

**LISBURN & CASTLEREAGH CITY COUNCIL**

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Governance and Audit Committee held on Thursday, 10 June, 2021 at 6:00 pm**

**PRESENT IN CHAMBER:**

Councillor John Palmer (Chairman)  
Alderman J Baird (Vice-Chairman)  
Aldermen O Gawith, S P Porter and J Tinsley  
Councillors S Carson, S Eastwood, J Gallen, J Lavery BEM, S Lee, C McCready and A Swan  
Mr E Jardine, Independent Member

**PRESENT IN REMOTE LOCATION:**

The Right Worshipful the Mayor  
Alderman S Martin  
Councillor S Lowry

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

In Chamber:

Chief Executive  
IT Officer  
Technician  
Member Services Officer  
Administrative Assistant

In Remote Location:

Director of Finance and Corporate Services  
Head of Human Resources & Organisation Development  
Interim Head of Audit, Risk & Performance  
Emergency Planning Officer  
Performance Improvement Officer  
Risk Officer

Northern Ireland Audit Office

Mr P O'Sullivan (present remotely)

**Commencement of the Meeting**

At the commencement of the meeting, the Chairman, Councillor John Palmer welcomed those present to the meeting, which was being live streamed to enable members of the public to hear and see the proceedings.

At this point, the Administrative Assistant read out the names of the Elected Members and Officers in attendance at the meeting.

The Chairman, Councillor John Palmer, stated that, whilst the meeting was being live streamed, unauthorised recording was not permitted, as per the Council's Standing Orders. He asked that mobile phones be put on silent or switched off for the duration of the meeting and proceeded to outline the evacuation procedures in the case of an emergency.

1. Apologies

It was agreed to accept apologies for non-attendance at the meeting on behalf of Councillors G McCleave and R McLernon.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

At this point, the Chairman, Councillor John Palmer, advised that the Interim Head of Audit, Risk & Performance was leaving Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council and taking up post in Newry, Mourne and Down District Council. He wished him every future success.

3. Report from Performance Improvement Officer

3.1 Complaints Report – Quarterly Report Quarter 4 2020/21

Members were provided with, and noted the contents of, a copy of a comparative report taken from the Council's Customer Care System detailing the number of comments, complaints and compliments in Quarter 4 of 2020/21.

3.2 Performance Improvement Plan 2021/22

Alderman J Tinsley arrived to the meeting during consideration of this item of business (6.09 pm).

Members were reminded that the Council must produce an annual Performance Improvement Plan and publish this by 30 June, 2021 in order to meet the requirements of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014, although the Performance Improvement Officer pointed out that no guidance had been received from the Department for Communities to advise if there were any changes in legislation in light of Covid-19.

Members were provided with a copy of the Performance Improvement Plan for 2021/22 containing the detail required by the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO), together with a copy of a summary version of the Plan, which would be used as the public document.

Public consultation on the Plan had been carried out during April and May 2021, with any comments or suggested amendments from consultees having been incorporated, where appropriate, in the final version.

3.2 Performance Improvement Plan 2021/22 (Contd)

Members commended Officers involved in the production of the Performance Improvement Plan, which they stated was an impressive, well laid out and aesthetically pleasing document.

In response to a query from Alderman S P Porter, it was agreed that information be provided regarding the number of people requesting copies of the Performance Improvement Plan.

It was proposed by Alderman J Baird, seconded by Councillor S Lee and agreed to recommend that the Performance Improvement Plan for 2021/22 be approved.

3.3 Consultation Report on Performance Improvement Plan 2021/22

The Right Worshipful the Mayor, Alderman S Martin, joined the meeting during consideration of this item of business (6.12 pm).

The Performance Improvement Officer reminded the Committee that, due to the current pandemic, it had previously approved that consultation on the Draft Performance Improvement Plan would be online only. In completing the consultation, the Council had made use of various social media platforms, as well as its online survey tool known as 'Smart Survey'. Consultees had included residents, staff, community groups and local businesses. The Performance Improvement Plan had been made available in draft format on the Council's website and promoted through social media during April and May 2021, with social media analytics indicating that a reach of 8,338 users had been achieved via Facebook and 2,671 impressions on Twitter. At the close of consultation, a total of 14 responses had been received from the online survey.

Members were provided with a copy of the consultation report on the Performance Improvement Plan for 2021/22. Officers addressed a number of comments by Members, particularly around the number of responses received from the online survey, and stated that it was hoped that in future years there would be a return to face-to-face focus group meetings with the public.

It was proposed by Alderman J Baird, seconded by Councillor J Gallen and agreed to recommend that the Consultation Report on the Performance Improvement Plan 2021/22 be approved.

The Head of Human Resources & Organisation Development and the Performance Improvement Officer left the meeting at this point (6.18 pm).

4. Report from Risk Officer

4.1 Corporate Risk Register

The Risk Officer set out in her report, an update in respect of the quarterly review of the Corporate Risk Register. Members were provided with, and noted the contents of, a copy of:

4.1 Corporate Risk Register (Contd)

- (a) Corporate Risk Dashboard; and
- (b) CRR2 Emergency Planning/Business Continuity report.

The Emergency Planning Officer made a verbal presentation in respect of the emergency planning/business continuity risk and answered queries raised by Members. The Chief Executive responded to Members' queries and took note of comments made, particularly around the Brexit Risk and the possibility of higher-level apprenticeships.

It was proposed by Alderman S P Porter, seconded by Alderman O Gawith and agreed to recommend that the next area of Council activity to be reviewed by the Committee would be Procurement.

The Risk Officer and Emergency Planning Officer left the meeting at this point (6.40 pm).

5. Confidential Business

The matters contained in the confidential report would be dealt with "In Committee" due to containing information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information).

"In Committee"

It was proposed by Councillor A Swan, seconded by Alderman J Baird and agreed that the following matters be considered "in committee", in the absence of members of the press and public being present. The livestream was paused at this point.

5.1 Report by Policy Officer

In the absence of the Policy Officer, this report was presented by the Chief Executive.

5.1.1 Acceptance of the Six Monthly Statements of Assurance for Period October 2020 to March 2021

Members were provided with, and noted the contents of, a copy of:

- (a) Statements of Assurance from each directorate for the period October 2020 to March 2021; and
- (b) the Corporate Statement of Assurance from the Chief Executive.

Members commended Officers involved in the preparation of the Statements of Assurance and thanked Council staff for how they had managed during the very difficult and challenging year past.

## 5.2 Report by Interim Head of Audit, Risk & Performance

At this point, the Interim Head of Audit, Risk & Performance thanked the Chairman for his earlier well-wishes and stated that he had enjoyed his time working in Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council.

### 5.2.1 Internal Audit Progress Report – May 2021

Members were provided with, and noted the contents of, a copy of an Internal Audit Progress Report – May 2021. This report summarised internal audit work and progress against the Operational Plan since the last meeting of the Committee on 11 March, 2021. A copy of any internal audit reports referred to in the progress report were also provided in full on SharePoint for Members' information. The Interim Head of Audit, Risk & Performance responded to a number of queries raised by Members.

### 5.2.2 Internal Audit Annual Assurance Report and Audit Opinion

Members were provided with, and noted the contents of, a copy of the above report, which set out the overall audit opinion of the Interim Head of Audit, Risk & Performance, together with a summary of the work the Internal Audit Service had undertaken during 2020/21.

### 5.2.3 2020/21 Governance and Audit Committee Annual Report

Members were provided with a copy of the Governance and Audit Committee Annual Report 2020/21. In response to comments by Alderman O Gawith, the Chief Executive advised that this report could have been considered under open business.

Comments were made in relation to the low number of responses received to the self-assessment questionnaire and Members were encouraged to complete such questionnaires in future. The Chief Executive took note of comments regarding the need for refresher training for Members of the Governance and Audit Committee.

It was proposed by Councillor J Gallen, seconded by Alderman J Baird and agreed to recommend that the Governance and Audit Committee Annual Report 2020/21 be approved.

## Resumption of Normal Business

It was proposed by Councillor A Swan, seconded by Alderman S P Porter and agreed to come out of committee and normal business was resumed. The livestream was commenced again at this point.

## 6. Delegated Authority for Special Meeting on 24 June, 2021

It was proposed by Alderman S P Porter, seconded by Alderman J Baird and agreed to recommend that delegated authority be granted to the Governance

6. Delegated Authority for Special Meeting on 24 June, 2021 (Contd)

and Audit Committee, at its special meeting on 24 June, 2021, to note the Council's Financial Statements 2020/21 and agree to forward those to the Northern Ireland Audit Office.

7. Any Other Business

7.1 Congratulations to Chairman, Councillor John Palmer  
Alderman S P Porter

Alderman S P Porter congratulated Councillor John Palmer on how well he had conducted the first meeting of the Governance and Audit Committee since his election as Chairman.

There being no further business, the meeting was terminated at 7.03 pm.

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Mayor/Chairman