



MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE MEETING OF THE POLICY AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE HELD AT MOSSLEY MILL ON TUESDAY 8 MARCH 2022 AT 6.30 PM

- In the Chair:** Alderman P Michael
- Members Present:** Councillors – M Cooper, H Cushinan, S Flanagan, N Kelly, A McAuley, T McGrann, M Magill, B Mallon, N Ramsay, V Robinson, M Stewart, B Webb and R Wilson
- Non Committee Members:** Councillors – A Bennington, V McWilliam, J Montgomery
- Officers Present:** Deputy Chief Executive of Finance & Governance – S Cole
Director of Organisation Development – D Rogers
Deputy Director of Finance – J Balmer
Head of Governance – L Johnston
Head of ICT – G Smyth
Head of Communications and Customer Services – N McCullough
Systems Support Officer – C Bell
ICT Helpdesk Officer – J Wilson
Mayor & Member Services Officer – S Fisher
Member Services Officer – J Moreland

CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

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

Although the COVID restrictions had been relaxed, to manage numbers and minimise risk, members of the public and press could continue to access those parts of the Council meetings which they are entitled to attend through the livestream on the Council's website.

- 1. APOLOGIES**
None

- 2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**
None

3. PRESENTATION

3.1 PRESENTATION – DIGITAL SERVICES SUPPORTING CORPORATE RECOVERY

A presentation on the Digital Strategy Project update was provided by the Head of ICT. He highlighted the increase in online services provided by Council and the high satisfaction ratings recorded. Current projects covered a variety of Council departments. Next steps included the integration of systems to ensure added value, the use of DOT (Digital Operations Team) to progress proposed solutions, scope service requirements and to determine the level of skills/resources required to deliver digital solutions at a service level.

The Head of ICT responded to Members' questions following which the Chairperson thanked him for his informative and interesting presentation.

Proposed by Councillor Robinson
Seconded by Councillor Webb and agreed that

the presentation be noted.

NO ACTION

4 ITEMS FOR DECISION

4.1 HR/GEN/019 RECRUITMENT ADVERTISING

Recruitment within the Council is returning to pre-pandemic levels and as the recent restructure exercise moves into the final stages and more external recruitment is expected, it was recommended that the Council continues to monitor recruitment advertising going forward.

Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic all external vacancies were advertised through a composite local government advertisement process. This process was led by Belfast City Council and was also used by other Councils. Through this process, vacancies were advertised in the Belfast Telegraph, Sunday Life and online through NI Job Finder.

A review is being carried out across all Councils to establish whether to continue using the composite advert process. This process had a longer lead in time, more restrictive deadlines, had minimal flexibility and attracted a lower number of candidates.

Given the need to focus on recovery and provide internal opportunities to staff, it was agreed that all vacancies below Head of Service level would be internally trawled in the first instance, subject to review. If posts are not filled internally, they are advertised externally through the Council's recruitment system GETGOT and promoted on iConnect, staff email and noticeboards, the Council's social pages (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and ANBorough

Jobs), NIJobs, Jobs and Benefits Office and through the Belfast Telegraph and Sunday Life.

NIJobs provides a platform to upload job advertisements quickly and gives flexible control over the timelines. Job sites offer a range of features including pushing jobs to be advertised on a local radio, social media channels, local business publications. Job alerts were also sent to registered applicants who matched the job criteria thus providing a targeted approach for recruiting specialist roles.

NIJobs had been cost effective with advertisements reaching a wider applicant pool and giving greater control in advertising our vacancies.

In the meantime, depending on timescales and to support the effective filling of posts, the following process for recruitment advertising was recommended :-

- Council vacancies are advertised directly with the Belfast Telegraph and Sunday Life or via composite advert, dependant on timescales,
- Council vacancies will in addition be advertised through GETGOT, iConnect, staff email and noticeboards, Council's social pages (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and ANBorough Jobs) and NIJobs,
- All vacancies will be advertised with the Jobs and Benefits Office,
- Elected Members will be advised of all posts being externally advertised. The cost, timescale, applicant source and reach/volume of applicants, will be monitored over 6 months and a further update report provided.

Proposed by Councillor Robinson
Seconded by Councillor Kelly and agreed that

the report be noted and a further update report be provided to Committee following review in 6 months.

ACTION BY: Pauline Greer, Human Resources Manager

5 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

5.1 FI/FIN/4 BUDGET REPORT – JANUARY 2022 – Period 10

A budget report for January 2022 – Period 10 was circulated for Members information.

The Council's financial position at the end of January 2022 showed a favourable variance of £1.36m.

Should the favourable position continue until the end of the financial year, contributions may be made to Reserves to offset future operational or rates losses, or for Borough Recovery and Strategic Projects.

Proposed by Councillor Ramsay
Seconded by Councillor Kelly and agreed that

the report be noted.

NO ACTION

5.2 CE/OA/012 LOCAL GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIP PANEL MEETING

The Local Government Partnership Panel provided a structured, political relationship between central and local government to discuss strategic policy and operational matters of mutual interest and concern.

Following postponement of their scheduled meeting on 19 January 2022, the Partnership Panel met on the 16 February 2022. Support material received in relation to this meeting was circulated for Members' Information.

The next meeting of the panel is planned for 29 June 2022.

Proposed by Councillor Webb

Seconded by Councillor Robinson and agreed that

the report be noted.

NO ACTION

5.3 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 was subject to a rigorous approval process, which required the approval of the Corporate Leadership Team and there was 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 January 2022 as compared to January 2021. It excludes limited ad-hoc agency cover, which was necessary to provide operational cover, at short notice Appendix 1 was circulated.

Appendix 2, was circulated, set out expenditure on agency workers in January 2022.

The cost of agency staff had increased for the period of 1 April 2021 to 31 January 2022 at 7% of all staffing costs compared to 3.9% for the same period last year. It was noted that agency expenditure was significantly reduced last year following the release of agency workers in May 2020. This year's costs had also increased due to the late application of the April 2020 pay award and the respective back charges incurred.

Proposed by Councillor Webb
Seconded by Councillor Robinson and agreed that

the report be noted.

NO ACTION

5.4 HR/GEN/019 MANAGING ATTENDANCE

The purpose of this report was to update Members on the management of attendance from April 2021 – January 2022 (summary was circulated).

April 2021 to January 2022 - Attendance Update

Members were advised that absence at the end of January 2022 was 12.43 average days per employee against a target of 10.23 days. Target days for 2021/22 is 12 average days lost per employee.

Whilst COVID related absence was excluded from these figures, this figure does include days lost for employees who were not in receipt of sick pay for part of their absence. No additional cost was incurred by the Council during the 'no pay' periods.

If days lost to employees who were not in receipt of sick pay were not included in these figures, the average days lost per employee at the end of January 2022 would have been 11.28 days.

Reasons for absence

In January, long term cases (in excess of 20 days) continued to account for 87% of absence, representing 17 employees (23 employees in December). Stress remains the main cause for long term cases, currently representing 53% of these absences which is a small decrease from 56% in December.

Short term cases account for 23% of absence. The main reason for short term cases remain minor illnesses including colds and infections, both of which were typical of the season.

Actions to improve absence levels

HR Business Partners continue to work with Heads of Service and Managers to monitor absence cases, and to do all that is possible to proactively accomplish employee health and welling in order to improve the ongoing management of attendance.

Actions include:

1. 9 Formal Case Reviews will now be undertaken
2. The Director of Organisation Development and Head of HR will arrange meetings with relevant Deputy Chief Executives, Deputy Directors/Heads of Service to plan the formal case reviews and to agree next steps for any further complex cases.

3. Virtual meetings or telephone calls will be undertaken with absent employees for regular contact
4. Identification of plausible return to work options e.g. alternative duties across the organisation.
5. Timely referrals to Occupational Health and use of Physio provision where appropriate
6. Continued promotion of Inspire, Staywell hub and Northern Trust Services

Proposed by Councillor Webb

Seconded by Councillor Robinson and agreed that

the report be noted.

NO ACTION

5.5 PT/CI/038 RECOVERY PLAN - PERFORMANCE PROGRESS REPORT QUARTER THREE

Members were reminded that Part 12 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 put in place a framework to support the continuous improvement of Council services.

In response to the pandemic, Council produced a Corporate Recovery Plan 2021-23 which was approved in August 2021. This served to ensure the recovery of our services and meeting the requirements of our statutory duties.

Members will know that the Council normally produces an annual Corporate Improvement Plan, however, given the uncertainty in the short term about recovery, we were unable to set targets for improvement. Members had agreed that we would measure and monitor the performance of the corporate indicators as set out in the Recovery Plan 2021-23.

The Quarter Three Performance Progress report would also be taken to the Audit and Risk Committee on the 22nd March for review and noting.

A progress report for quarter three was circulated for Members' attention.

Proposed by Councillor Webb

Seconded by Councillor Robinson and agreed that

the 2021-22 Performance Progress Report Quarter three is noted.

NO ACTION

5.6 CCS/CPRM/027 TOWN, VILLAGE AND HAMLET SIGNAGE UPDATE

Members were familiar with the welcome signs on the arterial routes into our five main towns, Antrim, Ballyclare, Crumlin, Glengormley and Randalstown which were completed in 2019.

Welcome signage for the Borough's villages was completed in February 2022 for Ballynure, Ballyrobert, Burnside, Doagh, Dunadry, Parkgate, Straid, Templepatrick, Toome and Whiteabbey. (images were circulated).

The next phase of the Borough signage project will see welcome signage located in the following hamlets:

| | | |
|-------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Aldergrove | Ballyclare | Ballycraigy |
| Ballyeaston | Bruslee | Caddy |
| Cargin | Craigarogan | Creavery |
| Creggan/Cranfield | Donegore | Gortgill |
| Groggan | Hillhead | Killead |
| Kingsmoss | Loanends | Lowtown |
| Maghereagh | Millbank | Milltown |
| Moneyglass | Moneynick | Newmill |
| Rathmore | Roughfort | Tildarg |
| Tavnaghmore | The Diamond | |

Due to the nature of the roads into the hamlets, for safety reasons these signs would be identical to the town and village signs, but slightly smaller in size. This would minimise any impact on site lines and road traffic issues.

Town, village, hamlet designations were advised by the Planning Section and documented in the Council's Local Development Plan.

In response to questions by Members, the Director of Organisation Development advised an audit would be completed and a report brought to a future Committee.

Proposed by Councillor Webb
Seconded by Councillor Robinson and agreed that

the report be noted and following an audit, a further report brought back to Committee.

ACTION BY: Nicola McCullough, Head of Communications and Customers

5.7 IMPLEMENTATION OF COUNCIL SUPPORT FOR BOYCOTT, DIVESTMENT, SANCTIONS AGAINST ISRAEL CAMPAIGN

Correspondence had been received from Fermanagh and Omagh District Council regarding support for the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions against Israel Campaign (BDS).

A copy of the correspondence was circulated for Members information.

Proposed by Councillor Webb
Seconded by Councillor Robinson and agreed that

the correspondence be noted.

NO ACTION

5.8 FI/PRO/GEN/042 SOCIAL VALUE IN CONSTRUCTION CONTRACTS - GLENGORMLEY OFFICE BLOCK

Members would recall that at the September 2021 Policy and Governance Committee Members were updated following Minister Murphy's announcement introducing mandatory scoring of social value within public procurement contracts.

Within the Councils capital programme, the next significant works to be tendered will be the Glengormley Office Block and social value clauses would be included as scored award criteria.

The Public Contract Regulations 2015 which provided the legal framework, specifically allowed for incorporating social value into specifications, contract performance, selection criteria and award criteria.

This report set out how 'social value' would be considered in this project and was detailed under the following sections:

- Building design
- Mandatory award criteria
- Scored award criteria

Building Design

One of the objectives of the building design was that the project achieves an 'excellence' rating under BREEAM (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method).

BREEAM looks beyond operational 'carbon footprint' alone, taking a holistic approach to the lifecycle of a building and it's environmental, social and economic sustainability performance.

The assessment used recognised measures of performance to evaluate a buildings specification, design construction and use across the factors below:

- Energy and water use
- Internal environment (health and well-being)
- Management processes
- Pollution
- Transport
- Materials
- Waste
- Ecology

Mandatory Award Criteria

Social values clauses would be included within the mandatory award criteria re.:

- Payment of the 'Living Wage' to all workers involved in construction
- Clauses re unlawful discrimination and equality of opportunity

- Requirement for contractor to hold Health and Safety Management certification to ISO18001/45001 to promote safe working practices and environments
- Requirement for contractor to hold certification to ISO14001 for Environmental Management System to promote sustainability
- Human rights standards e.g. Modern slavery

Scored Award Criteria

From 1st June 2022, following the policy update, public tenders must include a minimum of 10% of the total award criteria to score social value. It is envisaged that the measures most appropriate to this contract will focus on increasing secure employment and skills and promotion of well-being.

Questions would be centred around:

- New employment or training opportunities e.g. number of weeks work for previously unemployed workers
- Workforce education and skills development e.g. apprenticeship hours
- Increased opportunity for disabled people e.g. no of weeks of project employment for disabled workers.

In promotion of well-being, scored award criteria would likely focus on how the successful tenderer could promote and influence well-being within the local community e.g. donation of time or money to community events or projects.

This emphasis of 'social value' within public procurement would be further developed in all Council public procurements and indeed it was expected that the scored element of the award criteria will increase to 20% from June 2023.

Further project updates on the Glengormley Office Block including social value elements would be provided as the project progresses.

Proposed by Councillor Webb

Seconded by Councillor Robinson and agreed that

the report be noted.

NO ACTION

Councillor Magill left the meeting at this point.

PROPOSAL TO PROCEED 'IN CONFIDENCE'

Proposed by Councillor Robinson

Seconded by Councillor Wilson and agreed

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

6 ITEMS IN CONFIDENCE

6.1 **IN CONFIDENCE** FI/PRO/GEN/044 PROCUREMENT TENDER REPORTS AND AWARD OF CONTRACTS

Members were reminded that Council agreed in June 2021 that the Council Scheme of Delegation be used for the award of contracts and Members would be updated retrospectively.

This process allowed service and project delivery to be expedited more efficiently and facilitates timely delivery of actions against the Council's Recovery plan.

A list of contracts approved by the Corporate Leadership Team and awarded in February 2022 was circulated.

Proposed by Councillor Kelly
Seconded by Councillor Cooper and agreed that

the report be noted.

NO ACTION

6.2 **IN CONFIDENCE** HR/HR/10 PAY AGREEMENT 2021

Members were advised that correspondence had been received from NILGA in relation to the Pay Agreement reached for Local Government Services 2021/22. Local Government Services salaries to be increased by 1.75% with effect from 1 April 2021 (appendix 1 was circulated).



In response to a question from a Member, the Director of Organisation Development advised that the Pay Agreement detailed in the paper referred to 2021/22, and that communication was expected shortly to invite the Council to attend briefings regarding 2022/23 pay arrangements, which would offer opportunity for discussion in light of the current economic situation

Proposed by Councillor Cushinan
Seconded by Councillor Robinson and agreed that

the report be noted.

NO ACTION

PROPOSAL TO PROCEED OUT OF 'IN CONFIDENCE'

Proposed by Councillor Wilson
Seconded by Councillor Robinson 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 7:11pm.

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.