



**MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE MEETING OF THE POLICY AND GOVERNANCE
COMMITTEE HELD IN THE ROUND TOWER CHAMBER, ANTRIM CIVIC CENTRE
ON TUESDAY 4 MARCH 2025 AT 6.30 PM**

In the Chair	:	Councillor A O'Lone
Members Present (In person)	:	Aldermen – L Boyle, L Clarke and J Smyth Councillors – A Bennington, J Burbank, S Cosgrove, H Cushinan, H Magill and V McWilliam
Members Present (Remote)	:	Alderman P Bradley Councillors - A McAuley, M Cooper and E McLaughlin
Non Committee Members: (In person)	:	Councillor B Webb
Non Committee Members: (Remote)	:	Councillor R Lynch
Officers Present (In person)	:	Director of Finance & Governance – S Cole Director of Organisation Development (Interim) – H Hall Deputy Director of Governance – L Johnston Head of Finance – R Murray ICT Helpdesk Officer – J Wilson Member Services Officer – C McGrandle

CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

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

1 APOLOGIES

Councillor O'Hagan

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

3 ITEMS FOR DECISION

3.1 FI/GEN/30 CAR LOAN SCHEME

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to recommend to Members to approve the Council's updated Car Loan Scheme.

2. Introduction/Background

Section 41B of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972 provided district councils with the powers to make a loan to staff officers for the purchase of a motor vehicle or motorcycle, subject to such condition as the Department for Communities and Department of Finance may determine.

The Council Scheme offered the facility to Council Officers designated as requiring a form of transportation to fulfil their job, or in connection with their duties, to apply. All payments would be repaid via a salary deduction agreement.

The Car Loan Scheme had been reviewed (circulated) and thereafter would be reviewed on a four yearly basis, or sooner as necessary, to ensure that it remained up to date with any legislative changes.

3. Governance

The Car Loan Scheme had been equality screened, a copy of which was circulated for information.

Proposed by Alderman Smyth
Seconded by Councillor Bennington and agreed that

the updated Car Loan Scheme be approved.

ACTION BY: Richard Murray, Head of Finance

3.2 FI/FIN/050 LPS SUPPLEMENTARY CONSULTATION ON DOMESTIC RATING MEASURES

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to seek Members' instructions on the response to the Public Supplementary Consultation on Domestic Rating.

2. Introduction/Background

In January 2024, Council submitted a response to the Department of Finance's consultation on Revenue Raising Measures.

Council had been notified that the Minister of Finance had commenced a supplementary consultation (circulated) on two specific measures.

Proposal 1

Elevating the current level of the Maximum Capital Value (Cap) on domestic properties from £400,000 to £485,000.

Maximum Capital Value Cap – Summary of Measure

- Occupiers of domestic property with an assessed Capital Value of more than £400,000 pay rates as if the property's value is £400,000
- 183 Ratepayers in ANBC
- Cost of support in ANBC £163,038
- The cost fell on the NI Executive and district councils in revenue foregone

Proposal 2

Reducing the Early Payment Discount from 4% to 2%.

Early Payment Discount – Summary of Measure

- 4% Discount would be applied to a domestic rate bill if it is paid in full by a specified date – usually in mid-May.
- 11,905 ratepayers in ANBC
- Cost of support in ANBC £574,408
- The full cost of the discount was met by the NI Executive

The consultation would close on 25 April 2025 and details of the consultation including the consultation response form could be accessed via the website link below:

[Supplementary Consultation on Domestic Rating Measures](#)

Members were advised that they may wish to respond on a corporate, individual or party basis.

Proposed by Councillor Bennington
Seconded by Alderman Clarke and agreed that

Members respond to the Public Supplementary Consultation on Domestic

Rating on either an individual or party basis.

NO ACTION

3.3 PT/CI/060 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE AND IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2024/25, PERFORMANCE PROGRESS REPORT QUARTER 3

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to recommend to Members to approve the Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan 2024/25, Quarter 3 Performance Progress Reports for Finance & Governance, Organisation Development, and overall Council.

2. Background

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

3. Previous Decision of Council

Council's Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan 2024/25 was approved in June 2024. This set out a range of robust performance targets, along with identified improvement objectives and several Statutory Performance Targets.

4. Progress Reports

Third Quarter performance progress reports for Finance and Governance, Organisation Development and the overall Council were circulated for Members' information.

5. Governance

Quarterly performance progress reports were reported to relevant Committees.

In response to a Member's query in relation to environmental management, the Director of Organisation Development (Interim) confirmed that she would liaise with the Director of Sustainability and revert with a response.

In relation to a Member's query regarding the results for job creation within the Go Succeed Programme, the Director of Organisation Development (Interim) confirmed that a review was being undertaken as to the measurement of this KPI across all Councils in relation to the Go Succeed programme and would follow up on the timeline for this review.

The Director of Organisation Development (Interim) clarified that the reason for reduced sales at the Enchanted Winter Garden event was due to unforeseen weather conditions. The Director further confirmed that she would liaise with the Director of Community Development to provide a response in

relation to neighbouring towns' events and the impact of price increases on attendance.

Proposed by Councillor McLaughlin
Seconded by Alderman Smyth and agreed that

the Quarter 3 Performance Progress Reports for Finance & Governance, Organisation Development, and overall Council be approved.

ACTION BY: Allen Templeton, Performance Improvement Officer

3.4 CCS/EDP/10 DISABILITY ACTION PLAN (DAP) 2020–2025

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to recommend to Members to approve an extension to the Council's Disability Action Plan until 2026 to complete the remaining actions and align with the Council's Equality Scheme and Action Plan 2023-2026.

2. Introduction/Background

Council was required to submit a Disability Action Plan (DAP) to the Equality Commission. The DAP was a statement of Council's commitment to the promotion of equality of opportunity for disabled people and complements its Equality Scheme under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

The DAP was designed to ensure that Council fulfils its statutory obligations in compliance with Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA 1995) (as amended by Article 5 of the Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006) through to 2016.

The Disability Discrimination Act placed duties on public authorities, when carrying out their functions, to have due regard to the need to:

- promote positive attitudes towards disabled people; and
- encourage participation by disabled people in public life.

These were collectively referred to as 'the disability duties'.

3. Previous Decision of Council

The Disability Action Plan 2020-2025 was approved at Council in October 2020 following a 12-week consultation period.

4. Key Delivery of Disability Action Plan

The Disability Action Plan 2020-2025 actions would be regularly reviewed and reported on, and an Annual Progress Report would be brought to the Policy and Governance Committee and Council and then submitted to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI). An update on the Disability Action

Plan was circulated.

To achieve some final outstanding actions, and bring in line with the timeframes of the Equality Scheme and Action Plan 2023-2026, it was recommended that the Disability Action Plan 2020-2025 be extended to March 2026.

Proposed by Councillor Burbank
Seconded by Alderman Clarke and agreed that

an extension to the Council's Disability Action Plan until 2026 to complete the remaining actions and align with the Council's Equality Scheme and Action Plan 2023-2026 be approved.

ACTION BY: Ellen Boyd, Accessibility and Inclusion Officer

4 ITEMS FOR NOTING

4.1 FI/FIN/9 PROMPT PAYMENT PERFORMANCE

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to recommend to Members to note the Council's quarterly prompt payment performance.

2. Introduction/Background

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 April 2024 to 31st December 2024** was set out below:

The default target for paying invoices, where no other terms were agreed, was 30 days.

(N.B. 30 days target is 30 calendar days and 10 days is 10 working days).

During the above period, the Council paid invoices totalling £12,364,942.

Council paid 4,339 invoices within the 30-day target (93%).

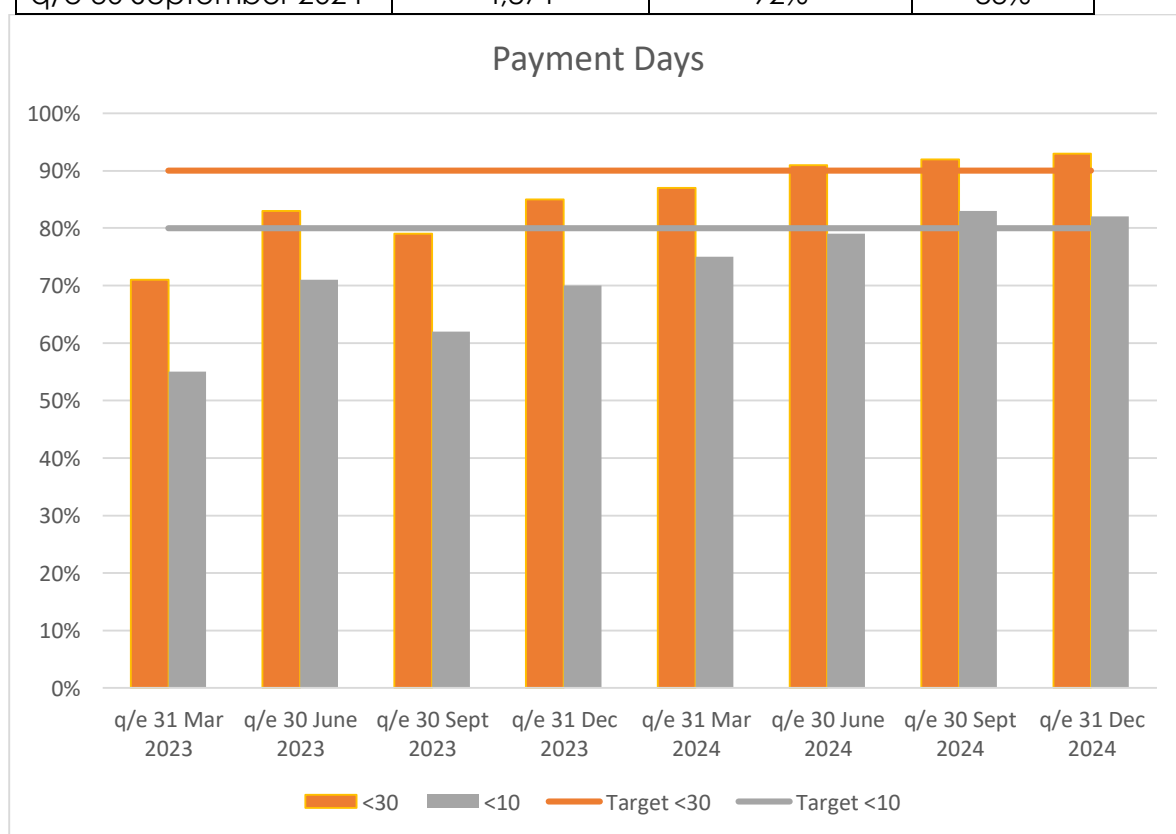
Council paid 3,821 invoices within the 10-day target (82%).

Council paid 325 invoices outside of the 30-day target (7%).

Council had set a target of paying 90% of invoices within 30 days and 80% within 10 days.

This compared to previous quarterly results as below:

Period	Total Number of Invoices Paid	% Paid Within 30 Days	% Paid Within 10 Days
Target		90%	80%
q/e 31 March 2023	5,558	71%	55%
q/e 30 June 2023	7,050	83%	71%
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%



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

The table and graph above showed the performance over the last two years. In comparison with the previous quarter, performance levels had improved for both the 30-day figure and 10-day figure.

The RAG weekly status report showed the continuing improvement that had been made over the last quarter to the end of December.

Period	No of invoices	% Paid Within 10 Days	11-30Cum	30plus cum	% Paid Within 30 Days
30/09/2024 - 06/10/2024	275	73%	12%	15%	85%
07/10/2024 - 13/10/2024	493	78%	9%	13%	87%
14/10/2024 - 20/10/2024	439	85%	9%	6%	94%
21/10/2024 - 27/10/2024	368	81%	12%	8%	92%
28/10/2024 - 03/11/2024	328	81%	10%	9%	91%
04/11/2024 - 10/11/2024	412	86%	13%	1%	99%
11/11/2024 - 17/11/2024	437	84%	12%	4%	96%
18/11/2024 - 24/11/2024	401	78%	15%	8%	92%
25/11/2024 - 01/12/2024	253	78%	15%	7%	93%
02/12/2024 - 08/12/2024	430	86%	8%	6%	94%
09/12/2024 - 15/12/2024	351	86%	9%	5%	95%
16/12/2024 - 22/12/2024	330	86%	10%	4%	96%
23/12/2024 - 24/12/2024	147	77%	16%	7%	93%

There was now a full complement of staff within the Finance section and work was ongoing with all departments to make further improvements.

Service improvements had included:

- Additional reporting capability to monitor performance
- Staff training/refresher sessions
- Process review for high volume suppliers

The prompt payment performance for Councils in Northern Ireland is published quarterly by the Department for Communities September 2024 (DfC). The prompt payment performance for the quarter ended March 2024 (circulated); the Council's performance for Quarter 2 of 2024/25 against the average performance for the other Councils for Quarter 2 (September) of 2024/25 was set out in the table below:

Council	% Paid Within 30 Days	% Paid Within 10 Days
Antrim & Newtownabbey BC (Quarter 2 24/25)	92%	83%

All Councils (Quarter 2 24/25)	92%	73%
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4. Supplier Balances

	December 2024	September 2024
	£	£
Creditors Control Account	599,109	200,365
% Total amount spend	0.10%	0.02%

The outstanding amount due to suppliers would fluctuate markedly depending on the timing of payment, invoice value and timelines of verification. The low value of the outstanding amount was consistent with the payment performance for the quarter.

Proposed by Alderman Smyth

Seconded by Councillor Cosgrove and agreed that

the Council's quarterly prompt payment performance report be noted.

NO ACTION

4.2 **FC/FA/8 QUARTERLY REVIEW OF PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS AND TREASURY MANAGEMENT**

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to provide a third quarter review of the Council's Prudential Indicators and Treasury Management activities for the 2024/25 financial year for noting.

2. Introduction

Council would measure and manage its capital expenditure, borrowings and investment activities with reference to the CIPFA Prudential Code. This report provided an update on these activities that took place during the first three quarters of the 2024/25 financial year.

3. Previous Decisions of Council

Council approved the Prudential Indicators for 2024/25 to 2026/2027 and the Treasury Management Strategies for 2024/25 in February 2024.

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

The Council's Treasury Management Policy required quarterly and annual

reports on treasury management activities.

This report compared the approved Prudential Indicators with the quarterly position for 2024/25 and the quarterly report on the Council's borrowing and investment activities for 2024/25.

A copy of the quarter 3 report was circulated for Members' information.

Proposed by Councillor Bennington
Seconded by Councillor Cosgrove and agreed that

the report be noted.

NO ACTION

4.3 CCS/CS/010 QUARTER 3 CUSTOMER SERVICES REPORT

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to recommend to Members to note the Quarter 3 Customer Service report for the period October to December 2024.

2. Introduction/Background

The Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan 2024-25 set out the performance improvement target; 'we will achieve high levels of customer satisfaction', with four indicators set as measures of success.

The Customer Services Report for Quarter 3 2024-25 (circulated) provided an update on performance.

In addition, there was an update on key consultations during 2024-25 to serve the Plan and the performance of the Complaints Handling Procedure during October to December 2024.

Proposed by Alderman Clarke
Seconded by Alderman Boyle and agreed that

the Quarter 3 Customer Service report for the period October to December 2024 be noted.

NO ACTION

4.4 HR/GEN/019 QUARTER 3 MANAGING ATTENDANCE UPDATE APRIL 2024 – DECEMBER 2024

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to recommend to Members to note the Quarter 3 Managing Attendance update for the period April 2024 to December 2024.

2. Managing Attendance Update Summary

Council's 2024/25 annual target for absence was 12 average days lost per employee.

Absence at the end of Quarter 3 was above target by 2.25 days, with 11.47 days being lost against a quarterly target of 9.22 days.

A comprehensive action plan was in place to manage absence, with further details provided in the (circulated) Managing Attendance Performance summary.

Proposed by Councillor Magill
Seconded by Alderman Clarke and agreed that

the Quarter 3 Managing Attendance update for the period April 2024 to December 2024, be noted.

NO ACTION

4.5 **CCS/EDP/025 DUAL LANGUAGE STREET SIGN APPLICATIONS**

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to recommend to Members to note Dual Language Street Sign applications as follows:-

Stage 1	No applications, be noted.
Stage 2	Ballytromery Avenue, Crumlin, BT29 4ZN, be noted Camlin Park, Crumlin, BT29 4HE, be noted Longlands Avenue, Newtownabbey, BT36 7FD, be noted
Stage 3	No applications, be noted.

2. Background

In accordance with the Dual Language Street Sign Policy, adopted by Council on 30 May 2022 (circulated), the following update outlined the status of applications received.

3. Application Update

STAGE 1: PETITION VERIFICATION

There were no applications at Stage 1.

STAGE 2: RESIDENTS CANVASS

Three applications were at Stage 2.

1. BALLYTROMERY AVENUE, CRUMLIN, BT29 4ZN
2. CAMLIN PARK, CRUMLIN, BT29 4HE

Canvass letters were issued to residents of the above streets, and the returns in favour do not satisfy the two-third threshold as required within the approved Policy.

3. LONGLANDS AVENUE, NEWTOWNABBEY, BT36 7FD

Canvass letters had been issued to residents of the above street with a February 2025 return date. The outcome would be reported to Members in due course.

STAGE 3: STREET SIGN INSTALLATION

There were no applications at Stage 3.

During the Policy and Governance Committee in February 2025, queries were raised regarding the fabrication and installation of dual language street signs.

A response from Estates Services was circulated.

Proposed by Councillor McLaughlin
Seconded by Councillor Burbank and agreed that

the Dual Language Street Sign applications update be noted.

NO ACTION

5 ANY OTHER RELEVANT BUSINESS

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

The Chairperson and Members offered their congratulations to Alderman Clarke and Councillor Magill on the recent births of their grandchildren.

PROPOSAL TO PROCEED 'IN CONFIDENCE'

Proposed by Councillor Cosgrove
Seconded by Alderman Smyth and agreed

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

6 ITEMS IN CONFIDENCE

6.1 IN CONFIDENCE FI/GEN/018 SALARY SACRIFICE PENSION AVC SCHEME

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to provide Members with an update on Council's Salary Sacrifice Pension Additional Voluntary Contributions Scheme and to recommend appointment of a suitable provider to administer the scheme.

2. Background

At the April 2022 Policy and Governance Committee, it was agreed that Council would participate in a fully managed Shared Cost Additional Voluntary Contributions (SCAVC) Scheme branded as 'AVC Wise'. This was contracted for a 3 year period, pending review after that period.

3. Progress to date

Since 2022 there had been a significant increase in scheme members. Table below showed the comparison to previous AVC numbers:

	2022	Jan'2025
NILGOSC Members	708	693
Number of AVC Payers	37	79
Monthly value of AVC payments	£5,235	£20,620

The main attraction of AVC's for participants was the income tax saving each month.

4. Proposed Arrangements

It was proposed to continue the SCAVC scheme for NILGOSC members.

In a 'Shared Cost' arrangement the scheme member agreed with Council to reduce their pay (i.e. a salary sacrifice) for exactly the same amount of the AVC payment. The purpose of this agreement was that the AVC would then fall under HMRC salary sacrifice scheme arrangements so that, as well as the income tax saving each month, there was also a national insurance saving for both the scheme member and employer. From 1st April 2025, the national insurance employers' rate would increase to 15%.

A quotation had been received from PS Tax who were local government tax specialists to continue to deliver a SCAVC scheme for Council as a fully managed solution. This was previously branded as 'AVC Wise' and was now known as 'My Money Matters'. This included:

- HMRC scheme registration and compliance
- Employee / Councillor communication service
- Self –service portal provision
- Transfer of existing AVC members (if requested)
- GDPR accountability
- Co-ordination with AVC fund providers

5. Scheme Cost

The quotation received to extend this arrangement is for a 3-year period at a cost of 5.0% of AVC contributions.

It would be the aim of PS Tax to continue to grow the membership of the SCAVC scheme, and to encourage current scheme participants to increase their contributions.

Growth in the membership or level of contributions would increase the fee payable to PS Tax, however the savings in employers' National Insurance costs would also increase proportionately.

Based on the January 2025 (AVC) Additional Voluntary Contributions, £20,620, the cost to Council would be approximately £1,031 per month (5%) with a employers National Insurance saving of £3,093 (15%) i.e. net savings of £2,062 per month.

Therefore, over a three-year period, the net savings would be £74,232.

Proposed by Councillor Bennington
Seconded by Alderman Smyth and agreed that

PS Tax be contracted for 3 years to provide a fully managed SCAVC scheme to Council at an approximate 3 year cost of £37,116.

ACTION BY: Richard Murray, Head of Finance

6.2 IN CONFIDENCE OD/OD/006 CYCLE 2 WORK SCHEME

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to seek Member approval to update the 'Cycle2Work' Scheme.

2. Background

The Bike to Work Scheme was previously part of Council's Workplace Travel Plan, which was approved in August 2012. The scheme would allow for bike and safety accessory purchases up to a maximum value of £1,000.

The scheme had three approved suppliers: Chain Reaction Cycles, Carnmoney Cycles, and Halfords.

3. Key Points

The Bike to Work scheme was a government initiative introduced in 2001 to promote cycling as a mode of commuting, supporting healthier lifestyles and contributing to a reduction in the UK's carbon footprint.

The scheme also enabled employees to save on Tax and National Insurance when purchasing a new bike and safety accessories. These savings were made through salary sacrifice, which was administered by their employer.

In June 2019, HMRC simplified its guidance, allowing employers to set scheme limits above £1,000 by utilising a third party's Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) license.

To address these limitations, the Organisation Development team had conducted a scoping exercise to explore alternative schemes and identify the most suitable option for Elected Members and employees.

4. Proposed 'Cycle2Work' Scheme

It was proposed that Council registered as an employer for the alternative 'Cycle2Work' Scheme, to provide Elected Members and employees with access to a wide range of suppliers. This scheme covered 98% of bike brands and included options such as mountain bikes, electric bikes, and hybrid bikes.

There were 47 independent suppliers in Northern Ireland who were registered with the Scheme. More locally within the Borough, suppliers such as Carnmoney Cycles and Full Cycle participated in the Scheme, alongside the online retailer Tredz.

Administered by Halfords for Business, the Scheme allowed the Council to utilise their FCA license to set appropriate purchasing limits. It was proposed that a 'cap' of £2,500 was set for purchases.

The Scheme was already in successful operation across various organisations, including the Education Authority.

Full details of the scheme could be found via the links below:

YouTube Video outlining the scheme: <https://youtu.be/65l26SPkF9A>
Scheme FAQs: <https://www.halfordsforbusiness.com/cycle2work/faq-hub/>

5. Governance

The Cycle2Work Scheme had been equality screened, a copy of which was circulated for Members' information.

6. Financial Implications

There was no charge or administration fee to set up and manage the 'Cycle2Work' scheme.

The costs for all bicycles purchased through the scheme could be recouped by Council through a salary sacrifice or net deduction and appropriate controls would be put in place to ensure repayment.

Should Members approve the updated Scheme, mitigation would be built into the process documents around length of hire agreement and conditions of bike usage to ensure compliance with HMRC guidance.

Proposed by Councillor Cosgrove
Seconded by Councillor Burbank and agreed that

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

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Proposed by Councillor Cosgrove
 Seconded by Alderman Smyth and agreed that

the capital update report be noted.

ACTION BY: John Balmer, Deputy Director of Finance

PROPOSAL TO PROCEED OUT OF 'IN CONFIDENCE'

Proposed by Alderman Clarke
 Seconded by Alderman Smyth 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 6.49 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.