

Minutes of Meeting of Party Group Leaders' Consultative Forum

Thursday 15th September 2022

Attendance

Members:

Councillor Ronan McLaughlin
Councillor Billy Hutchinson
Councillor Michael Long
Alderman George Dorrian
Councillor Brian Smyth
Councillor Donal Lyons
Alderman Sonia Copeland
Councillor Fiona Ferguson

Apologies: Councillor Emmet McDonough-Brown

Officers:

John Walsh, Chief Executive
Ronan Cregan, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Resources
Nora Largey, City Solicitor (for Item 6)
Peadar Doyle, Logistics Manager (for Item 8 Contracts Update)

1. Structures

The Chief Executive presented a proposed structure for the Corporate Management Tier following approval of the interim arrangements put in place to ensure continuity for the Deputy Chief Executive role. Members noted a report detailing the proposals discussed along with a revised proposal for the role of Director of Finance and Resources will be presented to September's SP&R Committee for consideration.

2. Finance Update

The Deputy Chief Executive & Director of Finance & Resources advised that work has commenced on the estimates for 2023/24 and an initial report outlining the 2023/24 rate setting process will be presented to September SP&R committee. Further to discussions at the last meeting of the Forum he stressed to Members the many challenges involved for the 2023/24 rate setting process due to the rising utility costs and the rise in inflation and the impact on Council Financing. Members discussed in detail the challenges involved, including potential options to review energy efficiency within Council Owned assets in order to mitigate

against some of the rising utility costs. It was noted that the process for 2023/24 would be unprecedented and very different from previous years.

Members also discussed NI Reval2023, the revaluation process being undertaken by Land & Property Services (LPS) to adjust the rateable value of business properties to reflect changes in the property market and the potential impacts for 2023/24.

A Member requested a Party Group Briefing for new party members who weren't familiar with the rate setting process and it was agreed a suitable time would be arranged. The Deputy Chief Executive & Director of Finance & Resources advised that Party Group Briefings for the 2023/24 rate setting process would also be arranged for all parties following October SP&R Committee when more detail on the LPS revaluation exercise would be available.

3. Update on Cost-of-Living Proposals – Agency and Casual Staff

The Deputy Chief Executive & Director of Finance & Resources provided an update on the ongoing discussions in relation to the cost of living payments for Agency and Casual Staff. He advised that August SP&R Committee had agreed in principle to also provide cost of living payments to Agency and Casual staff alongside the payment to all Council staff below Chief Officer grade. Discussion followed on how this might be managed and it was agreed that the projected costs for the options discussed would be circulated to Party Group Leaders in advance of September SP&R for consideration and review.

5. Joint Leadership Session PGL's/CMT

The Chief Executive advised that the externally facilitated leadership training session with Party Group Leaders and the Council's Corporate Management Team would take place on Friday 14th October, 2022. Diary invites have been issued and Members noted the venue. He advised that the facilitator had requested to meet with Party Group Leaders individually in advance of the session and it was agreed that Members would confirm with his office if they were content for their contact details to be shared.

6. Dual Language Street Signage

The City Solicitor advised that an update report would be brought to September SP&R Committee on the Dual Language Street Signs Policy. It was noted that the report will ask members to agree final wording before the policy is published online. In relation to a number

of queries raised by Members the City Solicitor advised that the policy has been agreed and is being implemented, the revisions discussed were administrative in nature only. The City Solicitor to provide an update for Members to confirm that the previously agreed quota of 5 applications in any given month was continuing to be processed following approval at July Council.

7. 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 September. He also provided an update on the Replacement Planning Portal (new Planning IT system) and some of the issues with the transition.

8. AOB

Update on Contracts

The Chief executive provided an update on the amendment to two proposed Single Tender Actions (STA's) to be administered as Competitive Tenders at September Council meeting. Members discussed the amendment made at the Council meeting and the Logistics Manager outlined the rationale for why they had been recommended for approval as a STA. Following discussion, it was noted that a report will be brought to September SP&R Committee for further consideration.

Hugh Hanna Statue

Alderman Dorrian raised an issue in relation the relocation of the Hugh Hanna Statue. Members noted the update and further information will be brought back to Party Group Leaders in due course.

Illumination Request

Alderman Dorrian requested to light up City Hall on 18th October 2022 during Anti Slavery week in order to highlight Modern Slavery. It was noted that this request would be agreed under the Chief Executive's delegated authority, subject to availability.