

Minutes of the Meeting of the Party Group Leaders' Consultative Forum

Thursday 10th August 2023

Attendance

Members:

Councillor Christina Black (*Chair*)
Councillor Séamas de Faoite
Councillor Michael Long
Councillor Ciaran Beattie
Councillor Brian Smyth
Councillor Sarah Bunting

Apologies: Alderman Sonia Copeland

Officers:

Sharon McNicholl Director of Corporate Services and Deputy Chief Executive
Trevor Wallace, Director of Finance
John Tully, Director of City & Organisational Strategy (for Item 1)
Shauna Murtagh, Physical Programmes Portfolio Manager (for Item 1)
Cathy Reynolds, Director City Regeneration & Development (for Item 3)
John Greer, Director of Economic Development (for Item 4)
Lesley Ann O'Donnell, Senior Manager, Tourism and Culture (for Item 4)
Erika Clark, Programme Manager (for Item 4)
Nora Largey, Interim City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services (for Item 6 & 7)
Christine Sheridan, Director of Human Resources (for Item 7)
Joanne Delaney, Portfolio and Programme Coordinator (secretariat)

1. Peace Plus

The Director of City & Organisational Strategy provided an update on the proposed approach for the development of applications for the PEACEPLUS Programme, specifically for the opening of the calls under Theme 1.1 and Theme 1.4. Members noted the proposed approach as previously agreed by SP&R committee, the challenges around the timeframes involved and the key next steps. There was detailed discussion around the proposed projects presented and it was highlighted by a Member that consideration should be given where possible to potential projects on a city wide basis. In relation to a number of queries raised by Members on specific project proposals the Physical Programmes Portfolio Manager provided clarity. The feedback provided by Members to be further considered and incorporated into the final report presented to August SP&R Committee.

Members also discussed potential requests for support under Theme 1.4 which were noted. The Director advised that discussions remained ongoing with SEUPB in relation to the implications should the Council be requested to act as delivery agent and/or provide letters of support for projects and an update will be included in the report to August SP&R committee.

2. Finance Update

The Director of Finance presented the Quarter 1 financial outturn for 2023/24 and advised a report with the detail discussed will be brought to August SP&R outlining the Quarter 1 financial position for the Council.

The Director also outlined the timeframe for the setting of the district rate for 2024/25 and highlighted the pre existing cost pressures and challenges that will need to be considered as part of the process. Member Workshops in order to begin the process of agreeing priorities will commence in September/October following consideration of the Corporate Planning process for 2024-2028 at August SP&R committee. It was agreed a copy of the information presented in relation to the rate setting process for 2024/25 will be circulated to Party Group Leaders.

In relation to a query raised by a Member in relation to the 2023/24 pay rise clarity was provided by the Director of Human Resources and Members noted the ongoing Trade Union consultation.

3. Strategic Site Assessments Phase 2

The Director City Regeneration and Development provided an update on the work being undertaken as part of Phase 2 of the Strategic Site Assessments (SSA). She advised that an extensive cross public sector mapping exercise had been carried out to identify, map and assess opportunities that may have housing led regeneration potential across publicly owned land. Members were presented with some examples of BCC assets, however the Director stressed that these would require further investigative work in terms of deliverability and planning etc. The composite list of potential sites mapped by partners across the city will be shared with Party Group Leaders once finalised and Members to feedback any initial comments/queries with the Director. The City solicitor stressed to Members the highly confidential nature of the information contained within the composite list and that it is

imperative that none of the information is for onward circulation. This will be included in the correspondence that will accompany the list when circulated. An update will then be brought to committee(s) in the near future as this work progresses.

The Director advised a Strategic Site Assessments Phase 1 report would be presented to September SP&R Committee for Members consideration. This will include an update on the institutional investors/strategic development partners expression of interest process which Party Group Leaders were previously briefed on. The Director offered to provide further Party briefings on request.

4. Belfast 2024 Update

The Director of Economic Development provided a briefing on the Belfast 2024 programme following deferral at June SP&R Committee. The programme manager then provided a detailed presentation including an overview of the engagement with communities that has taken place to date and a summary of the proposed projects being recommended for commission.

5. Memorial Request

Councillor de Faoite outlined a request for consideration to be given to the erection of a memorial in City Hall. Members discussed current memorials and also the recent Day of Reflection and it was agreed that the request come back to Party Group Leaders for further consideration at a future meeting.

6. Planning Update

The City Solicitor advised that the Local Development Plan had now been formally adopted. The Plan Strategy was formally adopted on 2nd May 2023, and the challenge period has now concluded. The City Solicitor also updated the Forum on the live planning applications and informed the Forum of applications that were being presented to the Planning Committee in the coming months.

7. AOB

Chief Officer Recruitment

The Director of Human Resources advised that the timeframe for the recruitment of the posts of Strategic Director of City Operations and the Strategic Director of Place and Economy had previously been approved. A report for the constitution of the selection panels for both will be brought to August SP&R Committee for Members consideration. She also outlined for Members the proposed advertising approach for these posts, the detail of which will be included in the report.

Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor - Political Advisory Group

The Director of Corporate Services and Deputy Chief Executive outlined for Members that as part of the governance structure for the Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor, three elected members from each council are nominated to serve on a political advisory board. Following the local government elections this year nominations are now being sought. A report will be brought to August SP&R committee.

Bonfire Review

Members noted that a Bonfire Review meeting will take place on 5 September 2023 and the meeting request has been circulated. In relation to a query raised by Members the City Solicitor confirmed that any issues Members may have can be raised at the meeting.

All-Party Members' Cost-of-Living Task Group

The Director of Corporate Services and Deputy Chief Executive advised that a request had been issued by Democratic Services seeking nominations for an All Party Members' Cost of Living Task Group. Party Group Leaders agreed to forward nominations in advance of the meeting scheduled for Tuesday 15th August.

Request for use of Woodvale Park

The Director of Corporate Services and Deputy Chief Executive outlined the details of a request received for the use of Woodvale Park. She advised that given the timescales

involved the Director of City Services would approve under delegated authority. Members requested further information and the Director of City Services to follow up.

Organisational Reviews and Change Programme

The City Solicitor provided an update of the status of the organisational reviews which had been ongoing for more than four years previously discussed at June SP&R committee. Members noted the update provided and that the report due to go to August SP&R may now go in September as discussions are still ongoing.

Request for Art Work

Councillor Black outlined a request received for some art work in the City to celebrate Oscar winning an Irish Goodbye. This will be added to the August SP&R agenda as an issue raised by a Member.