



2 March 2023

Committee Chair: Councillor M Magill
Committee Vice-Chair: Alderman M Girvan

Committee Members: Aldermen – T Burns and P Michael

Councillors – H Cushinan, S Flanagan, R Foster,
M Goodman, B Mallon, A McAuley, T McGrann,
N Ramsay, V Robinson, B Webb and R Wilson

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 7 March 2023 at 6.30 pm.**

You are requested to attend.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jacqui Dixon".

Jacqui Dixon, MBE BSc MBA
Chief Executive, Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council

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

For any queries please contact Member Services:

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memberservices@antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk

A G E N D A

1 APOLOGIES

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

3 INTRODUCTION OF NEW STAFF

4 ITEMS FOR DECISION

4.1 Risk Management Strategy

4.2 Banking Arrangements

4.3 Application for Renewal of Premises for Civil Marriage/Civil Partnership Ceremonies

4.4 Local Government Staff Commission Dissolution

5 ITEMS FOR NOTING

5.1 Department for Infrastructure – The Private Streets (Northern Ireland) Order 1980 – Development at Red Row, Toomebridge

5.2 Local Government Sector, Model Complaints Handling Procedure

5.3 Agency Staff Update

5.4 Managing Attendance

5.5 Communications and Customers Channel Report

5.6 British Deaf Association Sign Language Week 2023

5.7 Social Media Update

5.8 NILGA Constitution

5.9 UK Covid -19 Inquiry

5.10 Budget report – January 2023 – Period 10

5.11 Review of Data Breach Notification Procedure

6 ITEMS IN CONFIDENCE

6.1 Plotbox Crematorium & Cemetery Management Software Update

6.2 Procurement Tender Reports and Award of Contracts

7 ANY OTHER RELEVANT BUSINESS

REPORT ON BUSINESS TO BE CONSIDERED AT THE POLICY AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE MEETING ON 7 MARCH 2023

4 ITEMS FOR DECISION

4.1 FI/AUD/03 RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

Members are reminded that in March 2021, the Policy and Governance Committee approved a new Risk Management Strategy which was aligned to the five principles of risk management as set out in the HM Treasury's Guidance on the Management of Risk – Principles and Concepts.

In accordance with the Council's Policy Framework and Schedule, the Strategy has been reviewed and updated.

The amendments made include providing additional clarity on how Risk Management is linked to the Council's Corporate Improvement Plan, and reformatting the Strategy to comply with the requirements of the Policy Framework.

A copy of the updated Strategy is **enclosed**, with amendments highlighted in red for Members' information.

The Risk Management Strategy has been reviewed and approved by the Corporate Leadership Team in February 2023.

RECOMMENDATION: that the Committee approves the Risk Management Strategy.

Prepared by: Paul Caulcutt, Head of Internal Audit

Approved by: Sandra Cole, Director of Finance and Governance

4.2 FC/G/2 BANKING ARRANGEMENTS

Members are advised that Ms Shelley Jess has recently been appointed as Financial Accounts Assistant within the Finance & Governance Department.

It is a requirement of the financial institutions used by Council to formally minute the authorisation given by Council to named officers to transact financial business on the Council's behalf.

RECOMMENDATION: that Ms Shelley Jess, Financial Accounts Assistant, be authorised:

- a) as a signatory to the Council's bank accounts;**
- b) to submit and approve internet banking transactions;**
- c) to submit and approve Bankers' Automated Clearing Services (BACS) transactions;**
- d) transact business with Council approved counterparty institutions**

Prepared by: Denise Lynn, PA to Director of Finance and Governance

Agreed by: John Balmer, Deputy Director of Finance

Approved by: Sandra Cole, Director of Finance and Governance

4.3 CCS/REG/5, CCS/REG/8, CCS/REG/9, CCS/REG/12 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 renewal applications have been received for the re-approval of an area at the specified premises below:

- Sentry Hill
- Maldron Hotel
- Hilton Hotel
- Corrs Corner Hotel

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 have been formally inspected and no problems have been found with regard to the application.

- Sentry Hill
 - Converted stable
 - Yard outside converted stable
- Maldron Hotel
 - Island Suite – Banqueting Hall
 - Rathlin Suite – Conference Room
- Hilton Hotel
 - Conference Room
 - Garden Patio
- Corrs Corner Hotel
 - Mulberry Suite
 - Maple Suite
 - Cedar Suite

RECOMMENDATION: that the named premises be re-approved to hold Civil Marriages under the terms of the Marriage (NI) Order 2003 and Civil Partnerships under the Civil Partnership Act (2004)

Prepared by: Paula Redpath, Registrar

Approved by: Debbie Rogers, Director of Organisation Development

4.4 HR/ER/002 LOCAL GOVERNMENT STAFF COMMISSION DISSOLUTION

Members are advised that correspondence has been received from the Local Government Staff Commission (LGSC) continuing operations 2023/24. A copy of the correspondence is **enclosed** for information.

The Department for Communities has informed the Commission that the provisional date for dissolution has been extended to 31 March 2025.

In accordance with the 2023/24 Management and Dissolution Plan, the Commission has estimated its total financial requirement to be £417,742 for the year ahead. Income from ongoing operations, which is offset against this figure, is estimated at £40,000, leaving an amount of £377,742 to be raised.

By virtue of the apportionment arrangements, Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council is required to pay £23,185.

RECOMMENDATION: that a payment of £23,185 be made to the Local Government Staff Commission.

Prepared and Agreed by: Debbie Rogers, Director of Organisation Development

Approved by: Jacqui Dixon, Chief Executive

5 ITEMS FOR NOTING

5.1 G-LEG-325/20 DEPARTMENT FOR INFRASTRUCTURE - THE PRIVATE STREETS (NORTHERN IRELAND) ORDER 1980 – DEVELOPMENT AT RED ROW, TOOMEBRIDGE

Correspondence has been received from the Department for Infrastructure (Dfi) advising that streets at the above development have now been adopted by Dfi Roads (copy correspondence **enclosed**).

RECOMMENDATION: that the correspondence be noted.

Prepared by: Deirdre Nelson, Paralegal

Approved by: Paul Casey, Borough Lawyer and Head of Legal Services

5.2 CCS/CS/005 LOCAL GOVERNMENT SECTOR, MODEL COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCEDURE

The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on the status of the introduction of a new Model Complaints Handling Process from the Northern Ireland Public Sector Ombudsman (NIPSO).

Background

The Council's current two stage complaints procedure was introduced in October 2021, following approval from Council, and was in anticipation of a new Model Complaints Handling Process being introduced by NIPSO.

Key Issues/Points

The intended Model Complaints Handling Process will have two stages, but will differ from our existing procedure by being five days for stage one (we are currently ten days) and twenty days for stage two (we are currently ten days).

As part of the new process NIPSO will provide the following:

- Definitions of what constitutes a formal, informal or non-complaint (including practical and relevant examples)
- Templates for responses
- Training to Council officers (the Local Government Strategic Network are arranging a date for NIPSO to deliver a presentation to NILGA and elected Members regarding MCHP implementation)

Timeframe

1. NIPSO anticipate rolling out the new process from 1 April 2023
2. Council will have a six month period to implement the process
3. This timeframe will be confirmed by NIPSO at the next meeting of the Local Government Operational Network on 15 March 2023

Key Considerations for Council

Potential implications for Council include the following:

- Reduction in response time for dealing with stage one complaints, which may increase the number of complaints failing to be handled within target timeframes
- Changes in the definition of formal and informal complaints may possibly lead to an increase in the escalation of informal to formal complaints
- NIPSO intend to launch the process with a publicity and awareness campaign which may increase the number of complaints received by Council

Further updates will be reported to Members as NIPSO roll out the new process.

RECOMMENDATION: that the report be noted.

Prepared by: James Porter, Customer Services Manager

Approved by: Debbie Rogers, Director of Organisation Development

5.3 HR/HR/019 AGENCY STAFF UPDATE

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

- Maternity leave
- Secondments
- Sickness absence
- Vacant posts
- Seasonal Events

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.

Current Agency staff

The table appended provides an update for Members on the use of agency staff in January 2023 compared to January 2020 (pre covid-19). It excludes limited ad-hoc agency cover, which is necessary to provide operational cover, at short notice (see [Appendix 1](#)). Given the exceptional nature of 2020/21; 2019/20 agency figures have been used for comparison.

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

- In January 2023 this reduced to 38 agency workers compared to 53 in January 2020.
- Seasonal Grounds Maintenance Operatives who usually end in October each year have been retained for further cover this year due to vacancies and operational demands within Parks. However, seasonal cover reduced from 17 to 6 by January 2023.

Cost of Agency

[Appendix 2](#) sets out the expenditure on agency workers in January 2023.

The cost of agency staff from 1 April 2022 to January 2023 has reduced for the same period in 2019/2020 (pre-covid) from 7% to 6% of all staffing costs.

The costs have been impacted by:

- The 1.75% NJC pay increase for the 2021 financial year
- The increase in National Insurance of 1.25% from 6 April 2022; has been reversed effective from 5 November 2022

Costs will also be impacted going forward due to the agreement of the 2022 NJC pay award and the recent local pay agreement in January 2023.

In 2022/2023

Current recruitment:

Following recent recruitment exercises within Finance 2 further posts covered by agency workers have successfully been recruited:

- 1x Accounts Supervisor commenced in January 2023
- 1 x Financial Accounting Assistant is starting in February 2023

Further recruitment exercises are ongoing to fill the remaining posts within Finance that are covered through agencies. We will continue to reduce the number of agency workers as we recruit to fill vacant positions directly with agency being utilised for more ad hoc, seasonal, temporary cover when required.

RECOMMENDATION: that the report be noted.

Prepared by: Kirsty Clarke, Human Resources Advisor (Systems)

Agreed by: Pauline Greer, Human Resources Manager

Approved by: Debbie Rogers, Director of Organisation Development

5.4 HR/GEN/019 MANAGING ATTENDANCE

The purpose of this report is to update Members on the management of attendance from April 2022 – January 2023 (summary **enclosed**).

ABSENCE – 1 APRIL 2022 TO 31 JANUARY 2023

Members are advised that absence at the end of January was above target by 2.71 days with 12.94 average days lost per employee against a target of 10.23 days. Covid absence is not included in the reported figures.

It is projected that the absence rate for 2022/23 is likely to be approximately 15 average days lost against a target of 12 days. Members are advised that this projection may fluctuate depending on the presenting and returning cases in February and March 2023. Covid absence is not included in this projection.

A number of long term absence cases have resulted in employees exhausting their sick pay entitlement and although no additional cost is incurred by the Council during the 'no pay' periods, these days lost are 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 January 2023 would have been 11.04 days.

Despite reducing absence over the months of October and November, and a number of the complex cases resolved, the significant increase in absence in December has made it more challenging to achieve the annual target of 12 average days lost per employee.

In January 2023, there has been a positive return to work of short term cases and in particular 3 complex long term cases have returned to work with a further 3 long term cases commencing the ill health retirement assessment process.

Further analysis of this month's attendance/absence figures has highlighted the following:

100% attendance

For the period 1 April 2022 to 31 January 2023, 63% of employees had full attendance, which is 3% above target.

Long term absence

- Accounts for 87% of the absence figures.
- The main reason for long term absence continues as the 'other' category of absence. This category of absence includes cold/flu, bereavement, family illness and surgery.
- 40% of these long term cases are more challenging to manage including hospital procedures, disability related illness, broken bones and road traffic accidents.

- 3 long term cases have exhausted their sick pay entitlement.
- 3 further long term cases returned in January resulting in the total to date of 46 long term cases that have returned to work.

Formal Case Reviews

Formal Case reviews (FCRs) are normally held where all possible steps have been taken and have failed to secure the employee's return to work within a maximum of 9 months.

Completed to date

- From 1 April 2022 to date, 8 absence cases at the Formal Case Review stage have been concluded through either a return to work, ill health retirement or leaving the organisation.

In progress

- 2 FCRs are at appeal stage.
- A further 4 absence cases are at Formal Case Review stage as follows:
 - 1 in progress
 - 3 exploring ill health retirement

Approaching (FCR stage)

- 3 long term absence cases are currently approaching the formal case review stage.

Short term absence

- Accounts for 13% of the absence figures with days lost closely linked to the minor illnesses typical of the season.
- The main reasons for absence are
 - Cold/flu, stomach bug (accounting for 37% of short term absence)
 - Stress, Depression, mental health
 - Chest and respiratory issues
 - Musculoskeletal problems
 - Back and neck problems
 - Infection

It is noted that absence related to stress (including work related stress) has increased from 44% to 46% of the overall absence, both long and short term. To address this our focus continues on encouraging health and wellbeing in the workplace, and promoting Mental Health and Wellbeing resources and support services through STAYWELL and the courses delivered by the Northern Regional Recovery College.

The Employee Assistance Programme continues to be delivered through Inspire offering a 24/7 confidential counselling service. We will also work in partnership with our legal advisors and Employers for Disability to raise awareness of mental health illness and deliver awareness sessions to support Managers to understand disability related illnesses and reasonable adjustments in the workplace.

Ongoing action to address the absence rates and support earlier returns to work where possible:

- Commencement of regular case management discussions arranged with legal advisors. These sessions support a targeted approach for complex cases and support Directors, Head of Services and HR to review cases, consider reasonable adjustments to help those returning to work, support understanding of the legal context to enable specific actions plans to be agreed for these individual cases.
- The Head of HR and HR Manager have increased the frequency of meetings with the directorates with the high or complex absence cases, namely Parks & Leisure, Waste Operations, Community Planning, Economic Development & Planning and Finance & Governance. The relevant Directors, Deputy Directors & Heads of Service attend these meetings which cover in depth analysis of absence cases and the associated reasons, to agree next steps for caseloads and to schedule formal case reviews where appropriate.
- The HR Business Partnership team continues to work closely with Managers and Occupational Health on an individual case management basis, ensuring prompt action from Managers is prioritised to keep absences within target and providing support to managers in absence review trigger meetings to ensure a fair and consistent approach is applied.
- Monthly case management discussion meetings are scheduled where required to review complex cases with an Occupational Health consultant. Case managers attend these sessions to ensure effective use of the Occupational Health service and to support earlier returns to work where possible.
- Both the Corporate and Human Resources Risks registers have been reviewed to reflect the position of the current rate of absence with actions and interventions recorded to mitigate risks.
- Several training sessions have taken place for managers within Parks on how to effectively manage their absence caseloads. Absence management toolkits are also under development, best practice toolkits have been identified and information and resources shared on STAYWELL to further assist managers and employees.
- Planned delivery of targeted training in areas of high absence provided by Human Resources, legal advisors and in partnership with employers for disability or other relevant organisations.
- Development continues on an online training module on the importance of attending work. This will be rolled out to new staff initially and then across the wider organisation in 2023.
- Continued delivery of the Wellbeing Calendar.
- The weekly STAY MORE CONNECTED communication is being used to share and promote information to staff on up and coming Wellness events and courses and to target initiatives linked to the top five reasons for absence.
- Continued provision of physiotherapy services for appropriate cases (back and musculoskeletal related absence)

RECOMMENDATION: that the report be noted.

Prepared by: Victoria Stewart, HR Systems and Data Analyst

Agreed by: Jennifer Close, Head of Human Resources

Approved by: Debbie Rogers, Director of Organisation Development

5.5 CCS/CS/006 COMMUNICATIONS & CUSTOMERS CHANNEL REPORT

Members are 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 is to provide an update on the indicators that the Plan sets out as measurements of progress towards this target covering the period 1 April 2022 to 31 January 2023.

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

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

The Enchanted Winter Garden survey for residents received **891** responses, with **93.3%** expressing satisfaction. The Borough Life Have Your Say survey of Cleanliness of the Borough returned a satisfaction rating of **91.3%** from 172 respondents.

The cumulative satisfaction figure from **1,890** respondents in 2022-23 is **92.9%**.

	2021-22	Target 2022-23	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	January 2023
Number of respondents	3,000	N/A	N/A	118	709	1,063
Percentage Satisfaction	87.5%	80%	N/A	89.8%	93.2%	92.9%

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

A total of **16,074** calls were presented during January 2023, an increase of **3%** compared to **15,600** in January 2022. Total calls for 2023-23 are **150,397**, compared to **141,813** during the same time period in 2021-22.

The overall percentage for abandoned calls for the year so far is **5.1%**.

	2021-22	Target 2022-23	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	January 2023
Number calls	173,660	N/A	46,544	45,217	42,562	16,074
Number abandoned calls	10,351	N/A	2,345	2,143	2,280	952
Percentage abandoned calls	6.0%	6.5%	5.0%	4.7%	5.4%	5.9%

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.

By the end of January 2023, there had been **687,475** online transactions, which is **14.6%** above target for the year. Leisure bookings rose by **58.2%** on December 2022, during a period which is traditionally very busy for usage of leisure facilities.

2021-22	Target 2022-23	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	January 2023
652,593	600,000	176,882	235,715	208,321	66,557

For the purposes of maintaining consistency with previous benchmarks, this indicator focuses upon the number of online transactions including (January 2023 online transactions detailed below):

- Caravan bookings (27)
- Online theatre and events bookings (3,495)
- Leisure bookings (61,108)
- Dog licensing applications (761)
- Bulky waste bookings (1,166)

There are at least 5,062 downloads of the Residents App:

Downloads of the ANBorough App are measured through official app stores (Google and Apple) and total **11,828** in 2022-23, this is **133.6%** above target for the year.

2021-22	Target 2022-23	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	January 2023
14,481	5,062	3,475	3,531	2,904	1,918

The performance of the Corporate Recovery & Improvement Policy 2022-23 will 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 will be reviewed by Council and published on the Council's website by 30 September 2023.

RECOMMENDATION: that the report be noted.

Prepared by: James Porter, Customer Services Manager

Agreed by: Nicola McCullough, Head of Communications and Customers

Approved by: Debbie Rogers, Director of Organisation Development

5.6 CCS/EDP/023 BRITISH DEAF ASSOCIATION SIGN LANGUAGE WEEK 2023

Members are reminded that the Council committed to being a Deaf Friendly Council in 2021 and undertook to;

- Ensure all council services are accessible to those who are deaf;
- Commit to providing signing on social media videos to highlight important events and announcements within the Council area;
- Promote the introduction of Sign Courses for staff;
- Appoint a Deaf Champion within the Council;
- Commit to working with neighbouring Councils and Deaf organisations to promote deaf awareness.

In support of the BSL/ISL Charter and our deaf community, a series of events and awareness raising activities are being planned as part of Sign Language Week which will run from 13-19 March 2023.

A summary of the planned activities are noted below which will be promoted via our website and social media channels.

- Deaf Friendly Signed Tours
- Staff Training on Basic Sign Language
- Community Training on Basic Sign Language (BSL/ISL)
- Awareness Raising Social Media Posts
- Sign Language Celebration Video by Jordanstown Special School

RECOMMENDATION: that the report be noted.

Prepared by: Ellen Boyd, Accessibility and Inclusion Officer

Agreed by: Nicola McCullough, Head of Communications and Customers

Approved by: Debbie Rodgers, Director of Organisation Development

5.7 CCS/CPRM/5 SOCIAL MEDIA UPDATE

The Council has 24 active social media accounts ([Appendix 1](#)) across Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, TikTok and YouTube. These include corporate accounts as well as accounts specific to different aspects of Council including, events (e.g. Garden Show Ireland and Enchanted Winter Garden), theatre, community, jobs and Mayoral.

The Council's social media channels are used to promote, educate, inform and engage with our users and to communicate key corporate messages. Each platform has a variety of content publishing formats including posts, stories, reels and events ([Appendix 2](#)). This an important consideration when selecting the most appropriate platform and content type for each message and target audience.

PLATFORM BREAKDOWN

Each social media platform is used in a different way and depends on the key message and/or target audience. The Council's objective each year is to increase the number followers and increase engagement across all social media channels, and we also have specific actions and targets for each platform in order to achieve these objectives.

Members are reminded of the recent website report and the importance of linking social media content and website content to provide residents and customers with access to wider Council information. Each social media post will include a link to the relevant Council website where relevant.

1. Facebook

@ANBorough | 36.6k followers

The Council's Facebook account currently has over 36k followers with the profile highly female-dominant (80:20) and 35-44 being the most popular age category followed by 25-34 then 45-54. The high majority of users reside in Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough.

We publish the majority of our content on Facebook as it reaches a broad spectrum of our target audiences, e.g. home decision makers, family decision makers, small business owners and older residents.

Key actions & targets:

- Encourage more engagement on posts (e.g. increased tags.)
- Identify and post in topic-related groups and pages (e.g. Join Crafters Northern Ireland Facebook group and post content encouraging traders to sign up to Spinning Yarns and followers to attend)

2. Instagram

@anborough_ | 945 followers*

While the demographic of followers on Instagram is similar to that on Facebook, Instagram has more users under the age of 24 and fewer users

above 34 than Facebook. This platform therefore is used to further expand our reach and engage with a younger audience.

In addition, Instagram Reels (a relatively new form of posting short form video content in an entertaining way) can reach target audiences without those people having to follow your page. For example, our Instagram account has less than 1,000 followers, most of these being female aged 24-34 and one of our Skate 100 reels reached over 10,000 views.

**Account created February 2022 (Original Instagram page (@anborough) was set up circa 2018 and was disabled by Instagram for unknown reasons in September 2021).*

Key actions & targets:

- Collaborate with local companies and utilise competitions to support the increase of our followers to 2,000. (e.g. collaborating companies or individuals share content as well as the Council so we can maximise on their following. This will help increase the number of followers on our page.
- Maximise user generated content (e.g. sharing content from users who have tagged anborough_)

3. Twitter

@ANBorough | 10k followers

Twitter is used to promote new stories, share information and publish to users interested in business advice and support. This is typical of the industry standard, as 48% of people on Twitter use the platform to get news.

Key actions & targets:

- Drive traffic to the Council's Twitter page to increase follower numbers to 11,000.
- "Join the conversation" on twitter. Be active in real time when events and promotions are happening to drive traffic and increase followers e.g. golf themes during key tournaments, posting from live events we are attending using trending hashtags #jointheconversation

4. LinkedIn

@anborough | 1.9k followers

LinkedIn is a professional networking site, which we use to share investment updates, advertise opportunities for businesses in the Borough and promote opportunities for new talent and network with industry professionals to benefit the Council.

Key actions & targets:

- Increase LinkedIn followers to 3,000 in 2023-24
- Create a specific LinkedIn Jobs account to support recruitment
- Utilise key Council officers to help create timely and relevant content e.g. Economic Development

5. TikTok

@anborough | 419 followers

A corporate TikTok account was created in May 2022 to promote the launch of Skate100 as it is the best platform to reach and engage with a younger audience. The type of content published on TikTok is fun, entertaining short form video (30-60 seconds) enhanced with tools like music, audio clips and effects.

The Council currently has 419 followers however, like Instagram reels, TikTok videos are pushed into feeds of anyone who looks at similar related content, without them needing to follow your page. This is important as it means followers are not relevant to the amount of exposure a video will get. For example, the most viewed video on the Council's TikTok account currently has 131.3k views, which was a video to promote the Shop at the Top of the Town "A night at Theatre at the Mill".

Key actions & targets:

- Target 5 videos to reach 100k plus views in the next twelve months.
- Create fun and entertaining content to engage a younger audience who we cannot reach on other platforms.

6. YouTube

@anborough | 481 followers

Videos published on YouTube have a longer time limit than other platforms and is appropriate for publishing longer format, in-depth content. A younger audience often use YouTube as a form of 'on-demand' television making. This channel one of the highest performing search engines.

The Council primarily uses YouTube to upload long videos, which are then embedded in our website.

Key actions & targets:

- Promote awareness of the channel and continue to use YouTube for the publication of longer videos
- Use Google Video Advertising on YouTube to promote key messages

SOCIAL MEDIA ADVERTISING

Content can be published on each of these channels organically at no cost, or by paid for targeted advertisements. Paid-for advertisements take the same format as organic posts and will be targeted to specific interests and behaviours. They appear in social media newsfeeds in the same way as organic content, however they are marked as sponsored.

The cost of advertising varies depending on the channel. Advertising on LinkedIn and TikTok is significantly more expensive than Facebook and Instagram. LinkedIn advertisements are targeted so the likelihood of success is much higher. TikTok is a new trending platform and can charge premium

rates. Facebook and Instagram are both owned by Meta and can provide large numbers of a targeted audience.

A user may follow more than one of the Council's social platforms, however they may never see a particular live advertisement if they don't fit within the targeted demographic that we are trying to reach (e.g. a 25 year old will not be targeted with an ad for an over 50s exercise class).

As a result of the immediacy of the advertisements they can be easily changed, stopped, or the target audience changed to ensure maximum results. Paid for social media campaigns are a key tool used to market the Council's services and events.

ENGAGING WITH AND RESPONDING TO USERS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

A social media management tool called Agorapulse is used to monitor and respond to any comments on posts across all of our platforms, either by replying to the original comment or by taking the conversation offline onto a private message. This allows the opportunity to quickly identify any issues occurring and highlight as relevant and to gauge strong thoughts and opinions of our followers, eg. if we receive complaints or compliments, Council officers will respond and progress as appropriate through the appropriate channels.

SOCIAL MEDIA TRENDS

Short, engaging videos are now the centrepiece of social media. With this rise of TikTok in 2020, other platforms like Facebook, Instagram and YouTube have followed suit in deploying this feature on their platforms in the form of reels and shorts.

These videos are a great way to provide entertainment and information and allows us to reach and engage with millennials and Gen z audiences whose attention spans are quickly shrinking and who enjoy watching fun and relatable content.

There are also various other social media platforms available which the Council does not have a presence on for various reasons, such as BeReal and Snapchat. This is primarily due to the target audience and how the platform is used, details of which are enclosed at [Appendix 3](#).

SUMMARY

With the continuing growth of social media, more and more content is being created and shared by people and businesses every day. As a result, competition in users newsfeeds is increasing as it becomes harder for posts to gain exposure. In addition, social media algorithms (rules that determine what content is displayed on users feeds) are constantly changing and platforms are seeking out ways to monetise their business.

To enable us to compete with these changes, we are committed to:

- Creating content for users to engage with, i.e. by encouraging users to tag others, save the posts for later, or 'react' ('love' and other reactions rank higher than 'likes') and spend time replying to our audience
- Posting more videos to generate higher views and engagement and vary the mix of images, graphics, as well as short and long form videos published across social media platforms.
- Controlling the posting frequency, ensuring not to publish too much content, which can be harmful to algorithms and result in content not appearing in newsfeeds.
- Using Facebook and Instagram stories; post on Facebook groups; go live on Facebook; use hashtags to drive organic reach; support organic reach with ad spend.
- Monitoring trends within the social media landscape.

MOVING FORWARD

The Council's Marketing Officers continue to work with relevant departments within the Council, including Tourism, Leisure and Theatres to explore ways of sharing real time (user generated) content.

We will also review the Council's accounts in an effort to streamline messaging, for example within Theatres, and look towards creating new accounts for Tourism. A short term action plan is enclosed at **Appendix 4** for Members information.

RECOMMENDATION: that the report be noted

Prepared by: Emma McConville, Digital Marketing Manager

Agreed by: Nicola McCullough, Head of Communications and Customers

Approved by: Debbie Rogers, Director of Organisation Development

5.8 HR/ER/020 NILGA CONSTITUTION

Members are advised that correspondence (**enclosed**) has been received from NILGA in relation to a review of their Constitution to ensure the Association is enabled for success in the 2023-2027 local government mandate.

On the 10th February 2023, at the NILGA Executive meeting it was approved that the **enclosed** proposed amendments to the NILGA Constitution following review would be issued to Councils for feedback.

Changes to the previous Constitution agreed in March 2019 (**enclosed**) are highlighted in red on the draft 2023 document. These include minor wording and layout changes; for example the aims and objectives sections have been extended.

There are two new sections: the process for Resignation of Individual Councils is outlined at Section 12 – at least 12 months' notice must be given by a Council to terminate membership and the role of the Chief Executive of NILGA and the ability to recruit staff is outlined at Section 14.

Should Members be content with these amendments, it is recommended that the revised Constitution be noted.

Recommendation: that NILGA's revised Constitution be noted.

Prepared and Agreed by: Liz Johnston, Deputy Director of Governance

Approved by: Sandra Cole, Director of Finance and Governance

5.9 G/BCEP/016 UK COVID-19 INQUIRY

Members are advised an independent public inquiry has been set up to examine the UK's response to and impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic and to learn lessons for the future.

The inquiry will examine, consider and report on preparations and the response to the pandemic in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, up to and including the formal setting up date of the inquiry which was 28th June 2022.

The aims of the inquiry are to examine the Covid-19 response and the impact of the pandemic in the UK and produce a factual narrative account including the Public Health response across the whole of the UK which will include preparedness and resilience, how decisions were made, communicated, recorded and implemented, decision making between the Governments of the UK, the collaboration between Central Government, Devolved Administrations, Regional and Local Authorities and the voluntary and community sector, and legislative and regulatory control and enforcement.

A full copy of the Terms of Reference can be found at www.covid19.public-inquiry.uk/terms-of-reference/

The Covid-19 Inquiry has divided its investigation into modules. Module 1 deals with Resilience and Preparedness, Module 2 deals with Core Decision-Making and Political Governance and Module 3 deals with the Impact on the Health Care Systems. Module 2 has itself been broken down into a number of sub-modules to look independently at each of the Devolved Administrations in the United Kingdom; Module 2C examines the Northern Ireland response to the pandemic.

In order to avoid duplication of responses, the Covid-19 Inquiry has been addressing its initial requests for information through the Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA).

A response to Module 1 was prepared by NILGA working with SOLACE, political representatives, the Regional Resilience Group, and the Northern Ireland Legal Officers Group (NILOG). A request for a draft written statement from NILGA in response to Module 2C has also been received. The original deadline for the response was 16th February 2023. Given the extensive nature of the information requested, representatives of NILGA and NILOG met with legal representatives of the Inquiry and have agreed an extension to the time for response to 23rd March 2023.

NILGA will coordinate gathering of information through the existing Local Government Professional Officer networks including EHNI, Northern Ireland Waste Forum, Regional Licensing Forum, NILOG, Chief Leisure Officers Association NI, Local Authority Safety Advisory Network

NI, and the Community Planning Officers network; specific enquiries may be made of individual Councils in the future.

Local Government is obliged to co-operate with the Inquiry. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. However, the turnaround time for responses to the Inquiry is short and there can be a significant temporary resource implication in terms of officer time.

Recommendation: that the report be noted.

Prepared and Agreed by: Liz Johnston, Deputy Director of Governance

Approved by: Sandra Cole, Director of Finance and Governance

5.10 FI/FIN/4 BUDGET REPORT – JANUARY 2023 – Period 10

A budget report for January 2023 – Period 10 is enclosed for Members' information.

The Council's financial position at the end of January 2023 shows an adverse variance on Net Cost of Services of £2.46m.

The Actual Penny Product (income from District Rates) is anticipated to be £724k favourable, reducing the adverse variance to £1.7m.

RECOMMENDATION: that the report be noted.

Prepared by: Richard Murray, Head of Finance

Agreed by: John Balmer, Deputy Director of Finance and Capital

Approved by: Sandra Cole, Director of Finance & Governance

5.11 G/IG/7 REVIEW OF DATA BREACH NOTIFICATION PROCEDURE

The Data Breach Notification Procedure has been reviewed in accordance with the agreed Policy Framework and schedule; the Procedure was last reviewed in January 2021 which follows a two year review cycle.

The review has identified a number of minor amendments as being required:

- update regarding changes in organisational structure
- inclusion of Rural Needs and Data Protection Impact Assessment statements in accordance with the Policy Framework template
- version control table added.

The amendments to the procedure have been approved by CLT. The draft procedure with the amendments incorporated is **enclosed**.

RECOMMENDATION: that the reviewed Data Breach Notification Procedure be noted.

Prepared by: Helen McBride, Information Governance Manager

Agreed by: Liz Johnston, Deputy Director of Governance

Approved by: Sandra Cole, Director of Finance and Governance