

Minutes of Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum

13th February 2020

Attendance

Members:

Alderman Brian Kingston (Chair)
Councillor George Dorrian
Councillor Billy Hutchinson
Councillor Donal Lyons
Councillor Mal O'Hara
Councillor Michael Long
Councillor Ronan McLaughlin (for Cllr Beattie)

Officers:

Suzanne Wylie, Chief Executive
Ronan Cregan, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Resources
John Walsh, City Solicitor
Nigel Grimshaw, Director of City and Neighbourhood Services
Alistair Reid, Director of Planning and Place
Sean Dolan, Acting Director City Regeneration and Development (for item 3)
Jim Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer (for item 7)
Joanne Delaney, Strategic Performance Manager (secretariat)

Apologies: Councillors Beattie and Ferguson, Alderman Copeland

1. Waste Management for 2020 and Engagement with TU's

The Director of City & Neighbourhood Services provided an update on Waste Management issues and ongoing engagement with Trade Unions. He advised that following these discussions a joint statement from Management and Trade Unions on work patterns and conditions would be issued in due course.

2. Finance

Quarter 3 2019/20

The Director of Finance and Resources circulated a briefing outlining the 2019-20 Quarter 3 financial position which would be presented to members at the February SP&R Committee. He also advised that an additional 3 requests for funding had been received, these would be included in the report for consideration of the Committee. Members indicated that they would be minded to support some funding for the Tribunal Service but requested that Officers liaise with DfC officials to determine if funding from the Department would become available. It was agreed that a verbal update would be provided to the Committee.

3. Strategic Sites Assessment

The Acting Director of City Regeneration and Development provided the Forum with an update on the ongoing work on the Strategic Site Assessment piece for the INW Northern Cluster and the proposed approach for progressing the engagement strategy and the development agreement process. Meetings with local communities and political representatives are currently ongoing and will be completed prior to a report being brought to CG&R and SP&R Committees in April.

4. Substitute Members Policy

The City Solicitor circulated a discussion paper on a proposed Councillor Substitution Scheme, which would allow for a member from the same party to act as a substitute for the duration of a committee meeting. He advised that such a scheme would need to be further developed and he welcomed feedback from members of the Forum. It was agreed that the City Solicitor would arrange to discuss with the Local Government Policy Division and a more detailed report brought back to a future meeting.

5. Process of Managing Notice of Motions

The City Solicitor circulated an updated proposal on a process for dealing with Notices of Motion. It was noted that Party Group Briefings had been held to discuss the proposals in more detail. A report will now be brought to February SP&R Committee.

6. E- Petition

The City Solicitor circulated a discussion paper relating to a Notice of Motion on an E-Petition Mechanism. The Forum discussed a number of alternative options and it was agreed that the City Solicitor would further explore and bring a report back to a future meeting.

7. Webcasting of Committee Meetings

Members had asked for further details in relation to the costs involved in webcasting Committee meetings, the City Solicitor circulated the report at the meeting and the Senior Democratic Services Officer attended to answer any queries on the indicative costings. Other options were discussed including the option of an upgraded audio system that could potentially bookmark committee items. Members agreed that this is further researched and a report is brought back to a future meeting.

8. Update on Party Group Leaders' and Corporate Management Team Planning Day

The PGL/CMT planning session took place on the 5th February and a draft action list for extended meetings of the Forum was circulated for consideration. These extended meetings will be scheduled on a quarterly basis. Issues to be raised at forthcoming Ministerial meetings discussed on the planning day will be circulated to the Forum and a report brought to February SP&R Committee.

9. Planning Update

The Chief Executive updated the Forum on the live planning applications and informed the Forum of the applications that were being presented to the Planning Committee this month and next month.

10. AOB

Bonfire Related Issue

Councillor Dorrian raised an issue in relation to Bonfires. It was agreed that the Director of City & Neighbourhoods services would arrange a meeting with East Belfast Councillors and the bonfire representatives to discuss.

Queen's Award for Voluntary Service

Councillor O' Hara raised a request he had received from Philip McGarry to present to the Forum on the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service. The Forum agreed to the request to invite him to a future meeting.

Special Meeting – Bi Lingual Leisure Signage

The Forum noted that a Special meeting was being arranged for Party Group Leaders on Thursday 20th February to discuss Bi Lingual Leisure Signage. It was agreed that a recent Notice of Motion in relation to Irish Language Street Signage Policy would also be added to the agenda.

Lord Mayor's event

Members noted that the Lord Mayor was hosting an event in City Hall on Saturday 7th March, to mark the positive contribution made by community groups in our City. An information leaflet for the event has been circulated to all Members.

Meeting – Flags and Banners

The Chief Executive advised that following a Notice of Motion raised on Flags and Banners a meeting has been arranged for the Party Group Leaders to meet with PSNI and the Department for Infrastructure. The meeting will take place on 3rd March at 8.30am and a meeting request will be circulated.