

Minutes of Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum

Thursday 9th June 2022

Attendance

Members:

Councillor Billy Hutchinson

Councillor Michael Long

Alderman George Dorrian

Councillor Mal O'Hara

Councillor Donal Lyons

Councillor Emmet McDonough-Brown

Apologies: Councillor Fiona Ferguson, Councillor Ciaran Beattie and Alderman Sonia Copeland

Officers:

John Walsh, Chief Executive

Ronan Cregan, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Resources

Nicola Lane, Good Relations Manager (for Item 3)

Lisa Caldwell, Head of Marketing & Corporate Communications (for Item 3)

Eimear Henry, Strategic Lead, Belfast Stories (for Item 5)

Sandra Robinson, Protocol and Public Affairs Manager (for Item 5)

1. Finance Update

The Deputy Chief Executive & Director of Finance & Resources presented the year end financial outturn for 2021/22 and outlined the implications for both the general and covid reserves. He outlined the proposals for consideration following Party Group Briefings for the reallocation of the year end surplus. Members discussed in detail the proposals being considered and raised a number of queries and discussed some further proposals. In relation to the queries raised he advised that year end reallocations were for non-recurrent funding only and explained the financing processes for any proposed or potential recurrent reallocations. Members to further consider in advance of a report being presented to SP&R committee in June in the context of non-recurrent proposals aligned to the Council's priorities.

As part of the discussion Members discussed the ongoing issues in relation to cleansing services and waste management across the City and also particular issues within the City Centre. The Chief Executive to follow up with the Director Resources and Fleet.

2. Update on City Region Growth Deal

The Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Resources updated Members on the progress of the Belfast Region City Deal. He outlined the key decisions required in relation to the Funding & Governance arrangements for Belfast City Council as the Lead Authority and Accountable Body for the next phase of the Deal. Members noted the update on the Financial Agreement, Contract for Funding so funding can flow directly to projects and a Memorandum of Understanding that has been drawn up with partners. The Chief Executive advised that work continues with partners to formalise permanent structures and resources for the delivery of the deal to allow the council to carry out its role. A report on the progress to date will be brought to June SP&R Committee.

3. Day of Reflection

The Good Relations Manager provided a briefing for the Forum on the upcoming Annual Day of Reflection to be held on 21 June 2022. She advised that it was agreed by SP&R Committee at their meeting in March that the Council event would take place within City Hall and that officers would engage and consult with Healing Through Remembering. She outlined the format for the event on the day, and it was noted as previously agreed the event would not be led by any civic dignitary but supported by all of the parties. The Head of Marketing and Corporate communications discussed with Members a draft media release for the upcoming event, a copy of which will be circulated to Party Group leaders for their consideration before it is issued.

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 June. In relation to a number of issues discussed the Chief Executive to follow up with the Director of Planning & Building Control in relation to the feasibility of scheduling additional planning committee meetings if required.

5. AOB

Illumination Request

The Chief Executive advised he had received a request from a Member to light up City Hall for Deafblind Awareness Week June 2022. He advised that the proposed date for illumination was Wednesday 22nd June. Members noted that this request would be agreed under the Chief Executive's delegated authority.

Councillor O'Hara requested to light up City Hall for Clean Air Day 2022 on Thursday 16th June subject to availability. It was noted that this request would be agreed also under the Chief Executive's delegated authority

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The Chief Executive provided an update for Members on legal considerations following the recent planning permission decision made by the Infrastructure Minister. He also discussed a number of areas of concern and advised that he would continue to brief Party Group Leaders as this progresses.

Round 2 UK Levelling Up Fund

The Chief Executive provided an update in relation to Round 2 of the UK Levelling Up Fund discussed at May SP&R Committee. He advised that clarity from DLUHC is pending on the role of councils if they choose to support any community or private sector applications and what this might entail. The Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Resources provided an update on the applications currently seeking support and advised a report will be brought to June SP&R Committee once the advice from DLUHC was received. In relation to a query raised by a Member should other organisations wish to seek support the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Resources highlighted the challenges involved in relation to both the timescale and the requirements for applications.

Independent Review of Invest Northern Ireland

The Chief Executive provided an update on the Independent Review of Invest Northern Ireland (NI) which was announced by the Minister for the Economy in January 2022. He advised that the review panel is being led by Sir Michael Lyons, who as part of the review will be seeking input from a range of stakeholders across Northern Ireland including local government. Members noted the proposed engagement and agreed to attend the session or send a nominee. The Chief Executive to circulate the details discussed to Party Group Leaders.

Freedom of the City

Members noted that Council had agreed to award the Freedom of the City to healthcare workers and all those who had worked tirelessly on the frontline to care for vulnerable citizens during the Covid-19 pandemic. The Strategic Lead, Belfast Stories provided an update on the programme previously agreed by SP&R Committee which included city-wide engagement, a reflective exhibition, documentary and a broadcast music event themed on people's stories and experiences of the pandemic. She outlined the proposals for the

official Freedom of the City ceremony to Honour the contribution of the city's frontline workers and communities.

The Protocol and Public Affairs Manager updated Members on the ongoing engagement both internally and externally in relation to the format and proposed attendance at the event and advised that a report will be brought to June SP&R Committee outlining the proposals discussed.