

LISBURN & CASTLEREAGH CITY COUNCIL

Minutes of Meeting of the Governance and Audit Committee held in the Council Chamber and Remote Locations on Thursday, 14 December, 2023 at 6:00 pm

PRESENT IN CHAMBER:

Councillor R McLernon (Chairman)
Mr E Jardine (Independent Member and Vice-Chairman)
Alderman O Gawith
Councillors D J Craig, A P Ewing, A Givan, C Kemp, P Kennedy, M McKeever and A Martin

PRESENT IN REMOTE LOCATION:

Deputy Mayor, Councillor G McCleave
Alderman S P Porter
Councillors D Bassett, P Burke, S Burns and S Lowry

OTHER MEMBERS

Councillor G Hynds (remote)

IN ATTENDANCE:

Chief Executive
Director of Organisation Development and Innovation
Director of Finance and Corporate Services
Director of Leisure and Community Wellbeing
Director of Regeneration and Growth
Acting Director of Environmental Services
Head of Economic Development
Head of Planning and Capital Development (remote)
Head of Finance
Head of Human Resources and Organisation Development
Acting Head of Waste Management and Operational Services
Internal Audit Manager (remote)
Acting Emergency Planning, Corporate H&S, Risk & Business Continuity Manager
Performance Improvement Officer
IT Officer
Member Services Officers

Northern Ireland Audit Office

Mr P Barr

Ross Boyd Accountants

Mr B Stewart (remote)

Commencement of the Meeting

At the commencement of the meeting, the Chairman, Councillor R McLernon, welcomed those present, in particular the external audit representatives – Mr P Barr and Mr B Stewart. He pointed out that, unless the item on the agenda was considered under confidential business, this meeting would be audio recorded. In accordance with the Protocol for Remote Meetings, the Chairman asked those attending via zoom to ensure that the meeting could not be seen or heard by any other person at their remote location when confidential business was being considered.

At this point, the Member Services Officer read out the names of the Elected Members and Officers in attendance at the meeting.

The Chairman, Councillor R McLernon, asked that mobile phones be put on silent or switched off for the duration of the meeting. The Director of Organisation Development and Innovation outlined the evacuation procedures in the case of an emergency.

1. Apologies (00:02:29)

It was agreed to accept apologies for non-attendance at the meeting on behalf of The Right Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor A Gowan, and Councillor J Gallen.

2. Declarations of Interest (00:03:06)

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Report by Head of Finance (00:03:27)

3.1 Delegated Authority to Governance and Audit Committee for Annual Financial Statements (00:03:37)

It was proposed by Alderman O Gawith, seconded by Councillor A Givan and agreed to recommend that authority be delegated to special meetings of the Governance and Audit Committee for the purposes of:

- (a) noting the Council's Draft Annual Financial Statements in June each year; and;
- (b) approving the Council's Final Annual Financial Statements in September each year.

4. Report from the Performance Improvement Officer (00:04:38)

4.1 Compliments and Complaints Report – Quarter 2 2023/24 (00:04:48)

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 2 of 2023/24.

4.1 Compliments and Complaints Report – Quarter 2 2023/24 (Contd)

The Performance Improvement Officer pointed out that, in response to a request made by NIPSO to all councils, its logo would be removed from the Council's Customer Care Policy that had been approved by the Committee at its last meeting.

4.2 Performance Improvement Objectives, Case Studies & Associated KPIs – 2nd Quarter Review (00:06:15)

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

- (a) a quarterly monitoring document (covering July – September 2023) on all projects that demonstrated improvement against the 2023/24 Performance Improvement Objectives, including the relevant Performance Improvement KPIs. An additional section was included detailing some case studies and customer feedback that had demonstrated improvement during Quarter 2 and
- (b) a report from the 'Performance Management System' detailing the Performance Improvement Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the period July – September 2023.

4.3 Service KPIs – Quarter 2 2023/24 All Directorates (00:08:38)

Members were provided with, and noted the contents of, a copy of reports detailing the Quarter 2 2023/24 KPIs for each directorate.

During discussion:

- (a) the Performance Improvement Officer agreed to include in future cover reports, information on how each KPI had performed against the previous quarter;
- (b) the Director of Regeneration and Growth gave an update on steps being taken by the Council to meet the regionally-set target of processing local planning applications within an average of 15 weeks; and
- (c) the Head of Human Resources and Organisation Development provided an update on steps being taken to reduce staff absence.

4.4 NI Audit Office – Audit and Assessment Report 2023/24 (00:25:03)

Members were provided with, and noted the contents of, a copy of the NI Audit Office Audit and Assessment Report 2023/24.

The Acting Head of Waste Management and Operational Services left the meeting at this point (6.25 pm).

5. Report from the Acting Emergency Planning, Corporate H&S, Risk & Business Continuity Manager (00:26:49)

5.1 Corporate Risk Register (00:27:02)

The Acting Emergency Planning, Corporate H&S, Risk & Business Continuity Manager 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 the Corporate Risk Dashboard. A number of Members' queries were addressed by Officers, particularly in relation to Dundonald International Ice Bowl, cyber security and cemetery provision.

Alderman S P Porter left the meeting at 6.44 pm, as did the Head of Human Resources and Organisation Development, the Acting Emergency Planning, Corporate H&S, Risk & Business Continuity Manager and the Performance Improvement Officer.

6. Report from the Director of Regeneration and Growth (00:44:48)

6.1 LCCC Single Tender Actions Update (00:45:06)

The Head of Economic Development left the meeting during consideration of this item of business (6.46 pm).

The Chairman, Councillor R McLernon, thanked the Director of Regeneration and Growth for bringing this report forward, having been requested at a previous meeting. In his absence, Councillor J Gallen had also requested that his thanks be conveyed to the Director in this regard.

Members were provided with and, following responses to queries raised, noted the contents of an update in relation to single tender actions and the Council's continued improvement journey in this regard.

Prior to considering the confidential business on the agenda, the Chairman, Councillor R McLernon asked Members if they had any items of any other business. No Members had any matters to raise.

At this point, Mr P Barr, Northern Ireland Audit Office, explained that the Council's audit had been contracted out to the private firm of Ross Boyd Accountants. Mr B Stewart from Ross Boyd was in attendance at the meeting via zoom. A representative from the company would also be in attendance at future meetings, in addition to the NIAO representative.

The Director of Regeneration and Growth and the Acting Director of Environmental Services left the meeting (6.57 pm).

7. 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 P Ewing, seconded by Alderman O Gawith and agreed that the following matters be considered “in committee”, in the absence of members of the press and public being present.

7.1 Report by Internal Audit Manager

7.1.1 Internal Audit – Progress Report

(Redacted report will be made available on 31 December, 2023)

Members were provided with, and noted the contents of, a copy of an Internal Audit Progress Report summarising internal audit work and progress against the Operational Plan since the last meeting of the Committee on 14 September, 2023. A copy of any internal audit reports referred to in the progress report were also provided in full on Decision Time for Members’ information.

7.2 Report by Head of Finance

7.2.1 2022-2023 Final Report To Those Charged With Governance

(Report will never be available – final certified accounts will be published)

Members were provided with, and noted the contents of, a copy the 2022-2023 Final Report To Those Charged With Governance.

7.3 Report by Chief Executive

7.3.1 Chief Executive’s Assurance Statement

(Overall assurance will be reported as part of the annual governance statement in June 2024)

Member were provided with, and noted the contents of, a copy of the Chief Executive’s Assurance Statement.

7.4 Closed Session

In line with good practice and the Governance and Audit Committee Terms of Reference, Members now met with representatives from External Audit and Internal Audit in a closed session, the purpose of which was to afford Members the opportunity to ask questions that may not specifically be addressed as part of an audit.

The following Officers left the Meeting prior to the closed session taking place (7.15 pm): Chief Executive, Director of Organisation Development and Innovation, Director Finance and Corporate Services, Director of Leisure and Community Wellbeing, Head of Finance and Member Services Officers.

The Director of Organisation Development and Innovation, Director of Finance and Corporate Services and Member Services Officers returned to the meeting at 7.39 pm.

Resumption of Normal Business

It was proposed by Alderman O Gawith, seconded by Councillor D J Craig, and agreed to come out of committee and normal business was resumed.

The Chairman, Councillor R McLernon, wished those present a Happy Christmas and New Year.

There being no further business, the meeting was terminated at 7.39 pm.

Mayor/Chairman