



**MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE MEETING OF THE POLICY AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE HELD AT MOSSLEY MILL ON TUESDAY 5 OCTOBER 2021 AT 6.30 PM**

- In the Chair:** Alderman P Michael
- Members Present:** Councillors – M Cooper, H Cushinan, G Finlay, R Foster, S Flanagan, N Kelly, A McAuley, T McGrann, M Magill, N Ramsay, V Robinson, M Stewart and R Wilson
- Non Committee Members:** Councillors – A Bennington and V McWilliam
- Officers Present:** Deputy Chief Executive of Finance & Governance – S Cole  
Director of Communications and Customers (Consultant) (Interim) – S Hope  
Deputy Director of Finance – J Balmer  
Head of Governance – L Johnston  
Head of Human Resources (Interim) – J Close  
Corporate Health & Safety Manager - E Girvan  
ICT Systems Support Officer – C Bell  
ICT Helpdesk Officer – J Wilson  
Member Services Officer – S Boyd

**CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS**

The Chairperson welcomed everyone to the October 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**

None

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Item 5.1 – Councillor M Cooper

### **3. PRESENTATION**

#### **3.1 PRESENTATION - GOVERNANCE**

A presentation on the Governance teams' contribution to the Pandemic Response and the recovery of Council services was provided by the Head of Governance, Liz Johnston, and Corporate Health and Safety Manager, Elaine Girvan.

The Head of Governance and Corporate Health and Safety Manager responded to Members' questions.

The Chairperson and some Members thanked them for their presentation, and commended the team on the role which they carried out in supporting the Council. The Corporate Health and Safety Manager left the meeting.

### **4. ITEMS FOR DECISION**

#### **4.1 CCS/REG/14 APPLICATION FOR RENEWAL 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.

Approvals last for 3 years and a renewal application has been received from:

Dunamoy Cottages & Spa

for the re-approval of an area at the specified premises.

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

Dunamoy Cottages & Spa  
Oaktree Hall (Wellbeing Centre)  
Garden

Proposed by Councillor Wilson  
Seconded by Councillor Foster and agreed

**that the named premises are re-approved to hold 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*

## 4.2 F1/FIN/10 AMENDMENT TO FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

Members were reminded that Council approved amendments to the Financial Regulations following review in September 2019.

The Financial Regulations provide a framework through which the Chief Executive can be satisfied that proper financial administration is being achieved. The aim of these Regulations is to help ensure that high standards of propriety and best value are achieved. All the Council's Members and employees have a duty to promote these aims, not just by following Financial Regulations but in their general approach.

It is necessary to review the Financial Regulations regularly to ensure that this is maintained, and to seek approval for those amendments required.

Following review, a number of amendments had been drafted and were summarised below;

<b>Section</b>	<b>Amendment</b>
Section 7	Removal of reference to 'European Union' procurement thresholds and replacement with 'United Kingdom'
Section 7	Addition of subsection in relation to the use of 'frameworks' as a procurement route
Section 7	Addition of sub-section in relation to the inclusion of 'Social Value' considerations in procurement exercises
Section 27	Alignment of section with the employee Code of Conduct in relation to 'Hospitality and Gifts'
All sections	Updates to job titles, legislative references and Codes of Best Practice as required.

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

Following a question from a Member, the Deputy Director of Finance provided clarity on the Social Value clause.

Proposed by Councillor Wilson  
Seconded by Councillor Magill and agreed

**that the updated Financial Regulations be approved.**

*ACTION BY: John Balmer, Deputy Director of Finance*

#### **4.3 G/BCEP/009 CLIMATE CHANGE WORKING GROUP MINUTES**

The minutes of the sixth Climate Change Working Group, which took place on the 7 September 2021, were circulated.

In summary, Members were updated on:

- Actions from previous meeting
- Climate Change Action Plan
- LGAN Accredited Climate Emergency Training
- NILGA and COP26 Activities

Proposed by Councillor Wilson

Seconded by Councillor Flanagan and agreed

**that the minutes of the Climate Change Working Group be approved.**

*ACTION BY: Liz Johnston, Head of Governance*

#### **4.4 G/BCEP/015 REPORT ON LATERAL FLOW TESTING**

In response to a request from the Department of Health/Public Health Agency, in July 2021 Council established two lateral flow test sites at Mossley Mill Museum and Steeple Suite, Antrim Civic Centre. The sites have operated weekly on a Monday, Wednesday and Friday morning and are available for use by staff and Elected Members.

In addition, working with Economic Development and Marketing and Communications, a lateral flow test collection service was promoted and marketed to small businesses.

Council have also provided large amounts of test kits to events that we sponsor, including U18 Manchester United Football and Shanes Castle Steam Rally.

Only a small number of Councils choose to operate lateral flow testing centres:

- Newry, Mourne and Down Council had a publicly available (via booking) test centre, but due to no demand, this has been kept in situ with a focus on the collect model.
- Belfast City Council also had a lateral flow test site for employees involved in registration and grave digging. This has now been moved to the collect model due to staffing difficulties.
- Derry City and Strabane Council also established a test centre for staff. They are using the collect model for the public. It is not currently known if they still operate the test site.

All other councils are operating a collect model, some for staff, some for staff and public.

Having operated the test sites for 3 months a review of lateral flow testing is deemed appropriate.

Matters for consideration:

1. The Mossley Test Site will have to relocate imminently as the contract works are progressing and Property Services have confirmed this will be encompassing the test site area, in preparation for the new tenant. There are options for replacement if required at either Ballyearl Theatre or Mossley Mill Theatre Reception both as pop-up test sites.
2. Numbers are not high through either test site (average 18 tests per week in Antrim and 12 in Mossley).
3. Based on footfall, Wednesday is the least popular day for testing.
4. Highest footfall in one day was achieved at the Operational Depot when an extra pop up site was established (19 tests).
5. Operational staff generally do not attend the test sites away from their work base.
6. Casual staff are used to operate test sites.
7. Costs associated with the test sites to the end of September was £12,179.31. The costs have been mostly staffing. It is anticipated these costs and any future costs will be covered by the grant payable to Council by DfC.
8. Space for meetings within the Civic Offices is limited and if the Steeple Suite was not used as a test site this could be used for social distanced meetings.
9. Small businesses have collected over 1400 lateral flow test kits from Council.
10. Council currently hold a large stock of collect lateral flow tests.

### **Options Going Forward**

#### **Option 1:**

Continue to deliver lateral flow tests in two locations, in Antrim Civic Centre and relocating the Mossley test site to Mossley Theatre reception as a pop up site, operating on Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings for both staff and Elected Members.

#### **Option 2:**

Maintain two test sites in Antrim Civic Centre and Mossley Theatre reception but only operate on a Monday and Friday morning, adding an additional pop up test site on alternate weeks, one day a week, at the Depot for Operational staff usage.

Proposed by Councillor Kelly

Seconded by Councillor Ramsay and agreed

**that Members approve Option 2, along with the promotion of lateral flow test collection for all staff and Elected Members use and re-promote for small businesses, and that this be reviewed in December.**

*ACTION BY: Liz Johnston, Head of Governance*

## **5 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

### **5.1 G/MSMO/27 ELECTED MEMBER DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP MINUTES**

Members were advised that a meeting of the Member Development Working Group took place on Monday 13 September 2021 and a copy of the minutes was circulated for Members' information.

Proposed by Councillor Wilson  
Seconded by Councillor Foster and agreed

**that the Minutes of the Member Development Working Group Meeting held on Monday 13 September 2021 be noted.**

*NO ACTION*

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

The purpose of this report was to update Members on the management of attendance from April 2021 – August 2021 (summary circulated).

#### **April 2021 – August 2021 - Attendance Update**

Excluding COVID-19 sickness absence, the average days' absence per employee was 5.78 against a target of 5.09 days, which represents 0.69 days above target.

Long term absence accounts for 92% of sickness absence. This currently represents 26 employees, with 21 of these receiving full pay, 3 on half pay and 2 on zero pay.

The number of employees with 100% attendance was 83% with the corporate target set this year at 60%.

The Council's Employee Engagement and Wellbeing Strategy continues to support the management of attendance with the Council establishing a holistic approach by providing a wide range of interventions across the organisation.

HR Partners will 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 Councillor Foster and agreed

**that the report be noted.**

*NO ACTION*

### **5.3 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 at Appendix 1 provides an update for Members on the use of agency staff as at August 2021 as compared to August 2020. It excludes limited ad-hoc agency cover, which is necessary to provide operational cover, at short notice (see Appendix 1).

Appendix 2 circulated, sets out expenditure on agency workers in August 2021.

The cost of agency staff has increased for the period of 1 April 2021 to 31 August 2021 at 7% of all staffing costs compared to 4% for the same period last year. It should be noted that agency expenditure was significantly reduced last year following the release of agency workers in May 2020. This year's costs have also increased due to the late application of the April 2020 pay award and the respective back charges incurred.

Proposed by Councillor Wilson  
Seconded by Councillor Foster and agreed

**that the report be noted.**

*NO ACTION*

### **5.4 G/BCEP/1 FRAMEWORK DOCUMENT FOR CIVIL CONTINGENCIES NORTHERN IRELAND**

The purpose of this report was to update members on the new Framework for Civil Contingencies Northern Ireland 'Building Resilience Together' document produced by the Executive Office (TEO). This document is the first product within a wider strategic programme of work setting the direction for civil contingencies strategic planning in NI and was circulated for reference.

Members were aware that there are a number of regional emergency planning related protocols and reference documents in place, some of which are outdated and do not fully align to local level preparedness, response and recovery structures.

The new framework document "Building Resilience Together" is designed to work as a foundation for all governance structures and procedures across the civil contingencies structures. The framework does not alter the existing local multi agency structures both in planning and response. The new approach focuses on providing a coordinated strategic risk managed environment for civil contingencies in NI with TEO bringing together all of the partners and providing leadership and strategic direction for the management of an agreed portfolio of NI risks.

Civil Contingencies Policy Branch in The Executive Office (TEO) are responsible for the management and dissemination of this Framework.

The purpose of the NI Civil Contingencies Framework is to set out the Northern Ireland arrangements for effective emergency management, identifying the processes involved in preparing for, responding to and recovering from an emergency. It is not prescriptive in terms of the incidents it outlines but provides generic guidance for all types of emergencies. It is complementary to the Civil Contingencies Act of 2004 and provides tools to those responsible for drawing up emergency plans. It draws upon best practice and lessons learned from previous emergencies, both within Northern Ireland and from UK, Republic of Ireland (ROI) and global experiences.

The Framework is not a legislative document but provides regional cohesion to the civil contingencies' agencies by common acceptance of its principles and guides and should be used in conjunction with individual organisations' emergency plans.

The new framework document is designed to work as the foundation stone for all governance structures and procedures in the NI civil contingencies arena. It is based on 3 principles of transparency, accountability and cohesion.

Working with colleagues in the Northern Emergency Preparedness Group, Council's local emergency planning documents and arrangements would be fully aligned with this framework. Council Officers would also engage with the training and familiarisation on the framework to be provided by TEO in the forthcoming months.

Proposed by Councillor Wilson  
Seconded by Councillor Foster and agreed

**that the report be noted.**

*NO ACTION*



## **5.5 FC/FA/8 ANNUAL REVIEW OF PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS AND TREASURY MANAGEMENT 2020-2021**

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 mid-year and annual reports on treasury management activities.

This report compared the approved Prudential Indicators with the outturn position for 2020/21 and the annual report on the Council's borrowing and investment activities for 2020/21.

A copy of the annual report was circulated for Members' information.

Proposed by Councillor Wilson  
Seconded by Councillor Foster and agreed

**that the report be noted.**

*NO ACTION*

There being no further Committee business, the Chairperson thanked everyone for their attendance and the meeting concluded at 7.07 pm.

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**MAYOR**