



**MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE MEETING OF THE POLICY AND GOVERNANCE
COMMITTEE HELD IN ANTRIM CIVIC CENTRE ON TUESDAY 7 JANUARY 2020
AT 6.30 PM**

In the Chair: Councillor P Dunlop

Members Present: Aldermen F Agnew and D Kinahan
Councillors – H Cushinan, S Flanagan, M Goodman,
P Hamill, N Kelly, N McClelland, V McAuley, M Magill,
P Michael, V Robinson, B Webb and R Wilson

**Non Committee
Members:** Councillor - A Bennington and J Montgomery

Officers Present: Director of Finance & Governance – S Cole
Director of Organisation Development – A McCooke
Head of Legal Services & Borough Lawyer – P Casey
Head of Finance – J Balmer
Systems Support Officer – C Bell
Member Services Officer – S Boyd

CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

The Chairperson welcomed everyone to the January Meeting of the Policy and Governance Committee, wished Members and Officers a Happy and Prosperous New Year, and reminded all present of recording requirements. On behalf of Members the Chairperson passed on thoughts and prayers to the relatives of Wendy Brolly, Environmental Health Manager who had recently passed away, and a minute's silence was held as a mark of respect.

The Chairperson and Members congratulated Councillor Michael on being awarded the Order of the British Empire Medal (BEM) for services to local government in Antrim and Newtownabbey, in the New Year's Honours list.

1. APOLOGIES

None

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Item 3.3 – Alderman Kinahan

3. ITEMS FOR DECISION

3.1 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 2020.

(a) FI/FA/6 Minimum Revenue Provision Policy 2020/21

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 2020/21 was circulated.

Councillor Robinson sought clarity on how many vehicles would need to be replaced, the Director of Finance and Governance confirmed the estimated vehicle asset life was seven years and would come back to Councillor Robinson regarding total vehicles requiring replacement.

Proposed by Councillor Webb

Seconded by Councillor Robinson and agreed that

the MRP Policy 2020/21 be approved.

ACTION BY: Richard Murray, Management Accountant/Sandra Cole, Director of Finance and Governance

(b) FI/FA/7 Medium Term Financial Plan 2020/21 to 2022/23

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 2020/21 to 2022/23, a copy of which was circulated.

Councillor Webb sought clarity on the energy increase which had been taken into account and the timeframe regarding making any adjustments. The Director of Finance & Governance clarified that adjusting the percentage increase within the financial assumptions could take place up until the rate was set on the 10th February.

Proposed by Councillor Webb

Seconded by Councillor Flanagan and agreed that

the Medium Term Financial Plan 2020/21 to 2022/23 be noted.

NO ACTION

(c) FI/FA/8 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 was 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.

Following queries from Members the Head of Finance provided clarity on the duration of the tender of the current external advisor, Arlingclose Ltd, which is tendered on a regional basis for Councils and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

Proposed by Councillor Hamill

Seconded by Alderman Kinahan and agreed that

- i) the Treasury Management Policy be approved**
- ii) the Treasury Management Strategy 2020/21 be approved**
- iii) the Annual Investment Strategy 2020/21 be approved**

ACTION BY: Ann Hamilton, Financial Controller

(d) FI/FA/9 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.

Proposed by Councillor Magill

Seconded by Councillor Robinson and agreed that

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

NO ACTION

(e) FI/FA/5 Capital Strategy

The Prudential Code requires the Council to develop a Capital Strategy

which provides a high-level overview of the long-term context of capital expenditure and investment decisions and their associated risks and rewards along with an overview of how risk is managed for future financial sustainability.

A copy of the Capital Strategy was circulated.

Following queries from Members the Director of Organisation Development provided Members with an update on the status of the Crematorium.

Proposed by Councillor Webb
Seconded by Alderman Kinahan and agreed that

the Capital Strategy 2020/21 be approved.

ACTION BY: Ann Hamilton, Financial Controller

3.2 G/MSMO/21 THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COUNCILLORS UK

Members were advised that correspondence had been received from the National Association of Councillors UK advising that the Environment/Climate Change Conference will take place from 24-26 January 2020 at the Ripon Spa Best Western Hotel, Ripon (North Yorkshire). The delegate fee for the Conference is £350 plus VAT and accommodation is available at the conference hotel at £60 plus VAT per night.

Members were advised that this conference is not usually attended.

Members requested that information regarding previous attendance at Conferences be omitted from any future reports.

Proposed by Councillor Webb
Seconded by Councillor Magill and agreed that

the report be noted.

NO ACTION

Alderman Kinahan left the Chamber having declared an interest in Item 3.3.

3.3 CCS/REG/9 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 has the responsibility to approve appropriate applications for Place Approvals for Civil Marriages and Civil Partnerships. Approvals last for 3 years and a renewal application has been received from the Hilton Hotel, Templepatrick for re-approval of the following areas within the premises:

Hilton Hotel, Templepatrick

(a) Castle Upton Suite

(b) Lylehill Suite

(c) Donegore Suite

Part of the process requires 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 the notification to apply for Place Approval and the premises had been formally inspected and no problems had been found with regard to the application.

Proposed by Councillor McAuley
Seconded by Councillor Michael and agreed that

the named premise 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: Emma Thompson, Registrar

Alderman Kinahan returned to the Chamber.

4. ITEMS FOR NOTING

4.1 G/MSMO/27 MEMBER DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP

Members were advised that a meeting of the Member Development Working Group took place on Monday 2 December 2019. A copy of the minutes was circulated for Members' information.

Proposed by Councillor McClelland
Seconded by Councillor Magill and agreed that

the minutes of the Member Development Working Group meeting held on Monday 2 December 2019 be noted.

NO ACTION

4.2 FI/FIN/11 DRAFT RATES ESTIMATE UPDATE 2020/21

An updated draft rates calculation was circulated for 2020/21.

The net cost of services remains unchanged from December at £51.9 million. Land and Property Services have provided updated EPP figures, to calculate the Non-Domestic Rate, and an updated conversion factor to calculate the Domestic Rate. The effect of these is that the increase in the Domestic Rate is now 2.01%, down from 2.1%.

Finance officers were continuing to liaise with Land and Property Services and Council budget holders to ensure that the EPP figures and the net cost of services are as accurate as possible.

Any updated calculations would be presented to Council in accordance with the agreed Estimates Timetable.

Proposed by Councillor Kelly
Seconded by Councillor Webb and agreed that

the revised draft rates position for 2020/21 be noted.

NO ACTION

Alderman Agnew left the Meeting.

4.3 HR/HR/019 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 and there is budgetary provision for the majority of posts filled via departmental salary budgets, salary contingency and grant funding.

The table appended provided an update for Members on the use of agency staff as at November 2019 as compared to November 2018. It excludes limited ad-hoc agency cover, which is necessary to provide operational cover, at short notice (Appendix 1 circulated).

Appendix 2 circulated set out expenditure on agency workers in November 2019.

The cost of agency staff had increased for the period of 1 April 2019 to 30 November 2019 at 7% of all staffing costs compared to 6.51% for the same period last year. This increase substantively related to the pay increase and increase in Employers pension contributions effective from April 2019, and the earlier starting date required for parks seasonal staff this year.

Proposed by Councillor Flanagan
Seconded by Alderman Kinahan and agreed that

the report be noted.

NO ACTION

4.4 HR/HR/003 STAFF TURNOVER REPORT

The staff turnover rate is a measurement used to determine the proportion of employees who leave the Council, and it is an operational performance indicator within the Human Resources Business Plan. As a performance

indicator, it helps to establish whether the level of turnover is at an acceptable rate.

In practical terms, the turnover rate is assessed based on the number of employees leaving the Council as a percentage of the total number of staff employed by the Council.

At its broadest, the turnover rate can encompass all leavers, both voluntary (e.g. resignations, retirees, voluntary severance) and involuntary (e.g. temporary, seasonal, fixed term contracts and dismissals).

The Council's staff turnover rate includes voluntary leavers, which have declined over the past 3 financial years, as noted in the following table:

Year	ANBC Staff Turnover Rate	Local Government Association Ave Turnover rate for Local Government (UK)
2016/17	5.86%	13.4%
2017/18	5.37%	13.8%
2018/19	4.75%	Not yet available

For comparative purposes the average staff turnover rate across Local Government UK has been included in the table above (staff turnover data for Local Government NI is not officially reported, and therefore the information is not available for comparative purposes.)

Staff turnover rates vary between sectors and some of the highest levels are typically found in retailing, hotels, catering, call centres and other lower paid private sector service groups. Turnover rates vary from region to region with the highest rates being found where unemployment is lowest and where it is unproblematic for workers to secure desirable alternative employment.

Within this Council the staff turnover rate had remained consistently low, which can be linked to a number of factors that contribute to attracting and retaining staff including:

- Financial/contractual reasons (competitive levels of salary, attractive employer pension scheme, childcare voucher schemes, annual leave etc)
- Non-financial incentives (opportunities for promotion, equality of opportunity, flexible working practices, opportunities for learning and development, continuous professional development, health and wellbeing initiatives, best practice policies and procedures)
- Carrying out exit interviews to understand why employees are leaving and taking action on the results where necessary

Whilst the staff turnover was low, the Head of Human Resources would continue to assess staff turnover rates and report on the development of any relevant factors that are necessary to address any arising issues related to the attraction and retention of staff.

Proposed by Councillor Magill
Seconded by Councillor Robinson and agreed that

the report be noted.

NO ACTION

4.5 CCS/REG/023 REGISTRATION SERVICES UPDATE

The General Register Office is part of the NI Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA), which is an agency of the Department of Finance ("the Department") and is responsible for the administration and control of civil registration of births, adoptions, deaths, marriages and civil partnerships.

The Registration function is regulated and governed by the relevant legislation which provides that each local government district shall be a registration district.

In the exercise of the functions conferred on it as a local registration authority, Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council acts as an agent for the Department and delivers a Registration service for residents and customers. Registration services are available at both civic buildings and often customers visit the offices when they require the service.

In view of the nature of the services offered, customer demand can be difficult to predict and there may be periods of high demand, which can create a waiting time for customers.

To improve the customer service, it was proposed to implement an appointment system for the Registration services at both Civic buildings, effective from 1 February 2020. Customers would still have the option of accessing the service without an appointment, however appointments would be given first priority.

The feedback had been positive from other Councils that successfully operate the appointment system as it had reduced waiting times and improved the customer experience.

In response to a query from Councillor McClelland, the Director of Organisation Development clarified that the new appointment system would be appropriately communicated, prior to implementation.

Proposed by Councillor McAuley
Seconded by Councillor Webb and agreed that

an appointment system, for the Registration Services be implemented effective from 1 February 2020.

ACTION BY: Emma Thompson, Registrar

The Chairperson advised that the following supplementary report would be taken at this point.

4.6 G/MSMO/2/VOL 2 NOMINATION TO NORTHERN IRELAND HOUSING COUNCIL

Alderman Brett, Nominating Officer for the Democratic Unionist Party, had advised of the undernoted change of nomination to be effective from 6 January 2020

Name	Position
Councillor Mark Cooper	Northern Ireland Housing Council

Proposed by Councillor Webb
Seconded by Alderman Kinahan and agreed that

the report be noted.

NO ACTION

PROPOSAL TO PROCEED 'IN CONFIDENCE'

Proposed by Councillor Hamill
Seconded by Councillor Magill and agreed that

the following Committee business be taken In Confidence.

5. ITEMS IN CONFIDENCE

5.1 **IN CONFIDENCE** CCS/CEA/013 CEMETERY BURIAL CAPACITY UPDATE

Members were reminded that in January 2018 the Council agreed that the policy relating to the pre-sale of new burial rights be amended so that, with immediate effect, these will only be sold for immediate burial and that pre-selling will end, except in cases where terminal illness has been confirmed.

The burial capacity within Council cemeteries is noted in the table below (as at mid December 2019).

CEMETERY	NUMBER OF AVAILABLE PLOTS REMAINING	AVERAGE BURIAL PLOTS SOLD (based on previous 3 years sales)	ESTIMATED REMAINING BURIAL CAPACITY (years)
██████████	████	████	████
██████████	████	████	████
██████████	████	█	████
██████████	████	████	████
██████████	████	████	████
TOTAL	████	████	████

GARDEN OF REMEMBRANCE, FOR THE BURIAL OF ASHES ONLY	NUMBER OF AVAILABLE PLOTS REMAINING	AVERAGE BURIAL PLOTS SOLD (based on previous 3 years sales)	ESTIMATED REMAINING BURIAL CAPACITY (years)
██████████	████	████	████
██████████	████	█	████
██████	██	█	████
TOTAL	████	████	████

In response to queries relating to burial capacity in Carnmoney Cemetery, the Director of Organisation Development clarified that regular updates would be provided to Members, and that appropriate communications would be made to undertakers and residents.

Proposed by Councillor Hamill
Seconded by Councillor Robinson and agreed that

the report be noted.

NO ACTION

PROPOSAL TO PROCEED OUT OF 'IN CONFIDENCE'

Proposed by Councillor Robinson
Seconded by Alderman Kinahan 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. The meeting concluded at 7.27 pm.

MAYOR

Council Minutes have been redacted in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 2018, the General Data Protection Regulation, and legal advice.