

LISBURN & CASTLEREAGH CITY COUNCIL

Minutes of Meeting of the Corporate Services Committee held remotely and in the Council Chamber, Island Civic Centre, The Island, Lisburn on Wednesday 13th May 2026 at 6.00 pm.

**PRESENT IN
COUNCIL CHAMBER
(COMMITTEE):**

Councillor B Higginson (Chair)

Councillor J Bamford (Vice-Chair)

Aldermen A Ewart MBE, M Gregg and P Porter

Councillors T Beckett, R Carlin, K Dickson, A Ewing,
J Harpur, J Lavery BEM, G McCleave and N Parker

**PRESENT IN
COUNCIL CHAMBER
(NON-COMMITTEE)**

Councillor G Hynds

IN ATTENDANCE:

Chief Executive (remote attendance)
Director of Finance & Corporate Services
Director of Organisation Development & Innovation
Head of Assets
Head of Finance
Head of Governance & Communications
Head of Innovation
IT Officer
Member Services Officers (BS & HB)

Commencement of Meeting

The Chair, Councillor B Higginson, welcomed everyone to the meeting and advised that it would be audio recorded unless the item on the agenda was to be considered under confidential business.

Unauthorised recording was not permitted, as per 8.6 of the Council's Standing Orders. Mobile phones were to be turned off or on silent mode for the duration of the meeting. Members attending remotely were asked to keep their cameras on. Finally, the Chair asked that any Member entering or leaving the meeting alert the Member Services Officer accordingly so that this might be accurately reflected in the minutes.

The Director of Finance & Corporate Services outlined the evacuation procedures in the case of an emergency.

1. Apologies

Apologies for non-attendance at the meeting were accepted and recorded on behalf of The Hon Councillor N Trimble.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest.

3. Report of Chief Executive

3.1 Corporate Priorities 2026-2027

The Chief Executive provided a report outlining the Corporate Priorities for 2026 - 2027. The Chief Executive responded to questions from Members following which it was agreed that the report be noted.

The Chief Executive left the meeting remotely at 6.10 pm after Item 3.1.

4. Report of Director of Finance & Corporate Services

4.1 Notice of Motion – Support for Serving Armed Forces Personnel in Relation to Rates

A copy of the undernoted Notice of Motion in the name of Councillor G Hynds had been circulated to Members:

“This Council recognises the service and sacrifice of members of the Armed Forces, many of whom are required to spend extended periods away from their homes as a result of their duties.

Council notes that, in other parts of the United Kingdom, council tax systems make provision to reflect the circumstances of serving personnel who may be absent from their primary residence due to deployment.

Council further notes that, by contrast, there is no specific provision within the Northern Ireland domestic rates system which recognises the unique circumstances of serving Armed Forces personnel who may be absent from their primary residence for significant periods due to deployment.

Council also notes that while some support may be available to serving personnel through military or other channels, this is not reflected within the rates system itself.

In line with the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant, Council agrees to write to the Minister of Finance to request a review of how the current rates

4.1 Notice of Motion – Support for Serving Armed Forces Personnel in Relation to Rates (Cont'd)

system applies to serving personnel, with a view to ensuring fairness and appropriate recognition of their service.

Council further agrees to explore what additional support, guidance, or signposting can be provided at a local level to assist serving personnel in accessing any existing reliefs or support schemes for which they may be eligible.”

Councillor G Hynds, who was not a Member of the Corporate Services Committee, was in attendance to present his Notice of Motion. He pointed out that:

- many in the armed forces face financial pressures during deployment when they are away from home for extended periods of time;
- those serving in the armed forces show courage, professionalism and duty which should be recognised;
- many serving personnel are not highly paid, considering their responsibilities and pressure they face;
- this Motion is not seeking preferential treatment for the armed forces but is calling for a review.

The Notice of Motion was proposed by Councillor G Hynds and seconded by Councillor B Higginson.

Councillor Higginson elaborated on the Notice of Motion during which he highlighted the following:

- Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council has a long-standing relationship with the armed forces;
- this council is a signatory of the Armed Forces Covenant and therefore we have a responsibility to serving personnel;
- the issue of the current domestic rates system adequately reflecting the realities faced by those in the armed forces.

Councillor R Carlin spoke against the Notice of Motion, having pointed out that with 850 armed forces personnel based in Lisburn, a reduction in rates could result in a loss of up to £1 million per year. He also explained that there are already support structures, allowances and relief schemes which are provided by the Ministry of Defence for the armed forces.

Councillor K Dickson explained that other parts of the UK have council tax exemption and stated that the Alliance Party would be supporting the Motion.

Councillor A Ewing and Alderman P Porter also spoke in favour of the Motion.

Vote

The Notice of Motion on Support for Serving Armed Forces Personnel in relation to Rates was put to the meeting and on a recorded vote being taken, was declared 'carried', the voting being:

In favour Councillor B Higginson, Councillor J Bamford, Councillor T Beckett, Councillor K Dickson, Alderman A Ewart, Councillor A Ewing, Alderman M Gregg, Councillor J Harpur, Councillor J Lavery, Councillor N Parker, Alderman P Porter (11)

Against Councillor R Carlin and Councillor G McCleave (2)

5 Report of Head of Governance & Communications

5.1 Armed Forces Covenant Conference 2026

The Head of Governance & Communications had provided a report in connection with the Armed Forces Covenant Conference 2026 which was taking place in Portsmouth during 23 and 24 June 2026 with a recommendation that Members approve:

- Attendance of the Veterans Champion at the Armed Forces Covenant Conference 2026 and associated travel and subsistence costs for this event.

In response to questions from a Member, the Head of Service confirmed that the Veterans Champion, Alderman J Tinsley, is organising his own accommodation therefore the cost to the Council would be in relation to travel and subsistence only which was estimated to be in the region of £300.

It was proposed by Councillor T Beckett, seconded by Councillor A Ewing that the Officer's recommendation be agreed.

Councillor G McCleave spoke against the Officer's recommendation.

The proposal in the name of Councillor T Beckett, and seconded by Councillor A Ewing, was put to the meeting and on a recorded vote being taken, declared 'carried' the voting being:

In favour Councillor B Higginson, Councillor J Bamford, Councillor T Beckett, Councillor K Dickson, Alderman A Ewart, Councillor A Ewing, Alderman M Gregg, Councillor J Harpur, Councillor J Lavery, Councillor N Parker, Alderman P Porter (11)

Against Councillor R Carlin and Councillor G McCleave (2)

6 Report of Head of Assets

6.1 Single Tender Action End of Year Position 2025 / 2026

Councillor J Harpur left the Chamber at the start of Item 6.1 at 6.40 pm and returned at 6.43 pm.

The Head of Assets had provided a narrative report and appendix detailing the Single Tender Actions (STA's) during 2025 / 2026. The number of Single Tender Actions had reduced over the past four years, and further staff training was planned to ensure that this continues to decline.

The Head of Assets responded to a question from a Member in connection with ongoing training on the in-house policy on STA's.

The report was duly noted.

Alderman A Ewart left the Chamber at 6.43 pm and returned at 6.49 pm.

7. Any Other Business (Non-Confidential)

7.1 Online Threats
Councillor G Hynds

Councillor G Hynds explained that he recently received online threats and intimidation which, he stated, should never be normalised in public life. He put on record his appreciation in regard to the support of PSNI, Lisburn & Castlereagh Council Officers and those members of the public that had contacted him. Councillor Hynds enquired about what wider support could be provided by the Council alongside NILGA and the NAC (National Association of Councillors) in regard to support and guidance to Members in addressing such issues going forward.

It was proposed by Councillor N Parker that Council Officers contact NILGA and the NAC and consider what additional support could be provided to Members who had experienced any kind of attacks. This proposal was seconded by Alderman P Porter and agreed.

The Chair, Councillor B Higginson, condemned the threats and offered the support of Corporate Services Committee and his personal support to Councillor Hynds. There was unanimous support for Councillor G Hynds from all parties, and he thanked his fellow councillors for their contributions.

7.2 Armed Forces Covenant
Alderman P Porter

Alderman P Porter raised the issue of the Council having adopted the Armed Forces Covenant and enquired about any impact this Covenant had made in regard to help and support the Council had provided to those serving, and also those who have served, in the armed forces.

7.2 Armed Forces Covenant
Alderman P Porter (Cont'd)

It was proposed by Alderman P Porter, seconded by Alderman M Gregg, that a report be provided to the Committee detailing:

- i) What support does the council offer and has this itemised?
- ii) What difference does this support make?
- iii) How can this support make a difference going forward?

Confidential Business

"In Committee"

It was proposed by Councillor A Ewing, seconded by Councillor K Dickson, and agreed that the Confidential Reports be considered "in Committee". (Recording was paused at this stage in proceedings. The member of the press left the Chamber and member of the public in attendance left the public gallery).

Each of the confidential reports were confidential for reason of information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information), with the exception of item 7.2 Updated Emergency Volunteer Response Protocol, which was confidential for reason of information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the council or a government department and employees of, or office holders under, the council.

7.1 Report of Head of Assets

7.1.1 Report on Tender Awards

(Redacted report will be provided to Member Services following ratification and signing of contracts).

The undernoted tender reports and a summary of the tenders awarded had been provided with the narrative report and their contents duly noted.

- T25/26-074 PPM & RM 05: Fire Protection Equipment
- T25/26-084 Replacement Bleacher Seating System Lagan Valley Island
- T25/26-082 Future Pathways – Young People in Looked After Care Employability Programme
- T25/26-043 Delivery of the PEACEPLUS Programme – Thriving & Peaceful Communities – Sports Connects

The Head of Assets responded to questions from the Committee in connection with issues regarding climate change and social value.

7.2 Report of Director of OD & Innovation

7.2.1 Updated Emergency Volunteer Response Protocol

(Report will become available following formal Trade Union consultation).

The Director of OD & Innovation had provided a narrative report in connection with the updated Emergency Volunteer Response Protocol. It was proposed by Councillor N Parker, seconded by Alderman P Porter, and agreed to recommend that the updated Emergency Volunteer Response Protocol be agreed.

Councillor N Parker conveyed thanks all staff including the Director of Environmental Services for her help the previous week when a viable device had been discovered in Lambeg and residents had been evacuated to Lagan Valley Island.

Councillor R Carlin left the Chamber at the start of item at 7.01 pm and returned at 7.04 pm.

7.3 Report of Head of Innovation

7.3.1 Cyber Security Business Case

(Redacted report to be made available post award of contract).

The Head of Innovation's report outlined the background and key issues in connection with a Cyber Security Business Case.

The Director of Organisation Development & Innovation and the Head of Innovation responded to questions from Members on key issues contained in the report circulated.

It was proposed by Councillor K Dickson, seconded by Councillor R Carlin, and agreed to recommend that the business case for the procurement of a Managed eXtended Detection and Response (SOC, SIEM & SOAR) service, be agreed.

7.4 Report of Head of Governance & Communications

7.4.1 National Living Wage Increase Request

(Redacted report will become available on 1 June 2026).

The Head of Governance & Communications had provided a narrative report in connection with a request received relating to an increase in the National Living Wage.

7.4.1 National Living Wage Increase Request (Cont'd)

It was agreed that the request for increased costs as outlined in the Officer's report in relation to the contract for the provision of cleaning services at designated Council premises be noted.

7.5 Report of Head of Finance

7.5.1 Quarterly Finance Reports (Quarter 4, 2026)

(Redacted report to be available following ratification by Council on 26 May 2026).

The Head of Finance provided a Quarterly Finance Report for Quarter 4 in 2025 / 2026 along with appendices of the year end position of the Repairs and Renewals and year end position of the DfC budget.

It was proposed by Councillor J Harpur and seconded by Councillor J Bamford. and agreed that the recommendation that Members note the information contained in the report and approve the movements detailed in the report and appendices

7.5.2 Noting of Bad Debt Write Offs (Jan to March 2026)

(Redacted report to be available following ratification by Council on the 26 May 2026).

The Committee noted the content of a narrative report by the Head of Finance in connection with one bad debt of £306 which had been agreed by the Director of Finance and Corporate Services be written off for the reasons outlined.

8. Any Other Business (Confidential)

8.1 Pitch 5 at Lough Moss
Councillor J Harpur

The Head of Assets responded to comments and questions from Councillor J Harpur in regard to Carryduff Colts and issues relating to Pitch 5 at Lough Moss Leisure Centre.

In response to comments from Councillor R Carlin, the Head of Assets advised that she would endeavour to meet with Carryduff Colts again to discuss the issues raised.

8.2 HMRC VAT Assessment
Councillor K Dickson

The Director of Finance & Corporate Services having responded to a question from Councillor K Dickson in regard to the above matter undertook to bring an update report on this matter to the Committee in June.

Resumption of Normal Business

It was proposed by Councillor J Harpur, seconded by Councillor A Ewing and agreed to come “out of Committee.”

On the resumption of normal business the Chair, Councillor B Higginson, explained that this was his last meeting as Chair of Corporate Services Committee given that the Annual Meeting was taking place on 5 June 2026. He thanked Councillor J Bamford, Vice-Chair, for stepping in for him at meetings on occasions and his fellow committee members for their input during a busy year.

He also thanked the Directors and Officers for their efforts throughout the year and in bringing their various reports to Committee.

Councillor J Bamford, Vice-Chair, also thanked the Chair and fellow Members on the Corporate Services Committee for their support throughout the year.

The Chair, Councillor B Higginson, thanked everyone for their attendance, and there being no further business - the meeting concluded at 7.28 pm.

MAYOR/CHAIR