

Finance Policy Manual

Approved Date	19 March 2015
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Related Legislation/Applicable Section of Legislation	Local Government Finance Act (NI) 2011 Local Government (Accounts and Audit) Regulations (NI) 2015 Local Government (NI) Act 2014 Local Government (NI) Order 2005
Related Policies, Procedures, Guidelines, Standards, Frameworks	Councils Standing Orders and Scheme of Delegation Councils Procurement Policy Other Council Financial procedures
Replaces	
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Sponsor Directorate	Finance and Governance
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Introduction

This Finance Policy has been established to provide Mid and East Antrim Borough Council with a corporate framework by which to regulate all financial services and operations within its area of responsibility. It will also provide employees with a comprehensive understanding of all the core affiliated financial policies, procedures, codes and guidance documents that have been established to enable effective accountability within the management of Council's financial affairs.

This policy has been purposely developed at a strategic level and is supported by numerous operational procedures that will effectively deliver the day-to-day financial operations in a seamless and transparent manner.

Policy Scope

This Policy applies to all Mid and East Antrim Borough Council employees (permanent, temporary and voluntary). The effective delivery of this policy will play a key role in helping Council achieve its strategic priorities as stated within the Mid and East Antrim Borough Council Corporate Plan 2015-2019, and it will also contribute to Council realising its strategic vision of "Working together to create a better future for all" by living out the seven key values of Council through this policy. The policy will be supported by detailed financial procedures.

Aims of the Finance Policy

- To provide employees with clear, unambiguous and consistent guidelines when carrying out the financial activities of Council;
- To ensure proper accountability, checks and controls are in place across all of Council's financial operations;
- To maintain and improve the Council's financial control environment including the management of financial risk; and
- To maintain and improve the financial systems and processes such that they are easy for users to access, operate quickly and efficiently.

Responsibility

The Director of Finance and Governance has overall responsibility for the implementation and monitoring of the Finance Policy and the Head of Finance has responsibility for the day to day management and administration of the policy.

It is the responsibility of all employees to adhere to Council's Finance Policy and all of the associated policy and procedural documents that are referenced within it.

Review

This policy will be subject to scrutiny and from time to time, updates and reissues will be circulated.

It is anticipated that the first formal full review will take place in April 2016.

1. Audit, fraud and codes of conduct

1.1 External Audit - Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO)

1.1.1 The NIAO Local Government Auditor is the appointed independent external auditor under The Local Government (Northern Ireland) Order 2005, as updated by the Local Government (Northern Ireland) Act 2014 and is required to examine, certify and report on the financial statements of Mid and East Antrim Council. The examination of the Statement of Accounts will be carried out in accordance with International Standards on Auditing issued by the UK Auditing Practices Board and the Code of Audit Practice issued by the Chief Local Government Auditor.

1.1.2 The statutory responsibilities and powers of the designated Local Government Auditor are set out in the 2005 Order. In discharging these, the Local Government Auditor is required to carry out his/her work in accordance with a Code of Audit Practice. The scope of external audit in Local Government is extended to cover not only the audit of the financial statements, but also the audited bodies arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. The Code focuses on how the Local Government Auditor should carry out his/her wider range of functions and the audit of the financial statements is conducted in accordance with International Auditing Standards issued by the Financial Reporting Council.

1.1.3 Following completion of the audit the auditor will issue an Annual Audit Letter to the Council and will provide the Chief Financial Officer with a Report to those charged with Governance containing observations and recommendations on significant matters that have arisen in the course of the audit.

1.2 Internal Audit

1.2.1 The internal audit service within Council provides management with an objective assessment of whether systems and controls, (financial and non-financial), are working properly. It is a key part of the Council's internal control system because it measures and evaluates the adequacy and effectiveness of other controls in order that:

- a) the Council and senior management can know the extent to which they may rely on the whole control system; and
- b) individual managers can know the reliability or otherwise of the systems and controls for which they are responsible.

- 1.2.2 Whilst the responsibility for internal audit services sits with the Director of Finance and Governance, Council currently outsource internal audit service provision through a tendered contract.
- 1.2.3 The Internal Audit Service is carried out in line with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) which came into force on 1 April 2013 and is further informed by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Local Government Application Note (April 2013) published to assist in the implementation of the PSIAS.
- 1.2.4 Council will annually agree and approve an Internal Audit Charter with the Internal Audit Service provider which clearly outlines the key roles, responsibilities, reporting mechanisms of Internal Audit.

1.3 Codes of Conduct

- 1.3.1 Under Corporate Governance, Council is responsible for developing, communicating and embedding codes of conduct, and for defining the standards of behaviour for Councillors and staff.
- 1.3.2 The Local Government Staff Commission (LGSC) have developed a revised Code of Conduct as a statutory recommendation for adoption by all Councils from 1 April 2015.
- 1.3.3 All Councillors are required to comply with the Northern Ireland Code of Conduct for Councillors as issued by the DOE in May 2014.

1.4 Whistleblowing and Fraud

- 1.4.1 Please refer to Council's Whistleblowing and Fraud policies for guidance in relation to these areas.

2. Purchasing procedures, Specific Delegated Authority

- 2.1 Purchasing officers, having issued and signed a purchase order, are required to ensure that (i) goods and services are completely and satisfactorily supplied, (ii) all appropriate paperwork (quotations, order no., goods received note, etc) is retained awaiting an invoice from the supplier, (iii) funds exist to meet the cost of the order.
- 2.2 All invoices are received and registered within the Finance Department by Purchase Ledger staff. The invoices are checked for arithmetic accuracy and passed to the purchasing officer for further checking.
- 2.3 The Finance Department (Purchase Ledger staff) will also suggest a cost code where possible from which payment is to be made. Purchasing officers should check this against the purchase order and make an amendment, if appropriate.
- 2.4 The purchasing officer is responsible for checking that all paperwork matches up to the invoice and for following up any queries, which may arise (e.g. partial or non-completion, incorrect price/specification or workmanship/quality issues).
- 2.5 Once the purchasing officer is satisfied that all work has been completed, all the matched paperwork (as at 2 (a) above) plus the invoice should be passed to their line manager who authorises payment, as appropriate. (if line manager places order then Director must authorise invoice).
- 2.6 Authorising officers should check that:
 - (i) All documentation is correct to allow the invoice to be processed for payment
 - (ii) The purchase order is within delegated financial authority
 - (iii) Adequate funds exist against the relevant cost code/budget centre
 - (iv) Paperwork provides evidence that goods/services have been completely delivered/supplied to the satisfaction of the purchasing officer.
- 2.7 The authorising officer should follow up any points arising and either
 - (i) Return the order to the purchasing officer for further action
 - (ii) sign the invoice for payment
 - (iii) pass the order to the Finance Department (Purchase Ledger Staff) for payment
 - (iv) if invoice is not for Ballymena Borough Council return to finance noting this

- 2.8 Invoices are paid weekly by the Finance Department (Purchase Ledger Staff).
- 2.9 The Council's preferred option is for invoices to be paid by BACS. For this reason:
- (i) all suppliers are requested to provide BACS details
 - (ii) all invoices should be directed to the Finance Department (Purchase Ledger Staff) for registration.
- 2.10 The authorised Officers for procurement on behalf of Council will be agreed by the Director of Finance and Governance. It is intended that existing authorisations are carried forward until the organisation structures are in place, at which time a review will take place.

3. Income, debt management, banking and cash handling

3.1 Income - invoicing and credit notes

- 3.1.1 All income transactions (including grant claims and miscellaneous third party transactions) must be covered by an official invoice.
- 3.1.2 Recharges between Council Departments do not need to be processed by an Invoice, an internal recharge form with supporting information is sufficient.
- 3.1.3 To generate an Invoice an Invoice Request Form¹ must be completed
- 3.1.4 To generate a Credit Note a Credit Note Request Form² must be completed
- 3.1.5 The following information should be entered on these request forms:

- The name of the Service requesting the invoice/credit note.
- All of the following customer details must be completed.
Account Number - leave blank: this will be completed by Finance Dept.
Customer name in full/Trading Style
Customer address
Do not use initials only and avoid use of PO Box addresses as in the event of the customer defaulting in payment the Small Claims Court are unable to process applications using this information.
Telephone number

Full details for what the Invoice is to be raised for must be entered in the space provided e.g.

(a) Northern Health & Social Care Trust
Use of Ecos Centre - Seminar Room 27 Sept 2012
Order No: 11111

(b) Northern Health & Social Care Trust
Use of Civic Centre - Seminar Room as per attached sheet.

In the case of (b) please attach 2 copies of any documentation to be forwarded with the Invoice (one copy retained on our file).

- An explanation as to why the Credit Note is being raised e.g.
To cancel Invoice 2222 - Use of Smiley Buildings
Invoice raised in error.
- When completed each request must include:
 - The relevant Department and detail code.
 - The invoice amount net and gross of VAT.
 - The relevant VAT code (see attached).
 - Officer's signature and date signed off.

¹ Form available from Finance Service

² Form available from Finance Service

- 3.1.6 Only Officers who hold a recognised signing authority can sign Credit Note Requests.
- 3.1.7 Invoice Requests for one off goods or services should be raised and sent to Finance within 5 working days of the event happening.
- 3.1.8 Requests for on-going monthly services should be sent to Finance before the last working day of the month.
- 3.1.9 An Invoice/Credit Note number will be allocated by the Finance Service and the date inserted when the request is completed.
- 3.1.10 A copy of the processed Invoice will be forwarded to the relevant department for their records.

3.2 Debt Management

- 3.2.1 The following procedures are carried out at the end of every month:
 - a) Print-out of aged debt forwarded to all Heads of Departments.
 - b) Statement issued on all accounts.
 - c) Accounts with overdue balances greater than 30 days issued with 1st reminder
 - d) letter.
 - e) Accounts with overdue balances greater than 60 days issued with 2nd reminder letter.
 - f) Accounts with balances more than 60 days overdue and who have not responded to telephone calls or reminder notices, will be submitted to the Small Claims Court. (for values of outstanding debts less than £3,000)
- 3.2.2 Bad debts up to £1,000 can be written off by the Director of Finance and Governance, anything above this amount must be taken to the Audit and Scrutiny Committee for permission to be written off.

3.3 Cash Handling and Banking

- 3.3.1 Cash is received for the following services at a number of locations across council: -

- a) General Income - sales of bins, dog licences, building control fees, planning fees, registrar fees, canteen sales, stationery sales, allotments, grant income.
- b) Leisure facilities
- c) Shop sales, café sales
- d) Tourist Information Office/Museums - gifts, sales, booking fees
- e) Public Toilets
- f) Pitch bookings, hire of outdoor leisure facilities
- g) Marina
- h) Caravan sites

3.3.2 All cash must be lodged at least once per week

3.3.3 All cash must be kept in a secure location with access only by authorised personnel.

3.3.4 All safe limits for cash storage must be adhered to for insurance purposes.

3.3.5 Cash must be delivered to the finance service by an agreed method and accompanied by supporting documentation for input into the council's accounts system on a regular basis.

3.3.6 All income must be coded using councils coding system. Any queries regarding coding of income or extraction of VAT on cash received should be directed to the Finance Service immediately.

3.3.7 A receipt is produced for all cash entered on the TOTAL financial system and a copy must be obtained for your records.

3.3.8 All discrepancies must be recorded and reported immediately to senior officers at each location for investigation and sign off.

3.3.9 All cash lodged into council bank accounts will be reconciled on a monthly basis.

3.3.10 The Finance Service need to be notified immediately of any fraudulent notes or bounced cheques, as this will have an impact on income being recorded for relevant departments

4. Procurement

- 4.1 Mid and East Antrim Borough Council's vision for the delivery of procurement is:
'Delivering best value procurement to Mid and East Antrim rate payers from a joined-up and collaborative central procurement ethos, conducted in an efficient, effective and economic way.'
- 4.2 The procurement policy and approach across Mid and East Antrim aligns to this procurement vision. It also aligns to the Local Government Procurement Toolkit ensuring best practice across the region by having, for example, agreed procurement policies and a qualified procurement team.
- 4.3 Procurement Policy is available as a separate document.

5. Credit cards and web purchases

- 5.1 The Council's preferred option is to pay for goods and services on the basis of an authorised invoice after goods and services have been satisfactorily provided. Payments are ordinarily made by BACS, electronic transfer or cheque at the earliest opportunity following verification by Council.
- 5.2 The Council also holds Danske Bank visa cards, which are available in certain circumstances to settle accounts where payment by credit card is necessary.
- 5.3 The Council's credit cards are issued in the personal names of the Directors of Mid and East Antrim Borough Council.
- 5.4 It is, therefore, essential that each credit card transaction is authorised in advance on an individual basis. This arrangement is only overridden where a specific, written authority is given by the Director of Finance and Governance. Any transaction not authorised in accordance with this paragraph may be deemed to be personal expenditure and, as such, would be treated as follows:
- 5.5 Each officer given a sanction to use the credit card should be aware that no items of a personal nature are permissible, even if the intention is to repay such expenditure. The Council takes the view that failure to comply with this aspect should be treated as a disciplinary offence.
- 5.6 The Council's credit card is available to pay for, or to reserve, goods and services via the Internet, or over the telephone, where immediate payment is required and unavoidable.
- 5.7 Use of the credit card will ordinarily be authorised for transactions such as:
- a) discounted air tickets available via the internet at a reduced price;
 - b) hotel bookings and reservations;
 - c) car hire bookings;
 - d) goods and services where the supplier insists on an advance payment or deposit.
- 5.8 The card is not to be used:
- a) for any transaction not authorised by the Finance Director;
 - b) for any item of personal expenditure;
 - c) for any item of supply where it is reasonable or normal to expect the supplier to invoice the Council for payment after delivery of the service;
 - d) for any item where the supplier is based in Northern Ireland (other than to secure a hotel booking);

- e) for transactions where there is a higher likelihood of a refund, or where alteration would incur a significant fee.
- 5.9 The overriding principle is that use of the cards should be to benefit the Council, rather than in the interests of the supplier.
- 5.10 No personal expenditure is to be charged to the credit cards. Meals and expenses, etc, are only a legitimate charge to the credit cards if such expenditure is necessarily incurred in the performance of official Council business and within defined expenses' scales, limits, etc.
- 5.11 Where the credit cards are used, a purchase order must be raised as normal. The purchase order should be endorsed to show that payment has been made using the credit card.
- 5.12 Where Internet bookings are involved, a screen print should be taken with copies distributed to:
- (a) the travelling officer if appropriate;
 - (b) the Finance service (attached to a copy of the purchase order).
- 5.13 Where a hotel, flight ticket or car reservation is made, the purchase order must fully show the financial details of the transaction.
- 5.14 In the event of hotel expenses, etc., being charged to the credit card, receipts etc., **must** be obtained as usual. These receipts are to be passed to the finance department on the officer's return to the office.
- 5.15 Where other goods/services have been provided any receipts or invoices must be authorised as normal and passed to finance.
- 5.16 If for any reason a refund is sought, or tickets are not used, Finance must be notified immediately in writing.
- 5.17 When goods/services have not been satisfactorily delivered, or there are grounds to stop or query a credit card payment, the Finance Director is to be notified immediately as there is a time limit for credit card queries.
- 5.18 Purchasing officers should be aware of the possibility of a duplicate invoice being received for an item charged to the credit card. To protect against the possibility of double payment, any such invoice should be marked "paid by credit card", and then forwarded to the finance department.

6. Capital Expenditure, business cases and depreciation

- 6.1 All capital schemes will be administered by the Finance and Corporate Governance Directorate in conjunction with the directorate that the project emanates from.
- 6.2 As part of the estimates process and in line with the Prudential Code each department will estimate the capital expenditure requirements for the next 3 financial years. Notwithstanding the provision of estimated financial provision for schemes in the rates setting process each capital scheme will also require a business case and or economic appraisal to support a final decision by Council to commit to a capital expenditure scheme. The business case and or economic appraisals must be presented to Council and be approved prior to expenditure. Pro forma documentation is available for the purpose from finance.
- 6.3 With regard to the scale of capital expenditure for the purposes of materiality a de minimis level of expenditure will be determined and reviewed from time to time. The initial de minimis level is £5,000. All capital costs will be treated either as revenue (below the de minimis level) or as a fixed asset and added to the fixed asset register.
- 6.4 Detail codes will be attributed to identify capital acquisition costs, disposal and depreciation.
- 6.5 All capital invoices must be authorised by the Director of Finance and Governance.
- 6.6 When a decision is taken to either dispose of an asset held on the fixed asset register or transfer it between departments this must be recorded on the appropriate form including sign off by the Head of Service as evidence of approval for the disposal/transfer. The authorised form must be sent to the Finance and Governance Directorate and a copy retained by the Head of service. The fixed asset register will then be amended accordingly.
- 6.7 Capital assets will be categorised for depreciation purposes either as Operational or Non Operational. Capital assets other than land, community assets and heritage assets will be depreciated over the term of their useful economic life.

- 6.8 The Council will set the life, residual values and depreciation rates of each category of asset.

7. Bank Accounts (including foreign currency accounts) and BACS

- 7.1 All bank accounts are managed by senior Finance staff under direct and written authority delegated by Council. No other member of staff is authorised to enact any Council banking business with Danske Bank or any other financial institution.

The main Council bank accounts are held with:

Danske Bank
Corporate Banking
Po Box 183
Donegall Square West
Belfast
BT1 6JS

Tel: 0845 6023 6506

There is also a Call Deposit account and a Fixed Term Deposit account and a Euro current account.

7.2 Accounts

The following bank accounts are used across Council:

7.2.1 *General Income Account*

This account is used as follows:

Payments for:

Suppliers
Wages & Salaries
Government bodies for payroll deductions
Sundry expense payments
Loan repayments

Receipts for:

Debtors (including Trade Waste)
Loan receipts

7.2.2 *Cash accounts at a number of facilities across Council*

These accounts are used for monies collected for trading activities at each site.

Monies collected are banked at least once a week and the supporting documentation is forwarded to the finance department where details of the

monies received are entered in the relevant Cash Book and supporting documentation is filed in date order.

Periodically, surplus cash is transferred to the General Revenue Account, usually through the Telebanking system (see 7.3 below).

7.2.3 Mayor's Account

This account is used for the payment of small charitable donations and subscriptions made by the Mayor when he is attending events within the Borough.

7.2.4 Credit Card

This account is used to purchase items that must be paid upfront i.e. flights, accommodation.

7.2.5 Interreg Bank Account

This account is used by the North East Partnership Joint Committee for receipt of SEUPB funding, payment of grants by NEP to their project participants and transfers to Council for administration costs.

7.2.6 Treasury Call Account

Any surplus funds on the net balance of all Council bank accounts are transferred to this account.

7.2.7 Fixed Term Deposit Account

From the Treasury Call account surplus money is transferred in to this account for short periods of time and earns interest for the Council. The money is recalled when the net balance of all the Council bank accounts is no longer in credit.

Transfers between these accounts are initiated by Danske.

7.2.8 Euro Current Account

This account is used for payments to suppliers where the invoice is denominated in Euros so as to avoid the payment of charges for Euro drafts drawn on the Danske Bank account.

The exchange rate on the date of payment is used to calculate the Sterling value of each transaction.

7.3 Telebanking

7.3.1 This facility enables authorised Council employees to access details of the main bank accounts held with the Danske Bank.

7.3.2 Access is by modem link and is password protected.

7.3.3 Current Day Balances are accessed each day and a copy of a summary report is passed to the Director of Finance.

7.3.4 Transfers are made between accounts through the Telebanking facility.

These are generally to transfer monies which have been received by a particular account but which relate to another sector of the Council or to reflect payment for transactions between various sectors of the Council.

7.3.5 Access to the Telebanking facility is restricted to Senior Finance Officers.

7.4 Bank Reconciliation

7.4.1 Each bank account is reconciled on a monthly basis and any journal entries to reflect transactions not yet recorded (e.g. bank charges) are done at this time.

7.4.2 Each Bank Reconciliation Summary must show:

7.4.3 The Book Balance brought forward, a summary of each main source of receipt for the month, and a summary of each of the main sources of payment for the month to arrive at the Book Balance at the end of the month.

7.4.4 This balance must be agreed with the reconciled month end Bank Statement balance, which must be shown as Bank Statement balance plus Outstanding Lodgements less Outstanding Cheques.

7.4.5 A detailed list of all reconciling items must be attached to the Bank Reconciliation Summary.

7.4.6 Each bank reconciliation must be reviewed and signed off.

7.5 BACS

Bankers Automated Clearing System (BACS) is an established and secure system used by Council to transfer electronically all payments directly into the bank/building society accounts of employees and suppliers.

7.5.1 *Information required for BACS payments*

- 1 Name of Employee or Supplier
- 2 Address of Employee or Supplier
- 3 Bank/Building Society Name
- 4 Bank/Building Society Address
- 5 Branch Sort Code (6 digits)
- 6 Account Number (8 digits)
- 7 Full Name of Account Holder
- 8 BACS details must be confirmed via telephone with the supplier and verified with a follow up email from the Supplier (even if BACS details are on the Supplier invoice).

7.5.2 Councils are encouraged to pay Suppliers as promptly as possible in order to meet the 10 day prompt payment commitment made by Central Government in response to the current economic position. Payment by BACS ensures a prompt and efficient payment to Suppliers and Council will endeavour to pay Suppliers and Employees by BACS when possible.

7.6 Cash advances

7.6.1 Cash advances are available for up to 90% of estimated business expenditure and must be approved by the appropriate Senior Officer. All advances must be applied for at least 2 weeks before anticipated travel and requested using a cash advance request form and sent to Finance Department for processing.

7.6.2 The following details must be included on the cash advance form:

- Date and time of travel;
- Number of meals to be purchased,
- Anticipated taxi/train fares.
- Relevant currency (including requests for Bank of England notes).

7.6.3 Only one cash advance can be made per group of people travelling - only one form needs to be completed to cover expenditure for all personnel within the group.

7.6.4 If hospitality is to be included in advance, please use the same rates as for staff allowances as per council travel and subsistence policy.

7.6.5 All receipts relating to the advance must be returned to Finance Service within 2 weeks after returning from the trip.

7.6.6 Any monies not used must be returned to the Finance Service.

7.6.7 Only receipts relating to dates covered by the advance will be accepted.

7.6.8 Any receipt that does not show relevant date or expenditure will be returned to officers and will be excluded from the cash advance reconciliation.

7.6.9 If legitimate business receipts exceed monies given for advance, reimbursement will be made by means of a manual cheque which will need to be signed off by the appropriate Senior Officer.

7.6.10 Any advance not cleared or fully accounted for within 3 months of issue will be deducted automatically from salaries.

8. Loans

- 8.1 The Council operates under the powers conferred upon it by the Local Government (Northern Ireland) Act 1972, The Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014, Local Government Miscellaneous Provisions (1985 - 2002) and Local Government Finance (NI) Act 2011. The latter in particular regulates the powers of the Council to borrow in certain circumstances.
- 8.2 The Council set the level of local rates on an annual basis and these include sufficient funds to service the costs of long term and short terms loans (principal and interest). This is determined within the guidance issued by the Department of the Environment (and its successors), the Prudential Code and in particular affordability indicators.
- 8.3 Capital schemes under £30,000.00 are ordinarily funded through revenue. In order that Council can plan its loan requirements efficiently it is essential that capital schemes are planned and approved in a timely manner.
- 8.4 As part of the capital scheme a prudent assessment will be made of the economic life of the asset. The term of each Council loan must not exceed the economic life of the asset it is used to finance.
- 8.5 Short term loans are accessed solely to mitigate excessive overdraft charges and to ensure Council funding remains adequate to meet anticipated cash flow needs.
- 8.6 Receipts from the disposal of assets above the de minimis limit set by the Department may not be used to service revenue expenditure. The current de minimis limit is £5,000.

9. Grants Receivable

- 9.1 Mid and East Antrim Borough Council will receive grants to fund specific projects and service provision. It is important that the application for and receipt of grants is managed effectively to ensure that Council can maximise the funding available and minimise the risk of delay of receipt.
- 9.2 Each Service is responsible to ensure that all letters of offers are copied to the Finance Service, in full, upon receipt - to include all paperwork for submission of grant claims and any terms and conditions.
- 9.3 An initial meeting will be held at which the following will be determined and agreed:
- Allocation of an Accounts Officer by the finance service;
 - Coding of functions which must be used;
 - Timetable required to submit grant claim on time; and
 - An expenditure profile to effectively manage cash flow.
- 9.4 The Accounts Officer will be responsible for processing the grant claims, including assessing the financial procedures required to meet the terms and conditions of the funder.
- 9.5 Onus will remain on the service to maximise the amount of claim and ensure it is submitted in time, with the support of the Finance Service.
- 9.6 A claim will only be submitted early if all the relevant spend has occurred and it is of benefit to Mid and East Antrim Borough Council to do so.
- 9.7 Where difficulties are encountered in achieving expenditure profiles or deadlines for grant claim submissions, or where grant funders' requirements are not being met, it is essential for to refer the issue to the appropriate Director at the earliest opportunity.
- 9.8 Director(s) will seek extensions to claim deadlines or provide support, as appropriate, to achieve grant funders' protocols and deadlines for claim submissions.

- 9.9 A list of grant claims in progress will be reported to Senior Management Team quarterly.

10. Stock Control

- 10.1 Stock control is used to show how much stock Mid and East Antrim Borough Council has at any one time and how the Council will keep track of it.
- 10.2 It applies to every item Council uses to produce a product or service, from raw materials to finished goods. It covers stock at every stage of the production process, from purchase and delivery to using and re-ordering the stock.
- 10.3 To support effective stock control Mid and East Antrim Borough Council will undertake a bi-annual physical stock take at all sites and facilities which hold stock.
- 10.4 Stock takes will be supervised by a Finance Officer and must comply with the Stock Control procedures.

11. Car Scheme

- 11.1 Employees who are “essential car users” as specified in the terms and conditions of NJC agreements are entitled to apply for a loan from the Council. Such loans are repaid over agreed terms and at interest rates specified by the Department. A guarantor is required under the scheme and should the employee leave the councils employment before the expiry of the loan term then the balance of the loan is payable in full on or before the last day of employment.
- 11.2 Mid and East Antrim Borough Council will commission a review of the existing car lease scheme to determine if it remains fit for purpose.
- 11.3 Mid and East Antrim Borough Council will continue to honour any car scheme arrangements entered into by its predecessor councils with their employees before 31 March 2015.

12. Budget information and variances.

- 12.1 For each finance year commencing 1 April the Council estimates and approves a budget of its income and expenditure. The budget is monitored on a monthly basis and management accounts reports are prepared for each budget area.
- 12.2 The Council will maintain a schedule of those managers with budget management responsibility. The list will be kept under review and may be amended this from time to time as the need arises. The budget is profiled across the 12 calendar months of the finance year to reflect the pattern of expenditure and income generated.
- 12.3 Budget managers are required to exercise budgetary control over their respective sections and are assisted in this by the production by the Finance and Governance Directorate of timely and accurate management information and in particular variance analysis.
- 12.4 The Senior Management Team will also conduct periodic reviews throughout the finance year of budget and variance reports to
 - Highlight adverse budgets
 - Establish the cause of variance from budget
 - Consider corrective action and allocate who should carry forward such action
 - Document the results of corrective action

Budget managers are responsible for:

- Regular communication with the Finance and Governance Directorate regarding information to control their budget out with the scope of the monthly variance reports
- Regular review of the monthly variance reports

- Delegation of control of individual budgets to budget holders as appropriate
- Profiling of budget expenditure and income over the finance year
- Explanations for variances and develop corrective actions as appropriate for adverse variance
- Agree timescales and resources required to carry out corrective action
- Review corrective action to ensure its effectiveness
- Ensure adherence to the Procurement Policies and procedures of Council
- Cooperate with internal and external audit requests in a timely manner.

13. Budget Setting

- 13.1 The Director of Finance and Governance following consultation with the Chief Executive will issue an estimates timetable to budget holders and finance staff in September/ October each year. The timetable will include deadlines for each stage and detailed procedures will be developed for Officers and Members to facilitate the budget setting process.
- 13.2 Consultation with Elected members will commence from mid-October.
- 13.3 Payroll and capital expenditure is estimated by relevant finance staff at the initial stage of the timetable. Other revenue expenditure and income plans will be estimated through December and January.
- 13.4 Workshops will be held with Elected Members before a final plan is agreed in advance of the deadline set by the legislation for striking a rate.
- 13.5 The Council will meet before the deadline set by legislation to strike the rate.
- 13.6 The relevant returns of the estimates will be forwarded to the Department by the deadline set by it and to budget holders before 1 April.

14. Payroll

- 14.1 Council operate both monthly and weekly payroll.
- 14.2 Weekly payroll records must be received by the payroll office no later than 10 am each Monday to facilitate weekly payroll processing.

- 14.3 Monthly overtime sheets must be completed and received in finance no later than the 15th of each month to facilitate processing.
- 14.4 Both weekly payroll records and monthly overtime sheets must be authorised by an appropriate senior officer before submission to finance for processing.
- 14.5 Salaries and weekly wages are ordinarily paid by BACS transfer three working days prior to the end of the pay period.
- 14.6 Payslips are usually distributed one day in advance of payment.
- 14.7 New employees must provide the payroll office with the following information on their commencement, in order that correct payment of wages/salaries can be made:
- P45 from previous employer. If this is not available, the employee must complete HMRC form P46.
 - Pension Option Form.
 - Bank Credit Transfer Details
- 15. Travel and Subsistence**
- 15.1 Please refer to the Travel and Subsistence policy for guidance in relation to travel and subsistence claims.