

FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD THURSDAY 23 JANUARY 2025

No	Item	Summary of Key Recommendations	Estimated Timescale for completion
1.	Apologies	None	n/a
2.	Declarations of Interest	None	n/a
3.	Minutes of Finance Committee meeting held Thursday 12 th December 2024	Confirmed as a correct record	n/a
4.	Prompt payments	Noted	-
5.	Actual Penny Product forecast	Noted	-
6.	De Rating Grant Forecast	Noted	-
7.	Management Accounts Period 8	Noted	-
8.	Correspondence - 1 st NIPSO refund 2024 - 2024 Causeway	Noted	-
9.	Finance Management Team (FMT) Meeting minutes meeting held Monday 2 nd December 2024	Noted	-
10.	Debt Management	Noted	-
11.	DAC Valuation Services	to recommended that Council approve awarding a Direct Award Contract (DAC) to Land and Property Services LPS for asset valuation services.	n/a
12.	Rates estimates 2025/2026	To recommend to the Council Meeting on	15 February 2025

		Thursday 6 February 2025 that Council approve all the recommendations for the purposes of setting the rate	
13.	Any Other Relevant Business	None	n/a

Unconfirmed

**MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE
FINANCE COMMITTEE HELD
IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, AND VIA VIDEO CONFERENCE,
ON THURSDAY 23 JANUARY 2025 AT 7.00PM**

In the Chair: Councillor Huggins (C)

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

Officers Present: D Wright, Chief Finance Officer (C)
A McPeake, Director of Environmental Services (R)
J Culkin, Management Accountant (C)
L Clyde, Financial Accountant (R)
S Duggan, Civic Support & Committee & Member Services Officer (C)

In attendance: Press 1no. (R)

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

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

There were no apologies recorded.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest.

**3. MINUTES OF FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD THURSDAY 12TH
DECEMBER 2024**

Copy previously circulated.

AGREED –the Minutes of the Finance Committee meeting held Thursday 12th December 2024 were confirmed as a correct record.

The Chief Finance Officer stated Agenda Item 12 would be considered at the Rates Meeting on 6 February 2025.

4. PROMPT PAYMENTS

Report, previously circulated presented by the Chief Finance Officer.

Background

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

Detail

These figures are published on a quarterly basis by DfC with Councils required to do likewise. The purpose of the statistics is to encourage Councils to support businesses especially those local and/or small businesses for whom cash flow is of vital importance to their continued survival. In addition, as part of Council's performance improvement plan for this year the payment of our suppliers has been identified as one of the performance improvement objectives with a target of 90% of suppliers being paid within 30 calendar days. The tables below detail Council's performance since April 2022 the latest data being for quarter 3 of 24/25 year, up to and including end of December 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 December 95.36% (November 92.41%) of invoices were paid within 30 days, the highest monthly figure Council has ever reported, 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 91.82%. 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. Staff have identified a small area where we may be under reporting our performance and this is being addressed as we speak, it may lead to a minor improvement in the figures.

Prompt Payment Statistics 2022/2023					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Total No of Invoices	6461	6090	6825	6265	25641
Total amount paid	£ 17,214,458	£ 17,078,164	£ 12,851,511	£ 35,804,964	£ 82,949,097
Number of invoices paid within 10 days	4446	3487	4806	4628	17367
% of invoices paid within 10 days	68.81%	57.26%	70.42%	73.87%	67.73%
Number of invoices paid within 30 days	5872	5267	6252	5829	23220
% of invoices paid within 30 days	90.88%	86.49%	91.60%	93.04%	90.56%
Number of invoices paid outside 30 days	589	823	573	436	2421
% of invoices paid outside 30 days	9.12%	13.51%	8.40%	6.96%	9.44%
No. of Disputed Invoices	33	35	61	20	149
% of disputed invoices	0.51%	0.57%	0.89%	0.32%	0.58%
Average Payment Days	16.24	18.55	15.92	14.28	16.22
Prompt Payment Statistics 2023/2024					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Total No of Invoices	6512	7263	6847	7031	27653
Total amount paid	£ 23,864,802	£ 17,139,245	£ 13,837,183	£ 13,491,210	£ 68,332,440
Number of invoices paid within 10 days	3675	5233	5444	5774	20126
% of invoices paid within 10 days	56.43%	72.05%	79.51%	82.12%	72.78%
Number of invoices paid within 30 days	5398	6232	6215	6301	24146
% of invoices paid within 30 days	82.89%	85.80%	90.77%	89.62%	87.32%
Number of invoices paid outside 30 days	1114	1031	632	730	3507
% of invoices paid outside 30 days	17.11%	14.20%	9.23%	10.38%	12.68%
No. of Disputed Invoices	33	162	35	169	399
% of disputed invoices	0.51%	2.23%	0.51%	2.40%	1.44%
Average Payment Days	18.71	15.59	11.36	13.58	14.64
Prompt Payment Statistics 2024/2025					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Total No of Invoices	6890	7030	7234		21154
Total amount paid	£ 15,645,094	£ 14,616,411	£ 13,040,366		£ 43,301,871
Number of invoices paid within 10 days	5304	5316	5820		16440
% of invoices paid within 10 days	76.98%	75.62%	80.45%		77.72%
Number of invoices paid within 30 days	6274	6336	6813		19423
% of invoices paid within 30 days	91.06%	90.13%	94.18%		91.82%
Number of invoices paid outside 30 days	616	694	421	0	1731
% of invoices paid outside 30 days	8.94%	9.87%	5.82%		8.18%
No. of Disputed Invoices	37	54	40		131
% of disputed invoices	0.54%	0.77%	0.55%		0.62%
Average Payment Days	11.86	11.64	9.84		11.09

The Chief Finance Officer advised of an underreporting due to a technical issue with scanning invoices that could improve the figures slightly better.

Alderman Callan congratulated the team, stating it was a good trend and helps small businesses.

* **Director of Environmental Services joined the meeting at 7.07pm.**

Finance Committee NOTED the report.

5. ACTUAL PENNY PRODUCT FORECAST

Report, previously circulated 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	Nov
Forecast	£558	£625	£647	£718	£780	£710

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

Alderman Callan referred to the outstanding revaluation challenge what impact that may have?

The Chief Finance Officer responded, the most significant challenges had been dealt with and confirmed there was nothing major outstanding.

Finance Committee NOTED the report.

6. DE RATING GRANT FORECAST

Report, previously circulated presented by the Chief Finance Officer.

Background

De-rating is a central government policy which reduces the rating burden on a number of sectors, the most notable being manufacturing. The effect of this policy is that less rates are collected than would be expected applying the district and regional rate factors to a property's Net Annual Value (NAV) consequently there is a reduction in the income to Council from rates.

Detail

As Council has no operational influence in the application any such policy De-Rating grant is a statutory mechanism through which central government compensates the local Councils for any loss incurred as a result of the central policy. The grant is linked to the NAV's of those non-domestic properties where de-rating applies and is therefore affected by any increase in the District Rate factor as set by Council annually.

Quarterly Analysis

Land and Property services have provided us with the second quarterly projection for de-rating grant for 2024/25. This indicates a positive finalisation at the end of December 2024 of approximately £9k (September £4k negative). The tables in the Appendix A to this report show some analysis of the de-rating grant for all Councils.

Finance Committee NOTED the report.

* **Financial Accountant joined the meeting at 7.09pm.**

7. MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS PERIOD 8

Report, previously circulated 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 details a summary of the financial position at period 8 (up to and including 31 November 2024):

The report provided analysis under the following paragraphs:

- Income and Expenditure Analysis
- Leisure And Development Directorate
- Environmental Services Directorate
- Corporate Services
- Chief Executive
- Capital Expenditure
- Year-end projections

The Chief Finance Officer drew Committees attention to the Year End Projection Table and provided a narrative.

Alderman Callan stated it was good to see the finances performing, he liked the format, and Capital and projected Capital spend. Alderman Callan sought clarification surrounding a HBE favourable position in the case of vacant posts that had not been filled and rolled on every year.

The Chief Finance Officer advised there would always be a number of vacant posts, a number of recruitment campaigns were on going and that would lead to a change. He clarified on occasions; Managers will take advantage of a post being gapped and make savings for 6 months and reassess later in the year. The Chief Finance Officer stated he was unsure about a two or three year unfilled post.

The Director of Environmental Services advised the HBE backlog of posts had not been filled and would be in position for the start of the financial year, overall the positive position should be looked on favourably and was credit to staff.

Alderman Callan congratulated the staff in Environmental Services. Alderman Callan requested a narrative around the positive position going forward.

The Chief Finance Officer advised a narrative had put in a couple of meetings ago around staffing variances and could be reviewed at the Year End Accounts and provided then.

Finance Committee NOTED the report.

8. CORRESPONDENCE - 1ST NIPSO REFUND 2024 - 2024 CAUSEWAY

Copy correspondence from Jeff Glass, Local Government and Housing Regulation, Department for Communities re: Transferred Functions Grant – Councils Contribution

To Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman 2024/2025, dated 13th January 2025.

Council was advised that, as a result of a reduced requirement, Council is due to receive a refund of £2,402.

Finance Committee NOTED the correspondence.

- * **Councillor Holmes arrived in The Chamber, having previously attended remotely.**

MOTION TO PROCEED 'IN COMMITTEE'

Proposed by Alderman Knight-McQuillan
Seconded by Alderman Scott and

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

- * **Press left the meeting at 7.22pm.**

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.

MOTION TO PROCEED 'IN COMMITTEE'

Proposed by Alderman Knight-McQuillan
Seconded by Alderman Scott and

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 (FMT) MEETING MINUTES MEETING HELD MONDAY 2ND DECEMBER 2024

Copy, previously circulated presented as read.

Finance Committee NOTED the report.

10. DEBT MANAGEMENT

Confidential Report by virtue of paragraph(s) 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 set out the total debt position as at 31 December 2024 and compares this to the position at 31 December 2023.

The following tables were circulated:

- Aged Debt Analysis as at 31 December 2024
- As at 31 December 2023
- Movement and comparison between last year and this year (31 December 2023 and 31 December 2024).

With regards the 90 days and over figures there are customers who have entered administration totalling £254.32, 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. In addition there are two to be written off totalling £935. There are also balances amounting to £12,285 relating to customers who pay by direct debit therefore these are not of any immediate concern to Council. A further £51,129 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 (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 sets out such debts that have been cleared since the last report in December:

Options

Debt write-off under £1,000

In accordance with Council's debt management policy The Chief Finance Officer required to report to Council any debts under £1,000 which the Chief Finance Officer has the authority to write-off. There are two such debts this month as detailed below (circulated).

Debt Write-off over £1,000

In accordance with Council's 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.

Finance Committee NOTED the report.

11. DAC VALUATION SERVICES

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

To inform members of a proposed direct award contract to engage Land and Property Services to provide estimate valuations for rate setting purposes and building valuations for insurance purposes.

Background

Council has historically used Land and Property Services (LPS) to provide valuations for rates estimates, we now require LPS to engage with Council to provide asset valuations for annual accounts purposes, accounting regulations require Council to carry out annual valuations of its asset portfolio.

This DAC will also be inclusive of valuations of Council properties for insurance purposes, which is a requirement of Council's insurance providers. It is more cost effective to add this to the accounting valuation contract since much of the work is done and all the detail is already available to the valuer.

LPS are the chosen provider as their processes are already audited by Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) thereby mitigating additional audit fees should an alternative provider be selected.

Financials

The estimated cost is £ 45,000 (Approximate), £ 35,000 for annual accounts and £10,000 for insurance purposes.

Recommendation

It is recommended that Council approve awarding a DAC to LPS for asset valuation services.

The Chief Finance Officer advised of one change to the report, the estimated cost for the DAC was now £35,000 as LPS did not have currently the capacity to undertake the valuations of Council properties for insurance purposes, they would however, undertake this later in the year for the next cycle of insurance. The Chief Finance Officer advised the company undertaking Council's Condition Survey's would now undertake the estimated costs of the building valuations at approximately £12,000.

Proposed by Alderman Scott
Seconded by Alderman Callan and

AGREED – to recommended that Council approve awarding a Direct Award Contract (DAC) to Land and Property Services LPS for asset valuation services.

12. RATES ESTIMATES 2025/2026

Confidential Report by virtue of paragraph(s) 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.

Councils are required to consider their budgetary position annually and agree these budgets which are then converted into a domestic rating factor and non-domestic rating factor by 15 February annually.

Background information was circulated within the confidential report.

Assumptions included but requiring Council decision

These estimates include a general income increase of 3%, except in areas where fees and charges have already been considered or where the fee is set by legislation therefore adoption of the estimates as they currently stand will recommend to Council an increase to fees and charges of 3%, officers will not be required to bring this back through the working committees.

A number of recommendations for the purposes of setting the rate were tabled.

Proposed by Alderman Scott
Seconded by Alderman Callan

- To recommend to the Council Meeting on Thursday 6 February 2025 that Council approve all the recommendations.

Councillor Kyle supported seconding the motion.

Amendment

Proposed by Councillor Peacock

Seconded by Councillor McQuillan

- To recommend to the Council Meeting on Thursday 6 February 2025 that Council accept the first four recommendations and leave the last one to run its course through the Council procedures, to keep Council procedurally correct.

Councillor Peacock stated this was a divisive issue that generated a lot of debate at Environmental Services Committee, it had not been to Council nor satisfied the Call In procedure, it would not be prudent to include £220,000 at this point.

The Chief Finance Officer responded to Elected Member queries and a lack of information from the Department for Communities.

In response to the debate, the Chief Finance Officer clarified this was a Committee recommendation and should Council change that, it could be amended at the Rates meeting.

The Chair put the Amendment to the Council to vote.

4 Members voted For, 10 Members voted Against, 0 Members Abstained.

The Chair declared the Amendment lost.

The Chair put the substantive motion to the Committee to vote.

10 Members voted For, 4 Members voted Against, 0 Members Abstained.

The Chair declared the motion carried.

AGREED - To recommend to the Council Meeting on Thursday 6 February 2025 that Council approve all the recommendations for the purposes of setting the rates.

Alderman Callan suggested a matter for reporting to the Partnership Panel – to raise that Council was setting a Rate estimate, whilst there was outstanding information from the Department, who oversees local government.

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

There were no items of Any Other Relevant Business.

MOTION TO PROCEED 'IN PUBLIC'

Proposed by Alderman Knight-McQuillan

Seconded by Alderman McKillop 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 7.52pm.

Chair