

FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD THURSDAY 12 DECEMBER 2024

No	Item	Summary of Key Recommendations	Estimated Timescale for completion
1.	Apologies	Councillors Kane, Peacock, Schenning	12 December 2024
2.	Declarations of Interest	None	12 December 2024
3.	Minutes of Finance Committee meeting held Thursday 14 November 2024	Confirmed as a correct record.	12 December 2024
4.	Prompt payments	Noted	
5.	Actual Penny Product forecast	To recommend that Council note the report.	
6.	Estimated Penny Product Forecast	To recommend that Council approve the inclusion of the 2nd draft Estimated Penny Product in the next set of draft estimates.	
7.	Management Accounts Period 7	Noted	
8.	Rates Support Grant Report	To recommend that Council consider and adopt the report as tabled.	
	'In Committee' (Items 9-13 inclusive)		

9.	Finance Management Team Meeting minutes 5 November 2024	Noted	
10.	Debt Management	Noted	
11.	Rates estimates – Chief Executive	Noted	15 February 2025
12.	Rates estimates – Finance	To recommend that Council consider and agree the level of assumptions discussed for inclusion in the estimates for the 2025 / 26 period.	15 February 2025
13.	Rates estimates	To recommend that Council note the report and raise the matter of National Insurance reimbursement at the Partnership Panel.	15 February 2025
14.	Any Other Relevant Business (notified in accordance with Standing Order 12 (o))	None	

**MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE
FINANCE COMMITTEE HELD
IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, AND VIA VIDEO CONFERENCE,
ON THURSDAY 12 DECEMBER 2024 AT 7.00PM**

In the Chair: Councillor Huggins (C)

Members Present: Alderman Callan (R), Coyle (C), S McKillop (C),
Knight-McQuillan (C), Scott (R)
Councillors Holmes (R), Kyle (R), Mairs (C), McMullan (C),
McQuillan (R), Nicholl (R), Wisener (R)

Officers Present: D Wright, Chief Finance Officer (C)
J Culkin, Management Accountant (C)
U Harper, Committee & Member Services Officer (C)

A Lennox, ICT Operations Officer (C)

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

Substitutions: Councillor McMullan substituted for Councillor Peacock.

The Chief Finance Officer undertook a roll call.

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

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were recorded for Councillor Kane, Councillor Peacock and Councillor Schenning.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest.

**3. MINUTES OF FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD THURSDAY 14
NOVEMBER 2024**

Summary was previously circulated.

AGREED – the Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting held Thursday 14 November 2024 were confirmed as a correct record.

* **Alderman S McKillop joined the meeting in the Chamber at 7.04pm.**

4. PROMPT PAYMENTS

The report 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 (previously circulated) detail Council's performance since April 2022 the latest data being for quarter 3 of 24/25 year, up to and including end of November 2024.

Analysis

The statistics will be continually monitored to ensure the performance levels are maintained and where possible improved. Council's self-imposed target remains at 90% of invoices being paid within 30 days. During November 92.41% (October 94.78%) of invoices were paid within 30 days, a greatly improved position when compared to the figures from the previous quarters where 91.06% and 90.13% was recorded, for the entirety of the current year thus far we are showing 91.45%. This does represent a marked improvement in performance from 2023/24 which was 87.32% for the entire year but we can't let performance slip in the remaining months if we are to maintain this level.

Finance Committee NOTED the report.

5. ACTUAL PENNY PRODUCT FORECAST

The report was presented by the Chief Finance Officer.

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to inform members of the latest Actual Penny Product (APP) forecast supplied by Land and Property Services (LPS).

Background

LPS has issued to Councils the latest informal quarterly forecast as at 30 October 2024. The forecast for Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council has been based on in year assumptions for both formal and interim forecasts as detailed below:

Monthly Analysis

Month	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
Forecast	£558	£625	£647	£718	£780

All figures £'000

Additional analysis

The figures indicate a significant projected finalisation in terms of rates income for Council however there still remains a level of uncertainty on these figures as there are many factors that could lead to changes to them as the year continues. It is however an excellent position to be in at this point in the year and does give optimism that there is some growth in the rates base and gives Council somewhat of a buffer should negative market forces arise.

APP analysis

The tables below (previously circulated) set out the analysis of the APP forecast for the current financial year in terms of both domestic and non-domestic properties.

Revaluations

There are still a number of outstanding revaluation challenge cases and whilst they could impact on our APP for 2024/25 most of the significant challenges have by now been dealt with.

Recommendation

It is recommended that Council note the report.

AGREED – to recommend that Council note the report.

6. ESTIMATED PENNY PRODUCT FORECAST

The report was presented by the Chief Finance Officer.

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to inform members of the first draft Estimated Penny Product (EPP) forecast supplied by Land and Property Services (LPS) which will be used in the budgeting process.

Background

LPS have issued to Councils the first in year forecast for the EPP based on figures at 31 October 2024. The forecast for Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council gives an EPP of £2,061,990 (September £2,064,190) compared to £2,036,500 which was used in calculating our rate for the current year. This represents an increase of around 1.1%, the majority of this arising on the domestic side which is showing a 1.25% increase whilst on the non-domestic side we see approximately 0.55% of growth. Council continues to see relatively steady growth but at a low level. It is clear Council cannot rely on rates base growth to overcome the ongoing cost pressures in the provision of services, other efficiencies or sources of revenue generation must be explored and maximised to minimise the impact upon our ratepayers. Officers are currently investigating any potential sizable properties which have been approved recently or are imminent so that they could be added to our EPP thereby reducing potential additional ratepayer burden.

EPP Analysis

The tables below (previously circulated) set out the variance of the EPP forecast from previous calculations, the first table is the domestic property side and the second sets out the non-domestic calculations.

Recommendation

It is recommended that Council approve the inclusion of the 2nd draft Estimated Penny Product in the next set of draft estimates to be presented to the December Finance Committee.

Proposed by Alderman Coyle
Seconded by Councillor Mairs and

AGREED – to recommend that Council approve the inclusion of the 2nd draft Estimated Penny Product in the next set of draft estimates.

7. MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS PERIOD 7

The report was presented by the Management Accountant.

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to present the current management accounts to Council for information and analysis.

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 2024/25 controlled by the

Directorates is £82.410m (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 £81.978m the difference being a budgeted applied balance of £0.432m for the year.

Financial Overview by Directorate

The table below (previously circulated) details a summary of the financial position at period 7 (up to and including 31 October 2024).

Council is showing a favourable variance against budget at period 7 amounting to £1,433,209 however it should be noted that in Period 7 £552,252 of this figure arises from exceptional income, that income being interest connected to a historic VAT claim which was received in July and the amount was not known to facilitate inclusion of a debtor in the 2023/24 accounts. Adjusting for this item, which Council has previously agreed will be transferred to the Financial Recovery Reserve, results in a period 6 favourable variance of £880,957 (period 6 £416,582) which is an encouraging position to be in at this point in the financial year. This represents an improvement of approximately £464,375 (Period 6 - £13,153 reduction) on the month. It should be noted that this however is not a surplus but rather a positive variance against budget, Council set a deficit budget for 2024/25 of £0.432m therefore should this position be maintained throughout the year Council would be in surplus by £0.449m, increasing reserves by this amount.

Income and Expenditure Analysis

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

Council is currently favourable against budget in terms of staffing, this is after taking into account an accrual based on the current pay offer. It should be noted that the current offer has now been accepted, new pay rates will be implemented in November with backpay (effective from 1 April 2024) being calculated and paid in December. The pay award is approximately equivalent to the budgeted inclusion of 4% in anticipation of a pay increase however due to the lump sum nature of the pay agreement at lower pay scales there may be some adverse budgetary movements in areas where the staffing complement is dominated by employees on the lower pay scales, conversely where staffing is predominantly at the higher pay scales there may be some favourable budgetary movements.

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

At period 7 this is £306k adverse (Period 6 £514k adverse, Period 5 £348k adverse). The main areas of contribution to this figure are grant expenditure within Prosperity and Place (£411k) which will be offset by an expected income debtor together with

expenditure on equipment (£1101k adverse) in Tourism & Recreation again being offset by income. There is an additional overspend on Estates services and materials of £103k at this point.

Income levels are strong for period 7 and the position is as detailed in the table below (previously circulated) by Directorate.

At this stage we already know Rates Support Grant to be received by Council will be under budget by £369k therefore we have taken account of this in these accounts. In addition a subsequent Council decision to the approval of budgets means that additional car parking income included in the budget will not be realised during this financial year and again this reduction has been recognised in full in these accounts being the main contributing factor to the adverse income variance for Environmental Services. Within Sport and Well Being both Leisure Centre and Holiday Park income levels are well ahead of budget, in the case of the Holiday and Leisure parks this is offsetting some expenditure overspends referred to above and finally Prosperity & Place income is £483k favourable again offsetting the expenditure adverse variance referred to above.

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 2024/25 is £11,783,490. The net budget is a calculation of the forecast:

- Gross Expenditure of £22.863m.
- Gross Income of £10.079m.

Table 1, Illustrates a P7 Net Position of £3,861,550, which is favourable by £1,249,309 (Period 6 - £989,225).

Service Area Budgets

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

Income and Expenditure

Generally, the budgetary performance of Leisure and Development at Period 6 is performing well at this point of the financial year, main areas to highlight are:

Salaries and Wages.

The table below (previously circulated) shows the position regarding staffing costs across the Directorate, currently favourable by £309k (P6 - £299k), after taking into account the anticipated pay award.

Energy and Utilities.

At Period 7, energy costs and utilities have an adverse variance of £55k (P6 - £90k), this was an area where Council reduced budgets significantly at budget setting due to anticipated settling of the market in this area. The majority appears to be arising from Holiday & Leisure Parks (£48k) and therefore some of this may be recouped from customers later in the season.

Repairs and Maintenance.

At Period 7, scheduled and reactive repairs / maintenance are favourable by £259k (P6 - £229k) coming mostly from favourable variances across the Sport and Well Being section in terms of materials.

Supplies and Services

At period 7 Supplies and Services are currently showing a adverse variance of £264k (P6 - £437k), as mentioned above the main contribution to this figure comes from Prosperity and Place regarding grant payments and Holiday and Leisure parks, the majority of this being offset by associated income.

Income

Is currently showing a favourable variance of £1,014k (P6- £971k) mainly in Sport & wellbeing (£431k [P6 - £320k]) and Prosperity and Place (£483k [P6 - £369k]).

Analysis by Head of Service

Community & Culture

Community & Culture currently have a net favourable position of £98k, the main factors being employee costs £9k (vacant/gapped posts, including sickness and secondment). Premises has a favourable variance of £26k due to cost savings in art centres and museums. Customer and client receipts currently performing £10k ahead of budget. Grant income performing well, Ballycastle Museum development and DFC Hardship showing income where there was no budget, however these will be offset against expenditure associated with the grants received. Improvement in month mainly attributed to better profiling of budgets against spend particularly in museums and the two arts centres.

Prosperity & Place

Prosperity & Place has an overall favourable variance of £117k. Employee costs are £43k favourable due to vacant posts. Supplies and services showing grant scheme overspends but these are offset by grant income which is performing better than budget. Digital transformation grant of £39k in relation to last year was received with no corresponding debtor therefore an in-year bonus.

Leisure & Development Management

Leisure & Development management, made up of director salary costs and that of the L&D admin team currently £33k favourable £31k of this due to staff savings achieved with some administration staff working on funded projects.

Sport & Wellbeing

SWB is showing a positive variance of £556k. In particular, income for the 7 Leisure/ Sports Centres is up £326k on the estimated target which evidences the positive benefit of recent gym equipment upgrades across the sites.

Agency costs show a negative variance of £210k, but overall employee costs within SWB are currently £55k over budget. The dependency on agency staff will reduce as SWB continues to populate the remaining roles in its staff structure.

Whilst utility charges may become challenging as market prices fluctuate, currently the three main sites for utility usage (leisure centres) are generally maintaining estimated targets.

Repairs and Maintenance is showing a favourable variance in terms of materials, however the ongoing requirement for upkeep and repair across all SWB locations will be closely monitored and the current position may well be subject to change as the financial year progresses.

Tourism & Recreation

Tourism & Recreation £442k favourable overall with employee costs currently £281k favourable. Savings were made at the Benone complex earlier in the season due to the pool opening later than scheduled. Further savings were also made at Limavady VIC through sharing staff resources with Community and Culture.

Supplies and services currently £223k favourable which reflects the profiled expenditure for Period 7, however a significant amount of invoices from suppliers remain outstanding.

Funding Unit

Funding unit currently £10k under budget mainly due to savings on agency staff working on grant funded projects.

Strategic Projects

Strategic projects which consists of two SIB staff. Currently £8,135 over budget.

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 2024/25 is £ 30,085,955.41. This is based on expenditure budget of £35,793,585.27 and income budget of £5,707,629.86

The Environmental Services position at Period 7 shows a £66,686.51 (P6 - £170,045.38 negative) positive variance. This includes assumed increases in employee costs based on the proposed National Pay Award which is equivalent to the predicted budget increase.

The main costs and income attributing to the ES P7 position are summarised as follows as variances against budget.

- Employee costs are £404k positive
- Premises costs are £287k adverse
- Transport Costs are £201k adverse – Fuel (-15k), Mileage Claims (-30k), Repairs, Service and maintenance – (-126k)
- Supplies and Services are £18k favourable
- Contract Payments are £401k positive – Landfill Tax (£360k)
- Income is £159k adverse – Car Parks (-£184k), Landfill (-£394k), Building Control (£261k)

Estates.

£351k adverse mainly due to increased material costs. Employee costs is positive by £294k and Income is favourable by £3k.

Health and Built Environment.

£352k positive. Employee costs are £130k positive. Fee Income is favourable by £331k including £261k from Building Control.

Infrastructure.

£3k adverse. Car park income £184k adverse. Employee costs are £121k favourable.

Operations.

£37k favourable variance in Period 7. Employee costs are £144k adverse. A breakdown of the Variances are as follows

Function	Variance	Comments
Waste Collection & Street Cleansing	£24k Adverse	Employee cost increase.
Landfill & Compost Site	£193k Adverse	Due to reduction in 3 rd party income
HRC's	£56k Adverse	Employee cost increase.
Waste Disposal Contracts	£453k Favourable o Black Bin Contract - £451k (fav)	Variations on predicted tonnages due to extended opening of Craighulliar

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Blue Bin Contract - £127k (fav) o Brown Bin Contract £130k (adv) o Other Waste Contracts - £6k (fav) 	for Council waste only and lower price for the recycling (blue bin) contract
Transfer Stations & Depots	£20k Favourable	On target
Public Conveniences	£1k Adverse	On target
Ops Management	£16k Adverse	On target

ES Business Support.

£28k positive - on target

ES Centrally Managed.

£4k positive variance – on target

In-year Savings

Officers have and will continue to manage and scrutinise the budget to identify opportunities for reducing expenditure and increasing income in order to get back on budget. However at Period 7, due to loss of income from car parks and 3rd party waste, but offset by increased income from Building Control, ES financial position has an adverse variance of £66,686.51.

Corporate Services

The table below (previously circulated) demonstrates the financial position for Corporate Services at period 7.

Democratic Services (DS)

£59K favourable due to various elements of expenditure being less than budget in Period 7 including the following: Members Mileage, Official and Courtesy Visits and an increase in Registration Income.

Land and Property

£44k favourable at period 7 due to a vacant post within the structure.

Human Resources

£45K favourable in Period 7.

£39k favourable in salary costs.

ICT

£61K adverse overall in Period 7, due to a combination of underspends and overspends. The adverse variances in Telephones £131k and Computer Licences, are reduced by underspends in Internet and Data Connections £35k, Computer Supplies £11k, Computer Equipment £23k and Mobile Communications £10k.

Contributions to other bodies

No variance at period 7, as budget has been released to cover costs to date.

Internal Audit.

£74k adverse as at Period 7, £11k favourable on salary Costs and £28k adverse due to costs re complaints, additional accrual of investigation costs at Period 7 amounting to £65k.

Centrally Managed

Overall, £16K favourable position at the end of Period 7, mainly due to underspends in Telephones £14k.

Policy & Community Planning

Overall, £13K adverse position at the end of Period 7, due to overspend on salary costs of £13K and underspends in Professional fees and Programme Management Costs of £23k.

Planning

£113k favourable at end of Period 6, including £142k underspend on salary costs and £29k shortfall on income projections. A previously reported overspend of £48k on Programme Management Costs which should have been capitalised has now been corrected in period 7.

Chief Executive

The table below (previously circulated) demonstrates the financial position for areas reporting directly to the Chief Executive at period 7.

The variance under Performance includes Insurance costs for the year being favourable by £68k.

Finance, Investment Income, Interest and Rates

The table below (previously circulated) demonstrates the financial position relating to Finance, Investment Income, Interest payments, Central Government Support and Rates as at the end of period 7

Whilst the figures in this table are dominated by the adverse position regarding Rates Support Grant it should be noted that Investment Income is £74k favourable and this position will improve as the year continues. The figure for Finance includes an amount of £480k relating to staffing savings that management are committed to making during

the year through vacancy control for example and human resource management. At period 7 the effect of this is £300k and should be considered against overall staffing costs and not as a Finance generated adverse variance.

Capital Expenditure

The tables below (previously circulated) set out the capital expenditure that has been approved through Council thus far for the 2024/25 Financial Year.

Total Capital Commitment £5,884,427.

Cash expenditure of capital projects

The table below (previously circulated) sets out the cash outlay by month on ongoing capital projects.

Cashflow

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

Summary

This report represents a consistent performance following a solid start to the financial year and gives optimism for the remainder of the year. Council does however need to remain vigilant in respect of energy costs which, whilst they are roughly in line with budget at the moment and market changes leading to increased prices again could push these areas of expenditure significantly into deficit.

Finance Committee NOTED the report.

8. RATES SUPPORT GRANT REPORT

The report was presented by the Chief Finance Officer.

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to place before members for consideration a comprehensive report on Rates Support Grant (RSG) as requested by the Finance Committee.

Background

The level of funding allocated to RSG has been eroded over the last number of years to a level where the funding is no longer commensurate with the purpose of the grant.

Report for Council Consideration

Derry City and Strabane District Council shared with all the affected Councils a report adopted by them in respect of RSG and Council has requested that Causeway Coast

and Glens Borough Council prepare their own version of this report. Attached as an appendix to the report is the draft report for Council consideration. It is broadly based on the Derry City and Strabane report but has been amended in key areas to reflect this Council's circumstances.

Recommendation

It is recommended that Council consider and adopt the report as tabled.

The Chief Finance Officer gave an overview of the report, noting that Causeway Coast and Glens is one of the councils most severely affected by the cutting of the regional support grant. He advised that the report showed that Causeway Coast and Glens has the second lowest population density and the third highest age profile of all councils in NI.

Alderman Callan stated that the report is a great piece of work that highlights the need for the regional support grant. He asked that the report be shared at the next meeting of the senior management team.

In response to Alderman Callan's query regarding the status of the legal challenge, the Chief Finance Officer stated that councils were awaiting the outcome of the review of the Rates Support Grant. He stated that councils were advised that the funding was not being considered, hence it would not impact on the 2025-26 budgetary position, and there was no definite date given for the outcome of the review.

Proposed by Alderman Callan
Seconded by Councillor Mairs and

AGREED – to recommend that Council consider and adopt the report as tabled.

MOTION TO PROCEED 'IN COMMITTEE'

Proposed by Alderman Knight-McQuillan
Seconded by Councillor Mairs

AGREED – to recommend that Finance 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.

The Chair reminded Committee of the audio recordings procedure.

9. FINANCE MANAGEMENT TEAM MEETING MINUTES

Confidential report, by virtue of paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

The notes of the Finance Management Team meeting held Tuesday 5th November 2024 were presented as read by the Chief Finance Officer.

The Chief Finance Officer advised that it is anticipated that guidance and training for Chief Finance Officers will be scheduled for February.

Finance Committee NOTED the report.

* **Councillor McQuillan joined the meeting remotely at 7.21pm.**

10. DEBT MANAGEMENT

Confidential report, by virtue of paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 was previously circulated and 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 tables below (previously circulated) set out the total debt position as at 31 October 2024 and compares this to the position at 31 October 2023.

Detail – Aged Debt Analysis

Tables circulated detailing aged debt analysis as at 30 November 2024 and as at 30 November 2023.

Table circulated detailing movement and comparison between last year and this year (30 November 2023 and 30 November 2024).

With regards the 90 days and over figures there are customers who have entered administration totalling £107.20, 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. There are also balances amounting to £17,975 relating to customers who pay by direct debit therefore these are not of any immediate concern to Council. A further

£153,351 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.

Over 90 Days analysis

The table below (previously circulated) details the status of any debt which was over 90 days in excess of £10 currently (excluding third party invoices and direct debit accounts).

The table below (previously circulated) sets out such debts that have been cleared since the last report in October.

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. There are no such debts this month.

Car Parking Penalty Notices Write-off

In accordance with audit requirements, I am required to report periodically to Council any write-offs relating to car parking revenue. For the 6 months to 30th September 2024 a total of 666 notices were written off on appeal which equates to £29,970 at £45 per notice. The total number of notices issued during this period was 3,491 meaning 19.08% of issued notices were cancelled. As these are individually below £1,000 the delegated authority to the Chief Finance Officer enables these to be written off.

The Chief Finance Officer provided commentary on the report and advised that he would track a significant debt that was highlighted and update the Committee as requested.

Finance Committee NOTED the report.

* **Councillor Nicholl left the meeting remotely at 7.26pm.**

11. RATES ESTIMATES – CHIEF EXECUTIVE

For Information, confidential report, by virtue of paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 was circulated and presented by the Chief Finance Officer.

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to inform members of the budgetary requirements for the Chief Executive's Directorate for the 2025/26.

Finance Committee NOTED the report.

12. RATES ESTIMATES - FINANCE

For Information, confidential report, by virtue of paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 was presented by the Chief Finance Officer.

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to inform members of the budgetary requirements for the Finance Department for the 2025/26 period and to seek Council agreement on the setting of general assumptions for inclusion within those estimates.

Recommendation

It is recommended that Council consider and agree the level of assumptions discussed for inclusion in the estimates for the 25 / 26 period.

The Chief Finance Officer advised Members that the heading of the report should have read "Rates Estimate – Finance".

Proposed by Alderman S McKillop
Seconded by Councillor Mairs and

AGREED – to recommend that Council consider and agree the level of assumptions discussed for inclusion in the estimates for the 2025 / 26 period.

13. RATES ESTIMATES

For Information, confidential report, by virtue of paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 was presented by the Chief Finance Officer.

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to inform members of the pressures being faced by Council in terms of financial budgeting and the setting of the rate for 2025/26. The summary table details the estimated impact of the larger known high level influences on the rates and therefore gives an indication of the challenges which Council will face and need to address in considering the setting of the rate for 2025/26.

The draft estimates as tabled has necessitated a number of assumptions being made and their impact included to allow us to consider their consequences. These were agreed by this Committee in during the last three months following presentations from Directorates. At this stage there are many factors the outcome of which are unknown but we can make some judgements about these. This third draft is still at a high level and does not take into account a great deal of the detail which officers will consider over the next few weeks as we build up a picture of the budgetary requirements for the next financial year.

The Chief Finance Officer advised that Councils had still not received information from the Department on the level of the Rates Support Grant for next year, no information on the proposed level of Members allowances for 2025-26, and no information on any potential reimbursement from central Government relating to the National Insurance increase. He stated that there is a mechanism whereby public sector is being reimbursed for the increased cost of employers National Insurance, which may trigger a Barnett consequential resulting in additional funding going to Stormont, but no advice has yet been given on whether that funding will filter down to council level.

The Chief Finance Officer stated that Council had been advised of a new funding stream relating to waste processing and that officers would investigate the outworkings of this and report back to Members, via both the Finance directorate and the Environmental Services directorate as appropriate.

Proposed by Alderman Callan
Seconded by Alderman S McKillop and

AGREED – to recommend that Council note the report and raise the matter of National Insurance reimbursement at the Partnership Panel.

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

There were no Items of AORB.

MOTION TO PROCEED 'IN PUBLIC'

Proposed by Alderman Knight-McQuillan
Seconded by Councillor Mairs and

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

This being all the business, the Chair thanked Elected Members for their attendance and the meeting closed at 7.54pm.

Chair