

LISBURN & CASTLEREAGH CITY COUNCIL

Minutes of Meeting of the Governance and Audit Committee held in the Council Chamber and Remote Locations on Thursday, 12 March, 2026 at 6:00 pm

PRESENT IN CHAMBER:

Councillor D Bassett (Acting Chair)

Mr E Jardine (Independent Member and Vice-Chair)

Aldermen O Gawith and J Tinsley

Councillors J Bamford, D J Craig, A P Ewing, B Magee and M McKeever

PRESENT IN REMOTE LOCATION:

Alderman S P Porter, Councillors S Burns, J Gallen

OTHER MEMBER PRESENT IN REMOTE LOCATION:

Councillor U Mackin

IN ATTENDANCE:

Chief Executive
Director of Organisation Development and Innovation
Director of Finance & Corporate Services
Director of Regeneration & Growth
Director of Leisure & Community Wellbeing
Head of Environmental Health, Risk and Emergency Planning
Head of Finance
Head of Human Resources and Organisation Development
Head of Parks & Amenities (Acting)
Internal Audit Manager (remote)
Performance Improvement Officer
Business Support Manager
Member Services Manager (Acting)
Member Services Officer
IT Officer

Northern Ireland Audit Office

Mr C McGeown

RBCA

Mr B Stewart

Commencement of the Meeting

At the commencement of the meeting, the Director of Organisation Development & Innovation advised that the Chairperson, Councillor D Lynch, was unable to be present. As the Vice-Chair, Mr E Jardine, was an Independent Member, he was not permitted to chair the meeting and, in line with protocol, this responsibility fell to another Member of

Councillor Lynch's Party, SF. The Director advised that Councillor D Bassett would be chairing the meeting in Councillor Lynch's absence.

The Acting Chair, Councillor D Bassett, having welcomed those present to the March meeting of the Governance & Audit Committee, 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 Acting Chair asked that those attending via zoom ensure that the meeting could not be seen or heard by any other person at their remote location when confidential business was being considered.

The Acting Chair asked that mobile phones be put on silent or switched off for the duration of the meeting following which the Director of Organisation Development & Innovation outlined 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 the Chairperson, Councillor D Lynch, The Right Worshipful the Mayor, Alderman A Grehan and Councillors S Lowry and A Martin.

Alderman J Tinsley entered the meeting at 6.03 pm and Alderman S P Porter joined the meeting remotely also at 6.03 pm.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest declared at the meeting.

At this point, the Acting Chair, Councillor D Bassett, extended a welcome to Mr C McGeown, Northern Ireland Audit Office, and Mr B Stewart, RBCA.

3. Report from the Performance Improvement Officer

3.1 Customer Care Feedback – Quarter 3 2025/26

In addition to the narrative report Members were provided with a copy of a dashboard report showing compliments and complaints during Quarter 3 of 2025/26. The Performance Improvement Officer outlined in her report a summary of key learning outcomes from complaints, as well as good practice noted from compliments received. A number of Members' queries having been addressed by the Performance Improvement Officer, it was agreed that the contents of the report be noted.

A Member thanked the Performance Improvement Officer for her efforts in relation to the Council' Customer Care System.

3.2 Q3 Performance Improvement Monitoring – Objectives, Case Studies, Performance KPIs & Corporate Plan KPIs

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

- (a) a quarterly monitoring document, including case studies of improvement for Quarter 3 of 2025/26 (October - December inclusive); an additional section detailing case studies, photographs and customer feedback that have demonstrated improvement during Quarter 3.
- (b) details of Performance KPI results for Quarter 3 of 2025/26; and
- (c) details of Corporate Plan KPI results for Quarter 3 of 2025/26.

3.3 Draft Performance Improvement Objectives & Projects 2026/27

In addition to the narrative report, the Committee had been furnished with a copy of the draft Performance Improvement Objectives and Projects for 2026/27.

It was noted that seven improvement projects were being proposed to deliver upon the objectives, and that of the seven, one was continuing from 2025/26 and the other six were new projects. The projects focused on enhancing planning services, digital platforms, sports facilities, community wellbeing, and resilience.

It was planned to carry out a public consultation on the improvement projects during April and May 2026 and that any comments and suggested amendments from consultees would be incorporated where appropriate in producing the final Performance Improvement Plan which will be brought to this Committee in June 2026.

In response to a question by a Member, the Performance Improvement Officer provided clarification in regard to a statistic in appendix 1 concerning the Performance Improvement project relating to Planning Applications.

It was proposed by Councillor A P Ewing, seconded by Councillor J Bamford and agreed to recommend that Performance Improvement Objectives and Projects for 2026/27 be approved.

4. Report by Head of Environmental Health, Risk and Emergency Planning

4.1 Corporate Risk Register

Members were provided with copies of the Corporate and Directorate Risk Registers.

In accordance with the Council's Risk Management Strategy, and the established approach of selecting two corporate risks per annum for deep-dive analysis, it was proposed that the following risks are brought forward for the 2026/27 financial year:

4.1 Corporate Risk Register (Cont'd)

- CRR 014 – Compliance, and
- CRR 002 – Emergency Planning / Business Continuity

The Chief Executive, the Head of Finance and the Director of Organisation Development & Innovation responded to a questions from the Committee in connection with CRR 007 Financial Sustainability, CRR 014 Compliance, CRR 006 Cyber Security and also the issue of pen testing on the Council's IT network.

It was proposed by Councillor D J Craig, seconded by Alderman J Tinsley, and agreed to recommend that the report on the Corporate Risk Register be noted and that the proposed deep-dive risks for 2026/27, as outlined in the Officer's report, be agreed.

5. Report of the Internal Audit Manager

The following Officers left the meeting at this point (6.24 pm): Director of Leisure & Community Wellbeing, Head of Human Resources & Organisation Development, Head of Parks & Amenities (Acting), Performance Improvement Officer and the Business Support Manager.

5.1 Global Internal Audit Standards Gap Analysis

The Committee considered, and noted the content of, a report and appended document by the Internal Audit Manager in connection with a GAP analysis against the Global Internal Audit Standards of the Council's Internal Audit Function.

It was noted that an action plan of proposed recommendations would be brought to the attention of the Committee in June 2026.

5.2 Proposed Internal Audit Performance Indicators

The Committee considered a report and appended document outlining the proposed performance indicators which were required to be brought to the attention of the Governance & Audit Committee for agreement.

The Internal Audit Manager responded to questions and comments from the Committee in connection with the proposed performance indicators, as set out in the appended document. The Internal Audit Manager undertook to give consideration to amending the reporting of relevant targets achieved to 'Yes/No' instead of the percentage currently stated.

It was proposed by Alderman J Tinsley, seconded by Councillor A P Ewing, and agreed that the proposed Internal Audit performance indicators be agreed and implemented in the new 2026/2027 audit year.

6. Report by Head of Finance

6.1 Corporate Risk CRR 7 Financial Sustainability Deep Dive

Further to the decision of the Governance & Audit Committee at its meeting in September 2025 that two of the Council's Corporate Risks undergo a deep dive the Committee considered, and noted the content of, a report by the Head of Finance outlining key issues and mitigations in place in connection with a deep dive of Corporate Risk CRR 7 Financial Sustainability.

A presentation on the deep dive of CCR 7 had been appended to the Officer's report, the content of which was also noted.

7. Report by Head of Environmental Health, Risk and Emergency Planning

7.1 Corporate Risk CRR 011 Burial Grounds Deep Dive

Further to the decision of the Governance & Audit Committee at its meeting in September 2025 that two of the Council's Corporate Risks undergo a deep dive the Committee considered, and noted the content of, a report by the Head of Environmental Health, Risk and Emergency Planning outlining key issues and mitigations in place in connection with a deep dive of Corporate Risk CRR 11 Burial Grounds.

A presentation on the deep dive of CCR 011 had been appended to the Officer's report, the content of which was also noted.

The Head of Environmental Health, Risk and Emergency Planning responded to questions from the Committee in connection with the work in progress relating to the future provision of burial ground.

A Member welcomed the work being done in regard to future cemetery provision.

8.0 Any Other Business

8.1 Welcome to Director of Finance & Corporate Services
Acting Chairperson, Councillor D Bassett

The Acting Chairperson, Councillor D Bassett, welcomed to the meeting the Director of Finance & Corporate Services, Mr Paul Dane, who has taken up post on 1 March 2026 and stated that everyone was looking forward to working with him.

The Director of Regeneration & Growth left the meeting at 6.43 pm.

9. 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 Councillor D J Craig, and agreed that the following matters be considered “in committee,” in the absence of members of the press and public being present. The member of the press seated in the public gallery left the Council Chamber at 6.44 pm, as did the Head of Environmental Health, Risk and Emergency Planning.

9.1 Confidential Report by the Internal Audit Manager

9.1.1 Internal Audit – Progress Report

(Report will be made available following Council ratification)

Members were provided with, and noted the contents of, a copy of an Internal Audit Progress Report summarising internal audit work, progress against the 2025/26 Operational Plan and any outstanding previous year’s reports. A copy of any internal audit reports referred to in the progress report were also provided in full in the Resources section on Decision Time for Members’ information.

The Internal Audit Manager advised the Committee in relation to the removal of appendix 4 from within the Internal Audit Progress Report which had been referenced in the covering report in error.

The Internal Audit Manager responded to questions from Members in connection with key issues contained within the Internal Audit Progress Report.

9.1.2 LCCC Draft Internal Audit Strategy 2026-2031 and Draft Internal Audit Operational Plan for 2026/27

(Report will be made available following Council ratification)

The Internal Audit Manager responded to a question from a Member in relation to the draft Internal Audit Strategy.

It was proposed by Councillor A P Ewing, seconded by Councillor M McKeever, and agreed to recommend that the Draft Internal Audit Strategy 2026-2031 and Draft Internal Operational Plan 2026-27 be approved.

9.2 Confidential Report by the Head of Finance

9.2.1 NIAO Audit Strategy 2025-26 - Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council

(Report never to be published)

Members were provided with a copy of the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) Audit Strategy for LCCC for 2025-26.

9.2 1 NIAO Audit Strategy 2025-26 - Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council
(Cont'd)

Mr C McGeown, who was in attendance at his first meeting of the Council's Governance & Audit Committee, addressed the Committee. Mr McGeown stated that he looked forward to working with the Council and that he would be supported by his colleague Mr R McCance.

Mr B Stewart, RBCA, presented the NIAO Audit Strategy report to Members and it was agreed that its contents be noted.

Prior to the conclusion of confidential business, the Acting Chair, Councillor D Bassett, asked if Members had any confidential items of Any Other Business to raise, which they did not.

Resumption of Normal Business

It was proposed by Councillor A P Ewing, seconded by Councillor D J Craig, and agreed to come out of committee and normal business was resumed.

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 7.00 pm.

Mayor/Chairperson