

Minutes of Budget and Transformation Panel Meeting 13 October 2016

Attendance

Members:

Councillor Lee Reynolds
Councillor Michael Long
Alderman Pat Convery
Councillor Billy Hutchinson
Councillor Deidre Hargey (for Cllr J. McVeigh)
Alderman Jim Rodgers (for Alderman D Browne)

Apologies: Cllr J Hussey, Cllr J McVeigh Alderman D Browne, Cllr M Long

Officers:

Suzanne Wylie, Chief Executive
Ronan Cregan, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Resources
Jill Minne, Director of Organisational Development
John Walsh, Town Solicitor
Kevin Heaney, Programme Manager

1. Organisational Development

The Chief Executive informed the panel that party group briefings has taken place over recent weeks and that a report will be brought into the November meeting of Strategic Policy and Resources Committee. This report will provide an update on the work undertaken to date, the priorities for going forward and the associated timetable.

2. Communications

The panel discussed the importance of the Council taking a proactive approach to communications and ensuring that people are kept fully aware of the positive and beneficial work being undertaken by the Council. This is important for effective reputational management. The importance of utilising new technologies and all forms of media to communicate key messages was highlighted by Members. Communications to be a standing item on future panel meetings.

3. Finance & Efficiency

The Director of Finance and Resources informed the panel that the Council is working closely with Land and Property Services to assess the projected position around the growth (or otherwise) of the EPP/rate – so as to ensure that the estimating process is as prudent as possible. A report will be brought to SP&R Committee in November 2016. The panel was informed that there would no recommendations contained within this report regarding reallocations for non-recurrent spend in 17/18 financial year.

The Director of Finance and Resources highlighted that consideration is being given to how resources can be appropriately aligned to support the delivery of the key priorities emerging from the Belfast Agenda. During discussions the importance of securing investment and bringing forward regeneration schemes within the city (and city centre) was highlighted as key levers to increase the city's rates base and enable the Council to reinvest in capital projects the city and in front-line services.

4. Diversity Working Group

The members agreed that a further meeting be held to discuss the future role and remit of the Diversity Working Group. During discussion Members highlighted the importance of developing an annual programme of events.

5. Advocacy / City Regions Update

The Chief Executive reminded the panel of the key dates for meetings relating to the city regions piece and agreed to recirculate the details to party group leaders.

6. Sunday Trading

The panel was informed that a report will be presented to SP&R Committee in October seeking approval for the Council to undertake an initial consultation on the proposal to designate the Belfast district area as a 'holiday resort' for the purpose of extending Sunday trading hours during 18 Sunday's between March and October. It was highlighted that this would boost the local economy and help further enhance the city's tourism offering.

7. Declarations of Interest

The Town Solicitor informed the panel that a report will be presented to SP&R Committee in October which seeks to provide greater clarity for Members with regards to their Declaration of Interest duties under Section 28 of the 1972 Act and the NI Code of Conduct for Councillors.

8. Planning Applications

The Chief Executive informed the panel of the applications that were being presented to the Planning Committee in October.

9. AOB

(i) Peace IV

The Chief Executive updated the panel on the Peace IV Shared Space funding bids submitted to SEUPB and that supplementary information has recently been submitted to support the bid.

(ii) Audit

Members acknowledged the overall importance of Audit and sought to be keep up-to-date of any significance matters which may be of relevance. This would be included as an agenda item on the Budget Panel at regular intervals.

(iii) Derelict Buildings

Members requested that a report be brought to a future meeting of SP&R Committee outlining the current position in relation to the powers available to councils to address issues around derelict and dangerous buildings and outlining any proposed changes which would help.

(iv) City Hall Charging Points

The Director of Finance and Resources informed the panel that a report is to be brought to SP&R Committee in October outlining proposals for the installation of solar power charging points in the grounds of City Hall. The panel requested that the proposed locations should be outlined in this report for members' consideration.

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