

Raising the Standard

How Great Culture and Engagement Created the UK's Best Council

Richard Baker, GM

Chief Executive of Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council

#ICMA2025



Introduction

#ICMA2025

 **2025**
ICMA | **ANNUAL**
CONFERENCE
OCTOBER 25-29 | TAMPA CONVENTION CENTER
TAMPA/HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY, FLORIDA

 **Antrim and
Newtownabbey**
BOROUGH COUNCIL

 **SERVICE
AWARDS
2025** ON OVERALL COUNCIL
OF THE YEAR
FINALIST



Introduction to **Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council**

#ICMA2025

 **2025 ICMA** | **ANNUAL CONFERENCE**
OCTOBER 25-29 | TAMPA CONVENTION CENTER
TAMPA/HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY, FLORIDA





**Antrim and
Newtownabbey**



Stormont



Westminster

#ICMA2025

Our Borough 2025



146,000
Residents



4,328
Businesses



£83 million
Annual budget



90
Services



636
Staff



40
Councillors
(7 DEAs)

#ICMA2025

 **2025 ICMA** | **ANNUAL CONFERENCE**
OCTOBER 25-29 | TAMPA CONVENTION CENTER
TAMPA/HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY, FLORIDA

 **Antrim and
Newtownabbey
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

 **apse** SERVICE
AWARDS
2025 ON OVERALL COUNCIL
OF THE YEAR
2025 **FINALIST**

The UK Public Sector

#ICMA2025

 **2025**
ICMA | **ANNUAL**
CONFERENCE
OCTOBER 25-29 | TAMPA CONVENTION CENTER
TAMPA/HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY, FLORIDA

 **Antrim and
Newtownabbey**
BOROUGH COUNCIL

 **SERVICE**
AWARDS
2025 | **FINALIST**

The Public Sector - The Financial Risks

- As of March 2025, **six UK councils are effectively bankrupt** or in special measures (Section 114 notices).
- **Over 40%** of councils in England are at risk of financial failure over the next five years.
- The single overarching risk currently faced by the UK local government sector is **financial unsustainability**, jeopardising statutory services and overall community wellbeing.

However, the Risks are there:



Unsustainable increases in salary costs



Rising National Insurance Costs



Increasing utility and insurance expenses



Debt burdens



Waste management challenges



The migration debate

#ICMA2025

The Public Sector – ‘Toxic Culture’

The Post Office pursued prosecutions against sub-postmasters based on faulty Horizon data, leading to over 900 convictions between 1999 and 2015.

The failure to provide crucial relevant disclosure in court cases undermined the criminal justice system and public confidence in it.

Inadequate financial controls, poor record-keeping, a lack of proper oversight in the Post Office's management of the Horizon system.



“An absence of moral leadership, a toxic culture and a dysfunctional organisation structure”.

#ICMA2025

A Leadership Inspired Culture

#ICMA2025

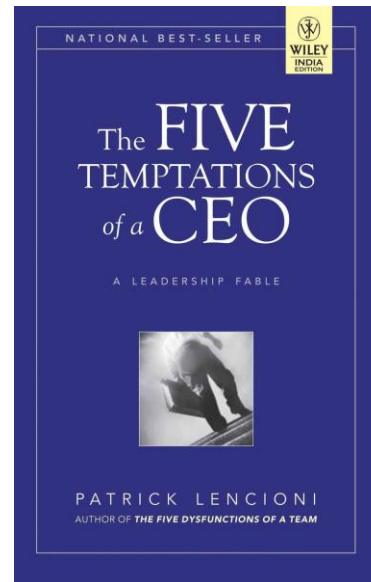
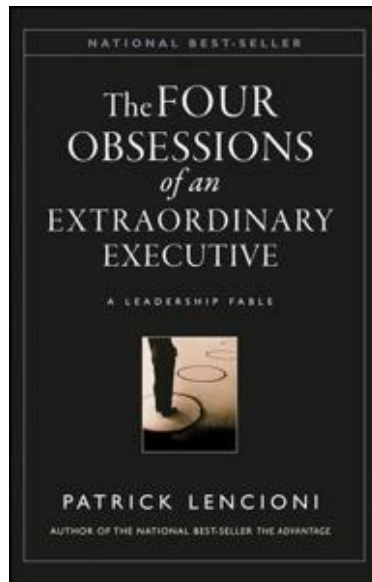
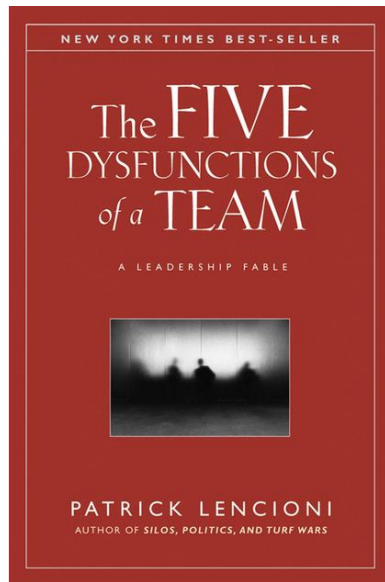
 **2025**
ICMA | **ANNUAL**
CONFERENCE
OCTOBER 25-29 | TAMPA CONVENTION CENTER
TAMPA/HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY, FLORIDA

 **Antrim and
Newtownabbey**
BOROUGH COUNCIL

 **apse** SERVICE
AWARDS
2025 ON OVERALL COUNCIL
OF THE YEAR
FINALIST

Organisational Culture

Patrick Lencioni's core works emphasise **TRUST** as foundational to effective leadership and organisational health.



#ICMA2025

Key Influencers



Simon Sinek

"Be the leader your wish you had"



Tara Brach

"Trance and Presence"



**Michael Bungay
Stainer**

"The Advice Trap"



Nancy Kline

"The Promise"

#ICMA2025

Organisational Culture Via Our Leadership



Employee Empowerment

Encourage meaningful
idea sharing



Communication

Promote open communication.
Listen without interruption



Recognition and Accountability

Consistency



Employee Development

Continuous learning programmes and
career development



Wellbeing

Encouragement to maintain a
healthy balance between work
and personal life



Leadership

Lead by example

#ICMA2025

Cultivating Culture

#ICMA2025

 **2025**
ICMA | **ANNUAL**
CONFERENCE
OCTOBER 25-29 | TAMPA CONVENTION CENTER
TAMPA/HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY, FLORIDA

 **Antrim and
Newtownabbey**
BOROUGH COUNCIL

 SERVICE
AWARDS
2025 ON OVERALL COUNCIL
OF THE YEAR
2025 **FINALIST**

Cultivating Organisational Culture



Over Communicating



Enhanced Wellbeing Programmes



Staff Development



Corporate Leadership Development



#ICMA2025

Over Communicating

What is the Message?



**Be Trusted and
Best in Class**



**We have Strong
Collaborative
Political Leadership**



**Staff are our most
important resource**



**Money, however, is
the most critical**

#ICMA2025

Over Communicating

A critical principle for achieving organisational clarity and health

Relentless, repeated messaging to ensure every colleague understands our purpose, values, and strategic direction.

- Weekly Executive Leadership Meetings
- Fortnightly 1-2-1 Meetings with Directors.
- 'Chat with the Chief' every quarter.
- Service area conversations – one each week.
- Impromptu Site Visits.
- Monthly engagement with the Trade Unions.
- Monthly workshops with Elected Members.
- Annual Management and Leadership Conference.



#ICMA2025

Enhanced Wellbeing Programmes

- ✓ Discounted Leisure Membership
- ✓ Subsidised Health Insurance
- ✓ Council Creche Project
- ✓ Action Cancer Big Bus Visits
- ✓ Flu Clinics
- ✓ Staff Health Checks
- ✓ Car Leasing Scheme



#ICMA2025

Staff Development

- ✓ CIPDNI Award Winning Leadership Development Programme
- ✓ Structured Tiered Programmes for all levels
- ✓ Continuous Professional Development
- ✓ Funded Courses
- ✓ Professional Fees Reimbursement
- ✓ Talent Management Programme



#ICMA2025

Effective Leadership and Organisational Health

#ICMA2025

 **2025**
ICMA | **ANNUAL**
CONFERENCE
OCTOBER 25-29 | TAMPA CONVENTION CENTER
TAMPA/HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY, FLORIDA

 **Antrim and
Newtownabbey**
BOROUGH COUNCIL

 **apse** SERVICE
AWARDS
2025 ON OVERALL COUNCIL
OF THE YEAR
2025 **FINALIST**

ANBC Corporate Leadership Team

*This team will develop and maintain trust.
To be respectful, cohesive and supportive.
To lead a 'Best in Class' organisation.*



#ICMA2025

 **2025**
ICMA | **ANNUAL**
CONFERENCE
OCTOBER 25-29 | TAMPA CONVENTION CENTER
TAMPA/HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY, FLORIDA

 **Antrim and
Newtownabbey**
BOROUGH COUNCIL

 **SERVICE**
AWARDS
2025 **FINALIST**

Corporate Leadership Development



Individual and Team
Leadership Coaching



An External Audit of
Effectiveness



APSE Peer Review
Assessment



#ICMA2025

Corporate Leadership Development

A Coaching Culture



Strengthening leadership capability, building a coaching culture, and supporting CLT to work together effectively through change and challenge.

#ICMA2025

Corporate Leadership Development

Effectiveness Review



An externally facilitated audit of the effectiveness of CLT is being commissioned to ensure that leadership, governance, and operational delivery are exemplary and that the CLT's model meets best practice standards.

#ICMA2025

Corporate Leadership Development

APSE Peer Review



A peer review, facilitated by UK APSE, offers an independent evaluation of the Council's wider Leadership Team, benchmarking against sector excellence, strengthening leadership, governance, collaboration, and culture while identifying improvements to enhance strategic outcomes.

#ICMA2025

“Trusted and Best in Class”



**SERVICE
AWARDS
2024**

**Overall Council
of the Year**

- WINNER



#ICMA2025

 **2025
ICMA** **ANNUAL
CONFERENCE**
OCTOBER 25-29 | TAMPA CONVENTION CENTER
TAMPA/HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY, FLORIDA

 **Antrim and
Newtownabbey
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

 **SERVICE
AWARDS
2025** 10th OVERALL COUNCIL
OF THE YEAR **FINALIST**