



26 February 2026

Committee Chairperson: Councillor B Webb

Committee Vice-Chairperson: Councillor H Magill

Committee Members: Aldermen – P Bradley, L Clarke and M Cosgrove

Councillors – J Burbank, S Cosgrove, H Cushinan, P Dunlop, M Goodman, N Kelly, A McAuley, T McGrann, V McWilliam and A O'Lone

Dear Member

MEETING OF THE POLICY AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Policy and Governance Committee will be held in the **Round Tower Chamber, Antrim Civic Centre on Tuesday 3 March 2026 at 6.30pm.**

You are requested to attend.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Richard Baker', is positioned above the printed name.

Richard Baker, GM MSc
Chief Executive, Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council

PLEASE NOTE: Refreshments will be available in the Café from 5.20pm

For any queries, please contact Member Services:

Tel: 028 9448 1301/028 9034 0107

memberservices@antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk

A G E N D A

1 APOLOGIES

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

3 INTRODUCTION OF NEW STAFF

4 ITEMS FOR DECISION

- 4.1 Consultation on the Northern Ireland Disability Strategy 2025-2035
- 4.2 Risk Management Policy
- 4.3 Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan 2025/26, Performance Progress Report Quarter 3
- 4.4 MJ Awards Ceremony 2026

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- 5.2 Annual Review of Prudential Indicators and Treasury Management
- 5.3 AccessNI Compliance Audit
- 5.4 Managing Attendance Quarter 3, October 2025 – December 2025
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- 5.6 Dual Language Street Sign Applications
- 5.7 Quarterly Section 75 and Rural Screening
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6 ANY OTHER RELEVANT BUSINESS

7 ITEMS IN CONFIDENCE

- 7.1 Procurement Pipeline
- 7.2 Procurement Spend Analysis

**REPORT ON BUSINESS TO BE CONSIDERED AT THE
POLICY AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE MEETING ON
TUESDAY 3 MARCH 2026**

4 ITEMS FOR DECISION

4.1 CCS/EDP/028 CONSULTATION ON THE NORTHERN IRELAND DISABILITY STRATEGY 2025-2035

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to recommend to Members to approve the consultation response on The Northern Ireland Disability Strategy 2025-2035.

2. Background

The Northern Ireland Disability Strategy 2025-2035 is a 10-year plan designed to improve the lives of Deaf and Disabled people by tackling inequalities, promoting inclusion, and ensuring rights are protected.

The Department for Communities has led the development of this Strategy on behalf of the Northern Ireland Executive, with input from other departments. It has been created in partnership with Deaf and Disabled people and representative organisations.

According to the 2021 Census, 24.3% of the Northern Ireland population has a limiting long-term health problem or disability, and therefore one in four people are Deaf or Disabled.

This Disability Strategy 2025-2035 aims to challenge the barriers that Deaf and Disabled people experience and sets out the Executive's ambition to create a fully accessible and inclusive society.

The Strategy is structured around eight outcomes, which are supported by an associated Action Plan. The outcomes will seek to ensure that Deaf and Disabled people can:

- Effectively exercise their rights and fundamental freedoms and participate in society on an equal basis, free from discrimination.
- Access our built environment, facilities and transport on an equal basis.
- Access our public services, government information and communications on an equal basis.
- Access and participate in culture, leisure activities and sport on an equal basis.
- Live independently in the community with choice and control, with a sufficient and sustainable standard of living.
- Have access to quality health and social care on an equal basis and without discrimination.
- Access, sustain and progress within quality employment in an inclusive labour market.

- Deaf and Disabled children and young people can exercise their rights and reach their full educational, social and developmental potential.

The associated action plan will be monitored, reviewed and updated annually with published progress reports which will be agreed by the Executive. A mid-point review will allow the Strategy to be monitored and reactive to emerging issues and needs.

The NI Executive is currently inviting feedback via a consultation process, which will conclude on Friday, 20 March 2026.

A copy of The Northern Ireland Disability Strategy 2025-2035 is **enclosed** for information.

3. Consultation Response

The Council welcomes that the Northern Ireland Disability Strategy 2025-2035 sets out a programme of work to address barriers that inhibit the full participation and inclusion of Deaf and Disabled people in society, however, it would benefit from clarity regarding the role and resourcing for local government in implementation.

A draft consultation response is **enclosed** for approval.

4. Recommendation

It is recommended that the consultation response on The Northern Ireland Disability Strategy 2025-2035 be approved.

Prepared by: Claire Webb, Accessibility and Inclusion Officer

Agreed by: Lesley Millar, Head of Organisation Development

Approved by: Liz Johnston, Deputy Director of Governance

4.2 FI/AUD/03 RISK MANAGEMENT POLICY

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to recommend to Members to approve the revised Risk Management Policy.

2. Background

Members are reminded that in March 2023, the Policy and Governance Committee approved the Risk Management Policy.

3. Key Points

In accordance with the Council's Policy Framework and Schedule, the Risk Management Policy has been reviewed and updated.

The Policy is aligned with the revised HM Treasury's Guidance on the Management of Risk – Principles and Concepts (published 2025).

The updates to the Policy include referencing the Risk Control Framework and providing clarification of the Council's Risk Appetite.

A copy of the updated Policy is **enclosed**, with amendments highlighted in red for information.

4. Screening Requirements

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

The screening of each has concluded that impact assessments are not recommended.

5. Recommendation

It is recommended that the revised Risk Management Policy be approved.

Prepared by: Paul Caulcutt, Head of Internal Audit

Approved by: John Balmer, Director of Finance

4.3 PT/CI/066 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE AND IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2025/26, PERFORMANCE PROGRESS REPORT QUARTER 3

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to recommend to Members to approve the Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan 2025/26, Quarter 3 Performance Progress Report.

2. Background

Members are reminded that 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 sets out a range of robust performance targets, along with identified improvement objectives and several Statutory Performance Targets.

4. Performance Progress Reports

Third Quarter Performance Progress Report is **enclosed** for Members' information.

5. Governance

Quarterly performance progress reports are reported to relevant Committees.

6. Recommendation

It is recommended that the Quarter 3 Performance Progress Report be approved.

Prepared by: Allen Templeton, Performance Improvement Officer

Agreed by: Lesley Millar, Head of Organisation Development

Approved by: Liz Johnston, Deputy Director of Governance

4.4 PT/CI/072 MJ AWARDS CEREMONY 2026

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to recommend to Members to note the outcome of the Council's submissions to the MJ Awards 2026 and seek approval for attendance at the Awards Ceremony in London on Friday 19 June 2026.

2. Introduction/Background

The MJ Awards acknowledge the tremendous effort of those in local government dedicating themselves to supporting local communities, facing challenges but never giving up in the face of adversity.

The MJ Awards are an inspiring event, with people coming together to witness each other's achievements and gain the recognition that their hard work has made a difference in the communities they serve.

3. Award Finalists

Following consideration by the judging panel, Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council has been confirmed as finalists in the following MJ Awards categories:

- Best Council Services Team: Environmental Health, Health & Wellbeing Team
- Local Government Finance Team
- Transforming Lives: Leisure, Health Intervention Team

Category winners will be announced at the MJ Awards Ceremony on Friday 19 June 2026, at the Park Plaza Hotel, Westminster Bridge, London.

4. Financial Implications

In recognition of this excellent performance, it is proposed that Members consider reserving a table of ten at a cost of £3,999 + VAT. Flights and accommodation to be arranged separately at additional cost. All expenses associated with attending the event will be met from existing budgets.

5. Attendance

It is proposed that The Mayor, Chairs of Policy & Governance and Operations Committee, or their nominees, attend along with relevant Officers as an approved duty.

6. Recommendation

It is recommended that: -

- a) a table of ten be reserved at the MJ Awards Ceremony in London on Friday 19 June 2026**

- b) the Mayor, Chairs of Policy & Governance and Operations Committee, or their nominees, attend along with relevant Officers as an approved duty.**

Prepared by: Allen Templeton, Performance Improvement Officer

Agreed by: Lesley Millar, Head of Organisation Development

Approved by: Liz Johnston, Deputy Director of Governance

5 ITEMS FOR NOTING

5.1 FI/FIN/9 PROMPT PAYMENT PERFORMANCE

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to recommend to Members to note the update on the Council's quarter three prompt payment performance.

2. Introduction/Background

Members are reminded that the Department for Communities (DfC) issued revised guidance (Local Government Circular 19/2016) on prompt payments and the recording of invoice payments in November 2016. This guidance requested Councils to record specific performance targets of 10 working days and 30 calendar days and continue a cycle of quarterly reporting on prompt payment performance by Councils to the DfC and its publication on their website.

3. Prompt Payment Performance

Council's prompt payment performance for the period 1st October to 31st December 2025 is set out below:

During the above period, the Council paid 5,644 invoices totalling £17,050,396.

Council paid 5,082 invoices within the 30 calendar days target (90%).

Council paid 4,495 invoices within the 10 working days target (80%).

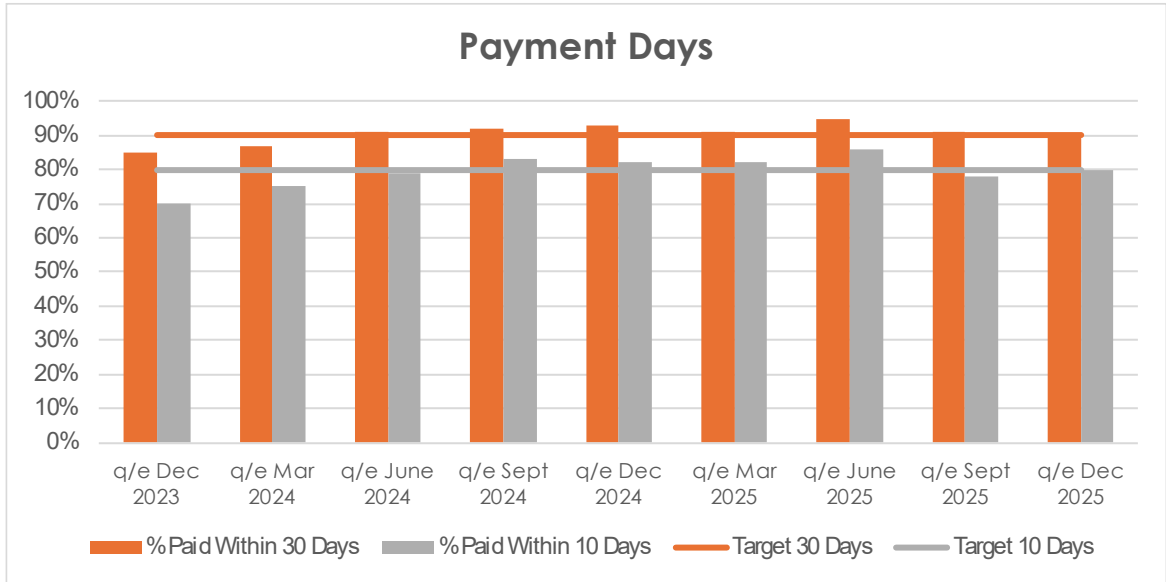
Council paid 562 invoices outside of the 30 days target (10%).

This compares to previous quarterly results over the past two years as below:

Period	Total Number of Invoices Paid	% Paid Within 30 Days	% Paid Within 10 Days
Target		90%	80%
q/e 31 December 2023	7,074	85%	70%
q/e 31 March 2024	5,776	87%	75%
q/e 30 June 2024	5,533	91%	79%
q/e 30 September 2024	4,871	92%	83%
q/e 31 December 2024	4,849	93%	82%
q/e 31 March 2025	6,787	91%	82%
q/e 30 June 2025	4,891	95%	86%

q/e 30 September 2025	4,992	91%	78%
q/e 31 December 2025	5,644	90%	80%

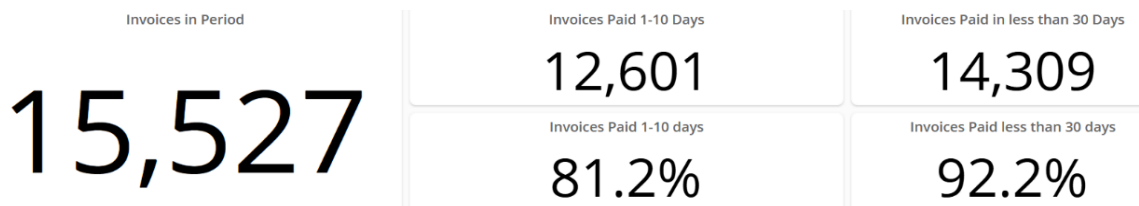
This performance is shown graphically below:



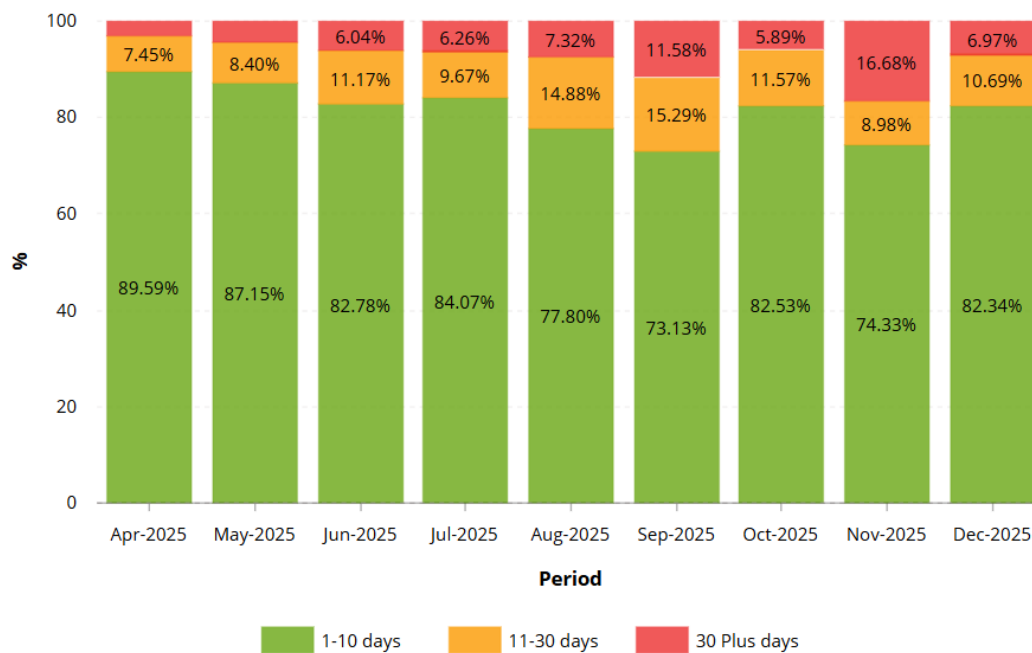
After being just below the target for payment within 10 days, at 78%, for quarter ending September 2025, the 10- day target was met during the quarter ending December 2025 at 80%.

The 10-day target has now been achieved for five out of the past six quarters and the 30-day target has been achieved for the past seven consecutive quarters.

Overall, both targets have been achieved for the whole financial year to the end of December with 81% of invoices paid within 10 days and 92% within 30 days.



The monthly performance for the financial year to date is shown overleaf:



Staff within the Finance section continue to work with all departments across the Council and with the software provider to ensure that the targets continue to be met and improved as much as possible.

Service improvements have included:

- Additional reporting capability to monitor performance
- Staff training/refresher sessions
- Process review for high volume suppliers
- Introduction of a new process to scan invoices and send to Council officers for action or to return invoices to the supplier for more information.

The prompt payment performance for Councils in Northern Ireland is published quarterly by the Department for Communities (DfC). The prompt payment performance for the quarter ended September 2025 is **(enclosed)**; the Council's performance for Quarter 3 of 2025/26 against the average performance for the other Councils for the latest available quarter is set out in the table below:

Council	% Paid Within 30 Days	% Paid Within 10 Days
Antrim & Newtownabbey BC (Quarter 3 25/26)	90%	80%
All Councils (Quarter 2 25/26)	93%	70%

4. Supplier Balances

	December 2025	September 2025
	£	£

Creditors Control Account	853,355	1,021,590
% of quarterly spend	5.00%	7.37%

The outstanding amount due to suppliers will fluctuate markedly depending on the timing of payment, invoice value and timelines of verification.

5 Recommendation

It is recommended that the Council's quarterly prompt payment performance report be noted.

Prepared by: Richard Murray, Head of Finance

Approved by: John Balmer, Deputy Director of Finance

5.2 FC/FA/8 ANNUAL REVIEW OF PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS AND TREASURY MANAGEMENT

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide a review of the Council's Prudential Indicators and Treasury Management activities for Quarter 3 of the 2025/26 financial year for noting.

2. Introduction

Members are reminded that the Council measures and manages its capital expenditure, borrowings and investment activities with reference to the CIPFA Prudential Code. This report provides an update on these activities that took place during April to December 2025.

3. Previous Decisions of Council

Council approved the Prudential Indicators for 2025/26 to 2027/2028 and the Treasury Management Strategies for 2025/26 in February 2025.

Under the Prudential Code and the Code of Practice on Treasury Management in the Public Services the Council is required to monitor and review its prudential indicators. The key objective is to ensure that, within a clear framework, the capital investment plans of the Council are affordable, prudent and sustainable and that treasury management decisions are taken in accordance with good professional practice.

The Council's Treasury Management Policy requires quarterly and annual reports on treasury management activities.

This report compares the approved Prudential Indicators for 2025/26 with the quarterly position and the quarterly report on the Council's borrowing and investment activities for 2025/26.

A copy of the Quarter 3 report is **enclosed** for information.

4. Recommendation

It is recommended that the report be noted.

Prepared by: Richard Murray, Head of Finance

Approved by: John Balmer, Director of Finance

5.3 HR/HR/051 ACCESSNI COMPLIANCE AUDIT

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to recommend to Members to note the outcome of the AccessNI Compliance Audit.

2. Audit Outcome

The compliance audit of Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council was conducted by the AccessNI Compliance Unit on 27 January 2026.

The audit reviewed compliance with the AccessNI Code of Practice and confirmed that the Council is sufficiently compliant, with no recommendations made.

Key strengths noted included strong understanding of legislation, robust identity and application checking processes, clear governance and record keeping arrangements, resulting in a successful audit outcome and confirmation that the organisation remains suitable to receive disclosure information.

3. Recommendation

It is recommended that the AccessNI Compliance Audit report be noted.

Prepared and Approved by: Liz Johnston, Deputy Director of Governance

5.4 HR/GEN/019 MANAGING ATTENDANCE QUARTER 3, OCTOBER 2025 – DECEMBER 2025

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to recommend to Members to note the Quarter 3 Managing Attendance Update for the period October 2025 to December 2025 and associated Action Plan for 2025/26.

2. Managing Attendance Update Summary

The Councils 2025/26 annual target for absence is 14 days lost per employee.

Absence at the end of Quarter 3 2025/26 was 12.26 days per employee which is above the target of 10.51 days per employee.

A comprehensive action plan is in place to manage absence, with further details provided in the **enclosed** Managing Absence Report and Attendance Management Action Plan.

3. Recommendation

It is recommended that the Quarter 3 Managing Attendance update for the period October 2025 to December 2025, and associated report and Action Plan for 2025/26 be noted.

Prepared by: Gary Gardner, HR Manager

Agreed by: Jane Clarke, Head of Human Resources

Approved by: Liz Johnston, Deputy Director of Governance

5.5 CCS/CS/011 CUSTOMER SERVICES QUARTER 3, 2025/26

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to note the Quarter 3 Customer Services report for the period October to December 2025.

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 are set as measures of success and the Customer Services Report for Quarter 3 2025/26 **enclosed**, provides an update on performance.

In addition, there is an update on key consultations to serve the Plan, and the performance of the Complaints Handling Procedure, during the period October to December 2025.

3. Recommendation

It is recommended that the Quarter 3 Customer Services report for the period October to December 2025 be noted.

Prepared by: James Porter, Customer Services Manager

Agreed by: Lesley Millar, Head of Organisation Development

Approved by: Liz Johnston, Deputy Director of Governance

5.6 CCS/EDP/025 DUAL LANGUAGE STREET SIGN APPLICATIONS

1. Purpose

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

Stage 1

- Longlands Walk, Newtownabbey, BT36 7NQ be noted.
- Longlands Park, Newtownabbey, BT36 7NG be noted.

Stage 2

- No applications at stage 2 be noted.

Stage 3

- No applications at stage 3 be noted.

2. Introduction/Background

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

3. Application Update

STAGE 1: PETITION VERIFICATION - there are two applications at Stage 1.

1. LONGLANDS WALK, NEWTOWNABBEY, BT36 7NQ
2. LONGLANDS PARK, NEWTOWNABBEY, BT36 7NG

Two new applications have been received for the above streets and are pending verification of the petition at Electoral Office NI. An update will be provided in the next report.

STAGE 2: RESIDENTS CANVASS – there are no applications at Stage 2.

STAGE 3: STREET SIGN INSTALLATION – there are no applications at Stage 3.

Maps and costs are **enclosed** for information.

4. Recommendation

It is recommended that Dual Language Street Sign applications at:

Stage 1

- Longlands Walk, Newtownabbey, BT36 7NQ be noted.
- Longlands Park, Newtownabbey, BT36 7NG be noted.

Stage 2

- No applications at stage 2 be noted.

Stage 3

- **No applications at stage 3 be noted.**

Prepared by: Claire Webb, Accessibility and Inclusion Officer

Agreed by: Lesley Millar, Head of Organisation Development

Approved by: Liz Johnston, Deputy Director of Governance

5.7 CCS/EDP/7 QUARTERLY SECTION 75 AND RURAL SCREENING

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to update Members on the quarterly section 75 and rural screenings which have taken place within the period of November 2025 and January 2026.

2. Background

Members are advised that in line with the Council's Equality Scheme, it was agreed to provide quarterly updates on the screening of policies under Section 75. Within the Scheme, 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. Section 75 and Rural Screenings

The policies noted below have been screened between November 2025 and January 2026.

POLICY	SCREENING DECISION
Internal Audit Strategy 2026-2030 consultation	1
Social Media Policy for Employees	1
Review of the Prohibition or Restriction of Use of Public Roads for Special Events policy	1
Temporary Festive Recycling Centre Arrangements	1
Review of Legacy Councils Dog Control Orders	1
Dementia Safeguarding Scheme	1
Positive Ageing Month 2025	1
Review of Entertainment Licensing Policy	1
Winter Woolies Update	1
International Men's Day Event	1
Surveillance Camera Policy	1
Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan 2026/27	1

- (1) Screened with no mitigation
- (2) Screened with mitigation
- (3) Screened and EQIA required

4. Recommendation

It is recommended that the quarterly screening report for November 2025 to January 2026 be noted.

Prepared by: Claire Webb, Accessibility and Inclusion Officer

Agreed by: Lesley Millar, Head of Organisation Development

Approved by: Liz Johnston, Deputy Director of Governance

5.8 HR/SG/002 DOMESTIC ABUSE (SAFE LEAVE) ACT (NI) 2022

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to recommend to Members to note an update on the Domestic Abuse (Safe Leave) Act (NI) 2022.

2. Previous decision of Council

Members are reminded that in November 2025, a motion concerning the Domestic Abuse (Safe Leave) Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 was approved. Officers committed to reviewing the provisions of the 2022 Act and to prepare a report for Member's consideration.

3. Background

The Domestic Abuse (Safe Leave) Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 "*makes provision for an entitlement to paid safe leave for victims of domestic abuse; and for connected purposes*".

The Domestic Abuse (Safe Leave) Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 provides for an entitlement of at least 10 days paid safe leave per leave year for victims of domestic abuse.

Although the Act was passed by the Northern Ireland Assembly in 2022, it has not yet come into operation, as the necessary secondary regulations, including provisions on definitions, notice requirements and payment arrangements, have not been finalised.

The Economy Minister has reaffirmed a commitment to commence the legislation, with implementation anticipated by May 2027. While there is no confirmed commencement date, many employers are preparing for its introduction.

4. Interim Arrangements

Officers are proactively preparing a draft Domestic and Sexual Abuse Policy which will be submitted to Members for approval in due course.

In the interim, pending the commencement of the relevant legislation and supporting regulations, the Council will consider any requests for domestic abuse-related leave on a case-by-case basis.

5. Recommendation

It is recommended that the Domestic Abuse (Safe Leave) Act (NI) 2022 update be noted.

Prepared and Approved by: Liz Johnston, Deputy Director of Governance

6 ANY OTHER RELEVANT BUSINESS

Any Other Relevant Business (AORB) may be taken at this point.