

FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD THURSDAY 12 OCTOBER 2023

No	Item	Summary of Key Recommendations
1.	Apologies	Alderman Callan, Councillors Kyle, Schenning
2.	Declarations of Interest	Nil
3.	Minutes of Finance Committee meeting held Thursday 14 September 2023	Signed as a correct record
4.	Management Accounts P5	Noted
5.	Procurement Strategy	To recommend that Council approves the Procurement Strategy
6.	Procurement Policy	To recommend that the matter is deferred to Full Council
7.	Medium Term Financial Plan	To recommend that Council approves the Medium Term Financial Plan
8.	Treasury Management mid-year review	Noted
9.	APP forecast	Noted
10.	Prompt payments	Noted
11.	Correspondence - Pension Administration Strategy	Noted
12.	Consultation - Automatic enrolment to pension schemes	Noted

	'In Committee' Items 13 – 15 inclusive	
13.	Procurement of Legal Services	<i>To recommend that Council approve officers to proceed with award of this contract</i>
14.	Debt Management	<i>Noted</i>
15.	Rating Policy	<i>To recommend that, at the request of Councillor Huggins, Council write to the appropriate Department to put forward her questions.</i>
16.	Any Other Relevant Business (notified in accordance with Standing Order 12 (o))	<i>Nil</i>

**MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDING OF THE
FINANCE COMMITTEE HELD
IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC HEADQUARTERS AND VIA VIDEO
CONFERENCE ON THURSDAY 12 OCTOBER 2023 AT 7PM**

In the Chair: Councillor Peacock (C)

Members Present: Alderman Coyle (C), Knight McQuillan (C), S McKillop (C); Councillors Holmes (R), Huggins (C), Kane (C), Jonathan McAuley (C), MA McKillop (R), McQuillan (R), Mairs (C), Scott (C), Wisener (C)

Non Committee Members Present: Councillor Wilson (R)

Officers Present: D Wright, Chief Finance Officer (C)
L Clyde, Financial Accountant (C)
J Culkin, Management Accountant (C)
P Kydd, Procurement Officer (R)
J Keen, Committee & Member Services Officer (C)

In Attendance: A Lennox, Mobile Operation Officer (C)

Key: (C) Attended in the Chamber
(R) Attended Remotely

Substitutions:

Councillor MA McKillop substituted for Councillor Schenning.
Councillor Jonathan McAuley substituted for Councillor Kyle.

The Chief Finance Officer undertook a roll call.

During the roll call Councillor Wisener advised Councillor Wilson was substituting for Councillor Holmes, Councillor Wilson confirmed his attendance. At the end of the roll call Councillor Holmes stated he was in attendance, remotely, and that he was not being substituted.

The Chair advised Committee of its obligations and protocol whilst the meeting was being audio recorded; and with the remote meetings protocol.

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were recorded for Alderman Callan, Councillor Kyle and Councillor Schenning.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES OF FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD THURSDAY 14 SEPTEMBER 2023

Summary previously circulated.

AGREED – to recommend that the Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting held Thursday 14 September 2023 are confirmed as a correct record.

4. MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS P5

Report, previously circulated, was presented by the Chief Finance Officer.

Background

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council (CC&GBC) consists of 4 legacy councils that merged on 1 April 2015 into 1 council. The council is currently made up of 3 directorates (Leisure and Development, Environmental Services, Corporate Policy and Resources) and includes a Planning, Finance and Legal department, that are reported separately in this report. The Annual Budgeted Spend for 2023/24 controlled by the Directorates is £78.818m (excludes depreciation, actuarial adjustments, provisions, accumulated absences, and it is these figures that change the figures in the Audited Accounts). Gross Income is budgeted at £76.206m the difference being a budgeted applied balance of £2.612m for the year.

Financial Overview by Directorate

The table below (circulated) details a summary of the financial position at period 5 (up to and including 31 August 2023).

Council is showing a favourable variance against budget at period 4 amounting to £968,994 however this figure requires adjustment for the profiling project related budgets which will reduce the favourable variance by approximately £332k therefore the “true” position will be favourable to the value of approximately £637k. This arises out of the project budgets being profiled on an equal monthly basis therefore in the period 5 accounts 5/12's of the annual budget has been released but in numerous cases the actual expenditure has not been incurred at the same rate. Finance staff have sought to correct the budget profiling in these accounts however it has not been possible in the time available to produce this report therefore it will be corrected in the period 6 accounts. The vast majority of this adjustment effects the Leisure and Development Directorate. The accrual reported last month regarding agency staffing and the impending pay award has now been included in these accounts and charged to the relevant service areas.

Income and Expenditure Analysis

The overall position with regards staffing costs is shown in the table below (circulated) by Directorate.

Council is currently adverse against budget in terms of staffing and this is expected to be the case as the current pay award offered to staff exceeds the budgetary provision included by Council in the rates estimates.

The table below (circulated) sets out the budgetary position of all other areas of expenditure against budget by Directorate.

At period 5 this is £167k adverse however it should be noted that this includes £139k relating to insurance costs for which the full charge for the year has already been included in the accounts thereby generating the adverse variance against the annual budget. Maintenance and materials are the other areas which are showing adverse at this stage across Council's entire estate.

Income levels are currently reporting favourable against budget as detailed in the table below (circulated) by Directorate.

At this stage we already know Rates Support Grant to be received by Council will be under budget by £273k therefore we have taken account of this in these accounts. The figure for Corporate Services includes release from the Election Reserve to meet the costs of the recent Election thereby offsetting what appears to be an overspend on the expenditure side.

Leisure And Development Directorate

Background

Council has approved the annual budget for Leisure and Development and delegated authority to officers to utilise this budget in the provision of services to the rate payers. The L&D budget for 2023/24 is £13,248,062 (*this includes estates transfer of £1,351,637 not included below). The net budget is a calculation of the forecast:

Gross Expenditure of £22.301m.
Gross Income of £9.053m.

Table 1, Illustrates a P5 Net Position of £3,551,175, which is favourable by £446,293.

The service area financial positions were also shown in Table 1 (circulated).

Income and Expenditure

Generally, the budgetary performance of Leisure and Development at Period 5 is performing well and as estimated at the start of the calendar year 2023, main areas to highlight are:

Salaries and Wages

The table below shows the position regarding staffing costs across the Directorate, currently adverse by £528k, mainly due to the expected overspend as a result of the anticipated pay award.

It is also anticipated that part of this is due to the budget profile where currently salaries wages and agency are profiled monthly (one twelfth per month).

Where in reality L&D would have several service areas with seasonal staff such as HALP, Coast & countryside and the leisure centres.

Energy and Utilities.

At Period 5, energy costs and utilities have a favourable variance of £230k, this is likely due to more improved pricing than anticipated. There are also invoices outstanding as not all utilities are monthly, generally water bills are bi annually and the budget may need profiled accordingly.

Repairs and Maintenance.

At Period 5, scheduled and reactive repairs / maintenance are favourable by £24k, this will be impacted by the withdrawal of estates transfer.

Supplies and Services

At period 5 Supplies and Services are currently showing a favourable variance of £166k, one reason being that funded project spend is slow in the first quarter as projects are only getting started, this will increase accordingly but there may also be some apprehension regarding funding cuts and therefore managers are exercising caution at this time in relation to spend.

Customer & Client Receipts

Is currently showing a favourable variance of £649k mainly in HALP income (258K) and Sport & wellbeing (£414k).

Income Opportunities / Cost Reduction Measures

Whether inflation remains high and / or increases further, officers will reduce expenditure and increase income, through both immediate cost mitigation and the continuation of ongoing initiatives:

- Essential maintenance only throughout the Estate.
- 'Gapping' vacant posts.
- Reducing the use of agency staff.
- The continual drive to increase income at Council facilities, including the leisure centres and HALPs.
- The critical 'belt-tightening' exercise to minimise expenditure wherever possible.

Environmental Services Directorate

Background

Council has approved the annual budget for Environmental Service and delegated authority to officers to utilise this budget in the provision of services to the rate payers. ES budget for 2023/24 is £ 28,731,095.78. This is based on expenditure budget of £34,228,754.98 and income budget of £5,497,659.20

The Environmental Services position at Period 5 shows a £289,401.61 positive variance. This includes predicted increases in employee costs based on the proposed National Pay Award which is greater than the predicted budget increase. Agency staff pay increases have not been accrued in Period 5.

The main costs and income attributing to the ES P5 position were summarised (table circulated) as variances against budget.

Estates

Table circulated detailing expenditure and income for Estates.
£467k favourable mainly due to Employee costs which are £332k favourable.
This is a result of difficulty in recruiting the number of seasonal grounds maintenance staff. A number of vacant posts within the Estates section remain unfilled. Income is positive by £18k

Health and Built Environment

Table circulated detailing expenditure and income for Health and Built Environment.

£167k positive. Employee costs are £10k adverse. Fee Income is favourable by £115k including £86k from Building Control and £55k grant from Consumer Protection at P5.

Infrastructure

Table circulated detailing expenditure and income for Infrastructure.

£253k favourable mainly due income favourable by £170k. Car Park income is favourable by £114k and Harbour and Marina income is favourable by £46k. Employee costs are £21k favourable mainly due to the Asset Realisation Officer post not having been filled and Harbour and Marina structure not permanently filled.

Operations

Table circulated detailing expenditure and income for Operations.

£517k adverse variance in Period 5. Employee costs are adverse by £615k. However, this includes an accrued pay award which was underprovided for in the budget. Seasonal profiling has not been completed. A breakdown of the variances are as follows (table circulated).

ES Business Support

£43k adverse due to increased employee costs.

ES Centrally Managed

£4k positive variance.

In year Savings

Officers have and will continue to manage and scrutinise the budget to identify opportunities for reducing expenditure and increasing income. This includes not filling vacant posts, reducing season staff durations, not filling staff on sick leave in all non-essential service areas, completing only essential maintenance on ES properties. Therefore, at Period 5 ES financial position has a positive variance of £289,401.61.

Corporate Services

The table below (circulated) demonstrates the financial position for Corporate Services at period 5.

Planning

Planning is showing a variance of over £23k favourable position at end of Period 5 based on draft Management Accounts.

The gross income received as of the end of Period 4 was £638,810.58 including Property Certificate income, sitting in a favourable position at £105,754.20 at end of Period 4 (Budget £533,056 v Actual £638,810.58).

In terms of expenditure, Salaries and Wages (including Agency staff) are showing an overspend of over £59,005 due to increased staff costs.

Savings in other expenditure codes will be reduced throughout the year as some payments are made on an annual basis and as current legal cases conclude.

Legal cases are ongoing with Mr Duff appealing 1 JR decision to the Court of Appeal and the other has been returned to the High court following Court of Appeal granting Mr Duff standing. Mr McLaughlin's judicial review in the High Court is awaiting decision.

Chief Executive

The table below (circulated) demonstrates the financial position for areas reporting directly to the Chief Executive at period 5.

The variance under Performance includes Insurance costs for the year being adverse by £139k.

Finance, Investment Income, Interest and Rates

The table below (circulated) demonstrates the financial position relating to Finance, Investment Income, Interest payments, Central Government Support and Rates as at the end of period 5:

Whilst the figures in this table are dominated by the adverse position regarding Rates Support Grant it should be noted that Investment Income is £133k favourable and this position should improve as the year progresses.

Cashflow

The table (circulated) sets out a projected cashflow for the next three months.

Summary

Whilst this report does present a welcome and healthy position for Council it must be noted that Council did approve a budget with a £2.612m deficit therefore if this position remained until the end of the year Council would still reduce reserves by just over £2 million. All expenditure and income streams require continued management and scrutiny in order to reduce that deficit and help protect Council's Reserves.

Committee NOTED the report.

5. PROCUREMENT STRATEGY

Report, previously circulated, was presented by the Chief Finance Officer.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to present to Council for approval the newly drafted Procurement Strategy, which is attached as an appendix to this report.

Background

This Strategy is intended to ensure that procurement decisions in Causeway Coast and Glens deliver for the Borough in terms of quality and sustainability whilst maintaining value for money.

The Strategy provides a framework for a strategic approach to procurement throughout the Council. It emphasises the importance of procurement decisions and will be communicated widely to Members, officers, partners, suppliers, stakeholders, and the community.

It is designed to ensure compliance with existing procurement legislation, predominantly the Public Contracting Regulations 2015, and reflects all related legislation and national policy drivers including the Social Value Act.

The importance of sustainable procurement is emphasised; using procurement to support wider social, economic, and environmental objectives in a way that offers real long-term benefits. The Strategy is constructed to highlight our commitment to a more sustainable Borough, and to enable us to demonstrate improvement in delivering sustainable outcomes through effective procurement practices.

Ultimately the Strategy paves the way for the Council's contribution to the broader public procurement landscape – one which promotes the needs of the Causeway Coast and Glens community, fosters innovation and efficiency, and uses procurement to develop and shape the local economy.

Intelligent procurement is vital not only in improving the quality and cost effectiveness of services across the Borough, but in demonstrating the type of authority the Council wants to be and shaping how we are perceived by our stakeholders.

Recommendation

It is recommended that Council approves the Procurement Strategy.

Proposed by Alderman S McKillop
Seconded by Alderman Scott and

AGREED – to recommend that Council approves the Procurement Strategy

6. PROCUREMENT POLICY

Report, previously circulated, was presented by the Chief Finance Officer.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to present to Council for approval the revised Procurement Policy, which is attached as an appendix to this report.

Background

This policy sets out the governance framework within which Council can purchase the numerous goods and services required for the efficient running of Council services.

The policy is based on Central Procurement Directorate guidance and best practice which, if followed, will give confidence that Council is meeting its obligations in terms of procurement from the viewpoint of both the rate payer and the supplier.

This new version of the policy has been updated to refer to the relevant legislation following Brexit whereby European Directives have been replaced with United Kingdom legislation.

The importance of sustainable procurement is emphasised; using procurement to support wider social, economic, and environmental objectives in a way that offers real long-term benefits. The policy highlights our commitment to a more sustainable Borough, and to enable us to demonstrate improvement in delivering sustainable outcomes through effective procurement practices.

Another key area of update when compared to the previous policy is the delegated authority to Council Officers, these limits are set out in the table entitled Procurement Processes at paragraph 12 and have been adopted from the CPD guidance. The delegations in this policy are consistent with those in place in all the other Councils in Northern Ireland.

Recommendation

It is recommended that Council approves the Procurement Policy.

The Chief Finance Officer advised Members that the Procurement Policy has been revised in line with legislation; now that Council are not governed by EU legislation, it is UK legislation that is now in place and the Central Procurement Directorate who issue best practice documents. The Chief Finance Officer drew Members attention to section 13, procurement approvals, stating that previous policies had reduced the overall limit for Management to £10k. The Central Procurement Directorate limits are included in this document which are consistent with other Councils, which allows Senior Management to make approvals up to £30k before it needs to go to Council; this includes Direct Award Contracts.

Alderman Scott expressed concern about the limit that management could approve rising from £10k to £30k, before it comes to Council for approval; Alderman Scott requested this was deferred to be considered at the Council meeting.

In response to the Chair asking if Alderman Scott wished to make this a proposal Alderman Scott stated that this decision needed to go to Full Council.

Proposed by Alderman Scott
Seconded by Alderman Knight - McQuillan and

AGREED – to recommend that the matter is deferred to Full Council.

7. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN

Report, previously circulated, was presented by the Chief Finance Officer.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to present to Council for approval the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP), which is attached as an appendix to this report.

Background

The requirement for an MTFP has been highlighted via a number of Internal Audit recommendations. The plan being presented has been drafted in response to those recommendations but is also a matter of best practice and will be regularly updated and brought back to this committee on an annual basis following the approval of the annual budget in February each year. It is anticipated that the revised plan will be presented to Council in May or June.

Detail

The MTFP aims to guide Council in its decision making processes to look forward beyond the annual rates setting process taking into account the future impact of current decisions financially. This document has to be read in conjunction with the overall Corporate Strategy and it is therefore crucial to recognise that such a plan contains a number of high level assumptions which are linked to the requirement of the strategy. It is therefore vital that an annual review of the plan is carried out to ensure the relevance or accuracy of any assumptions contained therein. The assumptions in the tabled plan are set out in paragraph 4.6. This plan looks at both the revenue expenditure and capital expenditure taking into account the effect both have on the budgetary position.

Recommendation

It is recommended that Council approves the Medium Term Financial Plan.

In response to a question the Chief Finance Officer advised that a report detailing the income from carparks will be presented to Committee in the next couple of months so Members can make informed decisions at the rate setting process.

Proposed by Alderman Scott
Seconded by and Alderman Coyle

AGREED – to recommend that Council approves the Medium Term Financial Plan.

8. TREASURY MANAGEMENT MID-YEAR REVIEW

Report, previously circulated, was presented by the Chief Finance Officer.

Background

Treasury management is the management of the Authority's cash flows, borrowing and investments, and the associated risks. The Authority has borrowed and invested substantial sums of money and is therefore exposed to financial risks including the loss of invested funds and the revenue effect of changing interest rates. The successful identification, monitoring and control of financial risk are therefore central to the Authority's prudent financial management.

Detail

Treasury risk management at the Authority is conducted within the framework of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's *Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice 2017 Edition* (the CIPFA Code) which requires the Authority to approve a treasury management strategy before the start of each financial year. In addition, the Department for Communities (DfC) issued *Guidance on Local Authority Investments* in November 2019 that requires the Authority to approve an investment strategy before the start of each financial year. This report fulfils the Authority's legal obligation under the *Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011* to have regard to both the CIPFA Code and the DfC Guidance.

Review

The purpose of this report is to provide a review of what has taken place in terms of Treasury Management within the Council so far during the 2023/24 financial year following on from the annual review of 2022/23 presented to Council in April 2023.

Borrowing

Council borrowing is used to fund various capital projects as approved by Council and as a result of this activity Council has an extensive portfolio of current loans. The table below (circulated) shows a breakdown of these loans at the end of each of the last 4 quarters:

Council continues to hold significant cash reserves therefore no new loans were borrowed during the year, Council instead utilising those reserves in the short term to finance capital expenditure thus avoiding incurring interest on loans. With interest rates now rising officers have assessed whether or not a change of strategy would be prudent to potentially draw down some of the longer terms loans, the advice is currently still to utilize cash reserves and only borrow if necessary for the short term to avoid locking in potentially higher interest over the life of a longer-term loan.

Investments

Council has carried significant cash reserves into 2023/24 and with interest rates rising there are now some decent returns to be gained with investment or lending. The table below (circulated) details the cash held by Council at the end of each of the last 4 quarters up to the end of September 2023

The next table (circulated) details actual investments made by Council maturing during the current year and the returns associated with those investments, the

figures above do not include these investments where the maturity date straddles a quarter end.

Treasury Management Strategy

In line with Council's Treasury Management Strategy and with increasing interest rates Council will seek to continue making investments like those detailed in 1.5 above during the 2023/24 financial year where there are now sufficient returns to justify the action and whilst those returns are still likely to be modest they will still none the less provide an income stream to Council and assist to offset a little of the financial pressures currently being faced. The 2023/24 budget has included an estimated income from investments amounting to £227,000. The year to date figure as per period 5 management accounts is £157,347 however this does not take into account any investments maturing after 31 August 2023, current investments will add a further £148,573 to this figure.

* **Councillor McQuillan joined the meeting remotely at 7.29pm**

Alderman Scott provided congratulations to the Finance team for reducing Council debt, although risk adverse good income has been made.

The Chair also provided congratulations and thanks to the Finance team for their work.

The Chair noted that Councillor McQuillan had joined the meeting.

Committee NOTED the report.

9. APP FORECAST

Report, previously circulated, was presented by the Chief Finance Officer.

Background

Land and Property Services (LPS) who issue bills and collect rates on behalf of Councils issue in year forecasts on the Actual Penny Product (APP) and projected outturns with regards the amount of rates actually collected.

Detail

LPS has issued to Councils the interim in year forecast for the APP based on figures at 31 August 2023. The forecast for Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council indicates that we are on course to receive a positive finalisation in terms of rates income amounting to approximately £374k, down slightly from the July forecast of £412k.

Monthly Analysis (table circulated).

APP analysis

The table (circulated) sets out the analysis of the APP forecast for the current financial year. This table demonstrates that the positive position is mainly generated by domestic properties which is consistent with the makeup of our

rates income with approximately 63% of rates revenue being raised on domestic properties. The steady growth experienced in this sector in recent years does appear to be continuing for the time being which is encouraging.

Revaluations

Whilst the figures remain positive Council must be mindful of the potential effect which challenge cases against previous revaluations may have, Non-domestic properties were revalued for 2023 and with Causeway Coast and Glens being one of only 4 Council areas with an increase in the overall Net Annual Value (NAV) of it's non-domestic property we may be exposed to a higher risk of appeals against those revaluations which, if successful, may lead to a reduction in the overall NAV figure and therefore subsequently rates income. It would appear that the decrease in this forecast from July has occurred mainly in the non-domestic sector and may therefore be as a result of the first revaluation appeals being processed.

Committee NOTED the report.

10. PROMPT PAYMENTS

Report, previously circulated, was presented by the Chief Finance Officer.

Background

Department for communities (DfC) requires Council to record and publish statistics regarding the payment of supplier invoices with specific reference to two distinct measures namely invoices paid within 10 working days and invoices paid within 30 calendar days.

Detail

These figures are published on a quarterly basis by DfC with Councils required to do likewise. The purpose of the statistics is to encourage Councils to support businesses especially those local and/or small businesses for whom cash flow is of vital importance to their continued survival. In addition as part of Council's performance improvement plan for this year the payment of our suppliers has been identified as one of the performance improvement objectives with a target of 90% of suppliers being paid within 30 calendar days. The tables below detail Council's performance since April 2020 the latest data being for quarter 2 of 23/24 year being up to and including end of September 2023. The implementation of the new Finance system at 1 April has had a negative impact on these statistics however we can see they have begun to recover in quarter 2, that improvement continuing slowly during September and it is anticipated that this improvement will continue.

Improvement Actions

The statistics will continue to be reviewed over the coming months to ensure this decline continues to be reversed and performance should be improved to pre-implementation levels and better with the enhancements of the new system taking effect. During September 88% of invoices were paid within 30 days.

Prompt Payment Statistics 2020/2021					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Total No of Invoices	3424	5544	5802	6296	21066
Total amount paid	£ 5,602,247	£ 10,310,263	£ 10,622,455	£ 17,216,296	£ 43,751,261
Number of invoices paid within 10 days	2414	3804	4308	4087	14613
% of invoices paid within 10 days	70.50%	68.61%	74.25%	64.91%	69.37%
Number of invoices paid within 30 days	2846	4951	5184	5383	18364
% of invoices paid within 30 days	83.12%	89.30%	89.35%	85.50%	87.17%
Number of invoices paid outside 30 days	578	593	618	913	2702
% of invoices paid outside 30 days	16.88%	10.70%	10.65%	14.50%	12.83%
No. of Disputed Invoices	10	82	102	57	251
% of disputed invoices	0.29%	1.48%	1.76%	0.91%	1.19%
Average Payment Days	15.52	13.85	16.26	17.06	15.74
Prompt Payment Statistics 2021/2022					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Total No of Invoices	5830	6442	7117	6567	25956
Total amount paid	£ 12,255,753	£ 14,938,664	£ 11,824,362	£ 16,652,683	£ 55,671,462
Number of invoices paid within 10 days	4139	4113	5240	4331	17823
% of invoices paid within 10 days	70.99%	63.85%	73.63%	65.95%	68.67%
Number of invoices paid within 30 days	5447	5886	6613	5893	23839
% of invoices paid within 30 days	93.43%	91.37%	92.92%	89.74%	91.84%
Number of invoices paid outside 30 days	383	556	504	674	2117
% of invoices paid outside 30 days	6.57%	8.63%	7.08%	10.26%	8.16%
No. of Disputed Invoices	32	26	48	28	134
% of disputed invoices	0.55%	0.40%	0.67%	0.43%	0.52%
Average Payment Days	15.80	17.23	15.27	16.81	16.27
Prompt Payment Statistics 2022/2023					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Total No of Invoices	6461	6090	6825	6265	25641
Total amount paid	£ 17,214,458	£ 17,078,164	£ 12,851,511	£ 35,804,964	£ 82,949,097
Number of invoices paid within 10 days	4446	3487	4806	4628	17367
% of invoices paid within 10 days	68.81%	57.26%	70.42%	73.87%	67.73%
Number of invoices paid within 30 days	5872	5267	6252	5829	23220
% of invoices paid within 30 days	90.88%	86.49%	91.60%	93.04%	90.56%
Number of invoices paid outside 30 days	589	823	573	436	2421
% of invoices paid outside 30 days	9.12%	13.51%	8.40%	6.96%	9.44%
No. of Disputed Invoices	33	35	61	20	149
% of disputed invoices	0.51%	0.57%	0.89%	0.32%	0.58%
Average Payment Days	16.24	18.55	15.92	14.28	16.22
Prompt Payment Statistics 2023/2024					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Total No of Invoices	6512	7155			13667
Total amount paid	£ 23,864,802	£ 14,062,221			£ 37,927,023
Number of invoices paid within 10 days	3675	5221			8896
% of invoices paid within 10 days	56.43%	72.97%	#DIV/0!	#DIV/0!	65.09%
Number of invoices paid within 30 days	5398	6169			11567
% of invoices paid within 30 days	82.89%	86.22%	#DIV/0!	#DIV/0!	84.63%
Number of invoices paid outside 30 days	1114	986	0	0	2100
% of invoices paid outside 30 days	17.11%	13.78%	#DIV/0!	#DIV/0!	15.37%
No. of Disputed Invoices	33	162			195
% of disputed invoices	0.51%	2.26%	#DIV/0!	#DIV/0!	1.43%
Average Payment Days	18.71	14.87	#DIV/0!	#DIV/0!	16.70

Committee NOTED the report.

11. CORRESPONDENCE - PENSION ADMINISTRATION STRATEGY

Report, previously circulated, was presented by the Chief Finance Officer.

Committee NOTED the report.

12. CONSULTATION - AUTOMATIC ENROLMENT TO PENSION SCHEMES

Report, previously circulated, was presented by the Chief Finance Officer.

In response to a question the Chief Finance Officer advised that anyone under the age of 22 who is auto enrolled into the pension scheme will receive 19% employer contributions which is the same as all other employees.

Committee NOTED the report.

MOTION TO PROCEED 'IN COMMITTEE'

Proposed by Alderman Knight-McQuillan
Seconded by Councillor Mairs

AGREED – that Committee move '*In Committee*'.

The information contained in the following items is restricted in accordance with Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

13. PROCUREMENT OF LEGAL SERVICES

Confidential report, previously circulated, was presented by the Chief Finance Officer.

Purpose of Report

To inform members of the committee of a procurement exercise conducted to engage with legal service suppliers.

Recommendation

It is recommended that Council approve officers to proceed with award of this contract.

Proposed by Alderman S McKillop
Seconded by Alderman Scott and

AGREED – to recommend that Council approve officers to proceed with award of this contract

14. DEBT MANAGEMENT

Confidential report, previously circulated, was presented by the Chief Finance Officer.

Purpose of Report

This report informs members of the current position surrounding debt owed to the Council by its customers.

Background

Council implemented a revised Debt Management Policy in July 2023.

The following tables were circulated within the confidential report:

- Detail – Aged Debt Analysis as at 30th September 2023 and as at 30th September 2022
- Movement and comparison between last year and this year (30th September 2022 and 30th September 2023)

As reported previously it should be noted that £135,291.37 included within the 90 days and over figure relates to the waste disposal customer who has gone into administration. In addition there are customers who have entered administration totalling another £10,670.05, in due course we will be informed if Council will receive any settlement from these companies following which any debts requiring written off will be informed to this committee or if required authority to write off will be sought. A further £103,203 included within the 90 days and over figure relates to invoices which are not Council debt but are invoices issued and collected on an agency contract for a third party under relevant legislative direction. The 30 days and over figure includes £178,863 from customers who are paying by direct debit.

Over 90 Days analysis

The tables below (circulated) detail the status of any debt which was over 90 days in excess of £10 currently (excluding third party invoices and direct debit accounts) and debts that have been cleared since last month.

Options

Debt write-off under £1,000

In accordance with our debt management policy I am required to report to Council any debts under £1,000 which the Chief Finance Officer has the authority to write-off. There are no such debts this month.

Debt Write-off over £1,000

In accordance with our debt management policy, Council approval is sought in order to write off any debts in excess of £1,000. Whilst there is no write-off required at this point Council is reminded that a significant debtor has gone into administration. Further information provided within the confidential report. There are also a number of additional insolvencies this month which may lead to write offs although some of these may fall under the delegated authority under paragraph 4.1.

In response to questions the Chief Finance Officer provided detail of what Council can expect to recover from the debtor who has gone into administration.

Committee NOTED the report.

15. RATING POLICY

Confidential report, previously circulated, was presented by the Chief Finance Officer.

Purpose of Report

To bring to the committee an issue raised by a committee member.

Background

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough has a significant level of ownership of second homes. The demand for these properties is positive in promoting a strong housing market however the negative side of this is that local families are finding it more difficult to afford their own homes, particularly amongst first time buyers.

Currently all domestic properties are rated on the same basis regardless of the ownership status.

Any amendment to the rating of these properties is determined by Rating Policy Division within the Department of Finance and is not something Council has any direct input to.

Recommendation

It is recommended that Council consider the matter and whether it wants to make any representations to Rating Policy on it.

Councillor Huggins expressed concerns about the impact of having second homes in her area on the local community, primary schools, businesses and economy. She stated it is also understood there are different categories of second home ownership and consideration should be given to the process in determining if it is a holiday home or a second home being privately rented on a full time basis, so not to penalise those already living in privately rented accommodation, as landlords may pass the increased cost onto tenants. Councillor Huggins stated she understands it is a free-market economy and that it would be interesting to see the rates yield if a second homes rate levy was introduced; an article in the Belfast Telegraph in August stated that Councils in England had been given the authority to double rate levies on second home owners. Councillor Huggins requested that the Council write to the appropriate Department to put forward her questions.

Proposed by Councillor Huggins

Seconded by Alderman Knight-McQuillan and

AGREED – to recommend that, at the request of Councillor Huggins, Council write to the appropriate Department to put forward her questions.

Committee Members spoke in support of the proposal referring to concerns that had been raised in their DEA's of a similar nature to what Councillor Huggins has raised.

In response to questions the Chief Finance Officer advised that the Rating Policy Division would be responsible for providing the definition of a second home. It was for Council to highlight the concerns raised and that some second homes were accommodation for long term tenants and a distinction should be made between these homes and holiday homes.

The Chief Finance Officer advised he would draft a letter to the Rating Policy Division and present it to the next Full Council meeting alongside the Finance Committee Minutes for approval.

16. ANY OTHER RELEVANT BUSINESS (NOTIFIED IN ACCORDANCE WITH STANDING ORDER 12 (O))

There were no items of Any Other Relevant Business.

MOTION TO PROCEED 'IN PUBLIC'

Proposed by Councillor Kane
Seconded by Alderman Knight-McQuillan and

AGREED – that Committee move '*In Public*'.

This being all the business The Chair thanked Elected Members for their attendance and the meeting closed at 8.06pm

Chair