



**MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE MEETING OF THE POLICY AND GOVERNANCE
COMMITTEE HELD IN THE ROUND TOWER CHAMBER, ANTRIM CIVIC CENTRE
ON TUESDAY 7 OCTOBER AT 6.30 PM**

- In the Chair** : Councillor B Webb
- Members Present (In person)** : Councillors – S Cosgrove, H Cushinan, P Dunlop, N Kelly, H Magill, V McWilliam, and A O'Lone
- Members Present (Remote)** : Alderman P Bradley
: Councillors – M Goodman, A McAuley and T McGrann
- Non-Committee Members: (Remote)** : Alderman S Ross
: Councillors – R Foster, R Lynch, L O'Hagan
- Officers Present (In person)** : Director of Finance & Governance – S Cole
Director of Organisation Development (Interim) – H Hall
Deputy Director of Governance – L Johnston
Borough Lawyer & Head of Legal – P Casey
Head of Health, Safety & Resilience – E Girvan
ICT Helpdesk Officer – J Wilson
ICT Support Assistant – D Graham
Member Services Manager – A Duffy
Member Services Officer – L McDonald

CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

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

1 APOLOGIES

Alderman M Cosgrove
Councillors – J Burbank and M Cooper

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Item 4.1 - Councillor McGrann

Councillor Goodman joined the meeting during Item 3.1.

3 PRESENTATION

3.1 FI/GEN/027 RESILIENCE – ROLE OF ELECTED MEMBERS

1. Purpose

An update on Resilience, and the role of Elected Members was presented by the Head of Health, Safety & Resilience.

The Chairperson thanked the Head of Health, Safety and Resilience for her presentation and requested that an updated Emergency contact list be provided to Members.

Proposed by Councillor Dunlop
Seconded by Councillor Kelly and agreed that

the presentation be noted.

ACTION BY: Elaine Girvan, Head of Health, Safety and Resilience

Councillor McGrann declared in Interest in Item 4.1 at this point.

4.1 CCS/EDP/025 DUAL LANGUAGE STREET SIGN APPLICATIONS

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to approve and note the Dual Language Street Sign applications as follows:

Stage 1

Arthur Crescent, BT36 7AL, be approved

Stage 2

- **Arthur Road, Newtownabbey, BT36 7EH be noted**
- **Arthur Park, Newtownabbey, BT36 7EL be noted**
- **Gallagh Road, Toome, BT41 3PD be noted**

Stage 3 - no applications at stage 3 be noted.

2. Background

Members were reminded that, in accordance with the Dual Language Street Sign Policy adopted by Council on 30 May 2022 (circulated), the following update outlined the current status of applications received.

3. Application Update

STAGE 1: PETITION VERIFICATION

One application had been received at Stage 1, requesting signage to be erected in Irish for the following area:

1. ARTHUR CRESCENT, BT36 7AL

The occupiers signing the petitions had been evidenced by their listing on the current Electoral Register and met the one-third threshold as required within the Policy.

STAGE 2: RESIDENTS CANVASS - there were three applications at stage 2.

1. ARTHUR ROAD, NEWTOWNABBEY, BT36 7EH
2. ARTHUR PARK, NEWTOWNABBEY, BT36 7EL
3. GALLAGH ROAD, TOOME, BT41 3PD

Canvass letters had been issued to the above residents, the outcome of which would be reported to Members.

STAGE 3: STREET SIGN INSTALLATION - there were no applications at stage 3.

Maps and costs were circulated for information.

Proposed by Councillor Cushinan

Seconded by Councillor McAuley and agreed that

the Dual Language Street Sign applications at:

Stage 1

- **Arthur Crescent, BT36 7AL, be approved**

Stage 2

- **Arthur Road, Newtownabbey, BT36 7EH be noted**
- **Arthur Park, Newtownabbey, BT36 7EL be noted**
- **Gallagh Road, Toome, BT41 3PD be noted**

Stage 3 - no applications at stage 3 be noted.

ACTION BY: James Porter, Customer Services Manager

4.2 G/MSMO/031 SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS OF ANTRIM AND NEWTOWNABBEY BOROUGH COUNCIL 1 JANUARY 2026 – 31 DECEMBER 2026

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to recommend to Members the approval of the Schedule of Meetings for the period 1 January 2026 – 31 December 2026.

2. Introduction

It was standard practice for the Schedule of Meetings for the year from 1 January to 31 December to be approved by Members.

3. Schedule

The following schedule of dates for Council and Committee meetings were proposed for the period 1 January 2026 – 31 December 2026.

Meetings marked in **red** are held at Antrim Civic Centre, while those in black are held at Mossley Mill. All meetings commence at 6.30 pm with the exception of the Planning Committee which would start at 6 pm.

Council/Committee Meetings	Date of Meeting
Operations Committee	Monday 5 January 2026
Policy and Governance Committee	Tuesday 6 January 2026
Community Development Committee	Monday 12 January 2026
Economic Development Committee	Tuesday 13 January 2026
Planning Committee	Monday 19 January 2026
Council Meeting	Monday 26 January 2026
Operations Committee	Monday 2 February 2026
Policy and Governance Committee	Tuesday 3 February 2026
Community Development Committee	Monday 9 February 2026
Special Council Meeting	Monday 9 February 2026
Planning Committee	Monday 16 February 2026
Council Meeting	Monday 23 February 2026
Operations Committee	Monday 2 March 2026
Policy and Governance Committee	Tuesday 3 March 2026
Community Development Committee	Monday 9 March 2026

Economic Development Committee	Tuesday 10 March 2026
Planning Committee	Monday 16 March 2026
Audit and Risk Committee	Wednesday 18 March 2026*
Council Meeting	Monday 30 March 2026
Operations Committee	Monday 13 April 2026*
Policy and Governance Committee	Tuesday 14 April 2026*
Community Development Committee	Wednesday 15 April 2026*
Planning Committee	Monday 20 April 2026
Council Meeting	Monday 27 April 2026
Operations Committee	Tuesday 5 May 2026*
Policy and Governance Committee	Wednesday 6 May 2026*
Community Development Committee	Monday 11 May 2026
Economic Development Committee	Tuesday 12 May 2026
Planning Meeting	Monday 18 May 2026
Council Meeting	Tuesday 26 May 2026*
Annual Council Meeting	Monday 1 June 2026
Operations Committee	Monday 8 June 2026*
Policy and Governance Committee	Tuesday 9 June 2026*
Community Development Committee	Monday 15 June 2026*
Planning Committee	Monday 22 June 2026*
Audit and Risk Committee	Tuesday 23 June 2026*
Council Meeting	Monday 29 June 2026
Planning Committee	Monday 20 July 2026
Council Meeting	Monday 27 July 2026

Planning Committee	Monday 17 August 2026
Council Meeting	Monday 24 August 2026*
Operations Committee	Monday 7 September 2026
Policy and Governance Committee	Tuesday 8 September 2026
Community Development Committee	Monday 14 September 2026
Economic Development Committee	Tuesday 15 September 2026
Planning Committee	Monday 21 September 2026
Audit and Risk Committee	Tuesday 22 September 2026
Council Meeting	Monday 28 September 2026
Operations Committee	Monday 5 October 2026
Policy and Governance Committee	Tuesday 6 October 2026
Community Development Committee	Monday 12 October 2026
Planning Committee	Monday 19 October 2026
Council Meeting	Monday 26 October 2026
Operations Committee	Monday 2 November 2026
Policy and Governance Committee	Tuesday 3 November 2026
Community Development Committee	Monday 9 November 2026
Economic Development Committee	Tuesday 10 November 2026
Planning Committee	Monday 16 November 2026
Council Meeting	Monday 30 November 2026
Operations Committee	Monday 7 December 2026
Policy and Governance	Tuesday 8 December 2026
Community Development Committee	Wednesday 9 December 2026*

Planning Committee	Monday 14 December 2026*
Audit and Risk Committee	Tuesday 15 December 2026*
Council Meeting	Monday 21 December 2026*

* Denotes change of date due to bank/public holiday/annual meeting

Proposed by Councillor Cosgrove
Seconded by Councillor Goodman and agreed that

the Schedule of Meetings for the period 1 January 2026 – 31 December 2026 be approved.

ACTION BY: Liz Johnston, Deputy Director of Governance

4.3 G-LEG-38-118 REVIEW OF STANDING ORDERS – USE OF A LANGUAGE OTHER THAN ENGLISH AT COUNCIL MEETINGS

1. Purpose

At the December 2023 Policy and Governance Committee, Members resolved to establish a Working Group to review the Council's current Standing Orders, membership being the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Party Group Leaders or their nominees, and Officers.

The aim of the Working Group was, on a task and finish principle, to make recommendations for the revision of the Council's Standing Orders in order to make them relevant to the current modern governance arrangements.

Therefore, the purpose of this report was to bring an amendment to Standing Orders for Members' consideration regarding the use of a language other than English at Council meetings.

2. Legal position

There are a number of laws which promote the use of and protection of regional and minority languages which includes Irish, Scottish Gaelic, Welsh and Ulster Scots.

Examples of the some of the relevant laws which Officers have had regard to were as follows:

- **The Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement 1998:** strand three of the Agreement contains a series of commitments in respect of economic, cultural and social issues, including a general provision relating to minority languages:
- All participants recognise the importance of respect, understanding and tolerance in relation to linguistic diversity, including in Northern Ireland, the Irish language, Ulster-Scots and the languages of the various ethnic communities, all of which are part of the cultural wealth of the island of Ireland.

- The Agreement commits the British Government to take resolute action to promote the language, to facilitate and encourage the use of the language in speech and writing in public and private life where there was appropriate demand and to seek to remove restrictions which would work against the maintenance and development of the language.
- **The Identity and Language (Northern Ireland) Act 2022:** provides legal recognition for the Irish and Ulster Scots languages, and creates new bodies to oversee their use and promote cultural expression. The Act established an Irish Language Commissioner, an Ulster Scots and Ulster British Commissioner, and an Office of Identity and Cultural Expression. When the Commissioners provide guidance which is thereafter ratified, Officers would bring a report to Members for consideration.
- **European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages:** seeks to protect and promote regional and minority languages in Europe. The Irish language was included in the Charter, which was ratified by the UK Government in 2001. The UK Government included the Irish language as one of three languages (Scottish Gaelic and Welsh being the other two) registered under Part III of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. However, it was not legally binding on the Council.

3. Conclusion

Having regard to the relevant laws, the speaking of a language other than English, particularly Irish and Ulster Scots in this jurisdiction, by authorised third party speakers and Councillors in the Council Chambers should not be prohibited.

In order to prevent discrimination, Councils were obliged to provide reasonable adjustments. Therefore, if an authorised third party speaker or a Councillor does not proficiently speak and understand English then the Council should facilitate, where reasonable and practicable, their ability to understand and be understood at a Council meeting.

There was no law which currently states that a Council in Northern Ireland must provide interpretation facilities for authorised third party speakers or Councillors who wish to speak at a Council meeting in a language other than English when they can proficiently speak and understand English. Such a request for interpretation services in that situation could be viewed as being unreasonable.

Therefore, where an authorised third party speaker(s) or a Councillor(s) wishes to speak in a language other than English at a Council meeting, and they can proficiently speak and understand English, it would be lawful and reasonable to request that they provide a verbatim oral translation immediately thereafter.

A section 75 screening form in relation to the recommendation was circulated and the advice was that the recommended amendment to Standing Orders was not subject to a full Equality Impact Assessment.

Proposed by Councillor Dunlop
Seconded by Councillor Cosgrove and that

Members agree to amend Standing Orders to add the following:

- a) It is important that all Members and the public can be understood and understand what is being said at all Council meetings.
- b) If any Member wishes to speak in a language other than English at a Council meeting, they must provide a verbatim oral translation immediately thereafter.
- c) This would also apply to any other party who is invited to speak at a Council meeting.
- d) Without the above said translation, a statement in a language other than English cannot be understood by all and would not be recorded in the Council meeting minutes.
- e) The Council may provide reasonable adjustments, when required and where practicable, to facilitate the use of a language other than English at Council meetings where the authorised speaker cannot proficiently speak and understand English.

AMENDMENT

Proposed by Councillor O'Lone
Seconded by Councillor Cushinan that

the matter be deferred until the following conditions could be met.

- (a) that advice be sought from Foras na Gaeilge, particularly in light that;
- (b) the Irish Language Commissioner and Ulster Scots Commissioner were due to take up post in November 2025, it would be premature to amend standing orders before their guidance was received and properly considered.
- (c) that in the meantime, the cost of facilitating simultaneous translations services be explored so that Members could make an informed decision on how to proceed on the matter of provision for minority languages including Irish and Ulster Scots being spoken in the Chamber.

On the amendment being put to the meeting and a recorded vote having been requested by Councillor Dunlop, Members voted as follows:

In favour of the Amendment 4 Members viz	Against the Amendment 8 Members viz	Abstentions 0 Members viz
Councillors – Cushinan, Goodman, McGrann and O'Lone	Alderman – Bradley Councillors – Cosgrove, Dunlop, Kelly, McAuley, McWilliam, Magill and Webb	

The amendment was declared not carried.

The substantive proposal was then put to the meeting.

Proposed by Councillor Dunlop

Seconded by Councillor Cosgrove and agreed that

Members agree to amend Standing Orders to add the following:

- a) It is important that all Members and the public can be understood and understand what is being said at all Council meetings.
- b) If any Member wishes to speak in a language other than English at a Council meeting, they must provide a verbatim oral translation immediately thereafter.
- c) This would also apply to any other party who is invited to speak at a Council meeting.
- d) Without the above said translation, a statement in a language other than English cannot be understood by all and would not be recorded in the Council meeting minutes.
- e) The Council may provide reasonable adjustments, when required and where practicable, to facilitate the use of a language other than English at Council meetings where the authorised speaker cannot proficiently speak and understand English.

ACTION BY: Paul Casey, Borough Lawyer and Head of Legal Services

5 ITEMS FOR NOTING

5.1 CCS/EDP/10 NEURODIVERSITY IN THE WORKPLACE GUIDANCE

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to note the publication of the Local Government Staff Commission's Neurodiversity in the Workplace Guidance document following consultation.

2. Neurodiversity in the Workplace Guidance Document

At the meeting in June 2025 Members approved the Council's consultation response to the Local Government Staff Commission's Neurodiversity in the Workplace Guidance Consultation.

The Commission reviewed the consultation feedback and had now issued their final Guidance (circulated).

Proposed by Councillor Kelly

Seconded by Councillor McAuley and agreed that

the Local Government Staff Commission's Neurodiversity in the Workplace Guidance be noted.

NO ACTION

5.2 **G/MSMO/2/VOL2 CHANGE IN MEMBERSHIP OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE BY THE ALLIANCE PARTY**

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to inform Members of the change in membership of the Economic Development Committee by the Alliance Party.

2. Introduction

Members would recall agreeing membership of the Economic Development Committee for Year 3 at the Annual Meeting in June 2025.

At the meeting, the Alliance Party nominated Councillor J Burbank to the Committee along with Councillor B Webb.

3. Key Issue

The Alliance Party Nominating Officer advised that, with immediate effect, Councillor N Kelly was to replace Councillor J Burbank on this Committee for the remainder of Year 3 of Council.

Proposed by Councillor Webb

Seconded by Councillor McWilliam and agreed that

Members note the change in membership of the Economic Development Committee by the Alliance Party for the remainder of Year 3 of Council.

NO ACTION

5.3 **CCS/EDP/023 DEAF FRIENDLY COUNCIL DFC SIGN LANGUAGE PARTNERSHIP GROUP (SLPG) FUNDING**

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to recommend that Members note the formal letter of offer of £10,708 to deliver BSL training.

2. Introduction/Background

Members were reminded of the Council's commitment to become a Deaf Friendly Council through our signing of the BSL and ISL Deaf Charter.

3. Key Issues (or the relevant titles for the main body of the report)

In support of the Charter and our deaf community, an application was submitted to the Department for Communities (DfC) Sign Language Partnership Group (SLPG) for 100% funding of £10,708 to deliver BSL Level One and Level Two Sign Language Training for Elected Members, Council Staff and Borough Residents.

A formal letter of offer for £10,708 had been approved and offered by the DfC (circulated).

4. Governance

An expression of interest would be circulated to Staff and Elected Members to ascertain interested participants. In addition, residents would be invited to express their interest through social media channels and community groups.

Applications would be assessed and allocated, with successful applicants invited to attend, with all courses delivered by 31 March 2026.

Proposed by Alderman Bradley
Seconded by Councillor McAuley and agreed that

Members note the formal letter of offer of £10,708 to deliver BSL training.

NO ACTION

5.4 **CCS/EDP/010 AUTISM IMPACT AWARD**

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to recommend that Members note Council's re-accreditation of the Autism Impact Award.

2. Background

Members were reminded that a key action within the Council's Disability Action Plan 2020-2025 was to secure re-accreditation as an Autism Impact Award Champion council (Autism Friendly Council).

The Council initially attained accreditation in 2019. The Autism NI Impact Award was a CPD certified training package that would support organisations to create truly autism-accessible environments and would be a mark of excellence, demonstrating commitment to inclusion and active support for Neurodivergent people in society

3. Key Points

As part of the re-accreditation process employees received tailored training from Autism NI and implemented a bespoke action plan of adjustments across the Council, to build an inclusive service and workplace.

Achievement of the Autism NI's Impact Award, demonstrates Council's commitment to inclusion for autistic and neurodivergent customers and employees.

Proposed by Councillor Magill

Seconded by Councillor O'Lone and agreed that

Members note the re-accreditation of the Autism Impact Award

NO ACTION

6 ANY OTHER RELEVANT BUSINESS

Members were advised that any Other Relevant Business (AORB) would be taken at this point.

there were no AORB raised.

PROPOSAL TO PROCEED 'IN CONFIDENCE'

Proposed by Councillor Cosgrove

Seconded by Alderman Bradley and agreed

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

Members were advised that the supplementary report would be taken at this point.

7 ITEMS IN CONFIDENCE

7.1 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 could 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, an additional application had been received:

Elected Member	Course	Duration	Indicative Costings	Proposed funding
Councillor Jay Burbank	Clinton Leadership Institute, Master of Business Administration (MBA)	September 2025 – September 2026	£15000	£11250 (75% CPD) £2200 (individual development allowance) (Residual personal cost)

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 had been circulated the CPD applications to review, assessing it against the policy, and recommends it for approval.

Proposed by Councillor Cosgrove

Seconded by Councillor McAuley and agreed that

the Elected Member Continuous Professional Development Application be approved.

ACTION BY: Katherine Young, Organisation Development and Employee Engagement Manager

PROPOSAL TO PROCEED OUT OF 'IN CONFIDENCE'

Proposed by Councillor Cosgrove

Seconded by Councillor McAuley 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 6.56 pm.

MAYOR