

Minutes of Party Group Leaders' Consultative Forum

Thursday 12th May, 2022

Attendance

Members Present:

The Lord Mayor, Councillor Michael Long

Councillor Billy Hutchinson

Councillor Ciaran Beattie

Alderman George Dorrian

Alderman Sonia Copeland

Councillor Mal O'Hara

Councillor Donal Lyons

Apologies: Councillor Áine Groogan, Councillor Fiona Ferguson

Officers:

John Walsh, Chief Executive

Trevor Wallace, Head of Finance (for Item 1)

John Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy (for Item 2)

Sinead Grimes, Director of Physical Programmes (for Item 2)

Cathy Reynolds, Director City Regeneration & Development (for Item 2)

Cathy Matthews, Director Resources and Fleet (for Item 3)

Joanne Delaney, Portfolio and Programme Coordinator (secretariat)

1. Finance Update

The Head of Finance presented the year-end financial outturn for 2021/22 and outlined the implications for both the general and covid reserves. Members noted the non-recurrent proposals and key priorities identified for the year end surplus. He advised that Party Group Briefings have been arranged in May, to allow Party Groups to further consider. Following Party Group briefings, a report will then be presented to the SP and R Committee in June outlining the non-recurrent proposals aligned to the Council's priorities.

2. Funding Update

The Chief Executive provided an update on the current position in relation to the proposed bid for Round 2 of the UK Levelling Up Fund, following deferral at April's SP and R Committee meeting. He advised that the recommendation made to SP and R to submit a single application from the Council was based on the challenging timescale involved from when the prospectus for the fund was published and the resultant closing date for applications. In order to provide context, the Director of City and Organisational Strategy outlined for Members those organisations eligible for funding in Northern Ireland, the investment themes

the fund will look to support and the timescales and assessments involved. The Director City Regeneration and Development then outlined the specifics around the proposed Council bid. It was highlighted by a Member that it would have been preferable had the resources and capacity been available that other potential projects across the City could have been identified for this funding opportunity.

The Director City Regeneration and Development advised that there was some potential private sector led applications that may seek endorsement and or letters of support from Council. The Director of Physical Programmes advised that there had been similar requests for Community Organisation applications. Clarity is being sought from DLUHC on the role of councils if they choose to support any community or private sector applications and what this might entail. It was noted that the capacity and resources to undertake this role may require further consideration, given the extensive capital projects being progressed across the City as set out in the Capital Projects Programme. Members will be kept updated as this progresses.

Members also received an update in relation to the Shared Island Local Authority Development Funding Scheme. The scheme will enable Local Authorities to partner on a cross-border basis to bring new projects through feasibility or pre-planning stages. A report on the both the UK Levelling Up Fund and the the Shared Island Local Authority Development Funding Scheme will be presented to May SP&R Committee for Members consideration.

Following the updates provided, there was detailed discussion on the various upcoming funding opportunities including Peace Plus funding. The Chief Executive highlighted the need to develop a strategic approach to these funding opportunities going forward. it was agreed it would be useful to have a suite of potential bids so that bids are at a degree of readiness when funding becomes available. Given the complexities involved, and the various different funding strands it was agreed to hold a special Party Group Leaders meeting in order to explore the best way to do this. A query was raised by a Member in relation to the Strategic Sites Assessment and it was agreed that this will be added to the agenda for the special meeting.

3. Kerbside Collection Contract

The Director Resources and Fleet provided an update on the commissioning of an independent economic appraisal on the future shape of kerbside recycling collections for Belfast as requested by the SP and R Committee. She outlined for Members the options

contained within the report and provided an update on the feedback from the recent Party Group Briefings. In relation to a number of queries and issues raised by Members it was noted that a report would be brought to June's P and C Committee recommending that Members consider glass expansion as a separate stream of work ahead of the wider kerbside recycling collection options being considered. If approved at P and C Committee, given the financial implications, it would then be presented to the SP and R Committee.

The Chief Executive highlighted that it was imperative that Members consider the potential capital costs involved for each of the options outlined and the impact on other key corporate priorities. Further information would be discussed in advance of a future meeting of the SP and R Committee before any final decision would be made.

Members also raised a number of issues in relation to cleansing services and waste collections across the City and also within the City Centre, most notably, due to the recent industrial actions that had taken place and also in relation to covid recovery. Detailed discussion was had on options and resources available to address these issues. The Chief Executive to follow up with the Director Resources and Fleet. It was also highlighted that communication was also key and it was important to continue to reinforce messaging on the importance of recycling to residents.

4. Planning Update

The Chief Executive updated the Forum on the live planning applications and informed the Forum of applications that were being presented to the Planning Committee in May. In relation to a query raised by a Member the Chief Executive advised that officers continue to engage with DfI and Northern Ireland Water (NIW) in order to address ongoing concerns.

5. AOB

Illumination Requests

The Chief Executive advised he had received two requests to light up City Hall, namely for Crusaders for their recent Irish Cup win, it was proposed to light up City Hall on Friday 13th May, 2022. The second request is to light up City Hall on an evening during Refugee week 20th - 26th June, 2022. Members noted that these would be approved under the Chief Executive's delegated authority.