

# Social Policy Working Group

Tuesday, 16th August, 2022

## MEETING OF THE SOCIAL POLICY WORKING GROUP HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

- Members present: Councillor O'Hara (Chairperson);  
Alderman Copeland; and  
Councillors Bunting, McLaughlin and Murray.
- In attendance: Mr. J. Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy;  
Ms. N. Bohill, Head of Commercial and Procurement  
Services;  
Mr. C. Campbell, Divisional Solicitor;  
Mr. K. Heaney, Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty;  
Ms. C. Patterson, Inclusive Growth-Policy and  
Programme Officer;  
Ms. C. Hutchinson, Policy and Performance Analyst;  
Mr. R. Kelly, Continuous Improvement Manager,  
Ms. M. Miller, Marketing Manager – City Development;  
Ms. N. Irvine, Enterprise and Business Growth Officer;  
Mr. J. Uprichard, Business and Research Development  
Manager;  
Ms. L. Toland – Senior Manager – Economy;  
Ms. S. O'Regan, Employability and Skills Manager;  
Mr. C. Tubridy, Employability and Skills Officer;  
Mr. L. Murray, Strategic Category Manager;  
Ms. V. Smyth, Democratic Services Officer; and  
Ms. C. Donnelly, Democratic Services Officer.

### **Apologies**

An apology for the inability to attend was received from Councillor Hutchinson.

### **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of 14th June were taken as read and signed as correct.

### **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were reported.

### **Actions Updates**

The Working Group noted the actions update report which had been circulated in advance.

A Member raised his concern around the continued reliance on agency staff and an update on the work to consider a costed proposal for the Council to provide its own recruitment service for temporary staff. The Director of City and Organisational Strategy responded that the immediate focus remained on reducing the reliance on agency staff, and that this was managed at no additional cost to the Council. However, as there was a significant amount of work going on, the Director of City and Organisational Strategy agreed to come back to the Working Group with proposed timing for a costed proposal to be brought back. He advised that this was likely to include significant budget considerations and therefore would need go to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

A Member referred to a Motion in relation to leave for fertility treatment and queried when the policy would be complete. The Director of City and Organisational Strategy responded that motions for fertility, miscarriage and menopause leave would be brought to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in August. There was discussion around other leave entitlements and it was agreed that there would be opportunity to raise the matter at the Committee.

A Member asked for an update on CLES spend analysis following a presentation to the Working Group in February. The Inclusive Growth-Policy and Programme Officer confirmed that an update had not been brought to Party Group Leaders due to outstanding partner responses, however, initial conversations had been had. She advised that the spend analysis would be available for Party Group Leaders when the analysis was complete to allow for fuller consideration.

The Chairman asked for the outstanding action to receive a presentation from SIB to be timetabled for a future meeting.

Noted.

### **Inclusive Growth City Charter – Belfast Business Promise Update and Next Steps**

The Policy and Performance Analyst delivered a Belfast Business Promise presentation and referred to feedback which had been received from the Members and from across the organisation. She provided details on the progress which had been made, outlined 8 Belfast Business Promises pledges and details of the proposed membership structure and membership offer along with a high-level plan.

The Chairman asked the Members for their feedback and there was discussion around internal Council performance against the Promise and the need for an action plan. The Policy and Performance Analyst confirmed that an internal steering group had been set up to look at this. It was noted that the Promise should be both welcoming and robust, with organisations encouraged to progress through the membership levels rather than remain static at a supporter level. Therefore, there was a need for some differentiation in the accreditation mark for organisations to demonstrate their commitment. The Policy and Performance Analyst confirmed that reviews would be part of the framework. A Member raised the issue of sustainability and asked for a reduction in waste to be included in the pledge.

The planned consultation on the Promise would take views on the Promise Pledges that should be considered 'core'. The Members provided initial views on the pledges that should be considered core and discussed the choice of 3 or 4 core pledges.

It was agreed that 4 core pledges would be the preferred approach and the matter would go out to consultation with businesses and residents as a way forward. It was agreed that the consultation would be shared with the Working Group.

The Chairman requested that an update on the initial assessment of how the Council stood in relation to the Belfast Business Promise be scheduled for the October meeting of the Working Group and to include the Belfast Business Promise as a standing item on the agenda.

The Working Group noted the information which had been provided.

### **Living Wage Accreditation Update**

The Continuous Improvement Manager provided a brief summary regarding the Living Wage Accreditation and reminded the Members of the update given at the June meeting. He provided information on the Council's current position and progress towards becoming an accredited Real Living Wage Employer which was paid currently by means of a supplement.

The Continuous Improvement Manager explained that, to be accredited, an employer must pay all directly employed staff the Living Wage and have an agreed plan in place for third party contracted staff. He added that he believed that the Council was already compliant to the qualifying criteria. He continued that, as part of the application, all third-party contracts needed to be collated on a "milestones" spreadsheet; this information must include the date that those contracts terminate.

During August work would be completed on:

- 1) the "milestones" spreadsheet; and
- 2) the licence agreement (application form).

The Continuous Improvement Manager reported that activities would take a number of weeks and it was the intention to submit an application for accreditation by October 2022. In accordance with Living Wage Foundation best practice requirements, a report would be brought to the Council before an application was made. After the application was submitted, the accreditation process would take approximately 10-15 days. He provided the Members with reassurance that the application for accreditation was in the final stages.

A Member raised his concerns around the delays and suggested speeding up the approval timescales by seeking Committee approval to use Delegated Authority. The Director of City and Organisational Strategy agreed to progress the matter through the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee. The Director also agreed to take a paper to SOLACE to share learning and best practice in terms of achieving accreditation.

The Working Group noted the information which had been provided and the Chairman thanked the team for getting to this point.

**Social, Economic and Environmental Impact  
of Real Estate & Regeneration Investment –  
Renewed Ambition Research**

The Marketing Manager – City Development updated Members on research undertaken via the Renewed Ambition Partnership to examine the role that the built environment played in delivering social, economic and environmental benefits to Belfast and wider Belfast City Region. The research had been presented to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee in June 2022 and was being finalised by the Renewed Ambition Partnership. A key pillar of work moving forward would focus on ensuring that the report findings and recommendations act as enabling levers for city region partners to incorporate sustainable development best practice into real estate development projects moving forward.

The Working Group agreed that officers attend a future meeting to present the report findings and recommendations; and discuss next steps to support implementation of the report recommendations.

**IGN Annual Political Summit**

The Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty informed the Members of the Inclusive Growth Network's (IGN) upcoming events and the change in approach to the annual political leaders summit. The Working Group noted that the IGN would be convening a joint statement on the cost-of-living crisis to highlight the ways in which IGN member places are fostering local inclusive growth approaches that support citizens and move beyond crisis management.

**Any Other Business**

A Member raised the matter of the reporting mechanism to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in relation to the Social Value Procurement Policy and whether the format could be changed. The Head of Commercial and Procurement Services advised that this was in development and asked the Strategic Category Manager to provide an update. The Strategic Category Manager presented the ongoing activities in relation to the implementation of the Social Value Policy Procurement Policy and reported positive feedback to date.

Discussion ensued around reporting requirements. The Strategic Category Manager advised that an annual report on the Social Value Procurement Policy would be reported to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, however, the Social Policy Working Group might wish to have more regular reports. The Chairperson asked that the Working Group have greater oversight of the policy during its early implementation.

It was agreed that the Strategic Category Manager would report back to the Working Group in relation to the monthly Strategic and Policy and Resources Committee reports.

**Date of Next Meeting**

It was agreed that the next meeting would be scheduled for Tuesday, 18th October, 2022 at 2.00 p.m.

Chairperson