



**CORPORATE POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING  
TUESDAY 26 JANUARY 2021**

<b>No</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Summary of Key Recommendations</b>
1.	Apologies	<b>Alderman McCorkell and Councillor McGlinchey</b>
2.	Declarations of Interest	<b>Nil</b>
3.	Minutes of Meeting held Tuesday 24 November 2020	<b>Confirm</b>
4.	Final Draft Corporate Strategy John O'Neill – Venturei in attendance to present	<b>Recommend adoption</b>
5.	Causeway Community Plan Update	<b>Note</b>
6.	Council Constitution - Review and Amendments	<b>Recommend approval of amendments</b>
7.	Perform Software	<b>Note</b>
8.	Woman's Working Group	<b>Note</b>

<b>9.</b>	Elected Member Development Working Group	<b>Note</b>
<b>10.</b>	Customer Services Charter	<b>Recommend adoption</b>
<b>11.</b>	Scheme of Allowances	<b>Recommend approval</b>
<b>12</b>	Prompt Payment Statistics	<b>Note</b>
<b>13.</b>	The Association of Public Sector Excellence (APSE) Performance Benchmarking	<b>Note</b>
<b>14</b>	Conferences	<b>Nil</b>
<b>15.</b>	Correspondence	<b>Nil</b>
<b>16.</b>	Consultation	<b>Nil</b>
<b>17.</b>	Matters for Reporting to Partnership Panel	<b>Nil</b>
	<b>In Committee (Items 18-20 inclusive)</b>	
<b>18.</b>	Debt Management	
	<b>18.1</b> Debt Recovery Case	<b>Recommend Council accept the reduced settlement offer of £135,000</b>

<b>19.</b>	Minutes of Land and Property Sub-Committee Meeting held Wednesday 6 January 2021	<b><i>Recommend approval</i></b>
<b>20.</b>	Corporate Services Directorate Estimates 2021-22 – Workshop held 14 <sup>th</sup> January 2021	<b><i>Note</i></b>
<b>21.</b>	Any Other Relevant Business (notified in accordance with Standing Order 12 (o))	<b>Nil</b>

UNCONFIRMED

**MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE MEETING OF THE  
CORPORATE POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE  
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC HEADQUARTERS,  
AND VIA VIDEO-CONFERENCE ON  
TUESDAY 26 JANUARY AT 7.00 PM**

- In the Chair:** Alderman Hillis (C)
- Present:** Alderman: Baird (R); Fielding (C); Sharon McKillop (R); Duddy (C)  
Councillors: Beattie (R); Chivers (R); Dallat O'Driscoll (R); Knight-McQuillan (R); McCaw (C); McGurk (R); McLean (C); Wilson (R); C McShane (R)
- Members in Attendance:** Councillor Holmes (R)
- Officers Present:** M Quinn, Director of Corporate Services (C)  
A McPeake, Director, Environmental Services (R)  
E Beattie, Head of Policy (R)  
J McCarron, Performance Officer (R)  
P Donaghy, Democratic & Central Services Manager (R)  
L Clyde, Financial Accountant (R)  
P McColgan, Head of ICT (R)  
I Owens, Committee and Member Services Officer (C)
- In Attendance:** A Lennox, Mobile Operations Officer (C)  
Chris Ballentine, ICT Officer (C)  
John O John O'Neill – Venturei (Item 4)  
Press (3 No.) (R)  
Public (0 No.)

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

**1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies were recorded for Alderman McCorkell and Councillor McGlinchey.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**3. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD TUESDAY 24 NOVEMBER 2020**

The Minutes of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee meeting held on Tuesday 24 November 2020 were confirmed as a correct record.

#### **4. FINAL DRAFT CORPORATE STRATEGY**

Report, previously circulated, was presented by The Director of Corporate Services.

##### Purpose of Report

A Corporate Strategy (Corporate Plan) was previously developed for Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019. A new Corporate Strategy is therefore required, particularly as a new Council was elected in May 2019. The aim of the Corporate Strategy is to enable the Council to define and agree its priorities and strategic direction for the next four years.

##### Background

In 2017 a Community Planning Strategic Framework was developed for the Causeway Coast and Glens area. This document put in place a long term vision and plan for the area based on an analysis of needs, priorities and opportunities within the Causeway Coast and Glens area. This Community Plan has been supported by a Delivery Plan with a Statement of Progress on the delivery of the Community Planning outcomes published in November 2019.

The guidelines for community planning envisage the local Community Plan acting as the key over-arching framework for all community planning partners. In Causeway Coast and Glens there are 14 statutory organisations/partners, including the Council, involved in the community planning process and the anticipation is that the local Community Plan will be taken as the starting point by all statutory partners when developing their own organisational strategies and plans.

A process for the development of the new Council Corporate Strategy has been on-going for some time with a development process established and agreed by the senior management team. Initial research work on gathering qualitative and quantitative evidence in relation to Causeway and Glens Borough Council area was undertaken as the first stage in this process.

The second stage was to initiate an internal consultation process to gather views and comments on the contents of a new Corporate Strategy. This was to start with a workshop for Councillors but, unfortunately, for various reasons this workshop did not take place until Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> February 2020.

##### Proposals

The six Councillors who attended the workshop explored and generated ideas for a new Vision for Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council; considered the Council's Mission Statement; identified values that should underpin the work of the Council; and considered high level strategic themes for the new Corporate Strategy.

The out-workings of the Councillor workshop discussions and subsequent Senior Leadership Team discussions were considered by the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee in August 2020.

At that meeting it was agreed to accept the suggestions as outlined and utilize these suggestions to draft a Corporate Strategy for Council which would be brought back to the Committee for further consideration.

Work has been on-going to develop a draft Corporate Strategy for Council and a copy of a proposed draft. (previously circulated)

This draft incorporates the agreed themes and other suggestions and has developed them into a framework which incorporates outcomes, indicators to help measure progress and it also identifies key strategic projects which will help achieve the outcomes.

#### Recommendation

**It is recommended** that the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee recommends to Council the adoption of this draft Corporate Strategy.

The Chair invited John O'Neill from Venturei to present a power point presentation on the Draft Corporate Strategy.

Members welcomed the plan, discussed the content, and comments were made on the following:-

P15 - Values

P22 - Capital Asset Realisation Programme

P23 – Cohesive Leadership

P23 – Delivery of Council's Anti-Poverty Action Plan

P25 – Climate Change

P26 – Domestic and Commercial Waste

Proposed by Alderman Baird

Seconded by Councillor C McShane

To recommend Council adoption of this draft Corporate Strategy

The Chair put the Proposal to the Committee to vote.

14 Members voted For, 0 Members voted Against, 0 Members Abstained

The Chair declared the Motion Carried.

## **5. CAUSEWAY COMMUNITY PLAN UPDATE**

The report, previously circulated, was presented by The Director of Corporate Services.

#### Introduction

The Community Plan is a long term plan (from 2017 to 2030) based on sound, robust evidence with a focus on improving social, economic and environmental well-being and contributing to sustainable development.

The Community Plan is a strategic planning tool for the Causeway Coast and Glens area and it is the key over-arching framework for partnerships and

initiatives in the Council area. It is not seen as an additional or parallel process to structures already in place.

Phase 1 of the community planning process was the development of a Strategic Framework for the Community Plan. This document was finalised in April 2017 and officially launched in June 2017. It outlines the high level outcomes identified for the Causeway Coast and Glens area based on an extensive public consultation process and a statistical analysis of the area.

Phase 2 of the community planning process was the development of a comprehensive Delivery Plan in 2018 which put in place 44 practical actions and activities to achieve the outcomes identified in the Strategic Framework.

Phase 3 of the community planning process put in place mechanisms to monitor and report on performance against the Community Plan objectives/outcomes. An Outcomes Based Accountability (OBA) process was utilised to monitor and report on performance with Action Leads using report cards to provide information on the following areas in relation to each of the 44 actions within the Delivery Plan:

What did we say we would do?  
How much did we do?  
How well did we do it?  
Who is better off?

The legislation also requires that the Community Planning Partnership reports to the public by way of a published statement, highlighting progress on outcomes achieved and actions taken. This Statement of Progress has to be published once every two years with the first of these required within two years of the Community Plan. Causeway Community Planning Partnership published its first Statement of Progress in November 2019.

#### Review of Delivery Plan

Following the publication of the Statement of Progress the Partnership decided that this would be an appropriate time to conduct a full review of the Delivery Plan and consider which actions had been completed, whether actions needed to be reviewed and amended or if new actions should be included.

A process for this review was developed which was to include the establishment of a range of Delivery Design Groups and a full consultation process involving partners and stakeholders. This review process was to begin in February 2020 but the intervention of the pandemic severely impacted the planned review process and a new approach had to be taken over the summer period to conduct this review.

A draft revised Delivery Plan was subsequently developed with 34 actions. This draft was considered by the Community Planning Partnership at its meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2020 and agreed.

The revised Draft Delivery Plan then went out for a short period of public comment in November. This included use of an on-line survey, promotional pieces on the Council website, within the Citizen's Newsletter and social media

outlets. The Community Planning Team also made themselves available for on-line virtual meetings and telephone calls.

#### Revised Delivery Plan 2020

The final draft document was considered at the meeting of the Partnership on 2nd December 2020 when the Partnership also considered a report outlining the comments submitted by the public.

The majority of comments received were general in nature and did not result in any changes to the actions proposed in the draft document. The Community Plan Team were able to refer a number of the issues raised to other organisations or used other avenues for their resolution.

The Community Planning Partnership adopted the Revised Delivery Plan as proposed and it was noted that the next steps would include publication and promotion of the document as a web based document (it was not proposed to publish hard copies).

The quarterly monitoring/reporting process will now be implemented in relation to Delivery Plan activity with the first reports from Action Leads to be considered by the Partnership at its next meeting in April 2021.

The quarterly reports received from Action Leads in March, June and September 2021 will form the basis of the next public Statement of Progress which is due to be published in November 2021.

#### Other Relevant Items

During the meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> December the Partnership received a video presentation on The Glens Healthy Places initiative which had been funded via the Public Health Agency. Members expressed their support for this initiative which demonstrated community planning in action and expressed the hope that this type of project would be rolled out into other areas of the Borough.

Section 69(1) of the Local Government (NI) Act NI 2014 requires a review of the Community Plan to be completed before the fourth anniversary of the date on which the Community Plan was published. For Causeway Coast and Glens this means a review of the Community Plan is due by June 2021.

However, the Department for Communities has recognised the disruption to normal working arrangements caused by current events and they have advised the Partnership that they consider it will be sufficient to meet the legislative requirements for Partnerships to formally confirm that a review of the Community Plan has been conducted with a commitment to a further review before April 2022.

The Community Planning Team will develop an approach to this requirement and will report to the Community Planning Partnership at its next meeting in April 2021.

**AGREED** that members note the contents of the report.

## 6. COUNCIL CONSTITUTION – REVIEW AND AMENDMENTS

Report, previously circulated, was presented by the Director of Corporate Services.

### Introduction

A Council is required, under section 2 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland 2014, to prepare and keep up-to-date a Constitution.

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council agreed their new Constitution in October 2015. This governs how the Council operates, how decisions are made, and the procedures which are to be followed to ensure efficiency, transparency and accountability to local people. Some of these processes are required by the law, while others are a matter for the Council to choose.

The Council's Constitution is divided into sixteen Articles which set out the basic rules governing the Council's business. More detailed procedures and codes of practice are provided in separate Rules and Protocols at the end of the document.

### Proposed Amendments to Council Constitution

Please see below proposed amendments to the Council Constitution:

<b>Item</b>	<b>Proposed Amendment</b>
Part 3 – Rules of Procedure (3.4 Standing Orders)	Adopt revised Protocol for the Operation of the Planning Committee (copy attached as Appendix 1, previously circulated) and revise Standing Orders accordingly.  Replace link to Standing Orders with link to

### Recommendation

**It is recommended** that the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee recommend to Council approval of the proposed amendments to the Council Constitution as outlined in table above.

Proposed by Alderman Duddy  
Seconded by Councillor McLean

To recommend Council approval of the proposed amendments to the Council Constitution as outlined in table above.

The Chair put the Proposal to the Committee to vote  
14 Members voted For; 0 Members voted Against; 0 Members Abstained  
The Chair declared the Motion Carried

## 7. PERFORM SOFTWARE

Report, previously circulated, was presented by the Performance Officer, who referred to the earlier GIS demonstration for members.

### Purpose

The purpose of this report is to update Members on the ongoing development of the Council's new Performance Software (Perform), and to provide a real time demonstration of its uses.

### Background

Council does not have, and has not had, a digital Management Information System (MIS) to enable officers and Members across Council, in a fully integrated manner, to collate, monitor, analyse and report on performance information across Service Business Plans, Corporate Performance Improvement Plans and APSE Benchmarking Indicators.

The Performance Team's key aim here is to ensure that Council has a system in which all the important targets, performance indicators and planned outcomes across all service areas are held and managed in a fully accessible and integrated digital platform. This aim expands the take into account the ambition that performance reports and performance dashboards for all service areas and Corporate documents would indeed look and feel the same, hence leading to a more consistent and easily understood set of performance reports regardless of the service area or subject matter.

Council has long regarded this absence of an MIS as an area of weakness within its internal Governance systems and has been working to address this. This has been further emphasised by audit recommendations from NI Audit Office over the past few years. For example, in the December 2019 Section 95 Audit and Assessment Report, the NI Audit Office highlighted the following issue and made the subsequent Proposal for Improvement:

Issue	December 2019 - Proposal for Improvement
<p>A robust and flexible Management Information System (MIS) is needed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inform budget and target setting;</li> <li>Enable Services to manage and report on performance;</li> <li>Enable Services and Committee members to challenge what Council does and how it is done.</li> </ul>	<p>The Council should prioritise the development of its performance management system to enable the performance of all its functions and services to be measured, to support the identification of those areas which would benefit most from improvement, and to monitor and report on performance improvement across all services as well as specifically against Improvement objectives and projects.</p> <p>The Council should consider if Performance Management software could improve the efficiency and effectiveness of collecting, analysing, monitoring and reporting on performance indicators and measures across all services and functions.</p>

Council has consulted with colleagues and peers across other Councils when planning how best to address this area for improvement. The two main issues that emerged were the specific requirements for a bespoke fit with the systems and software that Council already utilised and then secondly the significant cost implications, which for many Councils stretches to tens of thousands of pounds.

The best solution that addressed both these issues was that Councils' own Digital Services Team would create, build and develop a new Performance Management Software platform for Council. The Digital Services Team have been developing and testing the new Performance Management Software, which we are calling "Perform" and have been populating the software with as much information as possible. Furthermore, these colleagues will provide Members with a demonstration of the software's uses at this meeting.

### Next Steps

The next step will be to roll out a series of demonstrations and training sessions for those key colleagues across Council who will be involved in the collation, input and reporting of performance through the Perform platform.

Directorates and Service areas should already be planning for their 2021/22 Business Plans, and the Performance Team will liaise with the services to ensure that targets and outcomes are appropriately logged on to the Perform platform.

The current focus is on ensuring the integration into Perform of key performance information across Service Business Plans, Corporate Performance Improvement Plans and APSE Benchmarking Indicators, but the scope exists to also include the Council's Corporate Strategy and indicators from the Community Plan, so development along these lines will continue.

The Performance Team will report back to this Committee in April 2021 with an update on the progress of Perform.

Members welcomed the introduction of the GIS reporting system, commended the team on their efforts on this, and felt this would be useful tool.

**AGREED** that members note the contents of the report.

## **8. WOMAN'S WORKING GROUP**

The Director of Corporate Services referred members to the notes of the first Woman's Working Group held on Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> January at 6 pm via MS Teams.

Members wished future meetings to take place at 7 pm and The Democratic and Central Services Manager agreed that this would be accommodated.

**AGREED** that members note the meeting notes.

## 9. ELECTED MEMBERS DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP

The Director of Corporate Services referred members to the notes of the Elected Member Development Working Group held on Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> January 2021 at 7pm Via MS Teams.

Alderman Duddy felt that given pressures on staff it was not the right time to be increasing the number of evening meetings. At the request of Alderman Duddy the Director of Corporate Services agreed to provide for next meeting a breakdown of potential cost of reaching Elected Member Development Charter status. The Director of Corporate Services confirmed that since 2016/17 to present, a budget of £8,000 per year has been set aside for member development, and provided actual spend over the past number of years.

Councillor McLean asked how many other Councils had achieved Charter Status and The Democratic and Central Services Manager confirmed that 9 had achieved to date with 4 currently working towards Charter plus status.

**AGREED** that members note the meeting notes.

## 10. CUSTOMERS SERVICES CHARTER

Report, previously circulated, was presented by The Director of Corporate Services.

### Introduction

The purpose of this report is to seek Members approval for the 'Customer Service Charter' attached at Appendix 1 (previously circulated)

### Background

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council aims to provide quality, accessible and value for money services for all our communities, businesses, visitors, citizens and other stakeholders. It is our commitment to improving the service we offer.

### Standards summary

The Customer Service Charter sets out standards of customer service anyone contacting or visiting the Council can expect. The Charter covers the standards we aim to provide in relation to Customer Service standards, Equality and Diversity standards, Elected Members, Reception Areas, Comments, Compliments and Complaints, Data Protection and Freedom of Information.

The Charter also outlines the standards of behaviour we ask of those using Council's services or contacting the Council and what our expectations are.

### Next steps

All Members of staff will be informed of the Charter and have access to it. Frontline staff will be provided with additional training and support. The Charter will be displayed in all Council buildings open to the public, online and in other formats where required.

Financial, Legal, Implications

No financial or legal implications in relation to the introduction of the Charter.

Recommendation

**It is recommended** that Council adopts the Customer Service Charter.

Proposed by Councillor McLean

Seconded by Alderman Baird

To recommend that Council adopt the Customer Service Charter.

The Chair put the Proposal to the Committee to vote.

14 Members voted For, 0 Members voted Against, 0 Members Abstained

The Chair declared the Motion Carried.

**11. SCHEME OF ALLOWANCES**

Report, previously circulated, was presented by the Director of Corporate Services.

Purpose of Report

It was agreed to defer the decision on the Scheme of Allowances from the November Corporate Policy and Resources Committee to the Group Leaders' Forum to give further consideration to the report.

Appendix 1 (previously circulated) provides further details and analysis in terms of arrangements across some of the other Councils.

Background

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council has established a scheme of allowances payable to Members for the current period. The scheme provides for the payment of allowances to Councillors on the basis that:

- 1 – The maximum level of basic allowance as determined by the Department for Communities (DfC) is paid;
- 2 – The maximum level of carers allowances as determined by the DfC are paid;
- 3 – The maximum level of mileage rates as determined by the DfC are paid;
- 4 – Councillors' payments are made on the third last banking day of each month

Detail

The updated scheme of allowances, a copy of which has been included with this report, takes into account a number of factors:

- 1 – Basic allowance – budget allows for 2.75% increase to be applied;
- 2 – Mileage rates;
- 3 – Rates for dependant carer's allowance;
- 4 – Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA).

The four items are in keeping with the normal periodic update of the scheme of.

### Amendments

In October 2019 Council formed a new Finance committee which was not provided for in previous schemes of allowances therefore the Chair was not allocated any SRA. This new scheme does allocate the same SRA to the Finance Committee chair as to the other main committees (£3,000 p.a). This does however present a problem in that there are now 22 positions of responsibility and regulation only permits 20 members to be in receipt of SRA. Until now we have dealt with this issue by making the Partnership Panel representative a member of the Planning committee thereby creating a double responsibility but only one SRA can be received, the higher of the 2 being applicable.

### Current positions of responsibility

The current positions of responsibility which are governed by the 20 member limit are as follows:-

- 1 CP&R Committee Chair
- 2 L & D Committee Chair
- 3 ES Committee Chair
- 4 Planning Committee Chair
- 5 Finance Committee Chair (to be agreed)
- 6 Audit Committee Chair
- 7 Partnership Panel Representative
- 8 -22 Planning Committee Members (15)

The current post holders of the above positions include 2 members with dual roles therefore currently only 20 payments will be made under the current regulations.

### Rates of Special Responsibility Allowance

The current rates of SRA are as follows:

Committee chair (except Audit)	£3,000	(x4)
Audit Committee chair	£ 750	
Planning Committee Member	£1,200	(x15)
Partnership Panel representative	£1,000	

### Application

The current scheme will remain in place for this Financial Year. The new scheme of allowances will be effective from the 1<sup>st</sup> of April 2021 unless amended or updated.

### Previous decision

This report was previously tabled at this committee on 28 January 2020 at which time the decision was to defer the decision regarding the scheme of allowances until an application was made to DfC for council to be allowed to pay SRA to a number of members in excess of the statutory limit (50% of members i.e. 20).

### Department application

An application was made to DfC in February seeking permission for Council to pay SRA to up to 22 members based on the breakdown of SRA in 1.4 above. DfC issued a response in March 2020 which is copied below: (previously circulated)

### Consideration

DfC's refusal of the application now leaves Council with a decision to make regarding the allocation of SRA specifically about ensuring that the maximum number of 20 is not exceeded. This position is further complicated in that the existing SRA positions have continued to be paid at the rates detailed in 1.5 above since 1 April 2020, subject to the application of regulations where a member holds more than one position of responsibility, therefore any decision will affect the application of SRA from the date of approval of this scheme until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 meaning potentially a recipient of SRA up to this point may no longer receive it dependant on Council's decision.

As stated 1.4 the current list of post holders does include 2 members with dual roles therefore under the current regulations only 20 payments would be made, this position however cannot be guaranteed to occur every year therefore the scheme does require amendment so that in the event all positions of responsibility are occupied by different members then the 50% (20 member) limit would not be breached.

Following discussion by Group Leaders, the following suggestion for receipt of SRA has been made:

- 1 CP&R Committee Chair
- 2 L & D Committee Chair
- 3 ES Committee Chair
- 4 Planning Committee Chair
- 5 Finance Committee Chair (*to be agreed*)
- 6 Audit Committee Chair
- 7 Partnership Panel Representative
- 8 -15 Planning Committee Member (rotate 8 or 7 payments annually)

The future rates of SRA could be as follows:

Committee chair (except Audit)	£3,000	(x5)
Audit Committee chair	£ 750	
Planning Committee Member	£2,400	(x8/7 to rotate annually)
Partnership Panel rep.	£1,000	
(Total	£35,950)	

This will be reviewed again during the next financial year.

### Recommendation

**It is recommended** that Members consider the allocation of positions of responsibility and associated special responsibility allowance so that the new scheme of allowances can be approved.

The Director of Corporate Services confirmed that application of the new scheme would be effective from 1st April 2021.

Proposed by Alderman Duddy

Seconded Councillor McGurk

To recommend that Council approve the new scheme of allowances.

The Chair put the Proposal to the Committee to vote.

12 Members voted For, 2 Members voted Against, 0 Members Abstained

The Chair declared the Motion Carried.

## **12. PROMPT PAYMENT STATISTICS**

Report, previously circulated, was presented by The Director of Corporate Services, who advised members that the Financial Accountant was in attendance remotely to answer questions.

### 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 (previously circulated) detail Council's performance since April 2017 the latest data being for quarter 3 of 20/21 year being up to and including end of December 2020. Q3 performance has improved significantly from the previous year with 74.25% of invoices paid within 10 working days and 89.35% paid within 30 calendar days, there is a number of factors impacting on this as follows. Due to the current Covid-19 pandemic Council are currently processing a significantly lower number of invoices. Many staff are working from home, we have introduced where possible email approval for those invoices that don't require a purchase order, which has improved turnaround times. The Accounts Payable team have changed some of their working practices and staff have been allocated specific suppliers to look after and therefore when supplier invoices are out for approval for more than 10 days the staff member responsible is chasing the budget holder to approve these.

### Improvement Actions

Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic Council had introduced electronic purchase order processing (POPs) in January 2020, staff were trained and this was working well. For staff to access the system they need access to the Council network which has caused issues for some staff working from home without VPN connection. Many staff enter the council buildings at designated times to raise and approve orders but it is anticipated that as more staff return to the workplace this will improve.

Alderman Duddy questioned if staff working from home had access to VPN. The Financial Accountant confirmed that all Finance Staff had access to VPN, but not all staff across other service areas had access. The Director of Corporate Services confirmed she would follow up with how many staff had VPN.

**AGREED** that members note the contents of the report.

### **13. THE ASSOCIATION OF PUBLIC SECTOR EXCELLENCE (ASPE) PERFORMANCE BENCHMARKING**

Report, previously circulated, was presented by the Director of Corporate Services.

#### Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on progress with the APSE Performance Benchmarking process within Corporate Services including proposed indicators, and with draft figures at this time.

#### Background

The context for Council's benchmarking activity is set out in its Duty to Improve within the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014, **Part 12, Section 91**-(1)-(b) which states that "A council must use the information it collects under section 90 to compare its performance, in so far as is reasonably practicable, with the performance of other councils in exercising those or similar functions during the financial year to which the information relates and during previous financial years."

Council's level of regional and national benchmarking of its performance has been limited and has regularly been the subject of NIAO Audit Recommendations. Council's Section 95 Audit and Assessment Report 2019/20 from the NIAO stated that:

- "Council should continue working with other councils and the Department to agree a suite of self-imposed indicators and standards. This will enable meaningful comparisons to be made and published in line with its statutory responsibility. Significant progress by all councils is essential in the coming year to allow a broader range of functions to be compared."

- "We expect that further progress by all councils will be necessary in the coming year to allow a broader range of functions to be compared."

#### APSE led National Performance Benchmarking

Council has taken the positive step and joined with 9 of the 10 other Northern Ireland Councils to be part of the "Northern Ireland Project". This is the National Performance Benchmarking Framework that is led and facilitated by APSE Performance Networks.

Through membership of this network, Council will now be subject to and contribute data against over 160 Performance Indicators across 12 Services areas. Council will now be able to extensively benchmark its performance

against that of other Councils in Northern Ireland in order to comply with its statutory duties, identify areas for improvement, share good practice and increase accountability of its performance through public reporting.

APSE performance networks is the largest voluntary public sector benchmarking service across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The network has been collecting performance data on key frontline service areas since 1999, and the Northern Ireland project has been benchmarking data across Councils here since 2015. APSE is used by over 200 local authorities across the UK and it leads the way in local government benchmarking. The size of APSE's membership gives added benefits to members by being able to offer a wide variety of comparator groups.

The Corporate Services Directorate will be reporting against 26 Performance Indicators over 4 Service areas and these are set as follows.  
Democratic and Central Services – 10 Indicators  
Organisation Development/Human Resources – 10 Indicators  
Policy & Community Planning- 1 Indicator  
(Percentage of council buildings accessible to people with a disability)  
Information and Communications Technology – 5 Indicators

The training and development for staff who will be involved in this process has been ongoing, and Council believes that this is a valuable and positive step towards our ongoing aim to foster a culture of service improvement.

**AGREED** that members note the contents of the report.

#### **14. CONFERENCES**

There were no conferences.

#### **15. CORRESPONDENCE**

There was no correspondence.

#### **16. CONSULTATIONS**

There were no consultations.

#### **17. MATTERS FOR REPORTING TO THE PARTNERSHIP PANEL**

There were no matters for reporting to the Partnership Panel.

#### **MOTION TO PROCEED 'IN COMMITTEE'**

Proposed by Councillor McLean  
Seconded by Alderman Fielding

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

- \* **Members of the Press / Public were ejected from the meeting.**
- \* **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.**
- \* **The Director of Environmental Services joined the meeting to present Item 18.1**

## **18. DEBT MANAGEMENT**

Confidential report, previously circulated, was presented by the Director of Corporate Services. who advised members that the Financial Accountant was also in attendance remotely to answer questions

### Purpose of Report

The report (previously circulated) informed members of the current position surrounding debt owed to the Council by its customers.

### Background

Council implemented a revised Debt Management Policy in February 2017.

### Detail – Aged Debt Analysis

As at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020 (previously circulated)

As at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2019 (previously circulated)

Movement and comparison between last year and this year (31 Dec 2019 and 31<sup>st</sup> Dec 2020) (previously circulated)

### Over 90 Days analysis

The tables detail the status of any debt which was over 90 days in excess of £10 currently (excluding BID accounts) (previously circulated)

### 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 is one such debt 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. There are no such debts this month.

**AGREED** that members note the contents of the report.

## **18.1 Debt Recovery Case**

Confidential report, previously circulated, was presented by the Director of Environmental Services.

### Purpose of Report

This report informs members of the updated position surrounding debt owed to the Council by a debtor.

### Current Position

During the course of informing the owner of the debtor on the outcome of the previous Council decision to serve a Writ, a further settlement offer was tabled.

This offer was sent to our legal team to assess its merits. See attached letter received from our instructed Counsel (previously circulated). Members are reminded that the Counsel's letter is legally privileged, not for publication or sharing with any third party. The contents are self-explanatory. On the basis of this advice a further approach to the debtor was made in relation to the repayment terms. A further revised offer was made.

### Summary

Based on the revised offer of £135,000 and revised payment terms of £75,000 lump sum and monthly payments of £5,000 for 12 months and the advice from Council's legal advisor it would appear that there is an opportunity to settle the matter close to the full value of the claim and, assuming the Defendant was able to pay the money within a short timeframe, the commercial sense in accepting this offer is self-evident.

### Recommendation

**It is recommended** that Members consider accepting the revised offer provided by debtor of £135,000 with the payment terms of £75,000 lump sum paid in February 2021 and monthly payments of £5,000 per month for 12 months commencing in March 2021.

Alderman Duddy asked who would pay the legal costs incurred including writing off the deficit of £27,500. The Director of Environmental Services confirmed that Council would be liable for the additional legal costs of approximately £10,000 but to proceed to court would have likely incurred a higher cost. The Director said that the legal advice was that under the circumstances this was the best option to proceed with.

Proposed by Alderman Fielding  
Seconded by Alderman Duddy

To recommend that Council accept the revised offer provided by debtor of £135,000 with the payment terms of £75,000 lump sum paid in February 2021 and monthly payments of £5,000 per month for 12 months commencing in March 2021.

The Chair put the Proposal to the Committee to vote.

14 Members voted For, 0 Members voted Against, 0 Members Abstained  
The Chair declared the Motion Carried.

**19. MINUTES OF LAND AND PROPERTY SUB-COMMITTEE MEETING HELD WEDNESDAY 6 JANUARY 2021**

Minutes of the Land and Property Sub-Committee meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> January 2021 were presented by the Director of Corporate Services.

Proposed by Councillor McLean  
Seconded by Councillor McGurk

To recommend that the Minutes of the Land and Property Sub-Committee held 6 January 2021 and recommendations therein are approved.

The Chair put the Proposal to the Committee to vote.  
14 Members voted For, 0 Members voted Against, 0 Members Abstained  
The Chair declared the Motion Carried.

**20. CORPORATE SERVICES DIRECTORATE ESTIMATES 2021-22 – WORKSHOP HELD 14<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2021**

Confidential report, previously circulated, was presented by The Director of Corporate Services.

The Director of Corporate Services advised members that they would shortly receive a detailed and comprehensive report on the Corporate Section and that the Rates Estimates Booklet was due for issue.

**AGREED** that members note the contents of the report.

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

There was no other business.

**MOTION TO PROCEED 'IN PUBLIC'**

Proposed by Councillor Knight-McQuillan

Seconded by Alderman Fielding

**AGREED:** to recommend that Committee move 'In Public'.

There being no further business the Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and the meeting concluded at 8.50 pm.

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Chair

UNCONFIRMED