

Standards and Business Committee

Tuesday, 23rd August, 2022

MEETING OF THE STANDARDS AND BUSINESS COMMITTEE

HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER AND REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor Hanvey (Chairperson);
Councillors Canavan, Corr, Douglas, Duffy, de Faoite,
Ferguson, Flynn, Gormley, T. Kelly, Kyle, Long, Lyons,
McAteer, McCabe, McCullough, Pankhurst and Verner.

In attendance: Ms. N. Largey, Interim City Solicitor;
Mr. J. Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer; and
Ms. C. Donnelly, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

No apologies for inability to attend were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 28th June were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council, at its meeting on 4th July, subject to the omission of those matters which had been delegated to the Committee.

Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were recorded.

Motions

The Committee considered a report in relation to Notices of Motion which had been received for consideration by the Council at its meeting on 1st September.

The Committee considered each motion in turn and agreed the following:

Devolution of Local Transport Powers

That the motion in relation to Devolution of Local Transport Powers be referred to the Council for debate, with no restrictions on the number of speakers.

Drink Spike Testing Kits in Licensed Premises

That the motion in relation to Drink Spike Testing Kits in Licensed Premises be referred, in the first instance, to the Licensing Committee.

GLL and Trade Unions

Moved by Councillor Ferguson,
Seconded by Councillor Flynn,

That the motion in relation to GLL and Trade Unions be referred to the Council for debate, with no restrictions on the number of speakers.

Amendment

Moved by Councillor Pankhurst,
Seconded by Councillor T. Kelly,

That the proposal standing in the name of Councillor Ferguson be amended to provide that the Committee agrees to adopt the motion.

On a vote, eleven Members voted for the amendment and seven against and it was declared carried.

The amendment was put as the substantive motion and agreed.

A copy of the motion is set out hereunder:

**Moved by Councillor Ferguson,
Seconded by Councillor Michael Collins,**

“This Council recognises the importance of collective bargaining in the workplace and the central role of trade unions to this process, as representative voices for workers. Moreover, in a period where very many workers are opting to take industrial action, the Council recognises the right of workers to do so, and the role it can play in winning much needed pay increases during a cost-of-living crisis and while inflation continues to rise.

The Council notes that there are ongoing issues in Council leisure centres across our city, which workers and their trade unions have been attempting to resolve. The Council also notes, with disappointment, that GLL do not officially recognise trade unions in Council leisure facilities, denying workers the ability to collectively bargain effectively.

This Council agrees that GLL should officially recognise trade unions in Belfast City Council leisure centres and will write to the leadership of the organisation to urge them to do so.

The Chief Executive of the Council will also convene a meeting with the relevant trade unions to hear directly about the issues facing workers in our leisure centres and commit to address them with GLL.”

Commonwealth Games success and female sporting needs in the City

The Committee agreed that the motion in relation to Commonwealth Games success and female sporting needs in the city be considered in two parts, and that the first part, undernoted, be referred to the Council for debate, with no restrictions on the number of speakers:

**Moved by Councillor Maskey,
Seconded by Councillor McCabe,**

“This Council recognises the special achievements of Team Northern Ireland at the Commonwealth Games and the recent success with the Northern Ireland Women’s Soccer team reaching the European Championships.

We resolve that the Belfast Mayor invites both teams to the City Hall to give them proper civic recognition for their successes”; and

That, the second part of the motion, undernoted, be referred, in the first instance, to the People and Communities Committee:

“This Council also notes with concern a lack of capacity for female sports across the City and resolves to work in partnership with the Department of Communities, Sport NI, the Irish Football Association and any other relevant body to do an immediate and focussed audit of female sporting needs across the City in an attempt to have as early data as possible in terms of what is required to meet capacity for female sports across all sporting disciplines.”

Suspension of Government Debt Recovery for those in receipt of Benefits and Universal Credit

The Committee agreed that the motion in relation to Suspension of Government Debt Recovery for those in receipt of Benefits and Universal Credit be adopted:

**Moved by Councillor Matt Collins,
Seconded by Councillor Ferguson,**

"This Council notes new research carried out by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation documenting the alarming cost of living impact due to benefit deductions and debt recovery.

Many in receipt of means tested benefits and on Universal Credit, including many in work, are in bill payment arrears; taking on unaffordable debt; are going without household essentials; and are unable to properly heat their homes or feed their families. With inflation continuing to rise and the hardship emergency predicted to become more extreme as we face into the winter months the situation for many is set to worsen in the absence of immediate intervention.

Benefit reductions to repay government and utility providers at unaffordable rates are compounding the hardship crisis faced by many of those struggling the most. Government departments are in some cases claiming back debts at higher rates than private creditors. Many people are unaware that they can receive debt reduction help.

This Council will write to the Department of Communities' Minister requesting the immediate suspension of government debt recovery for those in receipt of benefits and universal credit.

The Council also requests that the Department of Communities provide information on how many benefit and universal credit claims were subject to deductions in the most recent month for which data is available, broken down by Council area; how much on average was deducted in each Council area; what the total sum was of deductions in each Council area; and what proportion of each of those sums was deducted to repay advance payments."

Support for Striking Communication Workers Union

Moved by Councillor Pankhurst,
Seconded by Councillor T. Kelly,

That the motion in relation to Support for Striking Communication Workers Union be adopted.

Amendment

Moved by Councillor Ferguson,
Seconded by Councillor Flynn,

That the proposal standing in the name of Councillor Pankhurst be amended to provide that the Committee agrees that the motion, in relation to Support for Striking Communication Workers Union, be referred to the Council for debate, with no restrictions on the number of speakers.

On a vote, eight Members voted for the amendment and ten against and it was declared lost.

The proposal standing in the name of Councillor Pankhurst was put as the substantive motion and agreed.

A copy of the motion is set out hereunder:

**Moved by Councillor Michael Collins,
Seconded by Councillor Ferguson,**

"This Council supports the decision by communication workers to engage in strike action to lift pay.

August will see significant strike action by workers in the Communication Workers Union, including staff from Royal Mail, BT and Openreach in a bid to improve staff wages.

As the cost-of-living spirals out of control, workers deserve a substantial pay increase to help offset rapidly escalating bills. These strikes are considered a last recourse for workers, in a context where the political institutions have utterly failed to address the issue of poverty wages, and shareholder profits have been prioritised over pay rises for workers in line with inflation.

Recent studies show that over half the population here now live in fuel poverty. Lifting wages would be a welcome step toward addressing fuel poverty, inequality, and improving the livelihood of those struggling to cope with rising costs.

Belfast City Council supports these communication workers in their demands for an above inflation pay offer. Council resolves to write to senior management of Royal Mail, BT and Openreach encouraging them to present a fair, above inflation pay offer to workers.

The Council also resolves to host an all-party meeting of Councillors, officers and representatives from CWU engaging in strike action, to explore ways in which Council can support their demands for a fair pay increase.”

Herbicide Reduction Policy

The Committee agreed that the motion in relation to Herbicide Reduction Policy be referred, in the first instance, to the People and Communities Committee.

Chairperson