

Shadow Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 13th February, 2015

SPECIAL MEETING OF SHADOW STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor McAteer (Deputy Chairman) (in the Chair);
Councillors Attwood, Beattie, Boyle,
D. Browne, Carson, B. Groves, Haire,
Hargey, Jones, Kingston, Long, McVeigh,
Robinson, Rodgers and Spence.

In attendance: Mrs. S. Wylie, Chief Executive;
Mr. R. Cregan, Director of Finance and Resources/
Deputy Chief Executive;
Mr. G. Millar, Director of Property and Projects;
Mr. J. Walsh, Town Solicitor;
Mr. S. McCrory, Democratic Services Manager; and
Mr. J. Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from the Chairman (Councillor Stalford) and Councillors McCabe and McNamee.

Minutes

The minutes of the meetings of 16th and 30th June were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the District Council at its meeting on 9th February.

Democratic Services and Governance

Political Management Arrangements for the New Council

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Background

1.1 At their meeting on 28th November 2014 members considered a report on the proposed political management arrangements for the new council post April 2015, including

possible committee structures and how they should be constituted. At that meeting SSP&R committee agreed the following:

1. The adoption of five standing committees; Strategic Policy and Resources, Place and Growth, People and Communities, Planning and Licensing.
2. Four committees; Strategic Policy and Resources, Place and Growth, People and Communities and Licensing, will each comprise 20 Members
3. The Planning committee will have 14 Members
4. The establishment of an Audit and Risk Panel
5. The Quota Greatest Remainder method of appointing councillors to committees (to be confirmed at the AGM)
6. D'Hondt as the method for selecting positions of responsibility

1.2 Parties are now being asked to consider their nominations for the various committees for agreement at the AGM in March 2015. Proposals for the AGM are also contained within this report. To assist members with this process further detail on the role and operation of the new committees is now outlined in this report.

2.0 Role of the Committees

2.1 **Regulatory Committees – Planning and Licensing**
While there will be five committees in the new Council two of these committees, Planning and Licensing, will be exercising regulatory functions and will therefore have a different role to the other three standing committees. Both committees will be quasi-judicial in nature and will therefore have delegated authority from the Council to exercise a number of their functions. This will mean that the decisions of both Committees will not be subject to Council approval or call-in.

The council has had a Licensing committee for a number of years and it essentially will continue to operate as before with terms of reference, a copy of which has been circulated. Work has been ongoing throughout the shadow period with the Shadow Planning Committee on the operation of the new Planning Committee, including training, consideration of Planning decisions and best practice site visits. Party Group Briefings have also been held to discuss the operation of the Planning Committee and its terms of reference, have been circulated.

- 2.2 Standing Committees – Strategic Policy and Resources, Place and Growth, People and Communities - Delivering the Council Services**
- 2.2.1** In the first instance it is important that the services across the Council are aligned to one of the new committees to ensure continuity of delivery and decision making.
- 2.2.2** The Strategic Policy and Resources Committee will be responsible for setting the strategic direction of the Council through the development of its corporate plan and other key corporate strategies and policies. It would also ensure effective use of resources and value for money for ratepayers, and oversee the Council's relationship with a number of key agencies and partners. The services of the council that will report into the committee will be those contained within the Chief Executive and Finance and Resources departments; Human Resources and Organisational Development, Corporate Communications, Legal Services, Democratic Services, Corporate Policy and Strategic Planning, Finance and Performance, Digital Services and Audit Governance and Risk Services. Property and Projects will also report on Procurement, Contract Management, Programme Management, Estates Unit, and Facilities Management. Good relations will also be the responsibility of this committee.
- 2.2.3** The Place and Growth Committee will be responsible for the development and implementation of strategies, policies, programmes and projects directed to the regeneration and growth of the city in the context of the outcomes agreed in the community (Belfast Agenda) and corporate plans and other corporate strategies. This committee will also oversee work relating to Economic Development, Urban Development, Tourism, Culture and Arts, European and International Relations, Waterfront and Ulster Halls, City Markets, City Events, Belfast Castle, Malone House, Belfast Zoo and the transferring car parks.
- 2.2.4** The People and Communities Committee will be responsible for the development and implementation of strategies, policies, programmes and projects aimed at improving quality of life at a local level in the context of the outcomes agreed in the community (Belfast Agenda) and corporate plans and other corporate strategies. The key frontline services will report into this committee including Environmental Services; Cleansing; Waste Management; Parks and Cemeteries service (excluding zoo, Malone House

and Belfast Castle), Neighbourhood and Development Services; Community Services, Community Safety and Emergency Planning. The committee will also be responsible for all community based assets such as community centres, playgrounds, pitches and parks.

2.3 Developing the Belfast Agenda, Delivering outcomes, monitoring performance

2.3.1 Given the members ambitions for the city and the council which are emerging through the Belfast Agenda it is clear that the new committees will have to support the development and implementation of key outcomes for the city and its neighbourhoods as well as continuing to oversee the delivery of key services. The outcomes will in the first instance need to be agreed and aligned to the relevant committee who will then have a role in further defining these. The committees will then have a further role in the implementation and monitoring of progress. This will include receiving regular performance reports on the progress of key projects and indicators from council officers and key stakeholders. Committees can, if appropriate, ask stakeholders to present updates on progress and establish task and finish working groups to review the delivery of key outcomes.

2.4 Managing Performance

2.4.1 Members will be aware that, under Part 12 of the Local Government Act 2014, Councils will, from 2015, have a general duty of performance improvement imposed upon them This will require putting in place arrangements for delivering improvement objectives that are relevant to the Council and to local communities while making best use of resources and evaluating the impact of our actions on a continuous basis.

2.4.2 The three standing committees, Strategic Policy and Resources, Place and Growth and People and Communities will therefore have an 'outcomes and performance' function to ensure that this statutory obligation is met. The Committees will do this by monitoring and overseeing the various plans that they are responsible for delivering. At the strategic level this will include monitoring of the implementation of both the Community (Belfast Agenda) and Corporate Plans, in terms of the progress of activities and performance indicators, as well as overseeing the work of the new Leisure Trust. The Committees will also monitor service delivery in the context of thematic outcomes agreed

through the Belfast Agenda. They will also have a role in overseeing how the needs of individual areas are being met and how well, and how efficiently, the organisation's objectives are being supported by our services.

- 2.4.5** While these committees will be responsible for the production of policies relevant to those functions and roles for which they are responsible, the policies of the existing council remain valid for the new council until they are amended, replaced or rescinded. This is the legal position under regulation 9 of the Local Government (transitional, supplementary, incidental provisions and modifications) Regulations NI 2014.

The role of each committee, including the individual council services each is responsible for, has been circulated.

2.5 Area Working Groups

Members have also indicated that they want to continue with area working groups. Proposals are being considered in the first instance on the geographies and number of groups. Relationships between the area working groups and the standing committees, particularly the People and Communities committee, will also need to be defined and agreed.

2.6 External Governance Arrangements

In line with the development of the Belfast Agenda, officers will also be developing proposals for city wide governance structures. These will be brought back to members for consideration.

3.0 Audit and Risk Panel

- 3.1** The SSP&R Committee at its meeting on the 28th November also agreed to the establishment of an Audit and Risk Panel comprised of one Member from each of the political party groupings on the Council (up to six Members), with at least one independent member, reporting in to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on a quarterly basis. It was also agreed that any issues requiring the attention of one of the new standing committees could be referred to that committee.

- 3.2 The Panel will provide independent review of the council's governance, risk management and control frameworks and oversee the financial reporting and annual governance processes. It will provide an independent scrutiny of the Council's financial and non-financial performance.
- 3.3 The statement of purpose and terms of reference reflect the suggested terms of reference for an audit committee as included within the CIPFA publication 'Audit Committees: Practical Guidance for Local Authorities and Police (2013) and are attached at Appendix 4.
- 4.0 **Next Steps Council AGM**
- 4.1 The Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 and the associated Transitional Regulations, stipulate that new councils shall hold a second Annual General Meeting (AGM) during the transitional (shadow) period for the purpose of appointing positions of responsibility for the four year term beginning 1 April 2015. It is proposed that this meeting takes place on Thursday 19th March 2015.
- 4.2 It is proposed that the Council also uses this Annual General Meeting to appoint Councillors to Committees under Schedule 2 of the 2014 Act. Whilst the appointment of councillors to committees does not have to take place at the Annual General meeting, Members may wish to fill both the positions of responsibility and the committee places at the same time.
- 4.3 Further draft regulations are currently being made to provide for the appointment of Aldermen at this second annual meeting. These regulations will replicate the existing provisions of the Local Government (Modification of Borough Charters) Order (Northern Ireland) 1973 in respect of electing aldermen but with one minor amendment – the removal of the requirement to elect aldermen immediately after the appointment of the lord mayor and deputy mayor. This will allow for the election of aldermen to take place at the end of the annual meeting and to remain separate from the processes for filling of positions of responsibility and appointing councillors to committees. A draft AGM agenda is attached at Appendix 5.
- 5.0 **Resource Implications**
- 5.1 None

6.0 Equality and Good Relations Implications

6.1 None

7.0 Recommendations

7.1 It is recommended that Members note the contents of the report and agree the Agenda and date of the AGM as the 19th March 2015.”

After discussion, during which the Chief Executive emphasised that the terms of reference for the Audit and Risk Panel had been provided with an enhanced role, the Committee agreed that:

- (1) the second Annual General Meeting of the Shadow Council be held at 6.00pm on Tuesday, 24th March and approved the agenda;
- (2) the Place and Growth Committee be renamed as the City Growth and Regeneration Committee;
- (3) a report on good practice in relation to Audit Panels and Member Governance be submitted to the Committee in due course.

Allocation and Special Responsibility Allowances

The Democratic Services Manager submitted for the Committees consideration the undernoted report:

“1 Relevant Background Information

1.1 The Minister for the Environment has agreed the scheme of allowances payable to Members of the new Councils in April 2015

1.2 Belfast (as a council with a population greater than 200,000) will receive a Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) of £108,000 per annum.

2 Key Issues

2.1 The following conditions in relation to the payment of Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) apply.

- There will be a Special Responsibility Allowance threshold of £108,000 which the Council may pay to those Members who hold positions on the Council which are considered to involve additional responsibility.
- No more than 50% of the Councillors can receive a special responsibility payment - (equates to no more than 30 councillors within the Council)

- No individual member can receive more than one special responsibility payment from this overall budget.
- The maximum amount of Special Responsibility Allowance payable to an individual Member is £21,600.

2.2 Existing Shadow Council arrangements

The existing Shadow Council pays Special Responsibility Allowances to those Councillors it considers to have significant, additional responsibilities over and above the generally accepted duties of a Councillor.

- 2.3 The division of the Special Responsibility Allowance is based upon the positions held by individual Members either as Presiding Councillor and Deputy Presiding Councillor, Chair and Deputy Chair of Committees or as Officers within the Political Parties.

The allocations are consistent with the Council's system of proportionality which seeks to allocate positions in accordance with the relative strength of the Parties within the Council. No councillor is paid more than one SRA, and no more than 50% of councillors (excluding the council chairperson and vice-chairperson) receive an SRA.

2.3 Proposals for New Council in April 2015

A proposed scheme for the allocation of Special Responsibility Allowance during the new Council is attached at Appendix 1. This allocation mirrors the arrangements that were agreed in June 2014 by the Shadow Council for the Shadow Council period and is recommended for adoption by the Committee.

- 2.4 The draft allocation is based on the same general principles that have been used to determine SRA allowance in the past. These principles have been discussed in conjunction with all party leaders:

- That the Shadow Council will select a traditional committee form of governance with five standing committees
- That the following political officer positions will be eligible for SRA payment
 - Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson of each standing committee
 - Party leaders of all parties (a party must consist of more than one member)
 - Deputy Party leaders – for parties with more than 6 members

- Party Secretaries – for parties with more than 11 members
- That an SRA allowance be allocated to Chairperson positions
- That an SRA allowance be allocated to Deputy Chairperson positions
- That a basic SRA allowance (equal to the Deputy Chairperson allowance) will be allocated to all remaining political officer positions
- That the amount of SRA allocated to party group leaders is uplifted to be reflective of party strength.

3 Resource Implications

3.1 Revenue expenditure to cover the cost of Special Responsibility Allowance has been included in the 2015/16 budgets.

4 Equality and Good Relations Implications

4.1 There are not any equality or good relations implications associated with this report.

5 Call-In

5.1 This decision is subject to call-in.

6 Recommendations

6.1 The Committee is requested to agree the scheme for SRA allocation attached at Appendix 1 with effect from 1st April, 2015.”

Appendix 1

Allocation of Special Responsibility Allowance – April 2015

Chairpersons and Deputy Chairpersons

Position	Allowance	Number of posts	Total
Chairpersons	£6,750	5	£33,750
Deputy Chairpersons	£3,500	5	£17,500
Total			£51,250

Political Party Officers

Party Officer Basic Allocation £3,500

Remainder allocated to Political Party Leaders £197.36 per Member of the Party

Position	Number of Members	Allocation per party Member	Allocation per Party Strength	Basic Allocation	Total
SF Party Leader	19	£197.36	£3,749.84	£3,500	£7,249.84
SF Deputy Leader				£3,500	£3,500
SF Secretary				£3,500	£3,500
DUP Party Leader	13		£2,565.68	£3,500	£6,065.68
DUP Deputy Leader				£3,500	£3,500
DUP Secretary				£3,500	£3,500
Alliance Party Leader	8		£1,578.88	£3,500	£5,078.88
Alliance Deputy Leader				£3,500	£3,500
UUP Party Leader	7		£1,381.52	£3,500	£4,881.52
UUP Deputy Leader				£3,500	£3,500
SDLP Party Leader	7		£1,381.52	£3,500	£4,881.52
SDLP Deputy Leader				£3,500	£3,500
PUP Party Leader	3		£592.08	£3,500	£4,092.08
	57			£45,500	£56,749.52

Total

£107,999.52

The Committee approved the scheme for Special Responsibility Allowance Allocation, as set out.

Appointment of Members to Outside Bodies

The Committee was reminded that Councillors were appointed to represent the Council on a range of outside organisations which dealt with Health, Education, Housing, Policing, Community Safety, Transport, Urban Regeneration, Tourism and Arts issues amongst others. The Committee was also reminded that the appointments to those outside bodies would cease when the existing Council was wound up at the end of March, 2015.

The Democratic Services Manager reported that, in the past, some of the appointments had been made at the Annual Meeting of the Council under the d'Hondt system of proportionality, while some had been made directly by Committees. In addition, some of the appointments had now been designated as Positions of Responsibility under the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 and would be filled as part of that process, while other appointments were now part of the Public Appointments Process.

In order to provide some clarity and direction to the Committee, Council officers would like to undertake a review of the outside bodies to which the Council was normally requested to make nominations and submit a report to the Committee in due course. That report would assess the benefits to the Council of continuing to nominate representatives to the individual organisations and make a recommendation to the Committee on an appropriate proportionality mechanism to use to nominate representatives to those organisations where representation was considered to be beneficial.

The Committee agreed that a review of the nomination of Members to outside bodies be undertaken and that a report be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee.

Appointment of Working Groups

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1 Relevant Background Information

1.1 The Committee will be aware that the current Council agreed to continue with the existing committee structures for the shadow period until March, 2015. In addition, the Shadow Council had opted for a traditional Committee system, with five Standing Committees, as the governance structure for the new Council from April, 2015.

1.2 The Council had agreed also to review the number and role of the existing working groups to take account of the dual governance systems which have been operating during the shadow period and particularly to prioritise the time

commitment required of those Members holding office on both Councils.

1.3 The current policy for establishing working groups is that they should be appointed for a short-term to focus on issues of particular concern. In addition, the following principles also apply to the appointment of Working Groups:

- Working Groups should be established only if they are considered to be essential for the achievement of effective and efficient decision-making;
- such Working Groups should be appointed for a fixed-term and for a specific purpose;
- the Groups would not have decision-making powers but rather would produce a report with recommendations for consideration by the appointing Committee;
- after the Working Group has concluded the business for which it was established, it would cease to exist; and
- Working Groups should be formed on the basis of All-Party representation with nominees sought from the Party Group Leaders.

2 Key Issues

2.1 At its meeting on 22nd August, 2014 the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee considered a report on Working Groups and agreed to reconstitute the following until March, 2015:

Accommodation Steering Group	Good Relations Partnership
Audit Panel	North Foreshore Steering Group
Budget and Transformation Panel	Party Leaders' Forum
Diversity Working Group	Reference Group on Older People
Emergency and Severe Weather Working Group	

2.2 In addition the Committee agreed the following:

- To reconstitute the 5 area Based Working Groups.

- The Housing Forum should be reviewed to take account of transferring functions.
- That the following working groups should not be reconstituted as their work has either been completed or is now under the remit of the new Shadow Council:

Cross-Party reference Group on Community Planning

Governance Working Group

Historic Centenaries working group (now incorporated into the Diversity Working Group)

Members' Development Steering Group (with capacity building issues being dealt with through the Budget and Transformation Panel)

Waste Plan Implementation Group

- 2.3 It should be pointed out that the work of some of the working groups which the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee agreed to reconstitute will be part of the remit of the new Standing Committees which will come in to operation from April, 2015
- 2.4 It is suggested that the Committee consider reconstituting only 5 of the Working Groups, namely, the Audit and Risk Panel, the Budget and Transformation Panel, the Diversity Working Group, the Good Relations Partnership and the Party Leaders Forum, on the same terms of reference and membership as previously agreed (copy of terms of reference and Membership attached at Appendix 1).
- 2.5 It will be a matter for the other new Committees to decide which Working Groups, if any, they wish to establish.
- 3 **Resource Implications**
- 3.1 The number and frequency of working group meetings will have an impact on Member and officer time.
- 4 **Equality and Good Relations Implications**
- 4.1 There are not any equality or good relations considerations in relation to this report.
- 5 **Call-In**
- 5.1 This decision is subject to call-in.

6 Recommendations

6.1 The Committee is recommended reconstitute the 5 Working Groups as outline in paragraph 2.4.”

After discussion, the Committee agreed to reconstitute the Audit and Risk Panel, the Diversity Working Group, the Good Relations Partnership and to combine the Budget and Transformation Panel with the Party Leaders Forum, on the same terms of reference and membership as previously agreed. It was agreed that a further report on the establishment of other Working Groups be submitted to the Committee in due course.

Allocation of Political Places on the Belfast Policing and Community Safety Partnership and the Four District Policing and Community Safety Partnerships

The Committee agreed to defer until its next meeting consideration of the above mentioned report to enable a party group to receive a briefing.

Finance/Value-for-Money

Proposed Tender for the Supply of Child Safety Equipment

The Committee approved the commencement of a tendering exercise for the procurement of child safety equipment for a period of one year for the sum of approximately £38,000, with two times twelve month extension options, dependent on funding from the Public Health Agency. The Committee noted that in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation, the contract would be awarded under delegated authority to the most advantageous tender received.

Tender for the Print of City Matters

The Committee granted authority for the commencement of a tendering exercise and delegated authority to the Director of Organisational Development, in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation, to accept the most advantageous tender received in respect of the printing of the City Matters publication for a four-year period. The Committee agreed also to extend the current contract for one edition, if required, to allow for any delay in the procurement process.

Chairman