



**MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE MEETING OF THE POLICY AND GOVERNANCE
COMMITTEE HELD IN THE ROUND TOWER CHAMBER, ANTRIM CIVIC CENTRE
ON 16 JUNE 2026 AT 6.30 PM**

In the Chair	:	Alderman P Bradley
Members Present (In person)	:	Alderman L Clarke Councillors – J Archibald-Brown, S Cosgrove, M Ní Chonghaile and A O'Lone
Members Present (Remote)	:	Aldermen - M Cosgrove and S Ross Councillors - J Burbank, M Goodman, H Magill and T McGrann
Non Committee Members: (Remote)	:	Councillor R Lynch
Officers Present (In person)	:	Director of Finance – J Balmer Director of Organisation Development (Interim) – L Johnston Head of Finance – R Murray Head of Organisation Development – L Millar Head of Human Resources – J Clarke Borough Lawyer, Legal, Land, Governance and Policy – P Casey ICT Helpdesk Officer – J Wilson Member Services Officer – C McGrandle

CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

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

1 APOLOGIES

Councillor V McWilliam

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Item 3.7 – Councillor T McGrann

Item 6.1 – Councillor A O'Lone

3 ITEMS FOR DECISION

3.1 F1/FIN/10 AMENDMENT TO FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to recommend for approval the amendment to the Financial Regulations.

2. Introduction

Council would regularly review the Financial Regulations to ensure a high level of governance was in place in relation to financial activity. Amendments to the financial regulations were last approved at the Policy and Governance Committee in June 2025.

The Financial Regulations form part of the financial framework of Council which provided the necessary control on financial matters, whilst encouraging best practice and promoting local accountability.

The Financial Regulations provided a framework through which the Chief Executive could be satisfied that proper financial administration was in place. The aim of these Regulations was to help ensure that high standards of propriety and best value were achieved. All Elected Members and employees had a duty to promote these aims, not just by following Financial Regulations but in their general approach.

3. Review of the Regulations

Following review, amendments had been drafted and were summarised below:

Section 7 Procurement:

- Section 7.5 Quotations and Tenders

The guidance had been amended to be more explicit in the requirements for below threshold purchases. A de-minimis limit had been added to reduce the administration costs of undertaking and evidencing checks on purchases.

- Section 7.35 Social Value

The guidance had been amended to include reference to applicable Procurement Policy Notes as issued by the Department of Finance.

Section 20 Property Plant and Equipment

- Section 20 Property Plant and Equipment

This section had been amended to update the definition of the Council's capital assets which shall be recorded on the fixed asset register within the Council statements of Accounts.

- Updated guidance on Inventories had been included.

Other amendments

- Amendment of title from Director of Finance and Governance to Director of Finance throughout the document

A copy of the proposed updated Financial Regulations was circulated, with amendments highlighted for information.

4. Screening Requirements

All necessary screening had been completed and relevant forms circulated for information.

In response to a Member's request, the Director of Finance confirmed that social value would be included within future procurement reports.

Proposed by Councillor Archibald-Brown

Seconded by Councillor O'Lone and agreed that

the updated Financial Regulations be approved.

ACTION BY: Richard Murray, Head of Finance

Councillor Burbank joined the meeting remotely at this point.

3.2 FI/AUD/04 ANTI-FRAUD, CORRUPTION AND ANTI-BRIBERY POLICIES

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to obtain approval from Members for the revised Anti-Fraud & Corruption and Anti-Bribery Policies.

2. Background

In April 2023, the Policy and Governance Committee approved both the Anti-Fraud & Corruption and Anti-Bribery Policies.

3. Key Points

In accordance with the Council's Policy Framework and Schedule, the Anti-Fraud & Corruption and Anti-Bribery Policies had been reviewed and updated.

There had been no significant amendments made to the Policies with the exception of amending job titles to reflect changes in Council structures, inclusion of the Rural Needs Impact Assessment and the provision of clarifications where appropriate.

A copy of the updated policies were circulated, with amendments highlighted for information.

4. Screening Requirements

The Policy had been screened for the need for an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA), Rural Needs Impact Assessment (RNIA) and a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA), and the relevant screening forms were circulated for information.

The DPIA screening for the Anti-Fraud & Corruption Policy indicated that a DPIA was required due to the combining, comparing or matching of personal data from multiple sources during an investigation.

Completion of the DPIA had indicated that all necessary steps had been taken to ensure that the data was held securely and so processing could be progressed. The DPIA would be kept under review.

The remaining screenings concluded that impact assessments were not recommended.

Proposed by Councillor Goodman
Seconded by Councillor Ní Chonghaile and agreed that

the revised Anti-Fraud & Corruption and Anti-Bribery Policies be approved.

ACTION BY: Paul Caulcutt, Head of Internal Audit

Councillor Lynch joined the meeting remotely at this point.

3.3 **PT/CI/066 YEAR END BUSINESS PLAN 2025/26 – FINANCE DIRECTORATE**

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to recommend to Members to approve the Year End Business Plan 2025/26 for the Finance Directorate.

2. Background

Part 12 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 put in place a

framework to support the continuous improvement of Council services. Specifically, the duties in the Act related to Section 84(1), 85(2) and 85(9) whereby the Council had a statutory duty to make arrangements to:

- Secure continuous improvement
- Secure achievement of its improvement objectives
- Exercise its functions so that any Departmental specified standards were met.

3. Previous Decision of Council

In June 2025, Council approved a strategic performance framework as part of the Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan 2025/26.

4. Business Planning

Business planning played a vital role in the Council's performance management and delivery processes. It offered a more efficient and cohesive approach to monitoring and evaluating performance, whilst improving overall visibility.

The purpose of the Directorate Business Plans was to:

- Demonstrate how each of the Directorates were supporting and achieving Council's priorities.
- Provide a clear sense of purpose of the Directorate and the challenges it faced.
- Illustrate how it would align its resources to meet the challenges ahead.
- Measure performance and hold ourselves to account to ensure we deliver for the Council and its residents.

Year End Business Plan for the Finance Directorate 2025/26 was circulated for approval.

5. Financial Position/Implications

As agreed, as part of the Council's rate setting process.

Proposed by Councillor Ní Chonghaile
Seconded by Councillor Magill and agreed that

the Year End Business Plan 2025/26 for the Finance Directorate be approved.

ACTION BY: Allen Templeton, Performance Improvement Officer

3.4 PT/CI/066 YEAR END BUSINESS PLAN 2025/26 – ORGANISATION DEVELOPMENT DIRECTORATE

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to recommend to Members to approve the Year End Business Plan 2025/26 for the Organisation Development Directorate.

2. Background

Part 12 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 put in place a framework to support the continuous improvement of Council services. Specifically, the duties in the Act relate to Section 84(1), 85(2) and 85(9) whereby the Council had a statutory duty to make arrangements to:

- Secure continuous improvement
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- Exercise its functions so that any Departmental specified standards were met.

3. Previous Decision of Council

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- Provide a clear sense of purpose of the Directorate and the challenges it faced.
- Illustrate how it would align its resources to meet the challenges ahead.
- Measure performance and hold ourselves to account to ensure we deliver for the Council and its residents.

Year End Business Plan for the Organisation Development Directorate 2025/26 was circulated for approval.

5. Financial Position/Implications

As agreed, as part of the Council's rate setting process.

Proposed by Councillor O'Lone

Seconded by Alderman Clarke and agreed that

the Year End Business Plan 2025/26 for the Organisation Development Directorate be approved.

ACTION BY: Allen Templeton, Performance Improvement Officer

3.5 PT/CI/066 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE AND IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2025/26, PERFORMANCE PROGRESS REPORT QUARTER 4

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to recommend to Members to approve the Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan 2025/26, Quarter 4 Performance Progress Report.

2. Background

Part 12 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 puts in place a framework to support the continuous improvement of Council services.

3. Previous Decision of Council

The Council's Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan 2025/26 was approved in June 2025. This set out a range of robust performance targets, along with identified improvement objectives and several Statutory Performance Targets.

4. Performance Progress Reports

Fourth Quarter Performance Progress Report was circulated for Member's information.

5. Governance

Quarterly performance progress reports were reported to relevant Committees.

In response to a Member's query in relation to the issues Council experienced in dealing with the increased number of phone calls as a result of the service delivery issues from Bryson Recycling, the Head of Organisation Development confirmed that Council was in the process of reviewing performance to identify potential improvements for future implementation.

The Head of Organisation Development confirmed that she would return to the Member in respect of his query relating to an Economic Development indicator that was not achieved.

Proposed by Councillor Archibald-Brown
Seconded by Councillor Goodman and agreed that

the Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan 2025/26 Quarter 4 Performance Progress Report be approved.

ACTION BY: Allen Templeton, Performance Improvement Officer

Councillor McGrann joined the meeting remotely during Item 3.6.

3.6 PT/CI/071 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE AND IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2026/27 (FINAL) AND PERFORMANCE GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to recommend to Members to approve the Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan 2026/27 following consultation, and the Performance Governance Arrangements.

2. Background

Part 12 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 puts in place a framework to support the continuous improvement of Council services.

3. Previous Decision of Council

The Council's draft Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan 2026/27 for consultation was approved in January 2026. This set out a range of robust performance targets, along with six identified improvement objectives and several statutory performance targets.

4. Consultation Period

A twelve-week public consultation commenced on 2 February 2026, to derive feedback from residents, stakeholders, local businesses, statutory and community planning partners, and other bodies with which collaborative working was taking place or planned.

Multiple channels were used for consultation to ensure robust feedback on the Plan:

- Copies of the draft Plan along with the consultation document and pop-up banner with QR Code were available in the reception areas in Mossley Mill and Antrim Civic Centre.
- The draft Plan, Executive Summary and consultation document were available on the Council's website and a QR code was created linked to the consultation survey.
- Face-to-face consultation events were held in Leisure Centres, Libraries, Civic Centres and events across the Borough.
- Weekly digital surveys were conducted via the Council's social media channels.
- 13,608 stakeholders were contacted directly requesting feedback on the Plan.

As a result of these 152 completed consultation surveys and 509 digital responses were received.

The consultation feedback, circulated, had been considered, and no

changes were required to the draft Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan 2026/27.

5. Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan 2026/27

Following consultation, the final Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan 2026/27 was circulated for approval.

6. Performance Governance Arrangements

To support the delivery of the Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan 2026/27, the Performance Governance Arrangements (circulated) and were reviewed annually.

These arrangements outline the Council's duty to set objectives for the improvement of services, the performance framework and reporting, the Corporate Performance and Improvement Objectives and how we would monitor and measure these objectives.

7. Section 75 Screening and Rural Needs Impact Assessment

A copy of the Section 75 Screening and Rural Needs Impact Assessment were circulated for information.

Proposed by Councillor Goodman

Seconded by Councillor McGrann and agreed that

the final Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan 2026/27 and Performance Governance Arrangements be approved.

ACTION BY: Allen Templeton, Performance Improvement Officer

Having declared an interest in Item 3.7, Councillor McGrann left the meeting remotely at this point.

3.7 CCS/EDP/025 DUAL LANGUAGE STREET SIGN APPLICATIONS

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to recommend to Members to note the Dual Language update and seek approval where required in accordance with the Policy.

2. Background

The Dual Language Street Sign Policy (circulated) was adopted by Council in May 2022. The Policy was drafted in accordance with Article 11 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Northern Ireland) Order 1995, which grants councils broad discretionary powers to erect dual language street signs or secondary nameplates in languages other than English.

3. Applications

Applications supported by a petition had been received for the following areas. The petitions would now be verified against the Electoral Register.

- Brecart Road, Toomebridge, BT41 3TH and BT41 3PJ
- Pakenham Court, Crumlin, BT29 4EP
- Mayfield Park, Newtownabbey, BT36 7WP

Stage 1 – Petition Verification (For Approval)

Three applications were at this stage. The occupiers signing the petition had been verified against the Electoral Register and the applications meet the required one-third threshold. Approval was requested for these applications to progress to Stage 2.

- Cargin Road, Toomebridge, BT41 3NS
- Hollybrook Gardens, Newtownabbey, BT36 3ZS
- Loup Road, Toomebridge, BT41 3TW

Stage 2 – Residents Canvass (For Approval)

Two applications had progressed to this stage. Canvass letters had been issued to occupants, and both applications met the required threshold of two thirds of residents. Approval was requested for these applications to progress to Stage 3.

- Longlands Walk, Newtownabbey, BT36 7NQ
- Longlands Park, Newtownabbey, BT36 7NG

Stage 3 – Street Sign Installation (For Noting)

- No applications were at this stage.

4. Map and Costs

Maps and associated costs were circulated for information.

Proposed by Councillor O'Lone

Seconded by Councillor Ní Chonghaile and agreed that

the Dual Language update be noted and the applications at Stage 2 and Stage 3 in accordance with the Policy be approved.

ACTION BY: Claire Webb, Accessibility and Inclusion Officer

Councillor McGrann returned to the meeting remotely at this point.

4 ITEMS FOR NOTING

4.1 CCS/EDP/7 SECTION 75 EQUALITY AND RURAL NEEDS SCREENING

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to recommend to Members to note the quarterly Section 75 Equality and Rural Needs Impact Assessment policy screenings.

2. Background

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 places a statutory duty on designated public authorities to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and the desirability of promoting good relations. Compliance with these duties was a legal requirement.

The Council made a commitment to apply screening methodology to all new and revised policies. Where necessary and appropriate, these new policies would be subject to further equality impact assessment.

3. Screening Update

The policies noted below had been screened between January and March 2026.

POLICY	SCREENING DECISION
Internal Audit Strategy 2026-2030	1
Risk Management Policy	1
Good Relations Audit and Strategy 2026-2031	1
Rural Investment and Growth Fund	1
Minimum Revenue Provision Policy 2026/27	1
Council Reserves Policy	1
Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan 2026/27	1
Grant Funding Policy	1
Rural Investment and Growth Fund	1
Review of Entertainment Licensing Policy	1
Winter Woolies Update	1

1. Screened with no mitigation
2. Screened with mitigation
3. Screened and EQIA required

Proposed by Councillor Ní Chonghaile
Seconded by Councillor Cosgrove and agreed that

the quarterly Section 75 Equality and Rural Needs Impact Assessment policy screenings be noted.

NO ACTION

4.2 HR/LD/004 LOCAL GOVERNMENT TRAINING GROUP 2026/27

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to recommend to Members to note the Council's contribution to the Local Government Training Group for 2026/27.

2. Introduction

The functions of the Local Government Training Group (LGTG) were still being administered by Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council and would continue until 1 April 2029.

Annually a request for contribution from the participating Councils was sought. This was based on the Council's percentage rateable value in relation to all rate payers across Northern Ireland and applied to the total amount agreed to run the LGTG.

3. Local Government Training Group

Council currently benefits most from the below elements provided by the Local Government Training Group:

- LGTG e-learning platform: relaunched as the iLearn Portal
- LGTG Call Off Framework
- Funding towards NILGA Elected Member Learning and Development
- ILM People Development Framework

Circulated for Members' information was the agreed Governance, Accountability and Audits Arrangements Paper and the Service Level Agreement.

4. Financial Position/Implication

Council's contribution for 2026/27 was £19,128.08 and was in line with budget allocations.

Proposed by Councillor Goodman
Seconded by Councillor Cosgrove and agreed that

the Council's contribution to the Local Government Training Group for 2026/27 be noted.

NO ACTION

4.3 CCS/CS/011 CUSTOMER SERVICES QUARTER 4 UPDATE

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to recommend to Members to note the Quarter 4 Customer Services report for the period January to March 2026.

2. Introduction/Background

The Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan 2025/26 sets out the performance improvement objective; *'We will provide best-in-class services for our residents and make them feel valued and engaged. By fostering trust, engagement and increased satisfaction, we are committed to elevating the customer service experience.'*

Four indicators were set as measures of success and the Customer Services Report for Quarter 4 2025/26 (circulated) provided an update on performance.

In addition, there was an update on key consultations to serve the Plan, and the performance of the Complaints Handling Procedure, during the period January to March 2026.

Proposed by Councillor Ní Chonghaile
Seconded by Alderman Clarke and agreed that

the Quarter 4 Customer Services report for the period January to March 2026 be noted.

NO ACTION

4.4 HR/GEN/019 MANAGING ATTENDANCE UPDATE APRIL 2025 – MARCH 2026

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to provide Members with the final position for Managing Attendance for the 2025/26 reporting period, including attendance trends, absence data and the actions currently being taken to improve attendance management across the Council.

The report also outlines the proposed priority actions for Quarter 1 of 2026/27, which would inform the development of a broader Managing Attendance Action Plan following further analysis and benchmarking activity.

2. Managing Attendance Update Summary

Absence at the end of 2025/26 was above the Council target, with an average of 16.92 days lost per employee against a target of 14 days.

The circulated Managing Attendance Performance Summary provided further detail on:

- Overall absence performance across the Council.
- Directorate and grade analysis.
- Short-term and long-term absence trends.
- Key reasons for absence.
- Wellbeing and occupational health interventions.
- Reasonable adjustments and flexible working arrangements.

- Employee Relations timelines.
- Quarter 1 priority improvement actions for 2026/27.

Analysis of absence data had identified mental health related absence as the most significant absence category, alongside respiratory illnesses, musculoskeletal conditions and digestive health related absences as continuing areas of focus. The absence profile reflects a continued prevalence of these absence types, which remain common absence drivers across the wider public sector workforce.

A number of operational improvement measures were already underway as part of Quarter 1 activity, including:

- Implementation of the HR Business Partnering approach.
- Weekly absence monitoring arrangements.
- Enhanced use of real-time HR dashboards.
- Targeted management support and training.
- Continued monthly attendance review meetings with Directors and Heads of Service.

Further detailed analysis and benchmarking work with other councils was also being undertaken during Quarter 1 to help inform the development of a broader Managing Attendance Action Plan for 2026/27.

Proposed by Councillor Ní Chonghaile

Seconded by Councillor O'Lone and agreed that

Members:

- Note the final position for Managing Attendance for the 2025/26 reporting period.**
- Note the Quarter 1 improvement actions currently underway.**
- Note that a broader Managing Attendance Action Plan for 2026/27 would be developed following further analysis and benchmarking activity.**

NO ACTION

4.5 G/DPFI/2 QUARTERLY REPORT ON FOI/EIR/DPA REQUESTS

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to recommend to Members to note the Quarter 4 statistics relating to FOI/EIR/DPA requests.

2. Introduction/Background

A report had been prepared on requests received and completed in the fourth quarter of the year (1 January to 31 March 2026) under the Freedom of Information Act (FOI), Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) and the Data Protection Act (DPA) and this was circulated.

3. Summary

A summary of the quarter's statistics was as follows:

- The number of requests received was higher than the number in the same period the previous year – an increase of 60%.
- Of the 155 requests received, 90 were under FOI, 58 under EIR and 7 under DPA.
- 134 requests were completed within the quarter.
- 100% of the requests received within the quarter were completed within the legislative deadlines of 20 days for FOI and EIR requests and a calendar month for requests made under DPA.
- The sections that received the most requests in the quarter were Environmental Health (38), Waste (34), Governance (25), Planning (16), and Finance (14).
- Ten appeals were received during the quarter. The Council's original decision was upheld on 6 occasions and additional information was provided on 4 occasions.
- Two complaints to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) were notified within the quarter.

In response to a Member's request for details of the two complaints to the ICO, the Borough Lawyer, confirmed that one of the complaints was regarding the waste harmonisation project, and that he would return to the Member with details of the second complaint.

Proposed by Councillor Cosgrove
Seconded by Alderman Clarke and agreed that

the Quarter 4 statistics relating to FOI/EIR/DPA requests be noted.

ACTION BY: Paul Casey, Borough Lawyer, Legal, Land, Governance and Policy

5 ANY OTHER RELEVANT BUSINESS

There was no any other relevant business taken at this point.

PROPOSAL TO PROCEED 'IN CONFIDENCE'

Proposed by Councillor Cosgrove
Seconded by Alderman Cosgrove and agreed

that the following Committee business be taken In Confidence and the livestream and audio recording would cease.

Having declared an interest in Item 6.1, Councillor O'Lone left the Chamber at this point.

6 ITEMS IN CONFIDENCE

6.1 IN CONFIDENCE OD/OD/002 ELECTED MEMBER DEVELOPMENT – CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT APPLICATION

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to recommend to Members to approve the Elected Member Continuous Professional Development Application.

2. Background

In April 2023, Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council introduced its Elected Member Continuous Professional Development Policy, enabling Elected Members to access:

- Full coverage of part-time study costs (up to degree level)
- An annual individual development allowance of £800 (£3200 per term)
- 75% funding for approved CPD applications

Members can use their individual budget towards any professional or academic development programs.

3. CPD Application

Following recent communication of the Policy to Elected Members via email and Councils new Elected Member app, one application had been received:

Elected Member	Course	Duration	Indicative Costings	Proposed funding
Councillor Annie O'Lone	BA (Hons) Social Science	3 October 2026-2030 (4 years part time)	£1300 per year	£1300 per year (100% coverage as per the policy)

4. Financial Position

There were no additional cost implications, request could be met in line with current budget expenditure.

5. Governance

The Elected Member Development Working Group were circulated the CPD application to review, assessing it against the policy, and recommends it for approval.

Proposed by Councillor Goodman
Seconded by Councillor Ní Chonghaile and agreed that

Elected Member Continuous Professional Development Application be approved.

NO ACTION

Councillor O'Lone returned to the Chamber at this point.

PROPOSAL TO PROCEED OUT OF 'IN CONFIDENCE'

Proposed by Councillor Magill

Seconded by Alderman Cosgrove 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 7.09 pm.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Henry Cushman". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned to the left of the Mayor's title line.

MAYOR