

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 31st January, 2025

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Murphy (Chairperson); and
Alderman McCoubrey;
Councillors Beattie, Black, Brennan, Bunting, Cobain,
de Faoite, R-M Donnelly, Duffy, Ferguson, Garrett,
Groogan, Long, Maghie, McDonough-Brown,
I. McLaughlin, R. McLaughlin, Nelson and Whyte.

In attendance: Mr. J. Walsh, Chief Executive;
Ms. S. McNicholl, Deputy Chief Executive/Director
of Corporate Services;
Ms. N. Largey, City Solicitor/Director of Legal and
Civic Services;
Mr. D. Sales, Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood
Services;
Mr. T. Wallace, Director of Finance;
Mr. J. Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy; and
Mr. J. Hanna, Democratic Services and Governance
Manager.

Apologies

No apologies were reported.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were recorded.

Restricted Items

The information contained in the reports associated with the following four items is restricted in accordance with Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

Resolved – That the Committee agrees to exclude the members of the press and public from the meeting during discussion of the following item as, due to the nature of the items, there would be a disclosure of exempt information as described in Section 42(4) and Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

The Members were also reminded that the content of 'restricted' reports and any discussion which took place during closed session must be treated as 'confidential

information' and that no such information should be disclosed to the public as per Paragraph 4.15 of the Code of Conduct.

Revenue Estimates and District Rate 2025/26

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on the 27 January 2025, it had agreed the cash limit for the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for 2025/26 and the recommended cash limits for the People and Communities, City Growth and Regeneration and Planning Committees, subject to consultation with the other committees prior to today's meeting. The Director of Finance reported that the aforementioned Committee's had now met and agreed their cash limits. Accordingly, he recommended that the Committee adopt the recommendations as set out in the report.

The Committee:

1. Agreed that the decisions should not be subject to call-in (as indicated above) because it would cause an unreasonable delay which would be prejudicial to the Council's and the public's interests in striking the rate by the legislative deadline of 15 February 2025.
2. Confirmed the cash limits agreed by the Committee at its meeting on the 27th January 2025 as follows:
 - a) A cash limit of £59,659,873 for the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for 2025/26, including £1,270,000 for Belfast Investment Fund and £3,000,000 for City Deal.
 - b) A cash limit of £109,423,272 for the People and Communities Committee for 2025/26.
 - c) A cash limit of £22,897,361 for the City Growth and Regeneration Committee for 2025/26.
 - d) A cash limit of £2,826,952 for the Planning Committee for 2025/26.
 - e) A Capital Financing Budget of £25,274,022 for 2025/26.
3. Agreed that the increase in the district rate for 2025//26 should be 5.99%, based on an estimated penny product of £6,716,110 meaning a non-domestic rate of 32.7692 and a domestic rate of 0.4299 and that the amount raised through the district rate in 2025/26 will be £212,984,985.
4. Noted the Chief Executive's statement on the adequacy of the Council's reserves position and the robustness of the revenue estimates as required by the Local Government Finance Act (NI) 2011.
5. Noted the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement as required by the Local Government (Capital Finance and Accounting) Regulations (NI) 2011.

Newington Football Club

The Committee considered a report regarding a request which had been received from Newington Football Club seeking the Council to provide a letter of support in relation to a new home pitch within Belfast to enable their application to the Football Fund.

Proposal

Moved by the Chairperson, Councillor Murphy,
Seconded by Councillor Brennan,

That the Committee agrees to provide a letter of support to Newington Football Club in relation to a new home pitch, in principle, at Ballysillan Playing Fields to enable its application to the Football Fund.

On a vote, fifteen Members voted for the proposal and five against and it was declared carried.

Property Maintenance Contracts

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 27th January, it had requested the submission of a report relating to the extent to which maintenance services were outsourced to external services. Accordingly, the Director of City and Organisational Strategy submitted a report in this regard, which he pointed out was presented in the context of the review of the Property Maintenance Team within the Property and Projects Department which would be considered later on in the meeting.

The Committee:

- Noted the contents of the report and the specialist Property Maintenance services that were currently contracted out by the Council;
- Noted that the new Property Maintenance structure presented in a separate report provided increased capacity and skills to deliver specialist services via in-house staff, and provided for effective contract management for these specialist services; and
- Agreed that Members be kept updated via Committee, following the implementation of the proposed structure and following the next phase of the review, when any further efficiencies to balance of in-house and contracted-out services were identified.

Update on Review of the Property Maintenance Service

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 27th January, it had deferred consideration of a report on the review of the Property Maintenance Service. The Director of City and Organisational Strategy presented a further report which contained the information which had been requested. He explained that the report

followed the completion of a key phase in the review of the Property Maintenance service within the Property and Projects Department and presented the proposed new staffing structure including any financial implications. The report also sought Committee approval to create a permanent Safeguarding Compliance Manager in the Legal and Civic Services Department.

The Committee:

- **Property Maintenance** - Approved the new staffing structure for the Property Maintenance service at Appendix 3 to the report to enable the establishment of a more effective delivery model, with a full range of clearly defined but flexible roles across the five distinct functions of the service (Fabric, Mechanical and Electrical Engineering Services, Compliance and Safety, Technical Support and Energy Operations); and noted that this approval was subject to a growth proposal for £109,000 which was part of the Revenue Estimates 2025/26 and Medium-Term Financial Planning report.
- **Legal and Civic Services** - Approved the deletion of the temporary Safeguarding Compliance Manager post and the creation and funding of a permanent Safeguarding Compliance Manager post Grade 8 (£61,037), within Legal and Civic Services, and for the post to be filled utilising appropriate processes; and noted that the post would support the compliance requirements in relation to Safeguarding and Assurance Framework.

Standing Order 14 – Submission of Minutes

In accordance with Standing Order 14, the Committee agreed, as the meeting had been held later than seven clear days before the meeting of the Council, that the minutes of the meeting be submitted to the Council on 3rd February for ratification.

Chairperson