



30 October 2025

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 4 November 2025 at 6.30pm.**

You are requested to attend.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard Baker".

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](mailto:memberservices@antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk)

## **A G E N D A**

### **1 APOLOGIES**

### **2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

### **3 PRESENTATION**

- 3.1 Organisation Development Presentation

### **4 ITEMS FOR DECISION**

- 4.1 Consultation by the Local Government Auditor on the Draft Code of Audit Practice 2026
- 4.2 Dual Language Street Signs Applications
- 4.3 Scheme of Allowances payable to Councillors 2025-26

### **5 ITEMS FOR NOTING**

- 5.1 Budget Report – Period 6 (April 2025 – September 2025)
- 5.2 Review of Prudential Indicators and Treasury Management
- 5.3 Prompt payments Performance Quarter 2 2025/26
- 5.4 Procurement pipeline report 2025/26
- 5.5 Quarterly Report on FOI/EIR/DPA requests - Quarter 2
- 5.6 Council Wide Cyber Desktop Exercise

### **6 ANY OTHER RELEVANT BUSINESS**

### **7 ITEMS IN CONFIDENCE**

- 7.1 Procurement Act 2023 – Conflicts of Interest
- 7.2 Christmas Eve 2025
- 7.3 Capital Projects Progress Report to 30 September 2025

**REPORT ON BUSINESS TO BE CONSIDERED AT THE  
POLICY AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE MEETING ON  
TUESDAY 4 NOVEMBER 2025**

**3 PRESENTATION**

**3.1 ORGANISATION DEVELOPMENT PRESENTATION**

**1. Purpose**

**The purpose of this presentation is to provide Members with an overview of the work of the Organisation Development Team.**

**2. Introduction**

Members are advised that Katherine Young, Organisation Development and Employee Engagement Manager, will deliver a presentation on the Organisation Development Work Plan

**3. Recommendation**

**It is recommended that the presentation be noted.**

Prepared by: Sarah Fenton, Organisation Development Officer

Agreed by: Katherine Young, Organisation Development and Employee Engagement Manager

Approved by: Helen Hall, Director of Organisation Development (Interim)

## **4 ITEMS FOR DECISION**

### **4.1 FI/GEN/031 CONSULTATION BY THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AUDITOR ON THE DRAFT CODE OF AUDIT PRACTICE 2026**

#### **1. Purpose**

**The purpose of this report is to seek Members approval for the Corporate response to the consultation by the Local Government Auditor on the Draft Code of Audit Practice 2026**

#### **2. Introduction/Background**

The Code of Audit Practice sets out how the Local Government Auditor conducts and reports on audit work, in line with statutory duties under the Local Government (Northern Ireland) Order 2005 (the Order) and the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 (the Act).

Legislation requires the Code to be revised every five years and therefore the Draft Code of Audit Practice 2026, has now been received for consultation, and will replace the current 2021 Code on 1 April 2026.

#### **3. Key Issues**

Officers have reviewed the Draft Code **enclosed** and consultation document **enclosed**. A consultation response has been completed **enclosed** and there are only a few minor changes from the previous Code of Audit Practice.

#### **4. Recommendation**

**Members approve the corporate response to the Local Government Auditor Consultation on the Draft Code of Audit Practice.**

Prepared and Approved by: Sandra Cole, Director of Finance and Governance

## 4.2 CCS/EDP/025 DUAL LANGUAGE STREET SIGN APPLICATIONS

### 1. Purpose

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

#### Stage 1

No applications be noted

#### Stage 2

- Arthur Crescent, Newtownabbey, BT36 7AL be noted

#### Stage 3

- Arthur Road, Newtownabbey, BT36 7EH be approved
- Arthur Park, Newtownabbey, BT36 7EL be approved
- Gallagher Road, Toome, BT41 3PD be approved

### 2. 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 no applications at Stage 1.

STAGE 2: RESIDENTS CANVASS - there is one application at Stage 2.

#### 1. ARTHUR CRESCENT, BT36 7AL

Canvass letters will be issued to residents of the above street and the outcome will be reported to Members.

#### STAGE 3: STREET SIGN INSTALLATION

Three applications have been progressed to Stage 3.

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

The occupiers of the above streets have been canvassed and the threshold of two thirds or more in favour of the erection of a second language street sign has been met as required within the approved Policy.

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

#### **4. Recommendation**

**It is recommended that the Dual Language Street Sign applications at:**

##### **Stage 1**

- **No applications be noted.**

##### **Stage 2**

- **Arthur Crescent, Newtownabbey, BT36 7AL be noted**

##### **Stage 3**

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

Prepared by: Claire Webb, Accessibility and Inclusion Officer

Approved by: Helen Hall, Director of Organisation Development (Interim)

#### **4.3 G/MSMO/1 SCHEME OF ALLOWANCES PAYABLE TO COUNCILLORS 2025-26**

##### **1. Purpose**

**The purpose of this report is to update the Scheme of Allowances Payable to Councillors 2025-26 for approval.**

##### **2. Introduction/Background**

Members are reminded that Council is required under the Local Government (Payments to Councillors) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2019 to make a scheme for the payment of allowances to Councillors and Committee Members in respect of each year. The scheme may be amended at any time.

##### **3. Key Issues**

The Scheme of Allowances for 2025/26 (**enclosed**) was approved by Council in April 2025.

CIRCULAR LG 17/2025 - CONSOLIDATED COUNCILLOR ALLOWANCES CIRCULAR (Updated October 2025) (**enclosed**) has been received from the Department for Communities.

This consolidated circular reflects an increase of 3.20% in maximum rates for Basic and Special Responsibility Allowance from 1 April 2025.

The Council's Scheme of Allowances for 2025/26 has been amended to reflect this increase.

Any future notifications from the DfC in relation to changes to the allowances payable for the 2025-26 financial year shall be reported to Members for their approval.

##### **4. Recommendation**

**It is recommended that the updated Scheme of Allowances Payable to Councillors for 2025-26 be approved.**

Prepared by: Richard Murray, Head of Finance

Agreed by: John Balmer, Deputy Director of Finance

Approved by: Sandra Cole, Director of Finance and Governance

## **5 ITEMS FOR NOTING**

### **5.1 FI/FIN/4 BUDGET REPORT – PERIOD 6 (APRIL 2025 TO SEPTEMBER 2025)**

#### **1. Purpose**

**The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the financial performance for the Directorates reporting to the Policy and Governance Committee and for the whole Council for Period 6 April 2025 to September 2025.**

#### **2. Introduction/Background**

As agreed, quarterly budget reports will be presented to the relevant Committee. All financial reports will be available to all Members.

#### **3. Summary**

As at period 6:

The Finance and Governance Directorate has a favourable variance of £198k, or 6.0%, against the budgeted financial performance for the period.

The Organisation Development Directorate has a favourable variance of £159k, or 12%, against the budgeted financial performance for the period.

Overall, the Council has a favourable variance of £990k or 2.7% against the budgeted financial performance for the period.

A report on the financial performance, employee costs, highest areas of expenditure and income, and the financial performance by Head of Service is **enclosed** for Members' information.

#### **4. Recommendation**

**It is recommended that the report be noted.**

Prepared by: Richard Murray, Head of Finance

Approved by: Sandra Cole, Director of Finance and Governance



## 5.2 FC/FA/8 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 2 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 September 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 of which 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 2 report is **enclosed** for Members' information.

### 4. Recommendation

**It is recommended that the report be noted.**

Prepared by: Richard Murray, Head of Finance

Agreed by: John Balmer, Deputy Director of Finance

Approved by: Sandra Cole, Director of Finance and Governance

### 5.3 FI/FIN/9 PROMPT PAYMENTS PERFORMANCE QUARTER 2 2025/26

#### 1. Purpose

**The purpose of this report is to update Members on Council's prompt payment performance for the quarter ended 30<sup>th</sup> September 2025.**

#### 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 **1<sup>st</sup> July to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2025** is set out below:

During the above period, the Council paid invoices totalling £13,865,205.

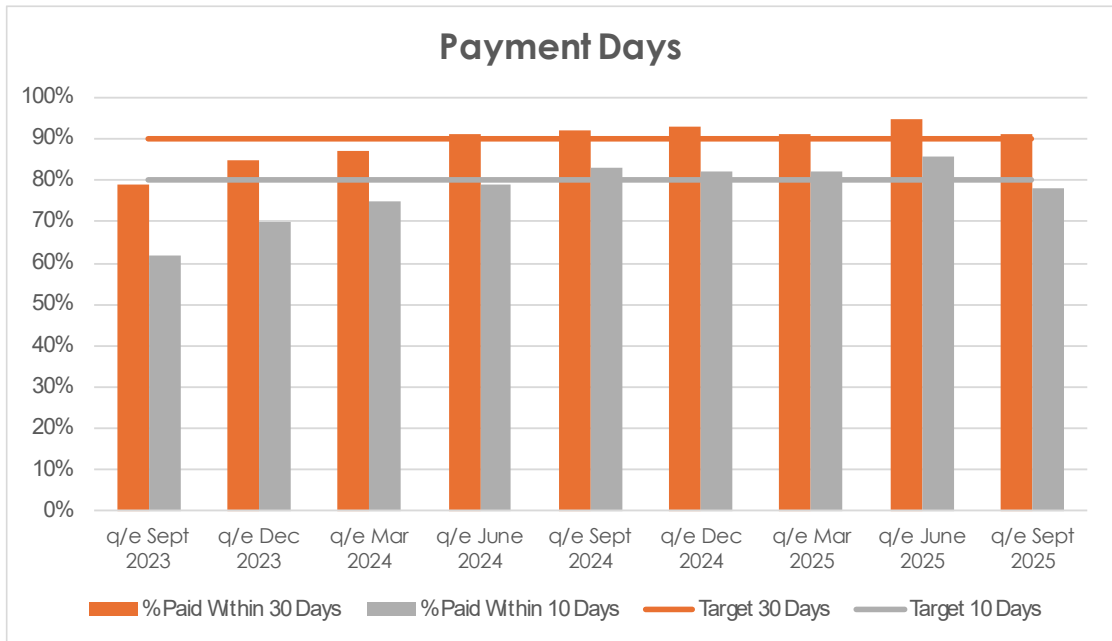
Council paid 4,562 invoices within the 30 calendar days target (91%).

Council paid 3,888 invoices within the 10 working days target (78%).

Council paid 430 invoices outside of the 30 days target (9%).

This compares to previous quarterly results as below:

Period	Total Number of Invoices Paid	% Paid Within 30 Days	% Paid Within 10 Days
<b>Target</b>		<b>90%</b>	<b>80%</b>
q/e 30 September 2023	6,498	79%	62%
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%



The performance presented graphically highlights the performance metrics for the above.

The table and graph above show the performance over the last two years.

After four consecutive quarters meeting both targets, the percentage paid within 10 days was just below target at 78%. Some additional functionality was added to the financial software during the quarter which caused a slight drop in performance as staff, both in Finance and across Council, started to use the new process.

This new process allows invoices to be automatically returned to suppliers and staff should there be any queries and removes some manual intervention by Finance staff.

Overall, both targets have been achieved for the whole financial year to the end of September with 82% of invoices paid within 10 days and 93.4% within 30 days.

The monthly performance for the financial year to date i.e. April to September is as shown overleaf:

Invoices in Period	Invoices Paid 1-10 Days	Invoices Paid in less than 30 Days
9,883	8,106	9,227
	Invoices Paid 1-10 days	Invoices Paid less than 30 days
	82.0%	93.4%



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 June 2025 is shown in Appendix 1 (**enclosed**); the Council's performance for Quarter 1 of 2025/26 against the average performance for the other Councils for the same quarter is set out in the table below:

Council	% Paid Within 30 Days	% Paid Within 10 Days
Antrim & Newtownabbey BC (Quarter 2 25/26)	91%	78%
All Councils (Quarter 1 25/26)	93%	73%

#### 4. Supplier Balances

	<b>September 2025</b>	<b>June 2025</b>
	£	£
Creditors Control Account	1,021,590	128,247
% of quarterly spend	7.37%	0.71%

The outstanding amount due to suppliers will fluctuate markedly depending on the timing of payment, invoice value and timelines of verification. The value at 30 September 2025 included some invoices which were not due for payment until October.

#### 5. Recommendation

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

Prepared by: Richard Murray, Head of Finance

Agreed by: John Balmer, Deputy Director of Finance

Approved by: Sandra Cole, Director of Finance and Governance

## **5.4 FI/PRO/GEN/030 PROCUREMENT PIPELINE REPORT 2025/26**

### **1. Purpose**

**The purpose of this report is to provide Elected Members with an update on the Procurement Exercises that have been completed in the financial year to date and those that are expected to be undertaken in the next few months.**

### **2. Introduction/Background**

Members are aware that the primary objective of the Council's Procurement Procedures is to ensure that the Council obtains best value for the money spent on goods and services, having due regard to the needs of the organisation/service.

The value of the anticipated spend determines whether quotations or a full tender is required.

If the anticipated spend is over £50,000 then a formal tendering process must be followed.

### **3. Summary**

The Procurement team, within the Finance department, has completed 32 procurement exercises from April 2025 to date, with a further 24 anticipated to be completed prior to the end of the financial year in March 2026.

There are also four other tenders which are anticipated to be awarded for contracts starting on 1 April 2026.

The record of the Procurements completed, in progress, or planned (referred to as the Procurement Pipeline) **enclosed** is regularly updated and enables staff to ensure that they can schedule work demands as efficiently and effectively as possible.

### **4. Recommendation**

**It is recommended that the report be noted.**

Prepared by: Richard Murray, Head of Finance

Approved by: Sandra Cole, Director of Finance and Governance

## 5.5 G/DPFI/2 QUARTERLY REPORT ON FOI/EIR/DPA REQUESTS – QUARTER 2

### 1. Purpose

**The purpose of this report is to inform Members on the Quarter 2 statistics relating to FOI/EIR/DPA Requests.**

### 2. Introduction/Background

A report has been prepared on requests received and completed in the second quarter of the year (1 July to 30 September 2025) under the Freedom of Information Act (FOI), Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) and the Data Protection Act (DPA) and this is **enclosed**.

### 3. Summary

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

The number of requests received was higher than the number in the same period the previous year – an increase of 47%.

Of the one hundred and sixty three (163) requests received, one hundred and nineteen (119) were under FOI, 31 under EIR and 13 under DPA.

One hundred and sixty six (166) 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 (35), Finance (33), Planning (31), Waste (29) and Governance (24).

Ten appeals were received during the quarter. The Council's original decision was upheld on 6 occasions and additional information was provided on 3 occasions. One appeal was underway at the end of the quarter.

One complaint to the ICO was notified within the quarter.

ICO reference - IC-415965-G6LO:

On 13 September 2025 the ICO notified the Council that they had received a complaint re FOI 2025/07/062 – application of section 43 exemption to withhold commercially sensitive information. The request asked for copies of council minutes to be unredacted regarding the harmonisation of waste collection services in the borough. Council stands over the decision to apply the section 43 exemption. Once the case has been allocated to a case officer they will proceed to a decision notice or request further information from the Council.

## **5. Recommendation**

**It is recommended that Members note the Quarter 2 statistics relating to FOI/EIR/DPA Requests.**

Prepared by: Helen McBride, Information Governance Manager

Agreed by: Liz Johnston, Deputy Director of Governance

Approved by: Sandra Cole, Director of Finance and Governance



## 5.6 ICT/GEN/2025/10 COUNCIL-WIDE CYBER DESKTOP EXERCISE

### 1. Purpose

**The purpose of this report is to update Members on the completion of the recent cyber desktop exercise undertaken across Council services, focusing on key systems and customer-facing functions.**

### 2. Background

In line with the Council's ongoing commitment to cyber resilience and business continuity, a desktop exercise was facilitated by ICT and Health, Safety and Resilience section during September and October 2025. The exercise was designed to assess Council-wide preparedness in responding to potential cyber incidents and to test existing continuity arrangements for critical systems and public-facing services.

The simulation replicated a range of plausible cyber events, including system compromise, data unavailability, and ransomware-style disruption. Each participating service area was required to respond using its existing business continuity plans (BCPs) and to evaluate operational resilience under pressure.

A total of eight service areas participated in the exercise: the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT), Finance, Leisure, Arts and Culture, Planning, Organisational Development, Building Control, and Waste and Sustainability. Each service contributed valuable insight into how cyber disruption could impact daily operations and service delivery, particularly where digital systems underpin customer engagement or statutory functions.

#### **Understanding a Cyber Attack**

A cyber attack typically involves an attempt by a malicious actor to compromise or disable systems, steal sensitive information, or disrupt essential operations. Attacks can take many forms, including phishing emails designed to obtain user credentials, ransomware that encrypts data until payment is made, or denial-of-service attacks that overwhelm systems and prevent normal use. The impact of such attacks can extend beyond immediate system downtime, potentially damaging public confidence, service continuity, and data integrity.

The timing of this exercise is particularly relevant given the recent high-profile cyber incidents affecting the NHS and Marks & Spencer, both of which have highlighted the significant operational, reputational, and financial risks posed by increasingly sophisticated cyber threats.

#### **Current Cyber Resilience and Defences**

As reported to the Audit and Risk Committee in September 2025, Cybersecurity remains a priority for the ICT Department, with a significant proportion of the ICT budget allocated to protecting the Council's data and digital assets.

The Council continues to maintain a comprehensive suite of security technologies, including advanced firewalls, cloud-based email protection, intrusion detection and prevention systems, and Microsoft 365 threat intelligence services. These controls work continuously to detect, block, and report suspicious or malicious activity across the Council's network and cloud environments.

The following statistics, covering **Quarter 1 (2025–26)**, provide an overview of cyber activity compared with the same period in the previous financial year.

	<b>Q1 25-26</b>	<b>Q1 24-25</b>
<b>Firewall</b>		
Intrusions blocked by Intrusion Protection System	36	157
*Malware Detections	56	N/A
<b>Trend Cloud Email &amp; Collaboration Protection</b>		
Services: Exchange Online, OneDrive, Teams		
*Files/Chats/Records scanned	53,143	N/A
Total number of emails scanned	1,237,750	995,741
Ransomware detected and blocked	0	1
High Risk Malicious Files blocked	11	23
Web Reputation – Malicious URLs blocked	39	45
Phishing emails blocked	203	113
*Spam	47,469	N/A
*BEC (Business Email Compromise)	351	N/A
<b>Microsoft 365 Advanced Threat Detection</b>		
Phishing Email Protection	1,029	429
Anti-Spam Engine	28,661	25,451
Anti-malware engine	2	194

\*These security services have been enhanced or added during the last 12 months.

### 3. Next Steps

The exercise outcomes have informed a programme of follow-up actions to strengthen the Council's overall cyber resilience. These include:

#### (a) **Supplier Assurance:**

All key system suppliers be contacted to confirm their current level of cyber readiness and operational resilience. This will include verification of data backup processes, incident response capability, and recovery times.

(b) **Staff Training:**

A dedicated Cybersecurity Awareness module will be added to the Council's mandatory staff training portfolio. This will ensure all employees understand their responsibilities in detecting, reporting, and responding to cyber threats.

(c) **Business Continuity Plan Updates:**

Each service area will review and update its BCP to ensure that cyber risks and recovery procedures are fully integrated. ICT will provide updated templates and guidance to support this process.

(d) **Future Exercises:**

Further cyber resilience exercises will be delivered during 2026 to build on the outcomes of this exercise and strengthen Council-wide preparedness.

(e) **Appointment of an Independent Body:**

An independent body will be appointed to review Council Cyber resilience and identify any gaps for future action.

**4. Recommendation**

**It is recommended that the completion of the Council-wide cyber desktop exercise and the Next Steps outlined above be noted.**

Prepared by: Graham Smyth, Head of ICT

Approved by: Sandra Cole, Director of Finance and Governance

## **6 ANY OTHER RELEVANT BUSINESS**

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