

# Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 10th May, 2013

## MEETING OF STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Hargey (Chairman);  
Alderman Browne; and  
Councillors Attwood, Convery, Corr, Haire,  
Hanna, Hussey, Jones, Lavery, Maskey,  
McCarthy, McVeigh, Mac Giolla Mhín,  
Ó Muilleoir, A. Newton and Reynolds.

In attendance: Mr. P. McNaney, Chief Executive;  
Mr. G. Millar, Director of Property and Projects;  
Mr. S. McCrory, Democratic Services Manager; and  
Mr. J. Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer.

### Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Aldermen M. Campbell and R. Newton; and Councillors Hendron, Mac Giolla Mhín and Ó Muilleoir.

### Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 19th April were taken as read and signed correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st May, subject to:

- (i) the amendment of the minute under the heading "Notice of Motion: Northern Ireland Hospice" to provide for the removal of the words "in principle" from the recommendation agreed by the Committee in order to provide assurance concerning the funding for the hospice; and that a letter be forwarded to all other Councils in Northern Ireland requesting that they give consideration to making a similar gesture to that made by the Council by providing financial support towards the building of a new hospice on the Somerton Road; and
- (ii) the amendment of the decision under the heading "Traffic Congestion in the City" to provide that the Council, in conjunction with a range of relevant stakeholders, seek an urgent meeting with the Minister with responsibility for the Roads Service to discuss the problems associated with traffic congestion in the City.

### Cross-Cutting Issues

#### Presentation from Representatives of the Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance – Abolition of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 22nd March, it had agreed to receive a presentation from representatives of the Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance (NIPSA) in relation to the abolition of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. It was reported that Ms. Alison Millar and Messrs. John McCaffrey and John Morrison were in attendance and they were admitted to the meeting and welcomed by the Chairman.

Ms. Millar reviewed the background to the decision of the Minister in relation to the future delivery of social housing and suggested it would signal the demise, destruction and abolition of the Housing Executive as it was currently structured. She stated that NIPSA's policy was that the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and the delivery of social housing should be provided and funded by the public sector and by one overarching body.

She referred to the current crisis in housing which had been caused by underinvestment and by the decision of the Government, in 1995, that the Housing Executive would no longer be able to borrow as it counted towards public sector borrowing and contributed to Government debt. She stated that that policy should be reversed and NIPSA had commenced a campaign to highlight that position and to support the retention of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive as a single overarching housing body. She indicated that there had been significant support for NIPSA's proposals from a number of sectors, including Resident/Tenant Associations, local political representatives, tenants, community groups, academics, trades' councils and others. She indicated that there had been a fundamental flaw in the whole process in that the key groups in relation to the future of the Housing Executive had not been consulted.

Mr. McCaffrey then reviewed the role of the Housing Associations and highlighted the gap between the level of rent charged by Housing Associations and that levied by the Housing Executive which continued to widen. He referred also to the lack of social housing, the proposed abolition of the Housing Council (which would remove any form of democratic accountability) and the effect the overall proposals were having and would continue to have on the 2,800 staff who were employed by the Housing Executive.

The deputation then answered a number of questions from the Members, following which the Chairman, on behalf of the Committee, thanked them for attending and they retired from the meeting.

**Future of Emergency Services Departments  
in Belfast - Draft Consultation Response**

(Mrs. S. Wylie, Director of Health and Environmental Services, attended in connection with this item.)

The Director of Health and Environmental Services submitted for the Committee's consideration the undernoted report:

**"1 Relevant Background Information**

- 1.1 **Members will be aware that the Minister for Health, Edwin Poots launched consultation on 5 February 2013 on the future of Emergency Services Departments in Belfast.**
- 1.2 **The consultation period closes on 10 May. The Terms of Reference for the consultation approved by the Minister requires the Health and Social Care Board to provide him with a sound basis for a decision on the future make-up of Emergency Department services across this area.**
- 1.3 **The proposals in the consultation document have been developed by the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) working with Belfast Trust.**
- 1.4 **The preferred and recommended option proposed is that *Emergency Department services should be delivered from two Emergency Departments at Royal Victoria Hospital and Mater Hospital*. Direct access to Belfast City Hospital would be available for patients who have been assessed by their GP as requiring medical assessment or admission to hospital without the need to go via an Emergency Department.**
- 1.5 **A Special meeting of the Committee took place at 2:00 pm on Thursday 25 April 2013 at which Members received a presentation from representatives of the Trust and were able to ask questions. At that meeting it was agreed that a draft Council response be drafted for review at the May meeting answering two of the three main questions posed in the questionnaire (Q.s 3 + 4) and leaving question 5 as a matter for the political groups.**

**2 Key Issues**

- 2.1 **The consultation outlines that there are three key reasons ('key drivers') for making changes in the way Emergency Department services are delivered across Belfast:**

- (i) The future direction for health and social care services, as outlined in 'Transforming Your Care' is for urgent care services to be provided as close to people's homes as possible, provided by an integrated team from primary, community and hospital services with an emergency service configuration that is sustainable and resilient in clinical terms. The report envisaged all hospitals in Belfast Trust as part of a single network of major acute services.
- (ii) The strategic direction for acute hospitals and service delivery in Belfast, as outlined in Belfast Trust's 'New Directions' document, focuses on both the development of patient pathways which enable people to access services quickly, without having to attend the Emergency Department, and the development of service profiles for the hospitals in the Belfast Acute Network (BCH, Mater Hospital & RVH);
- (iii) The need to deliver a safe and sustainable service into the future, where highly-skilled clinical teams, supported by an effective physical infrastructure and environment, can provide a high quality service for patients.

2.2 The 4 *shortlisted* options considered in the review are outlined below:

- (i) Option 1: Three Emergency Departments (RVH, Mater & BCH) - This option would result in insufficient numbers of experienced middle grade doctors and doctors in training being available to deliver a safe, high quality service in three Emergency Departments
- (ii) Option 2: Two Emergency Departments (RVH & BCH) – 2 sites would be preferred - but the RVH and BCH hospitals rely on the same limited cadre of experienced middle grade doctors and doctors in training. This option, with an Emergency Department in both RVH and BCH, could not consistently deliver safe, high quality services because of the limited availability of these experienced decision makers.
- (iii) Option 3: Two Emergency Departments (RVH & Mater) – 2 sites would be preferred and the Mater Hospital, as a smaller district general hospital, is capable of functioning safely with less experienced medical trainees because, as a smaller hospital, the close proximity of other specialties, such as anaesthetics and general medicine, supports the delivery of emergency services.

(iv) **Option 6: One Emergency Department (RVH) - The RVH Emergency Department has been designed to care for around 80,000 patients per annum. Any significant increase above this would put pressure on the RVH infrastructure including public access, car parking and access to diagnostic services. Delivery of the current total number of Emergency Department attendances of 120,000 could not be realistically achieved on the RVH site without significant service configuration.**

**2.3 The shortlisted options were considered against 5 assessment Criteria for Acute Reconfiguration included in the 'Transforming Your Care: Vision to Action' document:**

- Patient Safety & Quality**
- Deliverability & Sustainability**
- Effective Use of Resources**
- Local Access**
- Stakeholder Support**

**2.4 In response to a query from a Member as to whether the proposals were being driven by the need to make financial efficiencies, the Trust representatives explained that that the primary reasons for proposing these changes were due to patient safety and the lack of available consultants.**

**2.5 With regard to Questions 3 and 4, Members agreed in principle with the Drivers for Change and with how the criteria were applied in the assessment of the options, but they also wished to make the following points in the Council's response;-**

**The Patient Experience**

- The changes ongoing in the Emergency Service provision are not patient-centric enough and could benefit from a 'whole system' approach to joining up the 'patient experience' from admission through treatment to discharge.**
- The particular example of transport and transfers across and between sites (by ambulance) was referred to as not yet being patient-centric and robust enough to cope with the new proposals;**

- Too many patients are still being transferred too late at night – Out of Hours service for GPs are not well enough understood and used with the result that people still tend to choose going to A&E;

**TYC: More community based services**

- More non emergency patients should be seen in the Health and Well Being centres rather than in A&E (in line with the TYC vision) – and more local ‘hubs’ such as the example of the older peoples hub at Musgrave would be welcomed;
- Members highlighted the need for much more joined up approaches to out of hours GP and dental services, minor injuries treatment, etc. to discourage people from opting for A&E and also to ensure that non emergency cases don’t create an A & E log jam;
- The process around admission of patients needs to be stream-lined. The existence of the GP Direct Admission unit on level 5 of the Royal was welcomed but it was felt that this service is not yet well used enough by GPs and that it should be promoted more.

**Inappropriate Attendance at A&E**

- The fact that most GPs still only work 9-5 was highlighted as a practice which should be urgently reviewed in light of this proposal and TYC;
- Members also queried figures on “re-admissions” and whether there was any link to the quality of service received on first admission.

**Other issues raised**

- Members were concerned that the number of admissions is continuing to increase and queried whether or not the data used in the development of the proposal had forecast future demand and potential for further increases and queried if the sites remaining could cope – eg. Parking, infrastructure etc in and around the Royal and the existing expanse of the site;
- With regard to the shortage of suitably qualified consultants, Members emphasised the need for adequate education, training and development as well as appropriate incentives to attract the required level of consultants to the Belfast hospitals;

- Members also expressed concerns that waiting times were still not coming down enough

Subject to approval by Committee, it is proposed that the draft response attached at Appendix I is submitted to the Department on 10 May in order to meet the deadline but with the proviso that it is still subject to full Council approval at its meeting in June 2013.

### **3 Resource Implications**

#### **Financial**

None

#### **Human Resources**

None

#### **Asset and Other Implications**

None

### **4 Equality and Good Relations Considerations**

In the consultation documents BHSC Trust outline that the proposal is subject to a full Equality Impact Assessment. At the early screening stages, based on information available at present, there has been nothing to date to suggest that the proposal would have a major adverse impact on any individual or group covered by Section 75.

The outcomes of the EQIA and final EQIA document will be posted on the Health and Social Care Board and Trust's Website and made available on request. The Health and Social Care Board shall issue the outcome of the EQIA to those who submit responses to its consultation on this proposal.

### **5 Recommendations**

Members are asked to –

- (i) Note the contents of this report; and
- (ii) Approve submission of the draft consultation response to BHSC Trust, subject to any comments or amendment provided, by the deadline of 10 May.”

During discussion, a Member made the point that in relation to the development of more community-based services, the system of care packages needed to be robust to ensure that people could be well looked after at home where appropriate and, with regard to the shortage of suitably qualified consultants, there should be a concerted approach with universities in the United Kingdom and Ireland to attract the required level of doctors to Belfast hospitals. In relation to waiting times, he made the point that the current process still caused a backlog in the Admissions Unit.

After further discussion, the Committee approved the draft response to the consultation document with the inclusion of the additional points which had been made.

The Committee agreed further that Mr. John Compton, Chief Executive, Health and Social Care Board, be invited to a future meeting of the Committee to discuss health-related issues.

### **Consultation on Draft Guidance on Termination of Pregnancy**

The Committee was advised that the Minister for Health, Social Services and Public Safety had launched for consultation the Draft Guidance on the Termination of Pregnancy which was entitled "The Limited Circumstances for a Lawful Termination of Pregnancy in Northern Ireland". The Draft Guidance built on previous versions which had been consulted upon and aimed to provide guidance on the law in Northern Ireland to Health and Social Care professionals. Responses to the consultation were required by 29th July, 2013.

The Committee agreed that the consultation be referred to the Political Parties for consideration and comment.

### **Notice of Motion re – Organ Donation**

The Members were reminded that the Council, at its meeting on 4th March, had passed the following Notice of Motion:

"This Council welcomes the calls for consultation around the introduction of an opt-out organ donation scheme to increase the number of organ donors here; notes with concern the current serious shortage of organ donors; and agrees to write to the Minister for Health urging him to explore the introduction of such a scheme which would help save the lives of the many seriously ill people currently on long waiting lists dependent on the gift of organ donation."

The Democratic Services Manager reported that a letter had subsequently been forwarded to the Minister and a response, copies of which had been circulated, had been received in which the Minister had indicated that proposals for an opt-out scheme for organ donation were still being developed and he intended to announce the way forward as soon as possible. Once the findings of that work were known, he would then consider what the next steps would be for organ donation in Northern Ireland.

The Committee noted receipt of the correspondence from the Minister.



### **Traffic Congestion in the City**

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 19th April, a Member had requested that a report in relation to the traffic congestion in the City, caused as a result of the Belfast on the Move project, be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee. The Committee had agreed that, in the first instance, and as he had done so previously, the Lord Mayor be requested to host a meeting of the relevant stakeholders and key personnel to discuss the matter.

The Democratic Services Manager reminded the Committee further that the issue had been discussed by the Council at its meeting on 1st May. Subsequently, it had been agreed that the Council, in conjunction with the relevant stakeholders, seek an urgent meeting with the Minister with responsibility for the Roads Service to discuss the problems associated with traffic congestion in the City. He pointed out that, whilst it would be useful for the Members to meet with the Minister, it was suggested that, in the first instance, representatives of the Roads Service be invited to meet with the Committee to discuss the problems.

After discussion, the Committee:

- (i) agreed that a letter be forwarded to the Roads Service inviting representatives to attend a future meeting of the Committee to discuss the problems associated with the Belfast on the Move Project;
- (ii) agreed also, as part of a parallel process, that a letter be forwarded to the Minister for the Department for Regional Development, inviting him also to meet with a deputation from the Committee; and
- (iii) agreed that the matter of which other stakeholders should be invited to the meeting be considered following any responses which may be received from the Roads Service and/or the Minister.

### **Democratic Services and Governance**

#### **Change of Time of Meeting- 24th May, 2013**

The Members were reminded that the next meeting of the Committee was scheduled to be held at 10.00 a.m. on 24th May. The Democratic Services Manager reported that an event entitled "Leaders, Leading Change – Women in Politics" was being held in the City Hall on that date from 8.15 a.m. till 11.45 a.m.

He pointed out that the event followed on from a US State Department initiative last year – Women in the Workplace - when ten women from Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, including the Council's Head of Human Resources, had engaged with their American counterparts to examine strategies to support women in the workplace. The US Department of State had provided funding for an event in Belfast and invitations had been issued to Members of Belfast City Council. It was proposed, in order to afford those Members who so wished the opportunity to attend both that event and the meeting of the Committee, that the commencement time of the Committee be put back until 12.00 noon.

The Committee agreed that its meeting on 24th May commence at the later time of 12.00 noon.

**Allowances for the Lord Mayor,  
Deputy Lord Mayor and High Sheriff**

The Committee was reminded that the Personal and Entertainments Allowances for the Lord Mayor, the Deputy Lord Mayor and the High Sheriff were reviewed annually. The established practice had been that the Personal and Entertainments Allowances should take into account increases in the cost of living by increasing the allowances in line with the Consumer Price Index.

The Democratic Services Manager reminded the Committee that, in the last two years, it had considered three options, which were to increase the allowances by a percentage equivalent to the Consumer Price Index, increase the allowances by a percentage equivalent to the District Rate increase for the year or not to increase allowances for the year. In 2011 and 2012, the Committee had decided not to make any increase in the allowances and, accordingly, the Lord Mayor's Personal and Entertainments Allowances for those years had been maintained at £34,800 and £25,900 respectively, with the Deputy Lord Mayor's and the High Sheriff's Personal and Entertainments Allowances were remaining at £6,250 and £735 respectively.

The Democratic Services Manager requested that the Committee consider which of the following options should be adopted in relation to the allowances to be paid to the Civic Dignitaries in the 2012/134 year:

- Option 1 – no increase in the Civic Allowances for the 2013/14 year;
- Option 2 – increase the allowances in line with the District Rate increase for the 2013/14 year at 0%; or
- Option 3 – increase the allowances by 2.8%, in line with the Consumer Price Index as at 16th April.

The Committee agreed to adopt Option 2.

**Appointments to the Belfast Education and Library Board**

The Committee agreed to defer for one month consideration of a report in relation to appointments to the Belfast Education and Library Board to enable a legal opinion to be obtained regarding the decision of the Minister for Education.

Chairman