



MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE MEETING OF THE POLICY AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE HELD IN ANTRIM CIVIC CENTRE ON TUESDAY 9 JANUARY 2018 AT 6.30PM

In the Chair: Councillor N Kells

Members Present: Aldermen – F Agnew, W DeCourcy,
Councillors – J Bingham, B Duffin, T Girvan, P Hamill, D Hollis, T Hogg, A Logue, M Maguire, P Michael, N McClelland

Non-Committee Members Present: Alderman J Smyth

Officers Present: Chief Executive – Ms J Dixon
Director of Organisation Development – Ms A McCooke
Head of Governance – Ms L Johnston
Head of Finance – Mr J Balmer
ICT Officer – Mr C Bell
Governance Support Officer – Ms D Conlan

CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

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

1. APOLOGIES

Councillor B Webb

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None declared.

3. REPORT ON BUSINESS TO BE CONSIDERED

3.1 FC/FA/1 LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE ACT (NORTHERN IRELAND) 2011

Members were reminded that under the requirements of the Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 and the Prudential Code, the Council is required to have regard to a number of reports and to approve a range of indicators and strategies prior to the prescribed date for striking the rates, 15 February 2018.

Following recent consultation by CIPFA on the Prudential Code a revised Code is due to be published by CIPFA in January 2018 with an implementation date of 1 April 2018 (2018/19).

The following reports were prepared based on the 2011 Code, should the revised Code materially affect the content of these reports, updated reports would be reported back to Committee.

(a) FC/FA/3 Minimum Revenue Provision Policy 2018/2019

Under Regulation 6 of the Local Government (Capital Finance and Accounting) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2011, councils have a statutory requirement to charge to their general fund an amount of Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) which it considers to be 'prudent' in respect of the financing of capital expenditure.

A copy of the Council's MRP Policy 2018/2019 was circulated.

Proposed by Councillor Duffin
Seconded by Councillor Hogg and agreed that

the MRP Policy 2018/2019 be approved.

ACTION BY: Richard Murray, Management Accountant

(b) FC/FA/4 Prudential Indicators 2018/2019 to 2020/2021

The Council is required by Regulation to have regard to the current edition of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities when carrying out its duties under Part 1 of the Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011. In doing so, the Council is required to set and monitor a series of 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.

A report showing the Council's Prudential Indicators 2018/2019 to 2020/2021 was circulated.

Proposed by Councillor Duffin
Seconded by Councillor Hogg and agreed that

the Prudential Indicators 2018/2019 to 2020/2021 be approved.

ACTION BY: Ann Hamilton, Financial Controller

(c) FC/FA/5 Medium Term Financial Plan 2018/2019 to 2020/2021

The Prudential Code requires the Council to develop three-year revenue forecasts and three-year capital expenditure plans. These were shown in the Medium Term Financial Plan 2018/2019 to 2020/2021, a copy of which was circulated.

Proposed by Councillor Duffin
Seconded by Councillor Hogg and agreed that

the Medium Term Financial Plan 2018/2019 to 2020/2021 be noted.

ACTION BY: Richard Murray, Management Accountant

(d) FC/FA/2 Treasury Management Strategy

The Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 and the Local Government (Capital Finance and Accounting) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2011 requires the Council, in carrying out its capital finance functions, to have regard to the current editions of the CIPFA Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice and Cross-Sectoral Guidance Notes and the Prudential Code.

The Council is therefore required to set out its Treasury Management Policy and Strategy and to prepare an Annual Investment Strategy which sets out the Council's policies for managing its investments and for giving priority to the security and liquidity of those investments.

Copies of the above policy and strategies were circulated.

Proposed by Councillor Duffin
Seconded by Councillor Hogg and agreed that

- i) the council adopts the CIPFA Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice and Cross-Sectoral Guidance Notes;**
- ii) the Treasury Management Policy be approved;**
- iii) the Treasury Management Strategy 2018/2019 be approved;**
- iv) the Annual Investment Strategy 2018/2019 be approved.**

ACTION BY: Ann Hamilton, Financial Controller

(e) FC/FA/6 Report by the Chief Financial Officer on the Robustness of the Estimates and Adequacy of Reserves

Section 4 and 6 of the Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 requires the Council to have regard to a report, a copy of which was circulated, from the Chief Financial Officer on the robustness of the estimates and adequacy of reserves when considering the estimates for the next financial year.

Members thanked and congratulated Officers for the work involved.

Proposed by Councillor Duffin
Seconded by Councillor Hogg and agreed that

the Report by the Chief Financial Officer on the Robustness of the Estimates and Adequacy of the Reserves be noted.

ACTION BY: John Balmer, Head of Finance

3.2 HR/GEN/019 ATTENDANCE POLICY REVIEW

Members were advised that currently there are 4 attendance policies being applied across the Council. In practical and operational terms this makes the management of attendance difficult.

To support the effective management of attendance across the Council, it was proposed that the Council apply one Attendance Policy to all staff.

Previously management and trade unions had engaged in developing one Attendance Policy for new Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council employees. A further best practice review of this Attendance Policy had been completed and was circulated (Appendix 1).

The key refinements made to the Attendance Policy to apply to all staff are:

- One Single Trigger Process
- One Cautionary Review Process
- One Formal Case Review Process

Alongside the Managing Attendance Policy the Council offers a range of wellbeing initiatives to employees such as: counselling services; WRAP (Wellness, Recovery Action Plan); reduced membership fees for Council leisure centres; physiotherapy; screening services of the Action Cancer Big Bus; and men's health checks.

Members congratulated Officers for exceeding the targets set.

Proposed by Councillor McClelland
Seconded by Councillor Duffin and agreed that

the Council approves in principle, subject to trade union consultation and agreement, the draft Attendance Policy.

ACTION BY: Joan Cowan, Head of HR

3.3 P/PLAN/027 RETENTION AND DISPOSAL OF RECORDS SCHEDULE – PLANNING SECTION

Following the transfer of the majority of planning powers to local Councils on 1 April 2015 the Council's Retention and Disposal Schedule (RADS) for planning files remained in line with the previous DOE Planning schedule pending review.

All 11 of the new Councils, through the Planning Senior Administrative Officer Group and in liaison with representatives from PRONI, have now reviewed the position and are proposing a revised RADS schedule (copy circulated) which is consistent across all Councils. This revised RADS schedule would allow the Council to comply with both the current Data Protection Act 1988 and the forthcoming new General Data Protection Regulations which are due to come into operation in May 2018. The revised RADS schedule would also be taken in account in the specification for a new Planning Portal system to enable the Councils' to apply the retention and disposal requirements to both hard copy and electronic files.

The revised RADS schedule remains broadly in line with the previous DOE Planning schedule. The main change is the reduction in the retention period for planning files from 10 years to 6 years. Members were asked to note that Section 242 of the Planning Act (NI) 2011 requires for the permanent retention of a Public Register and therefore the main documents from planning application files, such as the application form, decision notice and stamped drawings and any other documents relevant to Section 242 of the 2011 Act would be permanently retained.

Proposed by Councillor Girvan
Seconded by Councillor Duffin and agreed that

the revised RADS schedule for planning files be approved.

ACTION BY: Carol Houston, Deputy Principal, Planning

3.4 HR/ER/001 POLICY ON PAYMENT FOR ANNUAL LEAVE

In line with the Working Time Regulations, the Council makes provision for annual leave and, as part of its duty of care, encourages all employees to use their full entitlement throughout the year.

Arrangements are in place which allow employees to carry forward 5 days' annual leave automatically. In exceptional circumstances employees may carry up to 10 days' annual leave and/or up to 20 hours' Time in Lieu (TOIL), subject to approval from the Corporate Leadership Team. These arrangements are adequate to deal with the majority of employees.

In rare and exceptional cases where there are ongoing pressing service requirements, it may not be possible for an employee to use in excess of 10 days' annual leave and/or up to 20 hours' TOIL.

If permission is given to carry forward in excess of 10 days' annual leave and/or 20 hours TOIL, the problem could arise again the following annual leave year.

For this reason, it was proposed that consideration be given to paying up to the amount of untaken annual leave in excess of 10 days' and/or 20 hours' TOIL.

The circulated policy had been drafted for Members' consideration so that payment could be made for annual leave/TOIL in exceptional circumstances.

Proposed by Councillor McClelland
Seconded by Councillor Logue and agreed that

the policy be approved.

ACTION BY: Joan Cowan, Head of Human Resources

3.5 FI/FIN/11 DRAFT RATES ESTIMATES UPDATE 2018/19

Members were reminded that detailed estimates were reported to the relevant Committees in December 2017.

A revised draft rates calculation and estimates summary by service were circulated for Members' information.

Proposed by Councillor Duffin
Seconded by Councillor Bingham and agreed that

the report be noted.

ACTION BY: Richard Murray, Management Accountant

3.6 ST/HS/207 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.

There is budgetary provision for the majority of posts filled via departmental salary budgets, salary contingency and grant funding.

The table below provided an update for Members on the use of agency staff as at November 2017 as compared to November 2016 and noted a reduction of 26 seasonal grounds maintenance operatives who left in October 2017.

Reason for Agency Worker	Nov 2017	Position Covered	Nov 2016	Comments
Additional Resource	14	4 x Seasonal Grounds Maintenance Ops Cleaner, Sentry Hill Receptionist Antrim Forum 6 x On Call Recreation Assistant/Leisure Attendant at Antrim Forum for Sunday early opening On Call Recreation Assistant/Leisure Attendant Antrim Forum On Call Leisure Attendant at Sixmile	23	Reflects the reduction of additional resources, some of which were related to temporary projects.
Filling Funded Posts	5	3 x Affordable Warmth Project Officer Grange Community Project Officer PCSP Support Officer (PT)	6	Changes in Affordable Warmth
Covering Sickness/ Maternity Leave	5	3 x Waste Operative, ESD Receptionist (Valley) Building Control Surveyor	5	

Covering vacancies until structures filled	32	Conferencing & Cultural Events Manager 2 x Arts Technician Front of House Sales Assistant, Old Court House Receptionist (Clotworthy) Tackling Deprivation Officer Clerical (Building Control) Systems Support Assistant Payroll Manager HR Officer HR Assistant Activity Coach – Disability 2 x Recreation Attendants Pavilion Attendant (Lilian Bland Pavilion) Team Leader Parks CSD 4 x Grounds Maintenance Operative Caravan Park Attendant (JLSP) Central Services Supervisor 4 x Waste Operatives, CSD 3 x Waste Operatives, ESD 3 x Driver Site Operatives	11	Increase due to vacant posts
Covering career breaks/	6	Systems Support Assistant E Communications Officer Clerical Officer Leisure	4	Additional Secondments/Career Breaks

secondments		Grounds Maintenance Operative Waste Operative Clerical Officer Waste		
TOTAL	62		49	

The table above excluded limited ad-hoc agency cover, which is necessary to provide operational cover, at short notice.

Appendix one (circulated) set out expenditure on agency workers in November 2017. The cost of agency staff had reduced for the period 1 April 2017 to 30 November 2017 at 7.63% of all staffing costs compared to 7.91% for the same period last year.

Proposed by Councillor Hamill
Seconded by Councillor Duffin and agreed that

the report be noted.

ACTION BY: P Greer, Human Resources Officer

The undernoted supplementary item was considered at this point.

SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT

CE/OA/34 BRIEFING ON NORTHERN IRELAND BUDGETARY OUTLOOK 2018-20

Members were advised that a Briefing Paper on the Budgetary Outlook for Northern Ireland 2018-20 was recently produced by the Department of Finance (Executive Summary circulated) and that feedback was to be provided to the Department by 26 January 2018.

Members were advised that they may note the correspondence, report on an individual/party political basis or formulate a response on behalf of the Council.

Proposed by Councillor Hogg
Seconded by Councillor Michael and agreed that

the Chief Executive request a short extension from the Department and that a draft Corporate response be reported to the Council Meeting on 29 January 2018.

MOTION TO PROCEED 'IN COMMITTEE'

Moved by Councillor Michael
Seconded by Councillor Duffin and agreed that

the Committee proceeds to conduct the following business 'In Committee'.

ITEMS IN CONFIDENCE

3.7 IN CONFIDENCE CE/GEN/74 PERFORMANCE UPDATE – RIDDOR REPORTING

Members were reminded that a report on performance was made to the November Council in relation to the Annual Business Plan. This report in addition to highlighting notable areas of achievement also summarised areas not currently on track where a more detailed report would be provided to the most appropriate Committee. The purpose of this report is to provide an update relating to an area of Health and Safety not currently on track i.e. the increase in RIDDOR (Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations) incidents.

RIDDOR legislation places a legal requirement on employers to report certain types of incidents. Some of these include:

- Dangerous Occurrences such as failure of lifting equipment or fires;
- Occupational Diseases;
- Major Incidents resulting in loss of sight or fractures of large limbs; and
- Absence from work for 3 days or more after an incident.

The target set for 2017/18 was four incidents and at Quarter 2 2017/18 five RIDDOR reportable incidents were recorded, none of which were major incidents, dangerous occurrences or occupational diseases. The incidents required reporting as they resulted in an absence from work of 3 or more days.

This was an increase on the RIDDOR incidents in 2016/2017, in which only four reportable incidents recorded.

An Internal Audit carried out in 2016 on the process of accident/incident investigation gave a Limited Assurance rating. Internal Audit raised a Priority 1 finding in relation to accident / incident reporting. In the report, Internal Audit noted that there was varying levels of adherence to the reporting procedures and also raised a Priority 2 concern regarding the timely reporting of accidents / incidents.

Given the concerns raised by Internal Audit, it is highly probable therefore that the increase in RIDDORS is not as a result of a real increase in accidents/incidents; but rather that there may have been under reporting of such incidents in 2016/17.

Since Internal Audit issued its findings, significant effort has been placed on actions taken to improve and strengthen Council's approach to accident

and incident reporting and investigation, with the following actions having been taken:

- A new accident investigation procedure;
- Raising awareness with staff through communication and monitoring of the process;
- Rationalising the reporting process to reduce time delays;
- Improving performance reporting to management on trends;
- Formalised training on accident reporting and investigation for staff; and
- A formalised Health and Safety inspection and audit programme monitoring compliance with reporting and legislative requirements.

The most recent Internal Audit of this process of accident/incident investigation has now given a Satisfactory Assurance rating, although further improvements are still required in respect of the timeliness of reporting, and these are ongoing.

Proposed by Councillor Duffin

Seconded by Councillor Maguire and agreed that

the Committee notes the update relating to RIDDOR reporting.

ACTION BY: Elaine Girvan, Corporate Health and Safety Manager

MOTION TO PROCEED 'OUT OF COMMITTEE'

Moved by Councillor Logue

Seconded by Councillor Duffin and agreed that

the Committee proceeds to conduct any remaining business 'In Public'.

The Chairperson advised that audio-recording would re-commence at this point.

4. ANY OTHER RELEVANT BUSINESS

Alderman DeCourcy requested that condolences from the Committee be sent to Councillor Webb on the loss of his Mother.

ACTION BY: Member Services

There being no further business the Chairperson thanked the Members for attending and the meeting ended at 7.16 pm.

Mayor

Council Minutes have been redacted in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 1998 and legal advice.