

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Monday, 9th July, 2018

SPECIAL MEETING OF STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Members present: Alderman Rodgers (Chairperson);
the Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor McDonough-Brown);
Aldermen Browne, Haire and Spence; and
Councillors Attwood, Beattie, Campbell, Carson,
Garrett, Graham, Hutchinson, Long, McAteer, O'Donnell,
Reynolds and Walsh.

Also attended: Councillor Armitage.

In attendance: Mrs. S. Wylie, Chief Executive;
Mr. J. Walsh, City Solicitor;
Mr. N. Grimshaw, Director of City and
Neighbourhood Services; and
Mr. H. Downey, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies were reported on behalf of Alderman Convery and Councillors Craig and McAllister.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

Audio Recording of Meeting

The Committee agreed that the meeting be audio recorded.

Restricted Item

The information relating to the following item 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 Committee meeting during discussion of this item as, due to the nature of the item, there would be a disclosure of exempt information as described in Section 42(4) and Section 6 of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014.

**THE COMMITTEE DEALT WITH THE FOLLOWING ITEM IN PURSUANCE
OF THE POWERS DELEGATED TO IT UNDER STANDING ORDER 37(a)**

Contingencies Relating to the Summer Months

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting earlier in the day, it had agreed, amongst other things, that an urgent meeting be sought with representatives of the Department for Infrastructure, the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service and the Police Service of Northern Ireland, to be attended by the Party Leaders, to discuss the Bloomfield Walkway bonfire. The Committee had agreed also that a special meeting be held immediately afterwards to allow Members to be briefed on the outcome of those discussions.

The Chief Executive reported that the inter-agency meeting had taken place earlier and that it had been attended by the Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service, and the Permanent Secretary and the Deputy Secretary within the Department for Infrastructure. The Police Service of Northern Ireland had been unable to send a representative to the meeting, as it had coincided with a major briefing event. During the meeting, the Assistant Chief Fire Officer had confirmed that the height to distance ratio of the Bonfire Walkway structure was well in excess of Fire and Rescue Service guidelines and that it had the potential to impact upon a number of adjacent properties. Unlike in previous years, the Fire and Rescue Service had decided that it would deploy fire appliances at that location from the outset on 11th July. The Permanent Secretary had confirmed that the Department for Infrastructure was aware of the issues surrounding the size of the bonfire and its proximity to properties and that it was working closely with the Fire and Rescue Service in terms of identifying mitigation measures. He had stressed that no decision had been taken to intervene at this point and that the Department would continue to keep the situation under review.

After discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor Long,

That the Committee agrees that the Council release a statement, a copy of which he circulated, in relation to the Bloomfield Walkway bonfire.

The proposal was seconded by Councillor Attwood.

At the request of Councillor Reynolds, the proposer agreed to amend his statement to read as follows:

“Belfast City Council recognises the huge effort made by Council officers, Councillors, mediators and community representatives in trying to resolve issues around bonfires this year.

All Parties in the City Hall had agreed to work to improve the situation from last year. There has been some success in this regard, which is welcome. However, the situation at the Bloomfield Walkway has continued to prove difficult.

Despite efforts by a range of agencies, the bonfire has been measured this morning as not being at a safe height acceptable to be within the guidelines of the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service.

We would make a final plea to the bonfire builders to remove the surplus material so as to reduce the threat to property.

However, we recognise that the land on which the bonfire is built is owned by the Department for Infrastructure and so is its responsibility. If there is not a satisfactory resolution in the time remaining, the Council calls upon the Department for Infrastructure to take all measures possible to reduce the potential damage to local properties.”

The statement, as amended, was thereupon put to the Committee and passed unanimously.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor Long,
Seconded by Councillor Atwood,

That the Committee agrees that the Council apply to the Court for an injunction to be served upon the Department for Infrastructure to protect the Council’s assets and property adjacent to the site of the Bloomfield Walkway bonfire site and invites local residents to be interested parties.

On a vote by show of hands, ten Members voted for the proposal and seven against and it was declared carried.

Request for Access to the Council’s Electrical Supply

The Chief Executive reported that a request had been received for access to be provided on the night of 11th July to the electrical supply in Council premises at Orangefield Park and Inverary/Alderman Tommy Patton Playing Fields, in connection with bonfire-related events.

In response to a question from a Member, the City Solicitor pointed out that the Council owned both the premises in question and the land on which the bonfires were situated.

After discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor Reynolds,
Seconded by Alderman Haire,

That the Committee agrees to accede to the request to provide access on the night of 11th July to the electrical supply in Council premises at Orangefield Park and Inverary/Alderman Tommy Patton Playing Fields.

On a vote by show of hands, seven Members voted for the proposal and nine against and it was declared lost.

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Bonfire Clean Ups

The Chief Executive sought and was granted authority for the Council's appointed contractor, if requested, to tend to bonfires still hot or smoking on land owned by other agencies and landowners, prior to them being removed, and noted that those making the request would be required to meet the cost.

Call-in

The Committee agreed, in accordance with Standing Order 47 (2) (c), that the decisions would not be subject to call-in, on the basis that an unreasonable delay could be prejudicial to the Council's or the public's interest.

Chairperson