



MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF A MEETING OF THE POLICY AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE HELD IN ANTRIM CIVIC CENTRE ON TUESDAY 5 JANUARY 2016 AT 6.30PM

- In the Chair** : Councillor D Arthurs
- Members Present** : Aldermen - F Agnew, W Ball, P Barr, and W DeCourcy
Councillors - P Brett, M Goodman, N Kells, A Logue,
M Maguire, N McClelland and P Michael
- Non-Committee Members Present** : Councillors - A Ball and D Hollis
- Officers Present** : Director of Finance & Governance, Mrs C McFarland
Director of Organisation Development, Mrs A McCooke
Legal Advisor, Mr P Casey
ICT Officer, Mr J Higginson
Senior Mayor and Member Services Officer, Mrs K Smyth
- In attendance** : Department of Finance & Personnel Representatives -
Mr Sam Connolly
Belfast International Airport Representatives -
Mr Graham Keddis
Mr Brian Carlin

CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the January Meeting of the Policy and Governance Committee and reminded all present of recording requirements. He expressed appreciation to the Vice-Chair, Alderman Ball, for chairing the December Committee Meeting.

1 APOLOGIES

Councillors Kelso, Scott and Webb.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

Councillors Goodman and Logue joined the meeting during the presentation.

3.1(a) G/LAN/2 PRESENTATION - REVIEW OF NORTHERN IRELAND'S NON DOMESTIC RATING SYSTEM

Mr Sam Connelly from Department of Finance and Personnel made a presentation on "Review of Northern Ireland's Non Domestic Rating System" prior to consultation feedback being given.

Mr Connolly's presentation outlined relevant background information, the process, key principles, the current non-domestic rating system with breakdowns of reliefs and exemptions, the scope of the review and issues of particular interest to Councils. He responded to enquiries elaborating as necessary.

It was noted the Council's draft response to the consultation exercise would be considered at the January Council Meeting.

Mr Connolly withdrew from the meeting at 6.50pm.

ACTION: Catherine McFarland.

3.1(b) G/MSMO/17 PRESENTATION - BELFAST INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Members were reminded that Belfast International Airport representatives had addressed the June Community Planning & Regeneration Committee meeting and it had been agreed that they meet with the Council on a six monthly basis.

Mr Graham Keddie (Managing Director) and Mr Brian Carlin (Director of Commercial Development) were present to elaborate on future plans.

- Future Investment
- Capital Programme
- Air Passenger Duty (APD)
- Customer / Passenger experience
- Retail Units
- Warehousing Projects
- Non-domestic rates
- Parking charges / unauthorised car parking

Concerns regarding the impact of Air Passenger Duty was highlighted and representatives welcomed any future lobbying from Members regarding same.

Both representatives responded to a number of enquiries from Members elaborating as necessary and Mr Keddie also extended an invitation for a Council representative to attend the forthcoming Major 'Routes' European Conference in April in Poland, this Conference being hosted in Belfast in 2017.

Members welcomed the forthcoming announcement and were delighted with the associated 700 new jobs, including the proposed fuel station and associated 35 jobs. The potential for Council branding opportunities on the front of the Airport Terminal were also highlighted.

ACTION: Andrea McCooke.

Councillor Brett left the meeting.

3.2 F1/ICT/4, I ICT DIGITALISATION STRATEGY

The ICT Digitalisation Strategy had evolved from the previous document presented to Council.

Focus has been given to how ICT systems can be used to engage more effectively with Citizens, promoting the use of self service options to enhance service delivery.

Proposed by Councillor McClelland
Seconded by Councillor Kells and agreed that

that the ICT Digitalisation Strategy be endorsed.

ACTION BY: Graham Smyth.

3.3 G/LAN/17 MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU) BETWEEN LAND AND PROPERTY SERVICES (LPS) AND COUNCIL

Correspondence and a draft Memorandum of Understanding had been received from Land and Property Services, copies of which were circulated.

The Memorandum of Understanding sets out the relationship between Council and LPS with particular emphasis on the operation of the Penny Product Working Group and the Property Services Liaison Group.

Officers had reviewed this document and were happy to accept in principle on the basis that we would work with LPS on the operational implementation of the Memorandum.

Proposed by Councillor Kells
Seconded by Councillor Michael and agreed that

Council adopts the Memorandum of Understanding between LPS and Council.

ACTION BY: Denise Lynn.

3.4 DRAFT GUIDANCE FOR COUNCILS PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT FROM APRIL 2016 ONWARDS

Members were advised that the Department of the Environment was seeking views from consultees on draft Guidance for Councils' Performance Improvement from April onwards. The aim was to provide statutory guidance to assist Councils to comply with performance improvement duties under the Local Government Act (NI) 2014.

Part 12 of the Local Government Act puts in place a new framework to support continuous improvement in the delivery of Council services in the context of strategic objectives and issues that are important to those who receive the services. Councils were required to gather information to assess improvements in their services and to report annually on their performance against indicators which they have either set themselves or that have been set by departments.

A copy of the consultation document and proposed response was circulated.

Proposed by Councillor Logue

Seconded by Councillor McClelland and agreed that

that the proposed response be submitted to the Department of the Environment by 25 February 2016.

ACTION BY: Helen Hall.

3.5 OD/HR/ER/1 PAY PROTECTION POLICY

The Council aims to support successful organisational change by providing for employees' contractual pay to be protected, where it was reduced as a result of organisational restructuring. To this end, and following consultation with Trade Unions, the circulated policy had been drafted for Members to consider.

Both Legacy Councils previously applied a maximum 3 year pay protection arrangement if and when employees had a reduction in pay, arising from restructuring and regrading exercises.

Similarly, this draft pay protection policy proposes to apply a maximum 3 year pay protection period specifically relating to the regrading of posts, in relation to the current restructuring exercise.

If approved, the employee's substantive pay rate (i.e. Contractual pay) will be protected for a maximum three year period from the date of reduction in pay. A number of conditions apply during the protection period including that there would be no annual incremental progression on the protected grade and pay awards would not be applied until the employee's new substantive pay was equal to or greater than the protected salary.

If approved, it was proposed that the Pay Protection Policy be applied to all employees, effective from 1 April 2015.

Proposed by Councillor Kells

Seconded by Councillor McClelland and agreed that

that the Pay Protection policy be approved, effect from 1 April 2015.

ACTION BY: Joan Cowan.

3.6 CCS/EDP/3 DISABILITY ACTION PLAN - JORDANSTOWN SPECIAL SCHOOL CONCERT

Members were advised that a request had been received from Jordanstown Special School to use the Theatre at the Mill for their school concert on 22 March 2016.

Invites to the concert would include pupils, parents, staff and representatives from a range of organisations, which the school works with, including Disability Action, Disability Sport NI, RNIB, RNID, Action and Hearing.

Members were reminded that as part of the Councils Disability Action Plan 2015/16 the Council was seeking to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people, and encourage participation by disabled people in public life.

It was proposed to grant Jordanstown Special School permission to use the Theatre at the Mill, without charge, and that the Council builds on this opportunity to engage with organisations which the Council can forge new and improved working relationships with as part of its Disability Action Plan.

Proposed by Councillor Logue
Seconded by Councillor Kells and agreed that

Jordanstown Special School be permitted to use the Theatre at the Mill, without charge, on 22 March 2016.

ACTION BY: Andrea McCooke.

3.7 CE/GEN/42 NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY - THE DEPARTMENTS BILL

Members were advised that correspondence had been received from the Northern Ireland Assembly, Committee for the Environment outlining details of a proposed new nine department structure to be established by renaming 7 departments and dissolving three others. Council's views on the proposals were sought (copy correspondence circulated).

Proposed by Councillor Kells
Seconded by Councillor Goodman and agreed that

Members respond on an individual/party political basis.

NO ACTION.

3.8 CP/CD/12 NORTHERN IRELAND FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE CONSULTATION TO DOWNGRADE FIRE STATIONS

Members were advised of correspondence received from the Fire Brigades Union advising of a Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service consultation document which could result in the downgrading of full-time fire cover at Antrim Fire station. The Fire Brigades Union (FBU) respectively requested an opportunity to also meet with the Council to express their concerns. Copy letter circulated.

Proposed by Goodman
Seconded by Kells and agreed that

The Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service be invited to address Members at 6pm prior to the February Policy & Governance Committee Meeting to elaborate on proposals to downgrade local Fire Stations.

ACTION BY: Member Services.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

3.9 CE/GEN/42 TRANSPORT NI - BUS SHELTER CONTRACT

Members were advised that correspondence had been received from transportni advising of forthcoming changes to the way in which the provision and maintenance of bus shelters across Northern Ireland is to be taken forward.

A copy of the correspondence was circulated for Members' information.

Proposed by Councillor Kells
Seconded by Councillor Logue and agreed that

the correspondence be noted.

NO ACTION.

3.10 FC/G/25 PAYMENTS REPORT

The schedule of payments for Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council dated 27th November to 18th December and schedule of manual payments for November were circulated with any payments over £5,000 having been analysed in more detail.

Proposed by Councillor Kells
Seconded by Councillor Goodman and agreed that

the report be noted.

NOTED: a breakdown of the Internal Audit and Recruitment Agency payments outlined on the schedule to be provided to Councillor Maguire.

ACTION BY: Catherine McFarland / Andrea McCooke

3.11 FI/FIN/4 BUDGET REPORT - APRIL TO NOVEMBER 2015

A budget report for the period April to November 2015 was circulated for Members' information.

Proposed by Councillor Kells
Seconded by Councillor Goodman and agreed that

the report be noted.

ACTION BY: Richard Murray.

3.12 F1/FIN/11 DRAFT RATES ESTIMATES 2016/2017

An update on the Draft Rates Estimates was circulated for Members' information.

Whilst there had been some changes to the cost of services and to the Estimated Gross Penny Rate Product, the rates proposed remain the same as those presented to Committees in December.

Officers would continue to review the figures, however it was not expected that there would be any further significant changes. A special meeting of Council was scheduled for 11 February to strike the District Rates.

Proposed by Councillor Maguire
Seconded by Councillor Kells and agreed that

the report be noted.

ACTION BY: John Balmer.

Councillor Brett returned to the Meeting.

3.13 CP/POL/1 UPDATE ON HOW THE TRANSFERRED FUNCTIONS GRANT WILL BE CALCULATED FOR 2016/17

Council had received communication from the Department of the Environment in relation to the update on how the transferred functions grant will be calculated for 2016/17.

In effect, the correspondence confirmed that the rate struck by Council would have a direct impact on our grant.

A copy of the correspondence from the Department of the Environment had been circulated.

Proposed by Councillor McClelland
Seconded by Councillor Logue and agreed that

the report be noted.

NO ACTION.

3.14 G/HS/1 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROJECT 2015/2016 (MASSEREENE STREET, RIVERSIDE AND RACEVIEW)

Background

Following Committee approval to engage in the proposed Red Cross Community Resilience Project in November, the project had been initiated.

A stakeholder meeting was held 27th November with the Red Cross, agency partners including Emergency Responders (PSNI, NIFRS), Drainage Agencies (Transport NI, Rivers Agency), Northern Ireland Housing Executive and Northern Health and Social Care Trust.

Further to this, a Community Resilience briefing was facilitated at Antrim Civic Centre on Wednesday 16th December for Elected Members to meet with the Red Cross and key agencies. Members in attendance were very supportive of the project and felt that it offered a very valuable, new community engagement opportunity. Members were issued with a delegate pack and further copies were available via the Governance Section - Laura O'Boyle (Ext 31414) or Perry Donaldson (Ext 31495).

Next Stage

The British Red Cross would lead on the Community Engagement side of the project. In mid-January they will carry out door to door engagement distributing leaflets and speaking to residents within the areas of Massereene Street, Riverside and Raceview which fall within the at risk boundary. Residents will be advised of a Roadshow taking place on **Saturday 30th January** in The Old Court House (provisionally), running as a drop in event from 11am – 3pm.

All Elected Members were welcome to come to the Roadshow and information had been distributed via email regarding the event.

The first workshop was scheduled for **Thursday 3rd March** at the Old Court House (provisionally), more details would follow the Roadshow.

The vital role that community representatives and Elected Members play in helping communities prepare for emergencies cannot be underestimated, and Council support for this initiative was key to its success. Members support would be greatly appreciated in the promotion of these events within the community, in order to maximise the community buy in to the project. With your help, this new innovative programme would hopefully add some value and resilience to residents in these areas.

If Members would like to discuss the initiative further, please do not hesitate to contact Laura O'Boyle (Ext 31414) or Perry Donaldson (Ext 31495) based within Governance Section in Antrim Civic Centre.

Proposed by Councillor Logue
Seconded by Councillor Kells and agreed that

the report be noted.

NOTED: request for calendar invitations to be issued.

ACTION BY: Liz Johnston / Perry Donaldson.

3.15 F1/FIN/3 HR/HR/3 CCS/GEN/1- UPDATED BUSINESS PLANS - FINANCE / GOVERNANCE / ICT / HUMAN RESOURCES / CUSTOMER SERVICES AND COMMUNICATIONS

Members were reminded that all of the Business Plans were presented to Council in June this year.

The updated Business Plans for Finance, ICT, Governance, Human Resources, Customer Services and Communications were circulated for Members' attention.

Further updates on performance against the Business Plans will be brought to the Committee in March 2016.

Proposed by Councillor Kells
Seconded by Councillor Logue and agreed that

the updated Business Plans for Finance, Governance, ICT, Human Resources, Customer Services and Communications be noted.

ACTION BY: Denise Lynn.

3.16 MEMBER DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP - MINUTES OF MEETING OF 8 DECEMBER 2015

Members were advised that a meeting of the Member Development Working Group took place on Tuesday 8 December 2015.

A copy of the Minutes of the meeting were attached for Members' information.

The Chairman congratulated all staff and Members involved on the success of the Charter Assessment process and the accreditation achieved.

Proposed by Councillor Kells
Seconded by Councillor Maguire and agreed that

the Minutes of the Member Development Working Group Meeting held on Monday 2 November 2015 be noted.

NO ACTION.

3.17 ST/G/215 REPORT ON ATTENDANCE

Members were aware from the recent Audit Committee Meeting it was agreed that the undernoted update on absenteeism be presented to the Policy and Governance Committee for noting.

BACKGROUND

Members were advised that table below outlined the sickness absence for Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council. The purpose of this report was to provide an **update on absence for the period from 1 April 2015 to 30 September 2015**. For comparison purposes the same period for 2013-2014 and 2014-15 had been included.

ABSENCE UPDATE

There had been an increase in short term absence by 63.36 days and a decrease in long term absence of 320.80 days and both would continue to be managed. The reduction in long term absence remained a priority and this would be reflected in the revised Occupational Health specification and contract.

Members were reminded that for the year ended 31 March 2015 almost 50% of employees had 100% attendance. At this stage in the year approximately 74% of employees have had 100% attendance and whilst this is likely to decrease within the current reporting year, we would continue to recognise those employees with full attendance during the 1 April 2015 – 31 March 2016 period.

	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016	
Month	1 Apr to 30 Sep 2013	1 Apr to 30 Sep 2014	1 Apr to 30 Sep 2015	Variance from period last year
No. FTE	695.16	706.07	710.46	+5.08
No. of days lost to sickness	4078.18	3576.29	3318.86	-257.43
Days lost to Long Term Absence	3008.24	2656.62	2335.82	-320.80
Day lost to Short Term Absence	1069.96	919.68	983.04	+63.36
Average Days Lost per Employee	5.87	5.07	4.67	-0.40

The top three reasons for absence for the period to date are noted below with current action being taken to address the reasons.

Reason	Action
Other Category E.g: Cancer Related Illness, Surgery and Post Op Debility etc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well being Action plans for individual cases. Phased returns variety of reduced hours, alternative work and/or adjusted duties. Use of leisure facilities to help with returns from surgery in suitable cases. Eg Pool

<p>Stress, depression, mental health and Fatigue</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staffcare, confidential counselling to all staff. • Cognitive behavioural Therapy (CBT) sessions for staff in appropriate cases. • Immediate letter sent to advise of Staffcare, • Immediate Meeting with employee and line manager alternative person if issue is with the Line Manager in WRS cases. • Referrals to Nurse Led Clinic and/or OH doctor • Regular Welfare Review Meetings to agreed action plans, Use of the Leisure Facilities, • Piloting of the Wellness Recovery Action Plan, helping staff to recognise stress earlier and the interventions that can be put in place to help • Harassment advisors available in all departments and various locations
<p>Musculo-Skeletal problems</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manual Handling Training • Referrals to Nurse Led Clinic and/or OH doctor, • Regular Welfare Review Meetings to agreed action plans, • Access to Physiotherapy subject to OH recommendation. • Wellbeing action plans. • Phased returns variety of reduced hours, alternative work and/or adjusted duties. • Work station/ergonomical assessments • Taster sessions of pilates • Investigation of workplace accidents and implementation of any appropriate recommendations

GENERAL UPDATE

The HR team continues to manage absence closely and has introduced an additional monthly update to all Heads of Service showing sickness to date and importantly how this compares to the targeted reduction in absence to date.

Long term cases were being closely monitored and referrals to Occupational Health were made as appropriate. Formal case reviews would be held where all possible steps have been taken and have failed to secure regular and sustained attendance.

Proposed by Councillor Kells
 Seconded by Councillor Michael and agreed that

the absenteeism update be noted.

ACTION BY: Joan Cowan.

ANY OTHER RELEVANT BUSINESS

There being no further Committee business the Chair thanked everyone for their attendance.

The meeting concluded at 7.40pm.

MAYOR