



MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE MEETING OF THE POLICY AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE HELD AT ANTRIM CIVIC CENTRE ON TUESDAY 4 OCTOBER 2022 AT 6.30 PM

In the Chair:	Councillor M Magill
Members Present: (In person)	Alderman – M Girvan Councillors – H Cushinan, A McAuley, N Ramsay, and B Webb
Members Present: (Remote)	Alderman – T Burns Councillors – S Flanagan, R Foster, M Goodman, B Mallon and R Wilson
Non Committee Members: (In person)	Councillor – N McClelland
Non Committee Members: (Remote)	
Officers Present:	Director of Finance & Governance – S Cole Director of Organisation Development – D Rogers Head of Communications and Customer Services – N McCullough Head of Human Resources – J Close Employee Performance & Development Manager – D Moorehead Digital Marketing Manager – E McConville ICT Helpdesk Officer – J Wilson ICT Helpdesk Officer – D Mason Member Services Manager – A Duffy

CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

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

Although the COVID restrictions had been relaxed, to manage numbers and minimise risk, members of the public and press could continue to access those parts of the Council meetings which they are entitled to attend through the livestream on the Council's website.

1. APOLOGIES

Councillor V Robinson

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

3. INTRODUCTION OF NEW STAFF

Diane Moorehead, Employee Performance & Development Manager

4 PRESENTATION

4.1 Digital Marketing Service - presentation

Members received a presentation on Digital Marketing Services at the meeting.

The Digital Marketing Manager and the Head of Communications and Customer Services responded to Members questions.

The Chairperson and Members thanked the Digital Marketing Manager for her presentation and she left the meeting.

Proposed by Councillor Foster

Seconded by Councillor Ramsay and agreed that

the presentation be noted.

5 ITEMS FOR DECISION

5.1 CCS/REG/025 & CCS/REG/026 APPLICATION FOR TEMPORARY APPROVAL OF PREMISES FOR CIVIL MARRIAGE / CIVIL PARTNERSHIP CEREMONIES

Under the terms of the Marriage (NI) Order 2003 and the Civil Partnership Act (2004), the Council has the responsibility to approve appropriate applications for Place Approvals for Civil Marriages and Civil Partnerships.

The owner(s) of the following specified premises had submitted an application for the temporary approval of an area (Garden(s)):-

31 Browns Road, Newtownabbey, BT36 4TD

28 Ballyscully Road, Muckamore, BT41 4QU

Part of the process requires that a Notice of Interest be displayed for a three-week period in a prominent place at the complex to allow for public objection.

No objections had been received to any of the notifications to apply for Place Approval and the premises have been formally inspected and no problems were found with regard to the application.

Proposed by Councillor Wilson
Seconded by Councillor Webb and agreed that

the named premises be approved to hold a Civil Marriages under the terms of the Marriage (NI) Order 2003 and Civil Partnerships under the Civil Partnership Act (2004)

ACTION BY: Emma Thompson, Registrar

5.2 A/GEN/13 MOTIONS AND PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO MOTIONS

A report on amendments to motions was deferred at the September Policy and Governance Committee for further consideration.

The Mayor had requested that Amendments to Motions be provided to Member Services in written form prior to a Council meeting to ensure that there was no misinterpretation re the amendment.

Officers had therefore reviewed the current procedures in relation to Motions and Amendments, contained within Section 20 & 21 of the Council's Standing Orders and consider the following addition appropriate.

1. In order to support the Mayor in his role as Chair it was suggested that as Motions are provided in advance, all proposed Amendments to Motions should also be provided in advance. However, as Amendments may not be finalised until closer to the meeting date, it was suggested that all proposed Amendments to motions be provided to Member Services by 12 noon, at the latest, on the day of the Council meeting. These should be provided in writing and include the name of the proposer(s) and seconder(s). Both the Motion and the proposed Amendments would be provided to the Mayor in advance of the meeting. This is only to assist the Mayor and the Amendments to Motions would not be read out at the Council meeting or circulated to other Members. This would not prevent new Amendments to be made at the Council meeting. The normal process for proposing an Amendment to a Motion would be unaffected.

Proposed by Councillor Foster
Seconded by Councillor Ramsay and agreed that

Members approve the incorporation of items listed in point 1 to Section 20 of the Standing Orders

ACTION BY: Liz Johnston, Deputy Director of Performance and Governance (Interim)

5.3 FI/GEN/018 SALARY SACRIFICE PENSION AVC SCHEME

Members were reminded that it was agreed in April 2022 that the Council would introduce an additional voluntary contributions (AVC) scheme for NILGOSC members in the form of a "Shared Cost AVC" scheme.

The introduction of this scheme requires an amendment to the Council's Pension Discretions Policy Statement, circulated Section 6 had therefore been amended to permit the Council to enter into a "shared cost" AVC arrangement as provided for under Regulation 19 of the Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014.

Proposed by Councillor Wilson
Seconded by Councillor Goodman and agreed that

the amendment to the Council's Pension Discretions Policy Statement be approved.

ACTION BY: Richard Murray, Head of Finance and Jennifer Close, Head of Human Resources

5.4 PT/CI/038 CORPORATE RECOVERY AND IMPROVEMENT PLAN – PERFORMANCE PROGRESS REPORT QUARTER ONE

Members were 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.

The Council's Corporate Recovery and Improvement Plan 2022-23 was approved in June 2022. This set out a range of challenging performance targets, along with four identified improvement objectives and a number of Statutory Performance Targets.

A first quarter progress report was circulated for Members' attention. This was noted by the Audit & Risk Committee on 20 September 2022

Proposed by Councillor Foster
Seconded by Councillor Flanagan and agreed that

the Corporate Recovery and Improvement Plan 2022-23 Quarter 1 progress report be approved.

ACTION BY: Allen Templeton, Performance and Transformation Officer

6 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

6.1 G-LEG-325/19 DEPARTMENT FOR INFRASTRUCTURE - THE PRIVATE STREETS (NORTHERN IRELAND) ORDER 1980 – DEVELOPMENT AT CLEMENTS HALL, BALLYCLARE

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

Proposed by Councillor Foster
Seconded by Alderman Girvan and agreed that

the correspondence be noted.

NO ACTION

6.2 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 Partnership Panel met on the 2nd August 2022, minutes and actions points received in relation to this meeting were circulated for Members' Information.

The next meeting of the panel was planned for 19th October 2022.

Proposed by Councillor Foster
Seconded by Alderman Girvan and agreed that

the report be noted.

NO ACTION

6.3 HR/HR/019 AGENCY STAFF UPDATE

Members were reminded that agency staff were used across the Council to provide temporary cover for absence such as:

- Maternity leave
- Secondments
- Sickness absence
- Vacant posts

The use of agency staff was 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.

Current Agency staff

The table appended provided an update for Members on the use of agency staff as at August 2022 compared to August 2019 (pre covid-19). It excluded limited ad-hoc agency cover, which was necessary to provide operational cover, at short notice (Appendix 1 circulated). Given the exceptional nature of 2020/21; 2019/20 agency figures had been used for comparison.

In reviewing the number of agency workers it was be noted that:

- the number of agency workers had reduced from 133 August 2019 to 104 in August 2022
- there were less agency workers covering sickness absence and vacancies on structures
- agency workers were used more to provide ad-hoc cover

Cost of Agency

Appendix 2 circulated sets out expenditure on agency workers in August 2022.

The cost of agency staff had remained the same for the period of 1 April 2022 to 31 August 2022 at 7% of all staffing costs compared to 7% for the same period in 2019/2020 (pre-covid).

The increased costs were impacted by:

- the 1.75% NJC pay increase that is also applicable to agency workers
- increase in National Insurance of 1.25% from 6 April 2022

In 2022/2023

While there were currently 25 Seasonal Grounds Maintenance workers in place, this cover was anticipated to finish in October 2022 and the reduction in numbers would be apparent in Novembers update report.

As the Summer Schemes resumed in July and August 2022 one agency was engaged to recruit 50 Summer Scheme Leader roles to support these schemes, 46 were recruited in July with the schemes ending on 19 August 2022. The reduction in numbers would be shown in the next update report for September.

It continues to be challenging to fill roles through the agencies due to the current labour market and we are directly recruiting and filling operational vacancies that are currently covered by agency workers.

We would continue to recruit to fill vacancies across all sections and reduce the number of agency workers covering the vacancies with agency workers used for more ad hoc, seasonal, temporary cover when required.

Proposed by Councillor Foster

Seconded by Alderman Girvan and agreed that

the report be noted.

NO ACTION

6.4 HR/GEN/019 MANAGING ATTENDANCE

The purpose of this report was to update Members on the management of attendance from April 2022 – August 2022 (summary circulated).

ABSENCE – 1 APRIL 2022 TO 31 AUGUST 2022

Members were advised that absence at the end of July was above target by 1.74 days with 6.83 average days lost per employee against a target of 5.09 days. Covid absence was not included in the reported figures.

A number of long term absence cases had resulted in employees exhausting their sick pay entitlement and although no additional cost was incurred by the Council during the 'no pay' periods – these days lost were still included in the absence figures.

If days lost to employees who were not in receipt of sick pay were not included in the absence figures, the average days lost per employee at the end of August 2022 would have been 5.74 days.

There had been a small decrease in 100% attendance with 80% of staff achieving this compared to 83% for the same period in 2021/22.

Analysis of this month's absence figures had highlighted the following:

Long term absence

- Accounts for 91% of the absence figures.
- The main reason for long term absence remains within the “other category” of absence. Types of absence include:
 - Absence following family bereavement
 - Stress/Work related stress
 - Surgery
 - Road Traffic Accident
 - Heart related issues
- 1.
- 42% of these long term cases were deemed unpreventable and therefore more challenging to manage including hospital procedures, broken bones, road traffic accidents and heart attacks.
- To date, 2 Formal Case Review cases have been concluded with 1 at appeal stage. This leaves 7 absence cases at Formal Case Review stage with 2 cases heard with outcomes pending, 1 in progress (potential ill health retirement) and 4 to be progressed to Formal Case review (2 of which are pending Employee Relations case outcomes).
- 9 long term cases had exhausted their sick pay entitlement
- To date, 15 long term cases returned to work.

Short term absence

- Accounts for 9% of the absence figures.
- The main reasons for absence were
 - Other - Cold/flu, vomiting
 - Musculoskeletal problems
 - Back and neck problems
 - Stress Depression, Mental Health
 - Infection
- To date, 21 short term cases of absence returned to work.

It was noted that absence related to stress (including work related stress) currently accounts for 46% of the overall absence (both long term and short term). The Council remains focused on encouraging health and wellbeing in the workplace, and continues to promote the Employee Assistance Programme through Inspire offering 24/7 confidential support in addition to other wellbeing initiatives in place.

Ongoing actions

- The Head of HR and HR Manager had held several bi-monthly meetings to date with the directorates with the highest levels of absence, namely Parks & Leisure, Waste Operations and Community Planning. The relevant Directors, Deputy Directors & Heads of Service attend. These meetings cover in depth analysis of absence cases and the associated reasons, to agree next steps for complex cases and to schedule formal case reviews where appropriate. General feedback had been positive with the targeted focus valued.
- Contract Management meeting had recently taken place with Independent Occupational Health, with feedback provided including the quality/standard of reports being received by the Council and general appointment availability. Following this meeting, we note an improvement in the standard of reports received from IOH which in turn, supports more focussed case management.
- A contract management meeting had also taken place with Inspire to discuss current waiting times and challenges along with discussions around further promotion of the service and additional support materials available. Follow-up meetings are due to take place in December 2022. It was noted that waiting times for Inspire had subsequently reduced following this recent meeting.
- Monthly case management discussion meetings scheduled to review complex cases with an Occupational Health consultant. Case managers would attend these sessions to ensure effective use of the Occupational Health service and to support earlier returns to work where possible.
- Training had commenced for managers within Parks on how to effectively manage their absence caseloads. Absence management toolkits were also under development to further assist managers.
- Development of online training module on the importance of attending work, to be rolled out to new staff initially and then across the wider organisation.
- Delivery of the Wellbeing Calendar with access to the flu vaccine for staff and Elected Members promoted in September for delivery 18-19 October 2022.
- Mental Health Awareness training scheduled for 27 September 2022, delivered by Inspire.
- Continued provision of physiotherapy services for appropriate cases (back and musculoskeletal related absence)

Proposed by Councillor Foster

Seconded by Alderman Girvan and agreed that

the report be noted.

NO ACTION

6.5 CCS/CS/006 COMMUNICATIONS & CUSTOMERS CHANNEL REPORT

Members were reminded that the Corporate Recovery & Improvement Plan for 2022-23 sets out the following Performance Improvement Target, "We will achieve high levels of customer satisfaction".

The purpose of this report was to provide an update on the indicators that the Plan set out as measurements of progress towards this target.

We achieve at least 80% satisfaction with overall Council services.

Each issue of the Borough Life magazine had a specific, themed survey, and within each one, residents are asked to rate their satisfaction with Council services.

The July issue, on Digital Services, which ran from 1st July to 5th August returned an **89%** rating. The next issue would be published in October.

2021-22	Target 2022-23	April	May	June	July	August
87.5%	80%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	89%

The percentage of abandoned calls will be 6.5% (or less).

A total of **76,627** calls were presented from 1st May to 31st August 2022, a **20.5%** increase on the same period in 2021 (**63,608**).

The percentage of abandoned calls during the same five month period, improved from **5.7%** in 2021 to **5%** in 2022 as the Customer Services team developing support plans for each service.

2021-22	Target 2022-23	April	May	June	July	August
6.1%	6.5%	5.5%	4.6%	5.1%	5.2%	4.7%

We have achieved at least 600,000 online transactions.

Officers continue to promote and monitor the shift of transactions to an online basis, where practical and beneficial.

For the purposes of maintaining consistency with previous benchmarks, this indicator focuses upon the number of online transactions for the following:

- Caravan bookings
- Theatre bookings
- Leisure bookings
- Dog licensing applications
- Bulky waste bookings

By the end of August 2022, there had been **290,724** online transactions. This is on track to meet our annual target.

2021-22	Target 2022-23	April	May	June	July	August
652,593	600,000	67,844	60,947	48,091	52,203	61,639

There were at least 5,062 downloads of the Residents App.

Downloads of the ANBorough App through the official app stores to date in 2022-23 total **5,909**, this is **16.7%** above target for the year.

There was a total of **14,481** downloads in 2021-22, which peaked following a leisure update which enabled MORE members to book and manage their leisure membership. Since the launch of the app in September 219 a total of **29,938** downloads had taken place (to the end of March 2022).

2021-22	Target 2022-23	April	May	June	July	August
14,481	5,062	1,104	1,241	1,130	1,207	1,227

The performance of the Corporate Recovery & Improvement Policy 2022-23 would be reported on a quarterly basis to the Policy & Governance and Audit Risk Committees, and within the Annual Report on Performance 2022-23 (Self-Assessment), which would be reviewed by Council and published on the Councils website by 30 September 2023.

Proposed by Councillor Foster
Seconded by Alderman Girvan and agreed that

the report be noted.

NO ACTION

6.6 FI/FIN/4 BUDGET REPORT – AUGUST 2022 – Period 05

A budget report for August 2022 – Period 05 was circulated for Members information.

The Council's financial position at the end of August 2022 shows a favourable variance on Net Cost of Services of £182k.

Proposed by Councillor Foster
Seconded by Alderman Girvan and agreed that

the report be noted.

NO ACTION

6.7 **FI/GEN/015 EXTENSION TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT REMOTE MEETINGS LEGISLATION**

Members were advised that correspondence circulated had been received from the Department for Communities in relation to the extension to Local Government Remote Meetings Legislation.

Section 78 (local authority meetings) of the Coronavirus Act 2020 contained the provision to provide Councils with the flexibility to hold meetings by remote or hybrid means during the Coronavirus emergency.

This was scheduled to expire on 24 September 2022, however the Department has now brought a further extension order to extend section 78 of the Coronavirus Act for a further 6 months, until 24 March 2023.

Proposed by Councillor Foster
Seconded by Alderman Girvan and agreed that

the report be noted.

NO ACTION

PROPOSAL TO PROCEED 'IN CONFIDENCE'

Proposed by Councillor Ramsay
Seconded by Councillor Webb and agreed that

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

7. **ITEMS IN CONFIDENCE**

7.1 **IN-CONFIDENCE FI/PRO/GEN/044 PROCUREMENT TENDER REPORTS AND AWARD OF CONTRACTS**

Members were reminded that Council agreed in June 2021 that the Council Scheme of Delegation be used for the award of contracts and Members be updated retrospectively.

This process allows service and project delivery to be expedited more efficiently and facilitates timely delivery of actions against the Council's Recovery plan.

A list of contracts approved by the Corporate Leadership Team and awarded in September 2022 was circulated.

Proposed by Councillor Webb
Seconded by Councillor McAuley and agreed that

the report be noted.

NO ACTION

7.2 **IN CONFIDENCE** HR/GEN/004 CHRISTMAS EVE 2022

Members were reminded that, historically, legacy Newtownabbey Borough Council staff were awarded a half day for Christmas Eve. When Christmas Eve fell on a Saturday or Sunday, the half day was taken on the preceding Friday. Where it was not possible to close the service early, a half day leave in lieu was awarded, to be taken by agreement at a later date.

Since 2015, Members have approved the half day Christmas Eve arrangement for all Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council and Members may wish to consider granting the same arrangement this year (to be taken, where service allows, on Friday 23 December 2022) as a further token of appreciation for continued staff achievements.

Proposed by Councillor Foster

Seconded by Councillor Goodman and agreed that

Council approves a half day leave for all staff for Christmas Eve, to be taken, where service allows, on Friday 23 December 2022.

ACTION BY: Victoria Stewart, HR Officer

7.3 **IN CONFIDENCE** CCS/CPRM/035 BIN SCHEDULE STICKERS

Christmas was always a time of year where bins are high on the agenda of the residents and therefore we would like to raise awareness of the schedule and any changes that impact collections at this busy time of the year.

Members would be aware that bin stickers have been previously provided through Borough Life magazine, usually March/April, however, due to supply issues, a card version of the bin schedule was issued this year instead of a sticker.

The 2023 schedule would be presented for approval to Council in November and in order to provide clear information, residents would receive up to date information via bin stickers in December.

Members were advised that the cost for this be covered within the normal provision for Borough Life.

In addition to the stickers, collection dates for the relevant holidays are included in each edition of Borough Life throughout the year. Press releases are issued each bank holiday along with social posts and website promotion.

The Council's bin checker is always available and will have all the appropriate change of dates listed within it. Residents can also download their own personal collection calendar from the bin checker page of the website – see example on the link below.

<https://antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk/getmedia/cd2cb78d-bb62-4102-86fe-449be4183141/Tuesday-B.aspx>

Proposed by Councillor Webb
Seconded by Councillor Goodman and agreed that

the report be noted

NO ACTION

PROPOSAL TO PROCEED OUT OF 'IN CONFIDENCE'

Proposed by Councillor Foster
Seconded by Councillor Goodman 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 7.19pm.

MAYOR