

Appendix 1

Review of Working Groups

Accommodation Steering Group

Terms of Reference

- to act as a sounding board in respect of the main drivers behind the development of a Corporate Accommodation Strategy for the Council;
- to consider accommodation issues and requirements emerging in light of local government reform, progress better use of existing accommodation assets, promotion of best practice in terms of working arrangements, enhance provision for "front-facing services" and our overall financial position to include achievable efficiencies;
- in conjunction with Officers to inform the selection of options based on the Economic Appraisal being undertaken in respect of the Council's office accommodation;
- to consider and advise upon future occupancy of the City Hall particularly in regard to public access and facilities;
- to consider and advise on extent of any collaborative working with other public sector bodies that would have accommodation implications;
- to act as a communication channel to Party Groups and to other Councillors in general and ensure that the facts of accommodation issues are fully understood.

Membership

One representative of each of the six Party Groups.

No. of Meetings

Three.

Recommendation

Given that the Council will be facing important decisions in relation to its future accommodation needs in light of the transferring functions in 2015, it is recommended that this group is reconstituted.

Audit Panel

The purpose of Belfast City Council's Audit Panel is to provide an independent assurance on the adequacy of the Council's risk management framework and associated control environment. It provides an independent scrutiny of the Council's financial and non-financial performance to the extent that it exposes the Council to risk and weakens the control environment. The Panel also oversees the Council's financial reporting process.

The Audit Panel has the function of providing scrutiny in relation to the implementation of the Council's policy decisions for the purpose of ensuring that the Council meets its obligations

to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness, pursuant to section 1 of the Local Government (Best Value) (NI) Act 2002.

Membership

One representative of each of the six Party Groups plus one independent Member.

No. of Meetings

Eight.

Recommendation

The Committee has already agreed to reappoint the membership of the Audit Panel and it is recommended that the Panel continues to operate until 31st March, 2015.

Budget and Transformation Panel

Terms of Reference

- To provide political support in terms of party groupings and the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for the delivery of the Council's efficiency and transformation agenda.
- To scrutinise the alignment of the Council's efficiency and transformation agenda to corporate priorities.
- To support the development and implementation of the Council's efficiency and transformation programme.
- To hold officers to account for the delivery of an agreed efficiency and transformation programme.
- To track and monitor the achievement of agreed financial savings.
- To provide oversight of the Council's finances.

It is suggested that the Panel would also oversee the Member Capacity Building Programme over the Shadow Period.

Membership

The Chairman of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee and each of the six Party Group Leaders (or their nominees).

No. of Meetings

11

Recommendation

The Budget Panel has already been re-established and it is recommended that the Panel continues to operate until 31st March, 2015.

Cross-Party Reference Group on Community Planning

The main purpose of the group, which had been established by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 19th March, 2013 is to provide a political forum to discuss and test emerging ideas/concepts as required for developing a Council approach to community planning with an early focus on the delivery of the Big Lottery Fund Pilot Project on Community Planning.

Terms of Reference

- provide strategic direction to the Belfast Community Planning Consortium (BCPC) - which is responsible for overseeing the BIG Lottery funded community planning pilot project;
- ensure the BCPC and BIG Lottery Community Planning Project is connected to the political process;
- monitor the progress of the BIG Lottery Community Planning Project and contribute to the evaluation of the project;
- Provide strategic / political direction and input to the development of the health planning process within Belfast;
- Assess the learning for Belfast City Council and its implications for the ongoing development of community planning within Belfast;
- Act as a reference panel in the wider development of the Council's community planning framework;
- To make recommendations to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee regarding the developing community planning framework for Belfast. This may include recommendations on timelines, resources and structure;
- Champion a cohesive approach within the Council to Community Planning; and
- To develop and maintain expertise in the field of community planning.

Membership

Two representatives of each of the six Party Groups.

No. of Meetings

Three.

Recommendation

The generic Terms of Reference of the new Transformation Committee includes a responsibility to the Council to *“prepare for the new powers of community planning and the general power of competence”*.

Therefore, it is recommended that this Group is not reconstituted and that it be a matter for the Transformation Committee to decide how it wishes to progress.

Emergency and Severe Weather Working Group

Terms of Reference:

- provide oversight of the implementation of the recommendations in the Council's 2008 Belfast Flooding Report;
- provide political influence and leadership for stakeholders and partners involved in flood work in Belfast; and
- support community engagement in flood work in Belfast.

Membership

One representative of each of the six Party Groups.

No. of Meetings

One.

Recommendation

It is recommended that, given that the Group only meets in times of emergency and on an ad-hoc basis, that it be reconstituted.

Good Relations Partnership

Terms of Reference

- to promote equality of opportunity in the discharge of the Council's responsibilities, taking into account the needs of persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation, of men and women generally, of persons with a disability and persons without and of persons with dependants and persons without;
- to promote tolerance and understanding throughout the City by providing support, including the equitable use of available budgets, for appropriate initiatives which celebrate the cultural diversity of Belfast;
- to promote good relations between people of different religious and political beliefs and different racial groups in every aspect of Council activities; and
- to use the Council's influence as a democratically elected body, providing civic leadership to the City, to promote good relations throughout society.

Membership

One representative of each of the six Party Groups plus 16 independent Members.

No. of Meetings

Recommendation

The Committee has already agreed to reappoint the membership of the Partnership. In addition, at its meeting on 21st February, the Committee authorised funding of £3,000 to be made available for the hiring of independent consultants to undertake a review of the Good Relations Partnership.

It is recommended that the Partnership continues to operate until 31st March, 2015 or until the review has been completed, whichever is earliest.

Governance Working Group

The purpose of the Group is to provide a forum for detailed discussion and engagement on complex issues relating to the future governance arrangements for the Council arising from the proposals contained in the Local Government Reform Bill.

Membership

Two representatives from each of the six Party Groups.

No. of Meetings

Three.

Recommendation

The Shadow Strategic Policy and Resources Committee is responsible for taking the lead role in putting place the relevant structures and resources for the new Council. Its remit includes “the development of new decision making structures, including new political management arrangements and supporting organisation development and design”.

It is recommended that Governance Working Group is not reconstituted as it is now a matter for the Shadow Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to decide how it wishes to progress the future governance arrangements.

Party Group Leaders' Forum

Terms of Reference

- There are not any formal terms of reference for this Group. However, it generally acts as a sounding board for discussion amongst the Party Groups on a more informal basis. The Group has, in the past, been facilitated by Jon Huish and is not regularly attended by Council Officers.

Membership

6 Party Group Leaders.

No. of Meetings

The Group has met on several occasions, usually once every two months.

Recommendation

The Party Leaders' Forum should continue to meet in closed session or with officers support as agreed with the Party Group Leaders

Historic Centenaries Working Group; and Joint Group of Party Leaders' Forum and Historic Centenaries Working Group

The membership of the Historic Centenaries Working Group is currently one Member from each of the six Party Groups.

Terms of Reference for the Group:

- to consider historic centenaries and commemorations which the Council might wish to consider marking over the next decade;
- to establish a core set of principles to be applied in considering those centenaries and in identifying appropriate events to be commemorated;
- to consider what actions the Council might wish to take itself, carry out with others or support the celebrations of others in the marking of those centenaries;
- to give consideration to how a budget might be developed to support any actions agreed; and
- to make recommendations to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee regarding the issues above.

However, the Group has not met as a single body since 14th November, 2011 when it started to meet as Joint Group with the Party Group Leaders' Forum following the decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee:

Members will be aware that SP&R Committee at its meeting on 18 November 2011 agreed:

“that the Party Group leaders meet with the Centenaries Working Group over a defined period of time, as set out (in the report), to explore the possibility of developing a Council strategy on diversity and agree that the Chief Executive’s office liaise with Members to agree a timetable of meetings to be tabled at the first joint meeting of the Historic Centenaries Group.”

Since then the Joint Group has met 22 times, including five times since June, 2013.

Recommendation

Given the significance of the events to be marked in the “Decade of Centenaries 2012-2022”, it is recommended that the Historic Centenaries Working Group (as a separate entity) be wound up, but that the Joint Group be reconstituted until 31st March, 2015, that it be renamed the Diversity Working Group and that the membership consist of the current Party

Group Leaders (or their nominees), together with one other representative from each of the six Political Parties. It is recommended also that the Group meet immediately prior to meetings of the Party Leaders' Forum in order to make the best use of Members' time.

Housing Forum

Terms of Reference

- to receive quarterly updates on the progress of the New Build Social Housing Programme;
- to receive reports on the Physical Programme, including annual cyclical maintenance; and
- to deal with any other Housing-related issues which the Members might wish to raise with Housing officials.

Membership

All Members of the Council.

No. of Meetings

Five.

Recommendation

A number of housing functions are transferring to the Council, that is, responsibility for the registration, renewal and inspection of houses of multiple occupancy (HMOs) and additional powers to deal with unfit housing including the ability to serve repair, closing, deferred action and demolition notices for individual properties. It is therefore recommended that the Housing Forum is reviewed to take account of the new functions

Members' Development Steering Group

Terms of Reference

- to align the Member development strategy to the value creation map;
- to oversee the processes for the identification of development needs at individual, Party Group and Council-wide levels;
- to ensure the appropriate implementation of the Member Development Strategy and associated policies;
- to adopt a structured and timely approach to promoting Member development opportunities;
- to recommend best practice in other Local Authorities which Members can learn from and share with external partners;
- to facilitate Member development activity;

- to develop mechanisms for the evaluation of Member development activities; and
- to review, update and revise the Member development strategy at appropriate levels to ensure that it continues to address the development needs of Members.

Membership

Each of the six Party Group Leaders (or their nominees).

No. of Meetings

The Group has not met since 6th February, 2013.

Recommendation

A member development programme is now underway and it is therefore recommended not to reconstitute this group during the Shadow Period. Instead, member Capacity Building issues will be dealt with through the Budget and Transformation Panel and the future of the Steering Group will be reviewed in April 2015.

North Foreshore Steering Group

Terms of Reference

The remit of the Group is to oversee the management of the North Foreshore, especially in regard to policy, resource allocation and financial risk of future development at the site.

Membership

Two representatives from each of the Political Parties and, as part of that representation, to include the Chairmen of the Strategic Policy and Resources, Parks and Leisure, Health and Environmental Services and Development Committees

No. of Meetings

One.

Recommendation

It is recommended that this group is reconstituted as it continues to be one of the main strategic projects within the Investment Programme.

Reference Group on Older People

Terms of Reference

- to consider the potential future strategic direction of the Council's work on older people to inform the development of the Council's Corporate Strategy and Plan;
- to explore improve methods of maximising the impact which the Council could have in working with other partners to meet older people's needs;

- to work with Belfast Healthy Cities on developing the Council's input to the Intersectoral Plan;
- to have an overseeing role in respect of the Intersectoral Plan on Older People and an advocacy role; and
- to consider the services provided currently by the Council for older people.

Membership

One representative from each of the Political Parties.

No. of Meetings

Eight.

Recommendation

It is recommended that this working group is reconstituted.

Waste Plan Implementation Plan

Terms of Reference

This Working Group was established in June, 2007 and reconvened in August, 2010 to act as a reference point for work on waste management within the Department on important issues such as meeting European Union Landfill and Waste Framework Directives and the establishment of residual waste treatment facilities.

Membership

The Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Health and Environmental Services Committee and one representative from each of the four other Political Parties.

No. of Meetings

The Group has not met since 13th April, 2011.

Recommendation

It is recommended that this Group be dissolved and any issues relating to waste management be reported directly to the Health and Environmental Services Committee.

Area Working Groups

Current Position

The Council, at its meeting on 2nd April, 2012, established five Area Working Groups consisting of:

- North Belfast comprising the Castle and Oldpark District Electoral Areas;
- South Belfast comprising the Balmoral and Laganbank District Electoral Areas;

- East Belfast comprising the Pottinger and Victoria District Electoral Areas;
- West Belfast comprising the Lower Falls and Upper Falls District Electoral Areas; and
- Shankill comprising the Court District Electoral Area

The Party representation on each is as follows:

Party	North	South	East	West	Shankill
SF	5	2	1	8	0
DUP	4	2	6	0	3
SDLP	2	4	0	2	0
ALL	0	2	4	0	0
UUP	1	1	1	0	0
PUP	0	0	1	0	1
IND	0	0	0	0	1
Total	12	11	13	10	5

The terms of reference for the Area Working Groups is as follows:

- act as community advocates to identify local priorities and support effective 'place-shaping';
- make recommendations to SP&R Committee on investment decisions for the local area;
- offer advice and guidance to SP&R Committee and officers in the development and implementation of local projects;
- participate in and facilitate community engagement and communications activities with a wide range of groups on investment in local areas;
- consider other area-based issues as referred by SP&R Committee;
- monitor progress and produce an annual report on performance.

At its meeting on 19th April, 2013, the Committee considered a report on a review of the future work of the Area Working Groups and whilst, the terms of reference were affirmed, the Committee agreed that the following issues would provide a focus for the work of the Groups in the year ahead:

- a continued role in implementing the Local Investment Fund (LIF) and working through the Belfast Investment Fund (BIF) projects and other related capital projects including those emerging under the Social Investment Fund (SIF)
- development of integrated, area-based interventions;
- consideration of the local dimension of key strategic Council projects such as leisure transformation; renewing the routes; tourism etc.;
- using set-piece workshop sessions as 'creative spaces' and opportunities for capacity building, designing interventions and problem solving;

- Member and Officer Development; and
- exploring the organisational consequences of area working and building capacity.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the area working groups are retained in their current format. Also, given that Area Based Working is likely to be more central to the new Council's delivery of services from 2015 onwards, it is recommended that the new members of the Shadow Council are invited to attend the appropriate group.