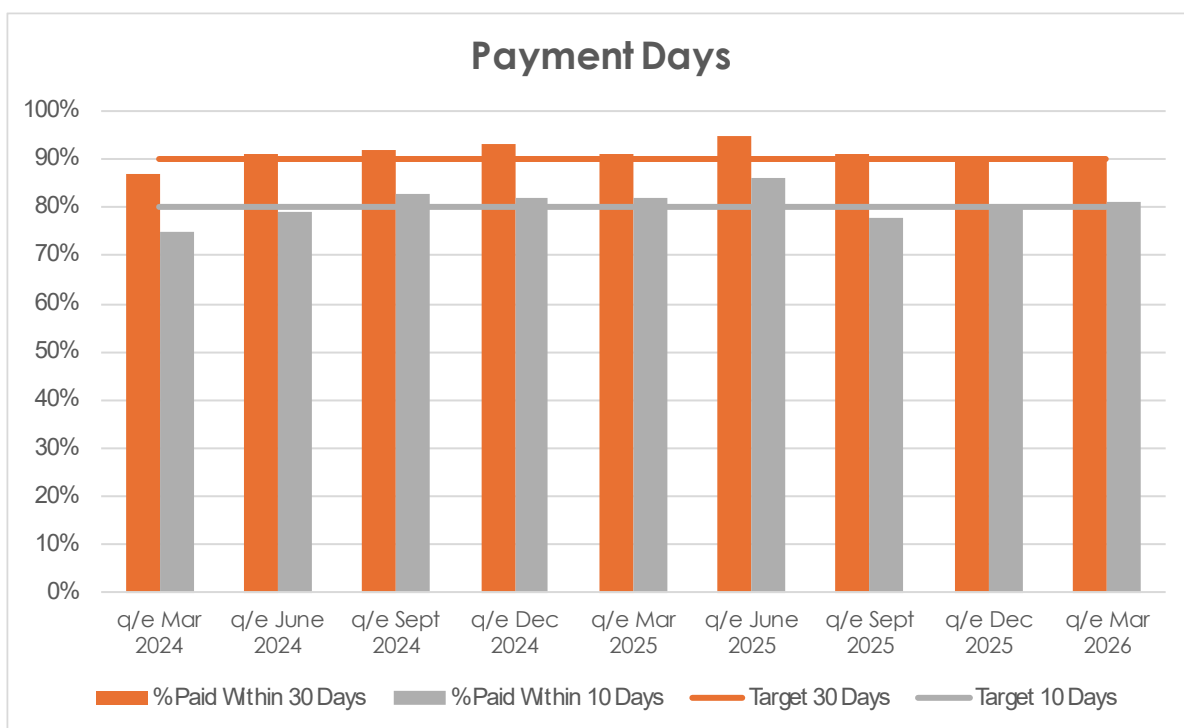
Council paid 4,708 invoices within the 10 working days target (81.1%).

Council paid 565 invoices outside of the 30 days target (9.7%).

This compares to previous quarterly results over the past two years as below:

Period	Total Number of Invoices Paid	% Paid Within 30 Days	% Paid Within 10 Days
Target		90%	80%
q/e 31 March 2024	5,776	87%	75%
q/e 30 June 2024	5,533	91%	79%
q/e 30 September 2024	4,871	92%	83%
q/e 31 December 2024	4,849	93%	82%
q/e 31 March 2025	6,787	91%	82%
q/e 30 June 2025	4,891	95%	86%
q/e 30 September 2025	4,992	91%	78%
q/e 31 December 2025	5,644	90%	80%
q/e 31 March 2026	5,803	90%	81%

This performance is shown graphically below:



Both targets were met during the quarter.

The 10 day target has now been achieved for six out of the past seven quarters and the 30 day target has been achieved for the past eight consecutive quarters.

Overall, both targets have been achieved for the whole financial year to the end of December with 81% of invoices paid within 10 days and 92% within 30 days.

Invoices in Period	Invoices Paid 1-10 Days	Invoices Paid in less than 30 Days
21,330	17,315	19,547
	Invoices Paid 1-10 days	Invoices Paid less than 30 days
	81.2%	91.6%

The monthly performance for the financial year to date is shown below:



Staff within the Finance section continue to work with all departments across the Council and with the software provider to ensure that the targets continue to be met and improved as much as possible.

Service improvements have included:

- Additional reporting capability to monitor performance
- Staff training/refresher sessions
- Process review for high volume suppliers
- Introduction of a new process to scan invoices and send to Council officers for action or to return invoices to the supplier for more information.

The prompt payment performance for Councils in Northern Ireland is published quarterly by the Department for Communities (DfC). The prompt payment performance for the quarter ended December 2025 is **enclosed**; the Council's performance for Quarter 3 of 2025/26 against the average performance for the other Councils for the latest available quarter is set out in the table below:

Council	% Paid Within 30 Days	% Paid Within 10 Days
Antrim & Newtownabbey BC (Quarter 4 25/26)	90%	80%
All Councils (Quarter 3 25/26)	93%	72%

4. Supplier Balances

	March 2026	December 2025
	£	£
Creditors Control Account	666,963	853,355
% of quarterly spend	3.16%	5.00%

The outstanding amount due to suppliers will fluctuate markedly depending on the timing of payment, invoice value and timelines of verification.

5. Recommendation

It is recommended that the Council's quarterly prompt payment performance report be noted.

Prepared by: Richard Murray, Head of Finance

Approved by: John Balmer, Deputy Director of Finance

4.4 FI/FIN/4 BUDGET REPORT – PERIOD FROM 12 APRIL 2025 TO MARCH 2026

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the financial performance for the Directorates reporting to the Policy and Governance Committee and for the whole Council for Period 12 April 2025 to March 2026.

2. Introduction/Background

As agreed, quarterly budget reports will be presented to the relevant Committee. All financial reports will be available to all Members.

The budget report for Period 12 does not include adjustments required to arrive at the final financial position of the Council for the 2025/26 financial year. These adjustments include final accruals of expenditure incurred and grants and debts invoiced after 31 March 2026, contributions to or from reserves, and prepayments of expenditure and income.

The final financial position for the year shall be presented to the Audit and Risk Committee in June 2026.

3. Summary

A report on the financial performance, employee costs, highest areas of expenditure and income, and the financial performance by Head of Service is **enclosed** for Members' information.

As at period 12:

The Finance and Governance Directorate has a favourable variance of 297k, or 6.9%, against the budgeted financial performance for the period.

Excluding Redundancy costs accounted for in the 2025/26 financial year, the Organisation Development Directorate has a favourable variance of £137k, or 5.45%, against the budgeted financial performance for the period. Redundancy costs of £1.7m have been included in the period 12 results. Officers have requested a Capitalisation Direction from the Department of Communities to spread this cost over the next four financial years.

Overall (including the full impact of redundancy costs) the Council has a favourable variance of £475k or 0.7% against the budgeted financial performance for the period.

This report also includes the overall financial performance of the Council, including a summary of the financial performance of each Directorate.

4. Recommendation

It is recommended that the report be noted.

Prepared by: Richard Murray, Head of Finance

Approved by: John Balmer, Deputy Director of Finance

4.5 FI/ICT/5 ICT HELPDESK AND PROJECT UPDATE

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on ICT Helpdesk activity and performance over the last year, and to provide a progress update on key ICT projects currently underway.

2. Introduction

The ICT Department is structured to provide both operational support and project delivery across the Council. This includes a service desk/helpdesk function providing day-to-day user support, alongside technical teams responsible for core infrastructure, networks and systems, and specialist capability covering cyber security and governance.

The ICT team works closely with service areas to maintain and improve digital services, support staff in delivering front-line and back-office functions, and progress priority technology initiatives (including Smart Working and wider digital change).

A report is **enclosed** which covers the ICT helpdesk statistics and core ICT project delivery.

3. Recommendation

It is recommended that Members note this report on the update of the ICT Helpdesk and ICT Projects.

Prepared by: Graham Smyth, Head of ICT

Approved by: John Balmer, Director of Finance

5 ANY OTHER RELEVANT BUSINESS

Any Other Relevant Business (AORB) may be taken at this point.