



**MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE MEETING OF THE POLICY AND GOVERNANCE
COMMITTEE HELD IN THE ROUND CHAMBER, ANTRIM CIVIC CENTRE ON
TUESDAY 3 SEPTEMBER 2024 AT 6.30 PM**

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

CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

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

1. APOLOGIES

Councillor A Bennington

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Item 4.1 – Councillor McLaughlin

3. PRESENTATION – CYBER SECURITY

1. Purpose

The purpose of this presentation was to provide Members with an update on Cyber Security within Council.

2. Introduction/Background

The Head of ICT provided a presentation summarising the key focus areas on Cyber Security.

Following responses to Members' questions regarding phishing and staff capacity, the Head of ICT agreed to investigate measures to block mobile phone nuisance calls.

The Chairperson and Members thanked the Head of ICT for his presentation.

Proposed by Alderman Smyth

Seconded by Alderman Clarke and agreed that

the presentation be noted.

ACTION BY: Graham Smyth, Head of ICT

4 ITEMS FOR DECISION

4.1 CCS/EDP/025 DUAL LANGUAGE STREET SIGN APPLICATIONS

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to recommend that the Dual Language Street Sign applications at

Stage 1 (Old Mill Drive) be approved.

Stage 3a (Bawnmore Drive), 3b (Hollybrook Road) be approved.

Stage 3c (Longlands Court), 3d (St Joseph's Court) are not approved.

2. Background

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

3. Application Update

STAGE 1: PETITION VERIFICATION

One application had been received at stage 1:

OLD MILL DRIVE, NEWTOWNABBAY, BT36 7XP

The occupiers signing the petition had been evidenced by their listing on the current Electoral Register and met the one third threshold as required within the approved Policy.

STAGE 2: RESIDENTS CANVASS

There were no applications at stage 2.

STAGE 3: STREET SIGN INSTALLATION

Four applications had progressed to stage 3:

- a) BAWNMORE DRIVE, NEWTOWNABBAY, BT36 7GD
- b) HOLLYBROOK ROAD, NEWTOWNABBAY, BT36 4ZT

The occupiers of the above streets had been canvassed. The threshold of two thirds or more in favour of the erection of a second language street sign had been met, as required within the approved policy.

A map and outline costings had been circulated.

- c) LONGLANDS COURT, NEWTOWNABBAY, BT36 7LY
- d) ST JOSEPH'S COURT, CRUMLIN, BT29 4WG

The occupiers of the above streets had been canvassed and the threshold of two thirds or more in favour of the erection of a second language street sign had not been met, as required within the approved policy.

Proposed by Councillor Burbank

Seconded by Councillor McAuley and agreed that

the Dual Language Street Sign applications at:-

- (a) Stage 1 (Old Mill Drive) be approved;**
- (b) Stage 3a (Bawnmore Drive), 3b (Hollybrook Road) be approved; and**
- (c) Stage 3c (Longlands Court), 3d (St Joseph's Court) are not approved as the threshold of two thirds or more in favour of the erection of a second language street sign had not been met as required within the approved policy.**

ACTION BY: Ellen Boyd, Accessibility and Inclusion Officer

4.2 G/BCEP/5 MULTI-AGENCY PROTOCOLS – DISTRICT COUNCIL MUTUAL AID PROTOCOL

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to recommend to Members to approve the signing of the updated District Council Mutual Aid Protocol.

2. Introduction/Background

This Protocol was initially developed in 2009. It provided a statement of intent, rather than a binding Protocol, to enable Councils to provide mutual aid to each other during an emergency or business continuity disruption that would go beyond the resources of an individual Council.

Activation of the Protocol would be via formal request by the Chief Executive or nominated representative of the affected Council to seek the assistance of another Council, in terms of staff, equipment or other resources.

The Council requesting the aid would co-ordinate the support provided and take all reasonable steps to ensure the welfare, health and safety of the staff provided. They would also ensure that staff provided would be appropriately authorised to work in the affected Council's jurisdiction.

The CLT had agreed that the Council should once more enter into the District Council Mutual Aid Protocol (circulated).

3. Previous Decision of Council

The previous Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was approved by Council in June 2018.

4. Changes to MOU

Since the last signing of the Protocol back in 2018, there had been some updates within Civil Contingencies. This included the updated NI Civil Contingencies Framework: Building Resilience Together 2021 which replaced the NI Civil Contingencies Framework 2011. The Civil Contingencies Act and the NI Risk Register both acknowledge that existing capabilities to deal with an emergency may be constrained and organisations would work together, using mutual aid as a means of addressing this.

5. Financial Position/Implication

If the Protocol was instigated, the Chief Executive of the Council receiving the request would respond and, if available at the time, provide mutual aid including goods, services and staff on a cost recovery basis.

6. Summary

It was essential that Councils had the ability to work together in the event of a

localised emergency, such as the flooding experienced in 2023 by Newry and Mourne.

Proposed by Alderman Bradley
Seconded by Councillor Cosgrove and agreed that

the signing of the updated District Mutual Aid Protocol be approved.

ACTION BY: Elaine Girvan, Head of Health, Safety and Resilience

4.3 G/MSMO/031 SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS OF ANTRIM AND NEWTOWNABBEY BOROUGH COUNCIL 1 JANUARY 2025 – 31 DECEMBER 2025

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to recommend to Members to approve the Schedule of Meetings for the period 1 January 2025 – 31 December 2025.

2. Introduction

It was standard practice for the Schedule of Meetings for the year from 1 January to 31 December to be approved by Members.

3. Schedule

The following schedule of dates for Council and Committee meetings were proposed for the period 1 January 2025 – 31 December 2025.

Meetings marked in **red** would be held at Antrim Civic Centre, while those in black would be held at Mossley Mill. All meetings would commence at 6.30 pm with the exception of the Planning Committee which would start at 6 pm.

** Denotes change of date due to bank/public holiday/annual meeting.*

Council / Committee Meetings	Date of Meeting
Operations Committee	Monday 6 January 2025
Policy & Governance Committee	Tuesday 7 January 2025
Community Development Committee	Monday 13 January 2025
Economic Development Committee	Tuesday 14 January 2025
Planning Committee	Monday 20 January 2025
Council Meeting	Monday 27 January 2025
Operations Committee	Monday 3 February 2025
Policy & Governance Committee	Tuesday 4 February 2025
Community Development Committee	Monday 10 February 2025
Special Council Meeting	Monday 10 February 2025
Planning Committee	Monday 17 February 2025
Council Meeting	Monday 24 February 2025

Operations Committee	Monday 3 March 2025
Policy & Governance Committee	Tuesday 4 March 2025
Community Development Committee	Monday 10 March 2025
Economic Development Committee	Tuesday 11 March 2025
Planning Committee	Tuesday 18 March 2025*
Audit and Risk Committee	Wednesday 19 March 2025*
Council Meeting	Monday 31 March 2025
Operations Committee	Monday 7 April 2025
Policy & Governance Committee	Tuesday 8 April 2025
Community Development Committee	Monday 14 April 2025
Planning Committee	Wednesday 23 April 2025*
Council Meeting	Monday 28 April 2025
Operations Committee	Tuesday 6 May 2025*
Policy & Governance Committee	Wednesday 7 May 2025*
Community Development Committee	Monday 12 May 2025
Economic Development Committee	Tuesday 13 May 2025
Planning Meeting	Monday 19 May 2025
Council Meeting	Tuesday 27 May 2025*
Annual Council Meeting	Monday 2 June 2025
Operations Committee	Monday 9 June 2025*
Policy & Governance Committee	Tuesday 10 June 2025*
Community Development Committee	Monday 16 June 2025*
Planning Committee	Monday 23 June 2025
Audit and Risk Committee	Tuesday 24 June 2025
Council Meeting	Monday 30 June 2025
Planning Committee	Monday 21 July 2025
Council Meeting	Monday 28 July 2025
Planning Committee	Monday 18 August 2025
Council Meeting	Tuesday 26 August 2025*
Operations Committee	Monday 1 September 2025
Policy & Governance Committee	Tuesday 2 September 2025
Community Development Committee	Monday 8 September 2025
Economic Development Committee	Tuesday 9 September 2025
Planning Committee	Monday 15 September 2025
Audit and Risk Committee	Tuesday 16 September 2025
Council Meeting	Monday 29 September 2025

Operations Committee	Monday 6 October 2025
Policy & Governance Committee	Tuesday 7 October 2025
Community Development Committee	Monday 13 October 2025
Planning Committee	Monday 20 October 2025
Council Meeting	Monday 27 October 2025
Operations Committee	Monday 3 November 2025
Policy & Governance Committee	Tuesday 4 November 2025
Community Development Committee	Monday 10 November 2025
Economic Development Committee	Tuesday 11 November 2025
Planning Committee	Monday 17 November 2025
Council Meeting	Monday 24 November 2025
Operations Committee	Monday 1 December 2025
Policy & Governance	Tuesday 2 December 2025
Community Development Committee	Wednesday 3 December 2025*
Planning Committee	Monday 8 December 2025*
Audit and Risk Committee	Tuesday 9 December 2025*
Council Meeting	Monday 15 December 2025*

In response to a Member's query, the Director of Finance and Governance agreed to provide a report on the financial and technical implications of holding Full Council meetings at Antrim Civic Centre.

Concerns were expressed in respect of cost implications and health and safety in relation to capacity.

Proposed by Alderman Smyth
Seconded by Councillor McLaughlin and agreed that

the item be deferred to a future Committee meeting and that a report be brought in the interim to the Committee to address any financial or technical implications on accommodating meetings of Full Council in the Round Tower Chamber, Antrim Civic Centre.

ACTION BY: Sandra Cole, Director of Finance and Governance

4.4 CCS/CS/010 CUSTOMER SERVICES UPDATE REPORT

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to approve the following within Customer Services as follows:-

- **Updated NIPSO Complaints Handling Procedure**
- **Customer Services 2024/25 Quarter 1 Update**
- **Updated Customer Promise**

2. NIPSO Complaints Handling Procedure – Compliance Check

The Council's Complaints Handling Procedure was approved by the Policy and Governance Committee in November 2023, and was based upon the Model Complaints Handling Procedure (MCHP) published by the Northern Ireland Public Sector Ombudsman (NIPSO) in July 2023.

A formal compliance check of the procedure had been undertaken by NIPSO, and general guidance had been provided to all Councils via the Local Government Best Practice Network (LGBPN).

Whilst NIPSO had not directed any specific instructions to Council, the following were requested of all Councils, to ensure consistency:

- Removal of any references to guidance documents not yet published by NIPSO.
- The consistent application of a 30 day period for complainants to request a progression from stage 1 to a stage 2 complaint.
- Alignment of wording with the final published version.
- Removal of examples referring to pensions and use of those relevant to the Council.
- Provision of examples of how the Council had gone beyond equality legislation in considering more widely what factors may impact on people's access to complaints handling.

The Council's Complaints Handling Procedure had been updated in line with this guidance with tracked changes for approval (circulated).

3. Customer Services 2024/25 Quarter 1 Update

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

The Customer Services 2024/25 Quarter 1 update had been circulated for noting. This update also included the key consultations during 2024/25 and complaints handling from April to June 2024.

4. Customer Charter (Customer Promise)

In 2015, the Council adopted a Customer and Staff Charter. This Charter now required review due to advancements in technology, updates in Council strategies and procedures, and the changing needs of both customers and staff.

The Customer Charter had also been renamed to the Customer Promise, a

copy of which had been circulated for approval.

The Customer Promise had been created based on best practice principles from across the UK public sector and would apply to all Council customer activities. Training would ensure that the Promise and its related commitments would be integrated into all Council services.

It was a key component of the Customer Experience Strategy which was currently being developed and would be presented to Elected Members for approval later this year.

In response to a Member's concern, the Director of Corporate Strategy highlighted measures to protect and safeguard staff.

Proposed by Alderman Smyth
Seconded by Councillor Magill and agreed that

the following be approved:

- (a) updated NIPSO Complaints Handling Procedure;**
- (b) Customer Services 2024/25 Quarter 1 Update; and**
- (c) updated Customer Promise.**

ACTION BY: James Porter, Customer Services Manager

4.5 PT/CI/049 2023/24 ANNUAL SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT ON PERFORMANCE

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to recommend to Members to approve the Annual Self-Assessment Report on Performance (Final Draft) 2023/24.

2. Background

Under Part 12 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014, Section 92(2)(b)(i) and (ii) of the Act required the Council to publish an assessment of its performance for 2023/24.

3. Self-Assessment on Performance

This report provided an assessment of the Council's performance for 2023/24 in relation to its statutory performance and self-imposed indicators. In line with the legislation, it included a comparison of performance against previous financial years and where possible, benchmarked against other Councils.

The final draft of the Annual Self-Assessment Report on Performance 2023/24 was circulated for approval.

Proposed by Alderman Bradley
Seconded by Councillor Cosgrove and agreed that

the Annual Self-Assessment Report on Performance (Final Draft) 2023/24 be approved.

ACTION BY: Allen Templeton, Performance Improvement Officer

4.6 PT/CI/060 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE AND IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2024/25 – PERFORMANCE PROGRESS REPORT, QUARTER 1

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to recommend to Members to approve the Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan 2024/25, Performance Progress Reports, Quarter 1 for Finance and Governance, Organisation Development and overall Council.

2. Background

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

The 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 a number of Statutory Performance Targets.

3. Previous Decision of Council

As agreed at the August 2023 Council meeting, quarterly performance reports would be presented to the relevant Committee.

4. Key Points

First Quarter performance progress reports were circulated for Finance and Governance and Organisation Development and for Council overall for approval.

In response to Members' concerns, the Director of Corporate Strategy highlighted measures to improve customer engagement which would be reported to Committee at a future date.

Proposed by Alderman Smyth
Seconded by Councillor Cooper and agreed that

the Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan 2024/25, Performance Progress Reports Quarter 1 for Finance and Governance, Organisation Development and overall Council be approved.

ACTION BY: Helen Hall, Director of Corporate Strategy

4.7 PT/CI/034 PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT POLICY

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to recommend to Members to approve the revised Performance Improvement Policy.

2. Policy Review

The Performance Improvement Policy 2017 had been revised to reflect departmental Business Plans, the Corporate Strategy 2024-2030 and formatted into the Corporate Policy Framework.

The revised Performance Improvement Policy with tracked changes was circulated for approval.

Proposed by Councillor O'Hagan
Seconded by Alderman Smyth and agreed that

the revised Performance Improvement Policy be approved.

ACTION BY: Allen Templeton, Performance Improvement Officer

4.8 PT/CI/060 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT UPDATED TIMETABLE 2024/25

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to recommend to Members to approve the updated Corporate Performance Management Timetable 2024/25.

2. Background

The Performance Management Timetable, which sits within the Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan 2024/25, outlined the Council's performance reporting deadlines and submission dates.

The timetable (circulated) had been updated to reflect the dates of the 2024 Corporate Workshop.

Proposed by Alderman Smyth
Seconded by Alderman Bradley and agreed that

the updated Corporate Performance Management Timetable 2024/25 be approved.

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

5 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

5.1 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 continued a cycle of quarterly reporting on prompt payment performance by Councils to the DfC and its publication on their website.

3. Prompt Payment Performance

The Council's prompt payment performance for the period **1st April 2024 to 30th June 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 was 30 calendar days and 10 days was 10 working days).

During the above period, the Council paid invoices totalling £17,960,253

The Council paid 5,031 invoices within the 30-day target. (91%)

The Council paid 4,347 invoices within the 10-day target. (79%)

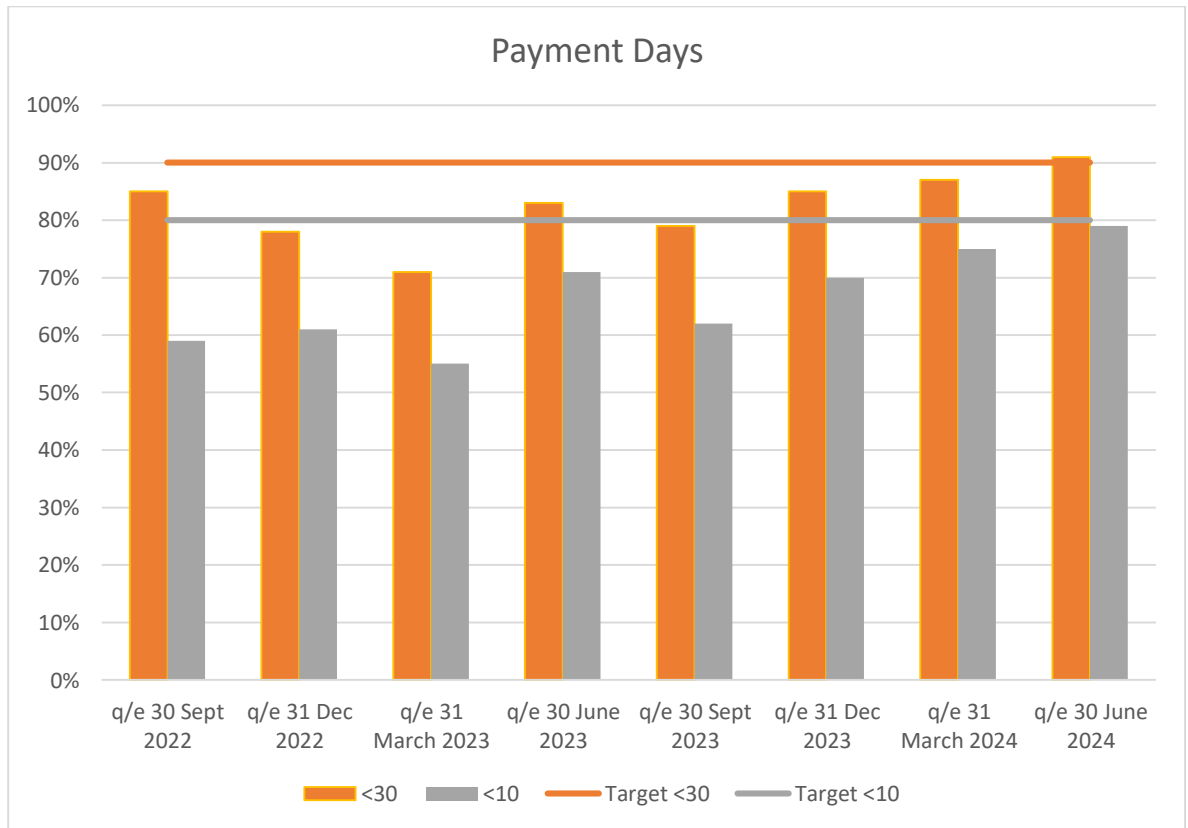
The Council paid 502 invoices outside of the 30-day target. (9%)

The 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 30 September 2022	6,090	85%	59%
q/e 31 December 2022	5,780	78%	61%
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%



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 improvement in Quarter 1 and into Quarter 2:

Period	No of invoices	% Paid Within 10 Days	11-30Cans	30plus cans	% Paid Within 30 Days
01/04/2024 - 06/04/2024	337	75%	18%	7%	93%
08/04/2024 - 14/04/2024	382	73%	14%	13%	87%
15/04/2024 - 21/04/2024	406	69%	8%	23%	77%
22/04/2024 - 27/04/2024	398	62%	33%	4%	96%
29/04/2024 - 05/05/2024	447	77%	15%	7%	93%
06/05/2024 - 12/05/2024	324	78%	10%	11%	89%
13/05/2024 - 19/05/2024	388	74%	14%	12%	88%
20/05/2024 - 25/05/2024	332	79%	11%	10%	90%
27/05/2024 - 01/06/2024	238	81%	8%	12%	88%
03/06/2024 - 08/06/2024	433	86%	9%	5%	95%
10/06/2024 - 15/06/2024	886	89%	6%	5%	95%
17/06/2024 - 22/06/2024	471	80%	11%	9%	91%
24/06/2024 - 29/06/2024	487	83%	10%	7%	93%
01/07/2024 - 06/07/2024	306	91%	5%	4%	96%

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 was published quarterly by the Department for Communities (DfC). The prompt payment performance for the quarter ended March 2024 was circulated. The Council's performance for Quarter 1 of 2024/25 against the average performance for the other Councils for Quarter 1 of 2024/25 was set out in the table below:

Council	% Paid Within 30 Days	% Paid Within 10 Days
Antrim & Newtownabbey BC (Quarter 1 24/25)	91%	79%
All Councils (Quarter 1 24/25)	93%	72%

Proposed by Alderman Smyth
Seconded by Alderman Clarke and agreed that

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

NO ACTION

5.2 FI/AUD/146 NATIONAL FRAUD INITIATIVE 2024-25

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to recommend to Members to note the National Fraud Initiative 2024-25 report.

2. Background

The National Fraud Initiative (NFI) was a data matching exercise designed to help participating bodies identify possible cases of fraud and detect and correct under or overpayments from the public purse.

3. Key Points

The Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) for Northern Ireland and Head of the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO), had statutory powers to conduct matching exercises for the purpose of assisting in the prevention and detection of fraud. These powers were contained in the Serious Crime Act 2007, which inserted Articles 4A to 4H to the Audit and Accountability (Northern Ireland) Order 2003.

The Council must participate in this exercise and supply the following information for matching to that of other public sector bodies to identify possible fraud or error:

1. Payroll – total payments made to current employees and Members from 1 April 2024 to 30 September 2024; and
2. Trade Creditors payment history and standing data – payment history from 1 October 2021 to 30 September 2024 and the current Creditor information held at the date of date extract (from 1 October 2024).

Where a match was found, it indicated that there was an inconsistency that may require further investigation to establish what had caused the match and any further action that may be deemed necessary. Examples of possible matches were as follows:

- An employee with the Council who had a second employment with another Council or public body;
- An employee who was also a supplier to the Council or had been paid through Creditors;
- Suppliers who were associated with other suppliers, eg. through address.

Results notification and possible action

Data extracted would then be matched with other Public Sector datasets and prioritised into the order of how closely the dataset matched. Matches would be available from January 2025.

The Council was responsible for investigating these matches. All matches would be considered by the Head of Internal Audit, who would determine further action if appropriate including invocation of the Fraud Response Plan.

Data Transfer

Datasets must be provided to the Cabinet Office (responsible for the collection and processing of data on behalf of the C&AG) from 1 October 2024. Finance staff, in conjunction with the Finance software developer, TechnologyOne, were working on the reports to extract the information in the format required.

A secure electronic upload facility was available enabling data for NFI to be submitted directly from local computers. This facility was contained within the existing secure NFI web application and consequently provided the same controlled access environment. It featured an Advanced Encryption Standard (AES) 256 Secure Sockets Layer encryption and enabled data files to be password protected. No other method of data transfer to the NFI was acceptable.

Access to the NFI website would be restricted to those officers deemed necessary by the Chief Executive.

Participating bodies

Organisations participating in this exercise were those that provided data for the purposes of a data matching exercise, which may be on either a mandatory or voluntary basis.

Mandatory bodies were those bodies whose accounts were required to be audited by:

1. the Comptroller and Auditor General, except for bodies audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General by virtue of section 55 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998; or
2. a Local Government Auditor.

Since the Council's accounts were audited by a Local Government Auditor, the Council must supply the required information.

Other mandatory participants included Central Government, Education Boards, and Health Trusts throughout the United Kingdom.

Further information was available on the Council's website at:

<http://www.antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk/Council/Procurement/National-Fraud-Initiative>

or by contacting Paul Caulcutt, Head of Internal Audit on 028 9446 3113 ext.

31395 or at paul.caulcutt@antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk.

Proposed by Alderman Bradley
Seconded by Councillor Magill and agreed that

the National Fraud Initiative 2024-25 report be noted.

NO ACTION

5.3 G/DPFI/2 QUARTER 1 REPORT ON FOI/EIR/DPA REQUESTS

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to recommend to Members to note the Quarter 1 statistics relating to FOI/EIR/DPA requests and the publication of summary statistics and associated graphs on the Council website.

2. Introduction/Background

A report had been prepared on requests received in the first quarter of the year (1 April to 30 June 2024) under the Freedom of Information Act (FOI), Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) and the Data Protection Act (DPA) (circulated).

Reports on Access to Information requests had been provided to Policy and Governance Committee on a quarterly and annual basis. These reports were based on requests **received** within the stated time period. The ICO had now advised that Public Authorities should publish details on performance on handling requests and that this should also include statistics on requests **completed** within the stated time period.

The summary information and associated graphs would now be published on the Council website following the report being made to Policy and Governance Committee.

3. Summary

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

- The number of requests received was slightly higher than the number in the same period the previous year – an increase of 5%.
- Of the 99 requests received, 68 were under FOI, 29 under EIR and 2 under DPA.
- 117 requests were completed within the quarter.
- 93% 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 Finance (29), Environmental Health (28), Planning (18) and Governance (12).
- Seven appeals were received during the quarter. In three of these appeals the Council was able to provide further information due to clarification of the request or the passage of time. In the remaining four appeals the Council's original decision was upheld.
- Two complaints to the ICO were notified within the quarter but no further correspondence had been received to date.

In response to a Member's query, the Director of Finance and Governance highlighted that there was sufficient capacity to deliver this service.

Proposed by Alderman Bradley

Seconded by Alderman Clarke and agreed that

the following be noted:-

- (a) the Quarter 1 statistics relating to FOI/EIR/DPA requests;**
- (b) the ICO advice on publication of performance on handling requests, to include statistics on requests completed within the quarter; and**
- (c) the publication of summary statistics and associated graphs on the Council website going forward.**

NO ACTION

5.4 FI/FIN/4 BUDGET REPORT – PERIOD 4, APRIL 2024 TO JULY 2024

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to recommend to Members to note the financial performance information at period 4 (April 2024 – July 2024) for Finance & Governance, Organisation Development and Council.

2. Introduction/Background

As agreed, quarterly budget reports would be presented to the relevant Committee or Working Group. All financial reports would be available to all Members.

3. Summary

The overall financial position of the Council would be presented to the Policy and Governance Committee.

Budget reports for Finance and Governance, Organisational Development, and the Overall Council Financial Performance for Period 4 April 2024 to July 2024 were circulated for Members' information.

At period 4 the Finance and Governance budget was showing a favourable

variance of £151k largely attributable to vacant posts and additional grant funding for revenue expenditure.

At period 4 the Organisation Development budget was showing a favourable variance of £3k.

The overall position of the Council at the end of the fourth period was a favourable variance on the net cost of services of £351k.

Proposed by Councillor Cooper
Seconded by Alderman Smyth and agreed that

the financial performance information at period 4 (April 2024 – July 2024) for Finance & Governance, Organisation Development and Council be noted.

NO ACTION

5.5 HR/GEN/019 MANAGING ATTENDANCE QUARTER 1 APRIL 2024 – JUNE 2024

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to recommend to Members to note the Quarter 1 Managing Attendance Update for the period April 2024 to June 2024 and associated Action Plan for 2024/25.

2. Managing Attendance Update Summary

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

Absence at the end of Quarter 1 2024/25 was above target by 0.54 of a day with 3.61 average days lost per employee against a target of 3.07 days.

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

In response to a Member's concern, the Director of Corporate Strategy detailed the support available to staff. As part of the Managing Attendance Action Plan a number of policies would be reviewed to support the health and well-being of staff; these would be brought to a future Committee for consideration.

Proposed by Councillor Cooper
Seconded by Alderman Smyth and agreed that

the Quarter 1 Managing Attendance Update for the period April 2024 to June 2024, and associated Action Plan for 2024/25 be noted.

ACTION BY: Helen Hall, Director of Corporate Strategy

5.6 G/MSMO/41 MEMBERS' ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS – DECEMBER 2023 TO MAY 2024

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to recommend to Members to note the summary of Members' attendance for each of the Council and Committee meetings from December 2023 to May 2024, prior to publication on the Council's website.

2. Introduction/Background

Since February 2017 it had become standard practice to publish six-monthly Members' attendance for each Council and Committee meeting on the Council's website.

A summary sheet was circulated showing the total attendance for each of the Council and Committee meetings for the period 1 December 2023 to 31 May 2024.

In response to a Member's query the Director of Finance and Governance detailed how Members' attendance, both in person and remotely, was currently recorded and agreed that this could be incorporated into the Summary going forward.

Proposed by Alderman Smyth
Seconded by Councillor Cooper and agreed that

the summary sheet recording Members' attendance at each of the Council and Committee Meetings for the period from 1 December 2023 to 31 May 2024, for publication on the Council's website, be noted.

ACTION BY: Member Services

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

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to recommend to Members to note the quarterly update on Section 75 Equality and Rural Screenings for the period February 2024 and June 2024.

2. Background

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 gave a commitment to apply screening methodology to all new and revised policies. Where necessary and appropriate, these new policies would be subject to a further equality impact assessment.

3. Section 75 Equality and Rural Screenings

The policies noted below had been screened between February 2024 and June 2024.

POLICY	SCREENING DECISION
Elected Member Learning and Development Strategy 2023-2027	1
Career Break Policy	1
Marriage/ Civil Partnership Leave Policy	1
Dependants Leave Policy	1
Dignity and Respect at Work Policy	1
Menopause Policy	1
Foster and Kinship Leave Policy	1
Draft Corporate Plan 2024 - 2030	1

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

Proposed by Alderman Bradley
Seconded by Councillor McLaughlin and agreed that

the quarterly update on Section 75 Equality and Rural Screenings for the period February 2024 and June 2024 be noted.

NO ACTION

PROPOSAL TO PROCEED 'IN CONFIDENCE'

Proposed by Alderman Smyth
Seconded by Councillor Magill 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 ICT/GEN/011 ICT CAPITAL SPEND 2024 - 2027

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to recommend to Members to approve the ICT Capital spend forecast for the next three financial years.

2. Introduction

Capital expenditure had been agreed as part of the rates-setting process, however, the information below would provide further clarification in relation to the ICT split of its Capital allocation over the next three years.

3. Capital Project

ICT Replacement

This rolling replacement scheme would proactively replace PCs, Laptops, and other ICT Equipment that was older than 5 years and, therefore, out of warranty.

Estimated Spend:

2024/25	2025/26	2026/27

Phone System Replacement

The current phone system had been in operation for the past seven years. By the end of 2024, the manufacturer would no longer support the hardware, therefore, a replacement system must be procured to ensure potential outages would not affect service delivery.

Estimated Spend:

2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
	Nil	Nil

Network Install Costs

ICT would upgrade some data connections during the 2024/25 financial year. This capital allowance would pay for the required upfront hardware costs associated with the installation of these new connections.

These data connections would form Council's Wide Area Network (WAN), which would securely connect all facilities to provide telephony, internet access and access to core business systems.

Estimated Spend:

2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
	Nil	Nil

Wireless Network Upgrade

The current wireless infrastructure would become end-of-life and unsupported by the manufacturer during 2026. This capital budget would be used to refresh wireless access points across the Council, ensuring that a reliable wireless network solution was always available for users. ICT Currently managed 120 wireless access points across 29 locations throughout the borough.

Estimated Spend:

2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
Nil	Nil	£

Three Year Forecast

	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
ICT Replacement	■	■	■
Phone System Replacement	■	-	-
Network Install Costs	■	-	-
Wireless Network Upgrade	-	-	■
	■	■	■
Three Year Total:		■	

There may be other capital expenditure during the 3-year period of higher priority, and this may mean that the projects listed would be subject to delay, however, this would be communicated to Members as required.

In response to a Member's query, the Head of ICT agreed to circulate the site location details where wireless access points were currently managed.

Proposed by Councillor Cosgrove
Seconded by Councillor Cooper and agreed that

the ICT Capital Expenditure Plan for the next three financial years be approved.

ACTION BY: Graham Smyth, Head of ICT

6.2 IN CONFIDENCE FI/GEN/012 FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND HUMAN RESOURCES INFORMATION SYSTEM

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report was to recommend to Members to approve an additional £■ funding to finalise the implementation of the new Finance and Human Resources System from the capital expenditure budget.

2. Background

In 2020, the core software used in the Finance and Human Resource sections was nearing its end-of-life. In addition, the software provider notified the Council that it would be discontinuing support for this software in the near future.

3. Previous Decision of Council

In February 2020, Members approved the Economic Appraisal (circulated), for a replacement Finance and Human Resources software system at a cost of £■

A copy of the project plan was circulated for information.

4. Additional Costs

Work had been ongoing to implement the new system, however due to inflation, it was expected that to complete the project, costs would be exceeded by approximately £[REDACTED].

5. Financial Position/Implication

During the 2024/2025 budget profiling, there had been no additional resource within the project budget to meet this increase. It was proposed that the additional expenditure could be met from the Capital expenditure budget.

Proposed by Alderman Bradley

Seconded by Alderman Smyth and agreed that

an additional £[REDACTED] funding to finalise the implementation of the new Finance and Human Resources System from the capital expenditure budget be approved.

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

PROPOSAL TO PROCEED OUT OF 'IN CONFIDENCE'

Proposed by Councillor McLaughlin

Seconded by Councillor Cosgrove 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 7.17pm.

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.