



MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE MEETING OF THE POLICY AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE HELD AT MOSSLEY MILL ON TUESDAY 3 NOVEMBER 2020 AT 6.30 PM

In the Chair:	Alderman P Brett
Members Present:	Aldermen - F Agnew, M Cosgrove and P Michael Councillors – H Cushinan, S Flanagan, R Foster, P Hamill, L Irwin, N Kelly, V McAuley, N Ramsay, S Ross, M Stewart and R Wilson
Non Committee Members:	Councillors – A Bennington, R Lynch, N McClelland and B Webb
Officers Present:	Director of Finance & Governance – S Cole Director of Organisation Development – A McCooke Head of Finance – J Balmer Borough Lawyer and Head of Legal Services – P Casey ICT Projects Officer – J Higginson ICT Helpdesk Officer – J Wilson Member Services Officer – S Boyd

CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

The Chairperson welcomed everyone to the November 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 live stream (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

None

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

3. ITEMS FOR DECISION

3.1 HR/HR/026 LOCAL GOVERNMENT TRAINING GROUP

Members were reminded that the functions of the Local Government Training Group (LGTG) are managed by the Board of the LGTG and administered by Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council from 1 April 2020.

The LGTG is a shared resource which develops learning and development provision and capacity building measures based on the needs of councils.

The Chair of the LGTG has reported that the impact of COVID-19 has put additional financial pressure on local government and in order to assist at this difficult time, Council subscription rates have been further reduced for the financial year 2020/2021.

A Service Level Agreement for the period April 2020-March 2021 is in place and the membership fees for 2020/2021 for Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council will be £11,515.

Proposed by Councillor Foster
Seconded by Councillor Hamill and agreed that

a payment of £11,515 be approved to Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council in respect of the fees for the Local Government Training Group for 2020/2021.

ACTION BY: Andrea McCooke, Director of Organisation Development

3.2 G-LEG-319/7 & 9 LAND ABANDONED BY THE DEPARTMENT – NEWFERRY ROAD, ANTRIM AND LARGY ROAD, CRUMLIN

Members were advised that correspondence had been received from the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) concerning the proposed abandonment/stopping up of roadways at Newferry Road, Antrim and Largy Road, Crumlin under Article 68(1) of the Roads (Northern Ireland) Order 1993. The Council has no interest in the lands.

The letters (circulated) outlined the proposals and highlighted the areas considered for abandonment.

DfI Roads requested comments in relation to the proposals and had granted Council an extension after 3 November to make any comments on this matter.

Proposed by Councillor Flanagan
Seconded by Councillor Wilson and agreed that

the correspondence be noted.

ACTION BY: Deirdre Nelson, Paralegal

3.3 G-LEG-319/8 LAND ABANDONED BY THE DEPARTMENT – ABANDONMENT AND STOPPING UP A6 CASTLEDAWSON BY-PASS & STOPPING UP OF PRIVATE ACCESSES A6 CASTLEDAWSON BY-PASS.

Members were advised that correspondence had been received from the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) concerning the proposed abandonment/stopping up of road along the A6 Castledawson By-Pass and the stopping up of private accesses along the A6 Castledawson By-Pass under Articles 68 and 69 of the Roads (Northern Ireland) Order 1993.

The Council has no interest in the land. Copies of the correspondence, legislation and maps were circulated for Members' information.

DfI Roads were requesting comments in relation to these proposals and had granted Council an extension after 30 November to make any comments on this matter.

Proposed by Councillor Foster
Seconded by Councillor Hamill and agreed that

the correspondence be noted.

ACTION BY: Deirdre Nelson, Paralegal

4. ITEMS FOR NOTING

4.1 FI/FIN/9 PROMPT PAYMENT PERFORMANCE

Members were reminded 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.

The Council's prompt payment performance for the period **1 June 2020 to 30 September 2020** is set out below:

The default target for paying invoices, where no other terms are agreed, is 30 days.

(N.B. 30 days target is 30 calendar days and 10 days is 10 working days).

During the above period, the Council paid 3,799 invoices totalling £10,632,816.

The Council paid 3,457 invoices within the 30 day target. (91%)

The Council paid 2,960 invoices within the 10 day target. (78%)

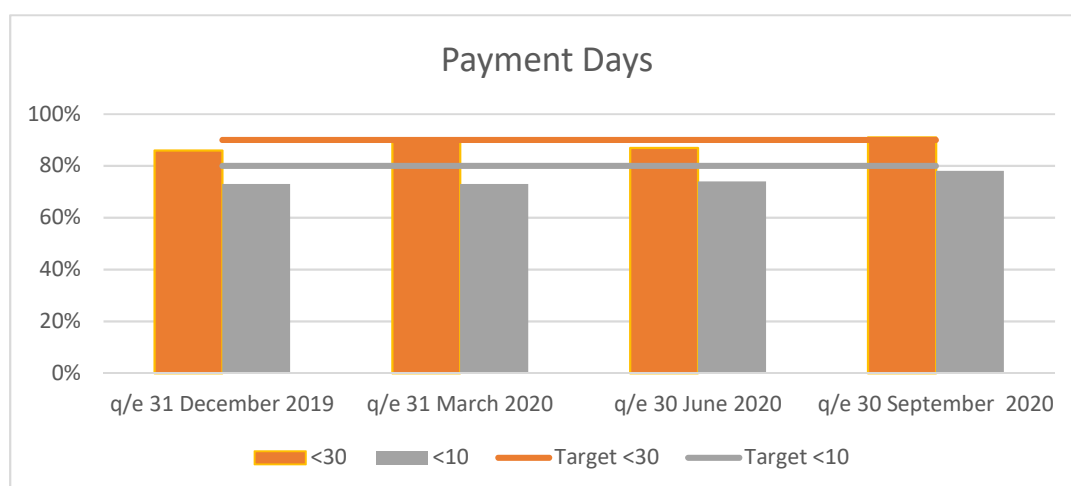
The Council paid 342 invoices outside of the 30 day target. (9%)

The Council has set a target of paying 90% of invoices within 30 days and 80% within 10 days.

The quarterly results from December 2019 to date are as follows:

Period	Total Number of Invoices Paid	% Paid Within 30 Days	% Paid Within 10 Days
Target		90%	80%
q/e 31 Dec 2019	7,240	86%	73%
q/e 31 March 2020	6,308	90%	73%
q/e 30 June 2020	4,032	87%	74%
q/e 30 Sept 2020	3,799	91%	78%

The performance presented graphically highlights the performance metrics for the above.

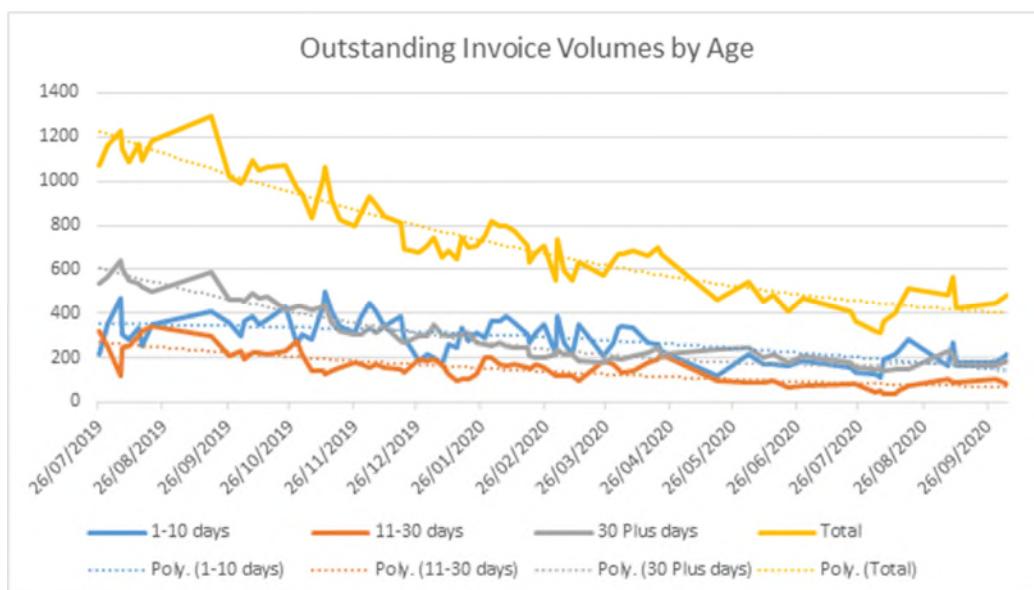


Performance for the first quarter of 2020/21 was similar to quarter 4 of 2019/20 for the 10 day target with a slight decrease in the 30 day target. This was mainly due to workarounds being put in place for invoice approvals and delivery of orders as some officers working remotely due to COVID 19 were unable to access the finance system for a period of time.

During the second quarter of 2020/21 the target of paying 90% of invoices within 30 days was met, with performance for the 10 day target improving by 4% to 78%.

The volume of invoices paid (3,799 invoices) for Quarter 2 for 2020/21 compared to the same quarter for 2019/20 (6,342 invoices paid) was down by approx. 40%, with some facilities closed or services reduced due to COVID-19.

Central to the performance improvement over the year has been the monitoring regime implemented by the Corporate Leadership Team. Another outturn of this is that the overall level of outstanding invoices has decreased markedly from over 1200 in August 2019 to now below 500.



Whilst both indicators now sit above the average for all councils we will continue to strive to improve performance whilst maintaining a high level of good governance and internal control in relation to supplier payments. Performance levels remain a priority for senior staff and other enhancements, for example, tolerance levels and further decreases to the overall outstanding volumes will bring additional improvements.

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 30 June 2020 was shown in **Appendix 1** (circulated); the Council's performance for Quarter 1 against the average performance for the other Councils for the final quarter of 2020/21 is set out in the table below:

Council	% Paid Within 30 Days	% Paid Within 10 Days
Antrim & Newtownabbey BC (1st Quarter 2020/21)	87%	74%
All Councils (1st Quarter 2020/21)	86%	63%

Proposed by Councillor Irwin
 Seconded by Councillor Flanagan and agreed that

the report be noted.

NO ACTION

4.2 G/MSMO/023 SOMME ASSOCIATION

Members were advised that correspondence (circulated) had been received from The Somme Association. It highlights the difficulties facing charities, museums, and visitor attractions during these challenging times and thanked Council for its continued support through its annual membership.

Members requested that the challenges facing Charities and in particular Services Charities as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic be noted.

Proposed by Alderman Michael
Seconded by Councillor Foster and agreed that

the report be noted.

NO ACTION

4.3 HR/HR/019 AGENCY 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 September 2020 as compared to September 2019. It excludes limited ad-hoc agency cover, which is necessary to provide operational cover, at short notice Appendix 1 (circulated).

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

The cost of agency staff had decreased for the period of 1 April 2020 to 30 September 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 Flanagan
Seconded by Councillor Hamill and agreed that

the report be noted.

NO ACTION

4.4 CCS/EDP/7 QUARTERLY SCREENING UPDATE

Members were advised that in line with the Council's Equality Scheme it was agreed to provide quarterly updates on the screening of policies under Section 75. Within the Scheme, the Council gave a commitment to apply screening methodology to all new and revised policies. Where necessary and appropriate, these new policies would be subject to further equality impact assessment.

The policies noted below had been screened, for noting:

POLICY	SCREENING DECISION
Environmental Policy	1
Filming Policy	1
On Line Chat Service	1
Redundancy Procedure	1

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

Proposed by Councillor Hamill

Seconded by Councillor Irwin and agreed that

the report be noted.

NO ACTION

4.5 G-LEG-321-6 DFI – MOTORWAYS TRAFFIC REGULATIONS – SPECIALIST DRIVER TRAINING ON MOTORWAYS

Members were advised that correspondence had been received from the Department for Infrastructure (DFI) advising that The Motorways Traffic Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2008 are to be amended to permit civilian staff of the Police Service of Northern Ireland to provide specialist driver training on Motorways.

The Motorways Traffic (Amendment No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 will come into effect on 11 November 2020.

A copy of the correspondence and legislation was circulated.

Proposed by Councillor Foster

Seconded by Councillor Hamill and agreed that

the correspondence be noted.

NO ACTION

4.6 G/DPFI/2 QUARTERLY REPORT ON FOI/EIR/DPA REQUESTS

A report had been prepared on requests received in the second quarter of the year (1 July to 30 September) under the Freedom of Information Act (FOI), Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) and the Data Protection Act (DPA) and this was circulated.

A summary of the quarter's statistics is as follows:

- There was a 35% decrease in the number of requests on the same period the previous year.
- Of the 62 requests received, 39 were under FOI, 21 under EIR and 2 under DPA.
- 53 requests were completed within the quarter.
- 100% of the requests were completed within the legislative deadlines of 20 days for FOI and EIR requests and a calendar month for requests made under DPA.
- The sections that received the most requests in the quarter were Planning (16), Environmental Health (15), Governance (13) and Finance (10).
- No appeals were received during the quarter.
- One complaint to the ICO was notified during the previous quarter relating to an exception applied to an EIR request regarding a planning application. A full response to the complaint was provided to the ICO by the deadline of 24 June 2020. The ICO decision was received on 23 September. The Commissioner's decision was that the Council had correctly applied regulation 12(4)(b) under EIR – manifestly unreasonable request – and they required no steps to be taken.

Proposed by Councillor Foster

Seconded by Councillor Wilson and agreed that

the report be noted.

NO ACTION

4.7 G/MSMO/2/VOL 2 NOMINATION TO POLICE AND COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP (PCSP)

Councillor Michael Goodman, Nominating Officer for the Sinn Fein Party, had advised that Councillor Anne Marie Logue had been nominated to replace Councillor Goodman as the Sinn Fein position on PSCP, with effect from 22 October 2020.

Proposed by Councillor Hamill
Seconded by Councillor Flanagan and agreed that

the report be noted

NO ACTION

4.8 FC/FA/8 MID-YEAR REVIEW OF PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS & TREASURY MANAGEMENT

Members were reminded that the Council approved the Prudential Indicators for 2020/2021 to 2022/2023 and the Treasury Management Strategies for 2020/21 in January 2020.

Under the Prudential Code and the Code of Practice on Treasury Management in the Public Services the Council is required to monitor and review its prudential indicators. The key objective of which is to ensure that, within a clear framework, the capital investment plans of the Council are affordable, prudent and sustainable and that treasury management decisions are taken in accordance with good professional practice.

The Council's Treasury Management Policy requires a mid-year review of treasury management activities.

This report provided an update on the Prudential Indicators and a mid-year review of the Council's borrowing and investment activities. A copy of the report was circulated for Members' information.

Proposed by Councillor Wilson
Seconded by Councillor Flanagan and agreed that

the report be noted.

NO ACTION

PROPOSAL TO PROCEED 'IN CONFIDENCE'

Proposed by Councillor Hamill
Seconded by Councillor Flanagan and agreed that

the following Committee business be taken In Confidence.

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

5 ITEMS IN CONFIDENCE

5.1 **IN CONFIDENCE** FI/AUD/02 INDEPENDENT AUDIT COMMITTEE MEMBER

Members were reminded that the CIPFA Audit Committee Practical Guidance for Local Authorities and Police 2018 recommends that the appointment of an Independent Member will be beneficial to the Audit Committee in that it will:

- bring additional knowledge and expertise to the Committee;
- reinforce the political neutrality and independence of the Committee; and
- maintain continuity of Committee membership where membership is affected.

In addition to the CIPFA guidance, the Local Government Auditor also recommends appointing an Independent Audit Committee Member as “one means of strengthening its (Audit Committee) independence and widening the range of specialist skills”.

In January 2015, the Council approved the appointment of an Independent Member to the Audit Committee. The current Independent Member was appointed in April 2015 for an initial term of 4 years, due to end in March 2019.

In May 2018, the Council approved the extension of the Independent Member's appointment for a further two years (to March 2021), with an option to extend for an additional two years (to March 2023).

As noted, the current term of the Independent Member was due to end at the end of March 2021. To ensure the Audit Committee's composition included an Independent Member, in line with the guidance, there were two options available to the Council:

1. Extend the Appointment

The Council could exercise the option to extend the appointment of the Independent Member for a further two years as approved by the Council in May 2018.

Or

2. Recruit a New Independent Member

The Council could recruit (through Human Resources) a new Independent Member.

The timeframe for this recruitment will be:

- Advertise in January 2021;
- Interviews in February / March 2021;
- Appointment and notification to Council in March / April 2021; and
- Independent Member attending their first Audit Committee in June 2021.

It was recommended that the Council exercises the option to extend the appointment of the current Independent Member for a further two years, in line with option 1 above.

The current Independent Member brings key knowledge and skills to the Audit Committee, which is required to ensure appropriate challenge is undertaken and that the Council promotes good governance and financial management.

The current arrangements had worked well for the Audit Committee with the Independent Member performing to a high standard.

Proposed by Councillor Kelly
Seconded by Councillor Foster and agreed that

the appointment of the current Independent Audit Committee Member be extended for three years.

ACTION BY: Paul Caulcutt, Head of Internal Audit

PROPOSAL TO PROCEED OUT OF 'IN CONFIDENCE'

Proposed by Councillor Hamill
Seconded by Councillor Flanagan 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. The meeting concluded at 6.45 pm.

MAYOR