

Minutes of Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum

16th March 2022

Attendance

Members:

Councillor Billy Hutchinson
Councillor Emmet Mc Donough-Brown (for Councillor Nuala McAlister)
Councillor Donal Lyons
Councillor Mal O'Hara
Alderman Brian Kingston
Councillor Ciaran Beattie
Alderman Sonia Copeland
Councillor Fiona Ferguson

Apologies: Councillor Nuala McAlister, Councillor Áine Groogan

Officers:

John Walsh, City Solicitor
John Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy
Rose Crozier, Director of City and Neighbourhood Services
Siobhan Toland, Director of City and Neighbourhood Services
Christine Sheridan, Head of Human Resources
Trevor Wallace, Head of Finance
Emer Husbands, Strategic Performance Manager (secretariat)

1. Industrial Action

The Head of Human Resources provided details of proposed Industrial Action, week commencing 21st March, from members of the Unite union in relation to their opposition to the agreed pay award. She reminded Members that the pay award is agreed nationally and therefore the Council has no direct control in pay negotiations. The panel was also updated on possible disruption to services which at this stage is unclear but would be kept under review and regular communication would be provided to members and the public throughout the week. Members asked if a meeting could be held with the trade unions, even at this late stage, to discuss if the strike action could be avoided. Given that this is a regional dispute and affects all local councils as well as NIHE and the Education Authority the City Solicitor agreed to raise it through SOLACE and NILGA.

2. Organisational Recovery

The Director of City and Neighbourhood Services outlined the ongoing plans for organisational recovery, including the prioritisation of frontline services, guidance in relation to social distancing and the phased return to the office. Members were reminded that a joint working group had been progressing the plans for this for a number of months with full consultation with services and trade unions. An updated report will be presented to a future meeting of the SP and R Committee.

3. Funding Requests

The Head of Finance outlined two requests for funding which had been received and will be presented to the March SP and R Committee meeting for consideration. He reminded members that there was no allocated budget for these requests but they do fall under the Council's discretionary spend policy.

4. Planning Update

The City Solicitor informed the panel there were no significant updates in relation to planning that had not been highlighted at the February meeting.

5. Queens Platinum Jubilee Funding

The Director of City and Neighbourhood Services provided an update on the process and timeline for applications for events to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. The application process will open next week through the CFNI portal. There will also be a link on the Council Website. The Director will write to party group leaders next week confirming dates for the application process and keep them advised of numbers of applications received. Consideration was asked to be given to maximising the number of applicants receiving the funding.

6. AOB

Future Updates

Requests were made for updates at the next meeting on Enhanced Cultural Funding and the Leisure Transformation Programme.

Crisis In Ukraine

The Director of City and Organisational Strategy informed the Members that the response to supporting refugees from Ukraine was moving at pace and it was likely that council would have to allocate resources at short notice over the coming weeks under delegated

authority. He hoped to get more details in relation to timeframes and possible numbers of refugees in the coming days.