

## **Minutes of Budget and Transformation Panel Meeting 9 October 2014**

### **1. Attendance**

Members:

Councillor Lee Reynolds (Chair)  
Alderman David Browne  
Councillor Deidre Hargey  
Councillor Maire Hendron  
Councillor Billy Hutchinson  
Councillor Michael Long  
Councillor Pat McCarthy for Councillor Tim Attwood  
Alderman Gavin Robinson

Apologies:

Councillor Tim Attwood  
Councillor Jim McVeigh

Officers:

Suzanne Wylie, Chief Executive  
Ronan Cregan, Director of Finance and Resources  
Andrew Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure  
Jill Minne, Director of Organisational Development  
Mark McBride, Head of Finance and Performance

### **2. Leisure Transformation Programme**

The Director of Parks and Leisure provided an update on the leisure transformation programme including the development of the financial agreement and service specification as well as the arrangements for leasing, maintenance and mobilisation which will take place prior to the transfer date. Clarification of the roles of Council and GLL in relation to reactive and planned maintenance was provided. The Panel noted the progress and the ongoing engagement with the trade unions and that the application to NILGOSC by GLL for admission to the pension scheme on an “open basis” had been successful.

The Director advised that a full report would be presented to the October SP&R Committee highlighting key areas for decision regarding finalising agreements, staffing issues, governance and accountability, assets planning and assurance arrangements.

The Director of Organisational Development confirmed that all staff in Leisure who had requested VR have been placed on notice; that GLL has been accepted into NILGOSC; that GLL would not be using zero hours contracts, would use the list of casual staff currently held by the Council, would provide apprentices and would be a living wage employer. Work is ongoing with TU's regarding employment policies and procedures, rates of pay and staffing structure.

It was agreed that “session staff” would be a better description than casual staff.

It was noted that proposals regarding the structure of the Active Belfast Board, including the designated number of Elected Members, would be presented to SP&R on the 17 October 2014. The Director of Parks and Leisure advised that these proposals would reflect legal advice and best practice in order to ensure good governance while limiting the risk to the

charitable status of the Trust. It was noted that the Board would provide regular reports to SP&R.

The Panel asked that the Director to seek further guidance on the scope for Elected member representation on the Board before the SP&R Committee.

### **3. Programme of Work**

The Chief Executive advised Members are entering a period of significant decision making which would include;

- The setting of the district rate for the new Council (which must be struck by mid-February)
- The form of political governance and decision making that will be used in the new Council
- The design of the new organisation
- The new Corporate Plan, setting out how Council will work towards achieving Members' ambition and priorities for the city – the corporate plan must be ready for April 2015.
- The strategic direction – emerging “Belfast Agenda” or set of city outcomes and priorities that will underpin all of these.

It was agreed that half day (approx 4 hour session) Party Group Briefings should be arranged for November culminating in a strategic planning workshop with all Members on Wednesday 26 November 2014.

The potential need for two Shadow SP&R meetings in December, to discuss the setting of the rate, was also noted.

### **4. Rates Convergence**

The Director of Finance and Resources advised that following the completion rates convergence consultation, it was expected that the Finance Minister would announce confirmation of the Rates Convergence Relief Scheme within the next two weeks.

The Director advised that specific information on rates convergence and the relief arising from the scheme would be distributed to those ratepayers in the transferring areas as soon as possible after the announcement.

### **5. Funding Issues**

The Director of Finance and Resources referred to recent announcements by government departments of reductions or removal of funding streams in 2015/16. He highlighted areas where this funding had been used to support tourism activities and events in Belfast in 2014/15.

The Director also advised that the letter of offer from OFMDFM for good relations funding for 2014/15 was £99k below the indicative allocation and that this could impact on tranche 2 of the good relations grants programme. The Director agreed that he would confirm whether the shortfall could be met from within the 2014/15 Health and Environmental Services cash limit, should SP&R wish to approve the reallocation of under spends within the Department to the good relations grant programme.

It was also noted that the impact of the reductions in government grant funding for 2015/16 would have to be considered by the Shadow SP&R Committee as part of the rate setting process.

The Panel noted the request from the Ulster Orchestra for the Council to enter into a one off 'cash deficiency agreement' as well as proposals for a 5 year rent free period for the Waterfront and Ulster Halls to stabilise the financial position of the Orchestra.

Members expressed concern at the level of one off commitment being requested, especially as it appeared that no other source of funding had been secured. It was agreed that the one off funding requested should be submitted to the SP&R Committee on the 17 October for consideration, but that as the "rent free" request would impact on the revenue estimates of the Development Department in 2015/16, it should be recommended to SP&R that this element of the request should be referred to the Shadow SP&R Committee for consideration as part of the rate setting process for 2015/16.

## **6. Members Capacity Building**

The Director of Organisational Development provided an update on the Member Capacity Building Programme. Following the completion of the Induction programme the following phases of the capacity building programme will start.

- Generic Skills Programme
- Tax Expense Allowance and Deductions
- Planning (bespoke training and study visit to GB)
- City Wide Site Visits
- The Leadership Academy

It was also noted that the council would seek Charter plus status for the Elected Member Development Programme by March 2015.

## **7. OD – LGA Corporate Peer Challenge**

The Director of Organisational Development outlined the details of the two pieces of work the Council will be undertaking with the Local Government Association to develop the new organisation structure – the Corporate Peer Challenge and the Decision Making and Accountability Analysis.

The Panel noted the overview of the work and the timeframes (Peer Challenge to take place for four days during the last two weeks of January 2015).

## **8. Accommodation Update**

The Panel noted the update from the Chief Executive on the temporary office accommodation which would be available for transferring and decanted staff.

## **9. Date of Next Meetings**

Thursday 20 November 2014 @ 12.00 noon  
Thursday 10 December 2014 @ 12.00 noon