



**MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE MEETING OF THE POLICY AND GOVERNANCE
COMMITTEE HELD IN THE ROUND TOWER CHAMBER, ANTRIM CIVIC CENTRE
ON TUESDAY 10 JUNE 2025 AT 6.30 PM**

- In the Chair** : Councillor B Webb (Remotely)
Councillor H Magill
- Members Present (In person)** : Alderman L Clarke

Councillors – S Cosgrove, H Cushinan,
P Dunlop and V McWilliam
- Members Present (Remote)** : Alderman P Bradley

Councillors - T McGrann and A O'Lone
- Officers Present (In person)** : Director of Finance and Governance – S Cole
Director of Organisation Development (Interim) – H Hall
Deputy Director of Finance – J Balmer
Deputy Director of Governance – L Johnston
Head of Finance – R Murray
Head of Health, Safety and Resilience – E Girvan
ICT Helpdesk Officer – J Wilson
Member Services Officer – C McGrandle

CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

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

Since the Chairperson was attending remotely, he believed it would be best for the Vice Chair to preside over the meeting. As a result, Councillor Magill assumed the role of Chairperson.

1 APOLOGIES

Alderman M Cosgrove
Councillors - N Kelly and A McAuley

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor T McGrann – Item 3.4

3 ITEMS FOR DECISION

3.1 G/MSMO/1 SCHEME OF ALLOWANCES PAYABLE TO COUNCILLORS 2025-26

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to update the Scheme of Allowances Payable to Councillors 2025-26 for approval.

2. Introduction/Background

Council was required under the Local Government (Payments to Councillors) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2019 to make a scheme for the payment of allowances to Councillors and Committee Members in respect of each year.

3. Key Issues

The Scheme of Allowances was approved by Council in April 2025 and revised the maximum Basic Allowance payable, following receipt of correspondence from the Department for Communities (DfC) circulated.

The Dependants' Carers' Allowance also changed from 1 April 2025 in line with the increase in the National Minimum Wage; this had been amended in the revised Scheme of Allowances circulated.

Following queries in relation to Members appointed to outside bodies attending relevant conferences, meetings or events of that outside body, Members were directed to section 9.2 c) of the Scheme.

This section detailed a list of approved duties which included:

Conferences, meetings and events of those outside bodies and organisations to which a member had been nominated by the Council and had been requested by the body/organisation to represent it.

For clarification, this enabled Members to attend such relevant conferences, meetings and events without further Council approval.

To ensure appropriate budgetary control, Members were advised that they should contact the Chief Executive, or the relevant Director prior to committing to attending the event.

Any future notifications from the DfC in relation to changes to the allowances payable for the 2025-26 financial year would be reported to Members for their approval.

Proposed by Councillor McWilliam
Seconded by Councillor Cosgrove and agreed that

the updated Scheme of Allowances Payable to Councillors for 2025-26 be approved.

ACTION BY: Richard Murray, Head of Finance

3.2 F1/FIN/10 AMENDMENT TO FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to recommend for approval Pricing Guidelines for officers to use in setting fees and charges for services which had been incorporated within section 15 of the Financial Regulations.

2. Introduction

Council regularly review the Financial Regulations to ensure a high level of governance is in place in relation to financial activity. Amendments to the financial regulations were last approved at the Policy and Governance Committee in December 2024.

The Financial Regulations form part of the financial framework of Council which provided the necessary control on financial matters, whilst encouraging best practice and promoting local accountability.

The Financial Regulations provided a framework through which the Chief Executive could be satisfied that proper financial administration was in place. The aim of these Regulations was to help ensure that high standards of propriety and best value were achieved. All Elected Members and employees had a duty to promote these aims, not just by following Financial Regulations but in their general approach.

'Pricing' would be an effective tool in delivering higher income streams or rates of return and would be often more effective than increasing service uptake or reducing costs; getting pricing wrong, however, could lead to reduced rates of return. 'Pricing' for Council also had to balance the need to cover costs with affordability and fairness.

3. Review of the Regulations

Following review, amendments had been drafted and were summarised below:

The following key aspects should be considered by officers in the price setting process;

- **Legal Basis** – charges for any services should have a legal basis
- **Market** – pricing should consider similar market provision and be competitive and reasonable
- **Affordability and Fairness** – the price charged to residents, businesses and visitors should be affordable and should consider the users ability to pay.
- **Exemptions and discounts** – service pricing may consider exemptions or reductions for specific groups; for example age, disability or the unemployed. This would be particularly relevant if there were service strategic objectives for specific groupings of people.
- **Cost Recovery** - Cost recovery for services should be based on the full understanding of the cost of that service. This therefore would enable a decision to be made on the fees or charges that could be set, the level of subsidy that would be built into the price or the level of surplus generated. Both direct and indirect costs should be considered.
- **Impact on Service** - In determining 'pricing' the impact on service demand must be considered. Consultation with users may be required to understand the relationship between service use and charges.

All discretionary charges should be reviewed at least annually and an appropriate increase or decrease applied in light of changes to any of the key considerations above.

An annual inflationary uplift, based on appropriate indices, should be automatically applied in conjunction with any pricing changes arising from the above key considerations.

Transitional arrangements should be considered if there was a significant change to pricing.

A copy of the proposed updated Financial Regulations was circulated for approval.

Proposed by Councillor Webb

Seconded by Councillor Cushinan and agreed that

- a) **the updated Financial Regulations be approved, with the recommendation that only non-inflationary amendments to pricing being presented to the relevant committee.**
- b) **inflationary increases would be based on the change in Consumer Price Index (CPI) from the previous calendar year.**

ACTION BY: John Balmer, Deputy Director of Finance

3.3 G/HSWB/4 HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY – REVIEWED AND UPDATED

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to recommend to Members to approve a reviewed and updated Health and Safety Policy.

2. Introduction/Background

It was a legal requirement under Health and Safety at Work Act (HSWA) 1974 to have a written Health & Safety Policy if five or more people were employed. In addition to having a written policy, the Act places certain obligations on employers to their employees whilst at work.

3. Previous Decision of Council

The previous updated policy was approved by Council in April 2024. The Health and Safety Policy was the over-arching principal document outlining the arrangements for Council's approach to managing Health and Safety. This Policy was supported by a range of detailed subject specific Health and Safety related Procedures, which would give more detail on the management approach for that particular subject. A copy of the previous policy with track changes was circulated.

The associated Health and Safety Policy Statement (circulated) was a statement of intent and listed what the Council and its employees would do to keep a safe and healthy environment for its employees and others affected by its activities. This was a requirement of the Health and Safety at Work Act, it would be signed by the most senior person in the Council to, the Chief Executive, and would be on display in every Council premises.

4. Policy Consultation

The updated Health and Safety Policy had been consulted with the Union Safety Representatives from NIPSA, GMB and UNITE in February 2025, and with the Health Safety and Wellbeing Committee as outlined in their Terms of Reference.

5. Implication

The updated policy and statement of intent were not only required by law, but also a requirement of other accreditations held by Council, e.g. Quest+

6. Governance

With guidance from the Accessibility and Inclusion Officer, this Policy had been equality screened (circulated), along with the Rural Needs Impact Assessment (circulated) for information.

This Policy would be communicated to all employees, both office-based and operational, and would be shared with all relevant stakeholders and uploaded onto iConnect.

Proposed by Alderman Clarke

Seconded by Councillor Dunlop and agreed that

the reviewed and updated Health and Safety Policy be approved.

ACTION BY: Elaine Girvan, Head of Health, Safety & Resilience

3.4 CCS/EDP/025 DUAL LANGUAGE STREET SIGN APPLICATIONS

1. Purpose

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

Stage 1

- Shore Road, Toome, BT41 3NW be noted.
- Brae Terrace, Crumlin, BT29 4XW be noted.
- Glenville Green, Newtownabbey, BT37 0TT be noted.

Stage 2

- No applications at stage 2 be noted.

Stage 3

- Glen Manor View, Newtownabbey, BT36 7GE be approved.
- Longlands Mews, Newtownabbey, BT36 7FR be approved.

2. Background

In accordance with the Dual Language Street Sign Policy, adopted by Council on 30 May 2022 (circulated), the following update outlined the status of applications received.

3. Application Update

STAGE 1: PETITION VERIFICATION

Two applications were at Stage 1.

1. SHORE ROAD, TOOME, BT41 3NW
2. BRAE TERRACE, CRUMLIN BT29 4XW
3. GLENVILLE GREEN, NEWTOWNABBAY, BT37 0TT

Officers visited the Electoral Office for Northern Ireland week commencing 26 May 2025 to verify the petitions for the above applications. The verification outcomes would be reported at the July Council meeting.

STAGE 2: RESIDENTS CANVASS

There were no applications at stage 2.

STAGE 3: STREET SIGN INSTALLATION

Two applications were at Stage 3.

1. GLEN MANOR VIEW, NEWTOWNABBAY, BT36 7GE
2. LONGLANDS MEWS, NEWTOWNABBAY, BT36 7FR

The occupiers of the above streets had been canvassed. The threshold of two thirds or more in favour of the erection of a second language street sign had been met, as required within the approved policy.

A map and outline costings was circulated.

Proposed by Councillor Cushinan

Seconded by Councillor Webb and agreed that

the Dual Language Street Sign applications at:

Stage 1

- **Shore Road, Toome, BT41 3NW be noted.**
- **Brae Terrace, Crumlin, BT29 4XW be noted.**
- **Glenville Green, Newtownabbey, BT37 0TT be noted.**

Stage 2

- **No applications at stage 2 be noted.**

Stage 3

- **Glen Manor View, Newtownabbey, BT36 7GE be approved.**
- **Longlands Mews, Newtownabbey, BT36 7FR be approved.**

ACTION BY: Ellen Boyd, Accessibility and Inclusion Officer

3.5 PT/CI/060 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE AND IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2024/25, QUARTER 4 PERFORMANCE PROGRESS REPORT

Purpose

The purpose of this report was to recommend to Members to approve the Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan 2024/25, Quarter 4 Performance Progress Reports for Finance & Governance, Organisation Development, and overall Council.

1. Background

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

2. Previous Decision of Council

Council's Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan 2024/25 was approved in June 2024. This set out a range of robust performance targets, along with identified improvement objectives and several Statutory Performance Targets.

3. Performance Progress Reports

Fourth Quarter Performance Progress Reports for Finance and Governance, Organisation Development and the overall Council were circulated for Members' information.

4. Governance

Quarterly performance progress reports were reported to relevant Committees.

Proposed by Councillor McWilliam
Seconded by Councillor Cosgrove and agreed that

the Quarter 4 Performance Progress Reports for Finance & Governance, Organisation Development, and overall Council be approved.

ACTION BY: Allen Templeton, Performance Improvement Officer

3.6 **PT/CI/066 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE AND IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2025/26 (FINAL) AND PERFORMANCE GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS**

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to recommend to Members to approve the Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan 2025/26 following consultation, and the Performance Governance Arrangements.

2. Background

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 draft Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan 2025/26 for consultation was approved in January 2025. This set out a range of robust performance targets, along with six identified improvement objectives and several statutory performance targets.

4. Consultation Period

A twelve-week public consultation commenced on 3 February 2025, to derive feedback from residents, stakeholders, local businesses, statutory and community planning partners, and other bodies with which collaborative working was taking place or planned.

Multiple channels were used for consultation to ensure robust feedback on the Plan as follows:

- Copies of the draft Plan along with the consultation document were available in the reception area on Mossley Mill and Antrim Civic Centre.

- The draft Plan, Executive Summary and consultation document were available on the Council's website and a QR code was created linked to the consultation survey.
- Face to face consultation events were held in Leisure Centres, Community Centres, Libraries, Civic Centres and PCSP events across the Borough.
- A consultation event was held with the Youth Voice in Antrim Civic Centre.
- Weekly digital surveys were conducted via the Council's social media channels.
- 13,241 stakeholders were contacted directly requesting feedback on the Plan.

As a result of these **148** completed consultation surveys and **527** digital responses were received.

A copy of the consultation feedback was circulated for information. The feedback had been considered for incorporation into the Plan.

5. Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan 2025/26

Following consultation, the final Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan 2025/26 was circulated for approval.

To support the delivery of the Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan 2025/26, the Performance Governance Arrangements (circulated) and would be reviewed annually. These arrangements outlined the Council's duty to set objectives for the improvement of services, the performance framework and reporting, the Corporate Performance and Improvement Objectives and how we would monitor and measure these objectives.

A copy of the Section 75 Screening and Rural Needs Impact Assessment was circulated for information.

Proposed by Alderman Clarke
Seconded by Councillor Webb and agreed that

the final Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan 2025/26, following consultation, and the Performance Governance Arrangements be approved.

ACTION BY: Allen Templeton, Performance Improvement Officer

3.7 **CCS/EDP/10 LOCAL GOVERNMENT STAFF COMMISSION CONSULTATION ON NEURODIVERSITY IN THE WORKPLACE GUIDANCE – APRIL 2025 AND DIVERSITY AMBASSADOR NETWORK**

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to recommend to Members to note the Diversity Ambassador Network update, and to approve the consultation response to

the Local Government Staff Commission's Neurodiversity in the Workplace Guidance Consultation.

2. Background

Local Government had an important role in promoting equality of opportunity, diversity, and inclusion.

The regional Local Government Staff Commission (LGSC) Equality and Diversity Group had responsibility for the development of the overall strategic direction for equality and diversity initiatives in local government. A key feature of the work of the Equality and Diversity Group was the establishment of the Diversity Ambassadors' Network.

3. Diversity Ambassadors Network

The Equality and Diversity Group prioritises and influences equality, good relations, diversity and inclusion initiatives across local government in Northern Ireland.

The Group attempted to bring together best practice across the sector and in so doing, sought to integrate the priorities of the Group with the ongoing work of individual councils.

The Group identified a key implementation initiative: establishing a network of Diversity Ambassadors to actively advance the equality and diversity agenda within councils.

From October 2023 to November 2024, a series of best practice events and information sessions took place, consisting of five sessions, offering Diversity Ambassadors opportunities to exchange insights and engage with subject experts.

These sessions were facilitated by the LGSC and supported by Equality and Diversity Group members Bronagh Hinds (DemocraShe) and Bernie Kelly (Vice Chair of the Commission).

The initiative aimed to formalise a Diversity Ambassador Network to sustain collaboration, learning, and the sharing of best practices across councils. It was proposed that the network would convene every four months, and the purpose of the Network would be reviewed annually.

4. Council Diversity Ambassadors and Upcoming Events

Members were reminded that the Council Diversity Ambassadors were as follows:

Elected Members

Alderman Lewis Boyle
Alderman Paula Bradley
Councillor Lucille O'Hagan

Councillor Maighr  ad N   Chonghaile

Council Officer

Ellen Boyd (Accessibility and Inclusion Officer)

The LGSC had provided an updated Terms of Reference for the Diversity Ambassadors network, a copy of which was circulated.

Upcoming events had been organised for:

- Wednesday, 15 October 2025
- Wednesday, 11 February 2026

Locations and timings would be provided in due course and circulated to the Council Diversity Ambassadors, participation would be encouraged.

5. Consultation - Neurodiversity in the Workplace Guidance

The LGSC, in collaboration with key stakeholders, had developed a Neurodiversity in the Workplace Guidance Document, which was open for consultation.

The aim of the Guidance was to outline Council's commitment to promoting equality and fairness, whilst recognising and celebrating the diversity that exists in our local communities.

It would also outline the duties we must uphold and the corporate framework within which we operate. The Guidance would apply to workers, and potential workers, who were neurodivergent, or who believe that they may be neurodivergent. It also provided guidance to managers of neurodivergent employees.

A copy of the consultation was circulated, along with the proposed response.

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

Proposed by Councillor Cushman

Seconded by Councillor Dunlop and agreed that

the Diversity Ambassador Network update be noted, and the consultation response to the Local Government Staff Commission's Neurodiversity in the Workplace Guidance Consultation be approved.

ACTION BY: Ellen Boyd, Accessibility and Inclusion Officer

3.8 CCS/EDP/10 UPDATED INCLUSIVE SEASONAL PROGRAMME

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to seek approval from Members for the addition of further Inclusive Seasonal Programmed events.

2. Council Decision

Council's Equality Action Plan (EAP) and Disability Action Plan (DAP) both featured actions to be achieved such as "Continue to improve access to leisure, play and recreation across the Borough for people with a disability". Providing the Inclusive Seasonal Programme achieved such actions.

3. Revised Inclusive Summer Scheme Programme

The revised Inclusive Seasonal Programme, which included a Family Day and Easter Scheme at Sixmile Leisure Centre, details were identified(*) below:

Programme	Location	Dates
Summer Scheme	Antrim Forum	Wednesday 9 July 2025 Thursday 10 July 2025
	Crumlin Leisure Centre	Wednesday 16 July 2025
	Mossley Pavilion	Wednesday 20 August 2025 Thursday 21 August 2025
Family Days	Antrim Castle Gardens	Friday 18 July 2025
	Theatre at the Mill	Tuesday 22 July 2025
	Lilian Bland	October 2025
	*Sixmile Leisure Centre	March 2026
Easter Scheme	Antrim Forum	March 2026 (2 dates)
	Crumlin Leisure Centre	April 2026 (1 date)
	Mossley Pavilion	April 2026 (2 dates)
	*Sixmile Leisure Centre	April 2026 (2 dates)

4. Financial Implications

The updated costs associated with the Inclusive Seasonal Programme, in partnership with the Mae Murray Foundation is £16,500, which would be met from within existing budgets.

Following a request from a Member that more events in the Dunsilly DEA be included in next year's Seasonal Programme, the Director of Organisation Development (Interim) confirmed that she would be happy to consider this.

Proposed by Alderman Clarke
Seconded by Councillor McWilliam and agreed that

the updated Inclusive Seasonal Programme be approved.

ACTION BY: Ellen Boyd, Accessibility and Inclusion Officer

3.9 CCS/EDP/14 RURAL NEEDS ACT (NI) 2016 ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to update Members of the Annual Rural Needs Monitoring.

On 1 June 2017, the Rural Needs Act became operational for district councils and government departments.

2. Introduction/ Background

The Rural Needs Act placed a duty on public authorities and local councils to have due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising policies, strategies, plans and when designing and delivering public services. It also required public authorities to provide information to Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) on how they have fulfilled this duty on an annual basis and to collate this information in their annual report.

The Rural Needs Annual Monitoring report for 2024 to 2025 was circulated for Members' information.

Proposed by Alderman Clarke
Seconded by Councillor Cushman and agreed that

the report be noted.

NO ACTION

4 ITEMS FOR NOTING

4.1 OD/OD/004 CORPORATE VALUES THREADS ARTWORK

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to recommend to Members to note the Corporate Values THREADS artwork.

2. Background

The Corporate Plan 2024-2030 was approved in June 2024. Within this Plan the corporate values THREADS (Trust, Healthy, Respect, Engaged, Ambitious, Diverse, Sustainable) were shaped through engagement workshops, surveys, and focus groups with Elected Members and staff.

3. THREADS Artwork

The THREADS values connect us as a team, weaving together behaviours, values, and goals.

The THREADS artwork was circulated for Members' information. This modern, minimalist design aligns with our corporate brand, reflecting professionalism, connection, and cohesion. Each THREADS value was represented by a unique colour strand, making it easy to visually distinguish and identify.

4. Launch of Brand Campaign and Organisational Alignment Activities

A brand campaign was being planned, supported by a strong visual identity and engaging storytelling to enhance recognition and engagement.

The campaign would focus on raising awareness and understanding throughout the organisation, while embedding the THREADS framework into key organisational processes, including recruitment and induction. Further details of the launch would be shared with Elected Members in due course.

Proposed by Councillor Cosgrove

Seconded by Alderman Bradley and agreed that

the Corporate Values THREADS artwork be noted.

NO ACTION

4.2 **CCS/CS/010 CUSTOMER SERVICES QUARTERLY (QUARTER 4) REPORT**

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to recommend to Members to note the Quarter 4 Customer Service report for the period January to March 2025.

2. Introduction/Background

The Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan 2024-25 set out the performance improvement target; 'we will achieve high levels of customer satisfaction', with four indicators set as measures of success. The Customer Services Report for quarter 4 2024-25 (circulated) provided an update on performance.

In addition, there was an update on key consultations during 2024-25 to serve the Plan and the performance of the Complaints Handling Procedure during January to March 2025.

Proposed by Councillor Webb
Seconded by Councillor Cosgrove and agreed that

the Quarter 4 Customer Service report for the period January to March 2025 be noted.

NO ACTION

4.3 PT/CI/065 YEAR-END DIRECTORATE BUSINESS PLAN 2024/25 PROGRESS REPORT

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to recommend to Members to note the Year-end Directorate Business Plans 2024/25 Progress reports for Finance & Governance and Organisation Development.

2. Background

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

Directorate Business Plans set out the key actions and objectives for each Directorate, informing how the wide remit of services were to be delivered. The Business Plans also summarised the operational context within which actions would be delivered in terms of staff and financial resources, risks and historical performance.

3. Previous Decision of Council

Annual Directorate Business Plans for 2024/25 were approved at the March 2024 Council meeting. It was agreed that bi-annual Directorate Business Plan Performance Progress reports would be presented to the relevant committees.

4. Key Points

The Year-end Directorate Business Plan 2024/25 Performance Progress Reports for Finance & Governance and Organisation Development were circulated for Members' information.

Proposed by Councillor McWilliam
Seconded by Councillor Cosgrove and agreed that

the Year-end Directorate Business Plans 2024/25 Progress reports for Finance & Governance and Organisation Development be noted.

NO ACTION

5 ANY OTHER RELEVANT BUSINESS

The Director of Finance and Governance and the Deputy Director of Finance

addressed Members' queries in relation to capital project delivery plans and provided clarification in relation to programming of capital projects including the appropriate communications plan.

There being no further Committee business, the Chairperson thanked everyone for their attendance and the meeting concluded at 6.59 pm.

MAYOR