



MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE MEETING OF THE POLICY AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE HELD AT ANTRIM CIVIC CENTRE ON TUESDAY 7 MARCH 2023 AT 6.30 PM

In the Chair	:	Councillor M Magill
Members Present (In person)	:	Alderman M Girvan Councillors – H Cushinan, N Ramsay, V Robinson and B Webb
Members Present (Remote)	:	Councillors – S Flanagan, R Foster, M Goodman, A McAuley, B Mallon
Non Committee Members: (Remote)	:	Councillor A Bennington
Officers Present	:	Director of Finance & Governance – S Cole Director of Organisation Development – D Rogers Deputy Director of Governance – L Johnston Head of Human Resources – J Close Head of Communications & Customers – N McCullough ICT Helpdesk Support Officer – J Wilson Member Services Officer – C McIntyre

CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

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

1. APOLOGIES

None

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

3. INTRODUCTION OF NEW STAFF

None

4. ITEMS FOR DECISION

4.1 FI/AUD/03 RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

Members were 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 had been reviewed and updated.

The amendments made included providing additional clarity on how Risk Management was 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 was circulated, with amendments highlighted in red for Members' information.

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

Proposed by Councillor Webb
Seconded by Councillor Foster and agreed that

the Risk Management Strategy be approved.

ACTION BY: Paul Caulcutt, Head of Internal Audit

4.2 FC/G/2 BANKING ARRANGEMENTS

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

It was 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.

Proposed by Councillor Ramsay
Seconded by Councillor Goodman and agreed 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**

ACTION BY: John Balmer, Deputy Director of Finance

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 had the responsibility to approve appropriate applications for Place Approvals for Civil Marriages and Civil Partnerships. Approvals lasted for 3 years and renewal applications had 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 required 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 had been formally inspected and no problems found with regard to the applications.

- 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

Proposed by Councillor Foster

Seconded by Councillor Goodman and agreed 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)

ACTION BY: Paula Redpath, Registrar

4.4 HR/ER/002 LOCAL GOVERNMENT STAFF COMMISSION DISSOLUTION

Members were advised that correspondence had been received from the Local Government Staff Commission (LGSC) concerning continuing operations 2023/24 (circulated).

The Department for Communities (DfC) had informed the Commission that the provisional date for dissolution had been extended to 31 March 2025.

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

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

Proposed by Councillor Goodman
Seconded by Councillor Ramsay and agreed that

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

ACTION BY: Debbie Rogers, Director of Organisation Development

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

Proposed by Councillor Goodman
Seconded by Alderman Girvan and agreed that

the correspondence be noted.

NO ACTION

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

Members were updated 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 would have two stages, but would differ from Council's existing procedure by being five days for stage one (currently ten days) and twenty days for stage two (currently ten days).

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

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

Timeframe

1. NIPSO anticipated rolling out the new process from 1 April 2023
2. Council would have a six month period to implement the process
3. This timeframe would 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 included 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 intended to launch the process with a publicity and awareness campaign which may increase the number of complaints received by Council

Further updates would be reported to Members as NIPSO rolled out the new process.

Proposed by Alderman Girvan

Seconded by Councillor Ramsay and agreed that

the report be noted.

NO ACTION

5.3 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
- Seasonal Events

The use of agency staff was subject to a rigorous approval process, which required the approval of the Corporate Leadership Team and there was budgetary provision for the majority of posts filled via departmental salary budgets, salary contingency and grant funding.

Current Agency Staff

The table circulated provided an update for Members on the use of agency staff in January 2023 compared to January 2020 (pre covid-19). It excluded limited ad-hoc agency cover, which was necessary to provide operational cover, at short notice. Given the exceptional nature of 2020/21, 2019/20 agency figures had 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, had 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

Expenditure in respect of agency workers in January 2023 was circulated.

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

The costs had 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; had been reversed effective from 5 November 2022

Costs would 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 had been successfully recruited:

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

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

Proposed by Councillor Robinson

Seconded by Councillor Goodman and agreed that

the report be noted and a member asked for further information to be provided on how Council publicly advertise posts.

ACTION BY: Debbie Rogers, Director of Organisation Development

5.4 HR/GEN/019 MANAGING ATTENDANCE

Members were updated on the management of attendance from April 2022 – January 2023 (summary circulated).

ABSENCE – 1 APRIL 2022 TO 31 JANUARY 2023

As at 31 January, absence was above target by 2.71 days with 12.94 average days lost per employee against a target of 10.23 days; Covid absence was not included in the reported figures.

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

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 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 had been a positive return to work of short term cases and in particular 3 complex long term cases had returned to work with a further 3 long term cases which had commenced the ill health retirement assessment process.

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

100% attendance

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

Long term absence

- Accounted for 87% of the absence figures.
- The main reason for long term absence continued as the 'other' category of absence. This category of absence included cold/flu, bereavement, family illness and surgery.
- 40% of these long term cases were more challenging to manage including hospital procedures, disability related illness, broken bones and road traffic accidents.
- 3 long term cases had 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 had returned to work.

Formal Case Reviews

Formal Case reviews (FCRs) were normally held where all possible steps had been taken and had 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 had been concluded through either a return to work, ill health retirement or having left the organisation.

In progress

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

Approaching (FCR stage)

- 3 long term absence cases were 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 were
 - 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 was noted that absence related to stress (including work related stress) had increased from 44% to 46% of the overall absence, both long and short term. To address this, Council's focus continued on encouraging health and wellbeing in the workplace and to promote Mental Health and Wellbeing resources alongside support services through STAYWELL and the courses delivered by the Northern Regional Recovery College.

The Employee Assistance Programme continued to be delivered through Inspire, which offered a 24/7 confidential counselling service. Council would work in partnership with its 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, included:

- Commencement of regular case management discussions arranged with legal advisors. These sessions supported a targeted approach for complex cases and supported 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 had 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 and Heads of Service attended these meetings which covered 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 continued to work closely with Managers and Occupational Health on an individual case-management basis, which ensured that prompt action from Managers was prioritised to keep absences within target and provided support to managers in absence review trigger meetings to ensure a fair and consistent approach had been applied.
- Monthly case management discussion meetings were scheduled where required 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.

- Both the Corporate and Human Resources Risks registers had been reviewed to reflect the position of the current rate of absence with actions and interventions recorded to mitigate risks.
- Several training sessions had taken place for managers within Parks on how to effectively manage their absence caseloads. Absence management toolkits were also under development, best practice toolkits had 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 continued on an online training module on the importance of attending work. This would 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 was 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)

Proposed by Councillor Webb

Seconded by Councillor Ramsay and agreed that

the report be noted.

NO ACTION

5.5 CCS/CS/006 COMMUNICATIONS & CUSTOMERS CHANNEL REPORT

Members were reminded that the Corporate Recovery & Improvement Plan for 2022-23 set 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 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 had a specific, themed survey, and within each one, residents were 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 was **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 were **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 was **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 was **14.6%** above target for the year. Leisure bookings rose by **58.2%** on December 2022, during a period which was 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 focused upon the number of online transactions (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 were measured through official app stores (Google and Apple) and total **11,828** in 2022-23; this was **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 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 Council's website by 30 September 2023.

Proposed by Councillor Robinson
Seconded by Councillor Ramsay and agreed that

the report be noted.

NO ACTION

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

Members were reminded that Council had committed to being a Deaf Friendly Council in 2021 and undertook to;

- Ensure all council services were accessible to those who were deaf;
- Commit to provide 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 were being planned as part of Sign Language Week which would run from 13-19 March 2023.

A summary of the planned activities were noted below which would 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

Proposed by Councillor Webb
Seconded by Alderman Girvan and agreed that

the report be noted.

NO ACTION

5.7 CCS/CPRM/5 SOCIAL MEDIA UPDATE

The Council had 24 active social media accounts (circulated) across Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, TikTok and YouTube. These included 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 were used to promote, educate, inform and engage with our users and to communicate key corporate messages. Each platform had a variety of content publishing formats including posts, stories, reels and events (circulated); this was an important consideration when selecting the most appropriate platform and content type for each message and target audience.

Platform Breakdown

Each social media platform was used in a different way and depended on the key message and/or target audience. The Council's objective each year was to increase the number of followers and increase engagement across all social media channels; Council had specific actions and targets for each platform in order to achieve these objectives.

Members were 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 would include a link to the relevant Council website where relevant.

1. Facebook

@ANBorough | 36.6k followers

The Council's Facebook account currently had 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 resided in Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough.

Council published the majority of its content on Facebook as it reached a broad spectrum of its 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 to encourage traders to sign up to Spinning Yarns and followers to attend)

2. Instagram

@anborough_ | 945 followers*

While the demographic of followers on Instagram was similar to that on Facebook, Instagram had more users under the age of 24 and fewer users above 34 than Facebook. This platform therefore was used to further expand Council's reach and to engage with a younger audience.

In addition, Instagram Reels (a relatively new form of posting short form video content in an entertaining way) could reach target audiences without those people having to follow your page. For example, our Instagram account had 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 could maximise on their following. This would help increase the number of followers on our page.
- Maximise user-generated content (e.g. to share content from users who had tagged anborough_)

3. Twitter

@ANBorough | 10k followers

Twitter was used to promote new stories, share information and publish to users interested in business advice and support. This was typical of the industry standard, as 48% of people on Twitter would 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 were happening to drive traffic and increase followers e.g. golf themes during key tournaments, posting from live events Council attends using trending hashtags #jointheconversation

4. LinkedIn

@anborough | 1.9k followers

LinkedIn was a professional networking site, used 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 was the best platform to reach and engage with a younger audience. The type of content published on TikTok was fun, entertaining short form videos (30-60 seconds) enhanced with tools like music, audio clips and effects.

The Council currently had 419 followers, however, like Instagram reels, TikTok videos were pushed into feeds of anyone who looked at similar related content, without them needing to follow your page. This was important as it would mean followers were not relevant to the amount of exposure a video would get. For example, the most viewed video on the Council's TikTok account currently had 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 had a longer time limit than other platforms and was appropriate for publishing longer format, in-depth content. A younger audience often used YouTube as a form of 'on-demand' television making. This channel was one of the highest performing search engines.

The Council primarily used YouTube to upload long videos, which were 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 could be published on each of these channels organically at no cost, or by paid-for targeted advertisements. Paid-for advertisements took the same format as organic posts and would be targeted to specific interests and behaviours. They appear in social media newsfeeds in the same way as organic content, however they were marked as sponsored.

The cost of advertising varied depending on the channel. Advertising on LinkedIn and TikTok was significantly more expensive than Facebook and Instagram. LinkedIn advertisements were targeted, so the likelihood of success was much higher. TikTok was a new trending platform and could charge premium rates. Facebook and Instagram were both owned by Meta and could 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 didn't fit within the targeted demographic that Council were trying to reach (e.g. a 25 year old would not be targeted with an ad for an over 50s exercise class).

As a result of the immediacy of the advertisements they could be easily changed, stopped, or the target audience changed to ensure maximum results. Paid-for social media campaigns were 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 was used to monitor and respond to any comments on posts across all of Council's platforms, either by replying to the original comment or by taking the conversation offline onto a private message. This allowed the opportunity to quickly identify any issues occurring and highlight as relevant and to gauge strong thoughts and opinions of our followers, eg. if Council receive complaints or compliments, Council officers would respond and progress as appropriate through the appropriate channels.

Social Media Trends

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

These videos were a great way to provide entertainment and information and allowed Council to reach and engage with millennials and Gen z audiences whose attention spans were quickly shrinking and who enjoyed watching fun and relatable content.

There were also various other social media platforms available which the Council did not have a presence on for various reasons, such as BeReal and Snapchat. This was primarily due to the target audience and how the platform was used, details of which were circulated.

Summary

With the continuing growth of social media, more and more content was being created and shared by people and businesses every day. As a result, competition in users' newsfeeds was increasing as it became harder for posts

to gain exposure. In addition, social media algorithms (rules that determine what content is displayed on users' feeds) were constantly changing and platforms were seeking out ways to monetise their business.

To enable Council 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.

A review of Council's accounts would also take place in an effort to streamline messaging, for example within Theatres, and look towards creating new accounts for Tourism; a short term action plan was circulated for Members' information.

Proposed by Councillor Robinson

Seconded by Councillor Ramsay and agreed that

the report be noted.

NO ACTION

5.8 HR/ER/020 NILGA CONSTITUTION

Members were advised that the circulated correspondence had been received from NILGA in relation to a review of their Constitution to ensure the Association was enabled for success in the 2023-2027 local government mandate.

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

Changes to the previous Constitution agreed in March 2019 (circulated) were highlighted in red on the draft 2023 document. These included minor wording and layout changes; for example the aims and objectives sections had been extended.

There were two new sections: the process for Resignation of Individual Councils was 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 was outlined at Section 14.

A Member who had attended a recent NAC meeting drew attention to related discussions at this meeting in respect of the roles and responsibilities set out in the Constitution for NILGA, which were similar in nature to those of the NAC, and suggested that an amendment to paragraph 3.1 was required.

Proposed by Councillor Webb
Seconded by Councillor Robinson and agreed that

NILGA's revised Constitution be noted and that Officers respond with an amendment to paragraph 3.1 to read 'To seek to involve every Councillor across Northern Ireland in the work of the Association'.

ACTION BY: Sandra Cole, Director of Finance & Governance

5.9 G/BCEP/016 UK COVID-19 INQUIRY

Members were advised that an independent public inquiry had 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 would 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 28 June 2022.

The aims of the inquiry were 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 would 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 could be found at www.covid19.public-inquiry.uk/terms-of-reference/

The Covid-19 Inquiry had divided its investigation into modules. Module 1 dealt with Resilience and Preparedness, Module 2 dealt with Core Decision-Making and Political Governance and Module 3 dealt with the Impact on the

Health Care Systems. Module 2 had 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 examined the Northern Ireland response to the pandemic.

In order to avoid duplication of responses, the Covid-19 Inquiry had 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 had 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 had agreed an extension to the time for response to 23 March 2023.

NILGA would 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 was obliged to co-operate with the Inquiry. There were no direct financial implications arising from this report. However, the turnaround time for responses to the Inquiry was short and there could be a significant temporary resource implication in terms of officer time.

Proposed by Councillor Robinson
Seconded by Councillor Webb and agreed that

the report be noted.

NO ACTION

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

A budget report for January 2023 – Period 10 was circulated for Members' information.

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

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

Proposed by Councillor Foster
Seconded by Councillor Webb and agreed that

the report be noted.

NO ACTION

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

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

The review had 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 had been approved by CLT and the draft procedure with the amendments incorporated was circulated.

Proposed by Councillor Foster

Seconded by Councillor Flanagan and agreed that

the reviewed Data Breach Notification Procedure 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.

6 ITEMS IN CONFIDENCE

6.1 IN CONFIDENCE PK/CEM/CR/006 PLOTBOX CREMATORIUM AND CEMETERY MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE UPDATE

Members were reminded that in April 2022 it was agreed to purchase Plotbox Crematorium and Cemetery Management Software to ensure efficient administration and service delivery in our cemeteries and crematorium facility.

The software system 'Plotbox' had been identified through the central government G-Cloud Framework that meets all the requirements of Council. This system would be provided by a company from their headquarters in Ballymena, having over 125 implementations worldwide.

The project to implement Plotbox began in June 2022. Plotbox would provide everything required to administer cemeteries & crematoria to be available on one system, (i.e. booking burials/cremations, grave/burial records, finance management, cemetery mapping, online searches and a Funeral Director portal for booking burial/cremation slots).

The project to transfer from our existing software provider, Cemetery-Pro, also commenced in June 2022; the cemeteries module would go live in March 2023, followed by the crematorium module in June 2023.

Members were advised that to date the following were now complete:

- Full Drone image mapping of Council's cemeteries. This mapping allows the user to see an exact location of a plot within the cemetery and would be available on the public search portal as 'Discover Ever After'.

A sample of how the maps would look for Antrim Cemetery & Carnmoney Cemetery were available on the [Antrim Cemetery](#) and [Carnmoney East Cemetery](#) links respectively.

- Approximately 300k records had been transferred from Council's existing software platform (Cemetery Pro) with the remaining data being transferred prior to going live.
- The Cemetery Admin team had tested the transferred records within the Plotbox system to ensure that the records had been successfully transferred. No issues were reported.
- Process Alignment meetings were ongoing with the Plotbox Consultants to customise the diary, deeds, records, plots, memorials and finance modules for ANBC.
- Training commenced on 9 February 2023 for the Bereavement Services team. Training for Crematorium staff was scheduled for week commencing 9 May 2023.

Sample images of what the user would see on the Plotbox system when searching our maps for a specific plot were circulated. Further update reports would be provided to Members as the project progressed.

A Member's query concerning the search facility was addressed.

Proposed by Councillor Webb

Seconded by Councillor Goodman and agreed that

the report be noted.

NO ACTION

6.2 **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 that Members be updated retrospectively.

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

A list of contracts approved by the Corporate Leadership Team and awarded in February 2023 was circulated.

Proposed by Councillor Webb
Seconded by Councillor Ramsay and agreed that

the report be noted.

NO ACTION

PROPOSAL TO PROCEED OUT OF 'IN CONFIDENCE'

Proposed by Councillor Ramsay
Seconded by Councillor Foster 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 6.52pm.

MAYOR