

Council

SPECIAL MEETING OF BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

Held in the City Hall on Monday, 9th March, 2020
at 5.30 o'clock p.m., pursuant to notice.

Members present: The Right Honourable the Lord Mayor (Councillor D. Baker) (Chairperson); the Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor McReynolds); the High Sheriff (Councillor Verner); Aldermen Copeland, Haire, Rodgers, Sandford and Spence; and Councillors Black, Brooks, Bunting, Canavan, Carson, Matt Collins, Corr, de Faoite, Donnelly, Dorrian, Ferguson, Flynn, Garrett, Graham, Groogan, Groves, Heading, Hussey, Hutchinson, M. Kelly, T. Kelly, Kyle, Long, Lyons, Magennis, McAteer, McDonough-Brown, McKeown, McLaughlin, McMullan, Murphy, Newton, O'Hara and Walsh.

Summons

The Chief Executive submitted the summons convening the meeting.

Apologies

Apologies were reported on behalf of Aldermen Kingston and McCoubrey and Councillors S. Baker, Beattie, Cobain, Michael Collins, Gormley, Hanvey, Howard, Magee, Maskey, McAllister, McCusker, Mulholland, Nicholl, Pankhurst, Smyth and Whyte.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor McKeown declared an interest in respect of the motion on the St. Patrick's Day Event in that he was employed by the Public Health Agency and left the meeting whilst this item was under discussion.

Request to Address the Council

The Chief Executive informed the Council that a request had been received from Ms. J. Cummings, Flybe employee, Mr. G. Brash, from Unite the Union, and Mr. C. Robb, British Airline Pilots Association, to address the Council in advance of the motion on Flybe Airline, which was being proposed by the Lord Mayor, Councillor D. Baker.

The Council approved the request and the deputation was welcomed to the meeting.

Mr. Brash stated that, from a Union prospective, the Flybe collapse had massive repercussions on Flybe staff and other workers throughout the supply chain. He referred to the impact on the Northern Ireland economy and that the Union was calling for the

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airport to come back into public service authority and asking for Councillors to lobby MLAs and local politicians to secure funding to allow that to happen. He referred to the cherry picking of the routes by other airlines and how this would not secure jobs and that an airline needed to be based at the City airport for this to happen.

Ms. Jennings advised that she had worked at Flybe for 19 years. She outlined the impact which the collapse of the airline would have personally on her and her colleagues financially, their lack of knowledge regarding the benefits system and moving forward. She then highlighted the number of workers who would be affected and the impact the collapse of Flybe would have on the passengers who used the service.

Mr. Robb highlighted the fact that Flybe had successfully provided a service to Northern Ireland for the past forty years. He referred to the Airport Operators Certificate, which was held by Flybe, which any airline needed to operate commercially and which would only be in place for less than 30 days, therefore time was of the essence to salvage the situation. He referred to the daily flights and routes undertaken by Flybe and indicated that no other airline was in a position to replace those, and therefore support the Northern Ireland economy, as they were more leisure orientated and were currently scaling back operations due to COVID-19, and did not have the resources in place to operate a seventy aircraft network. He concluded by highlighting the services the company provided and the class of passengers, such as business, sporting and leisure, who used the service.

The Lord Mayor thanked the deputation for their presentation.

The Council noted the information which had been provided and that it would have an opportunity to discuss the issue later in the meeting.

Motion – Flybe Airline

Moved by the Lord Mayor, Councillor D. Baker,
Seconded by Councillor McAteer,

“This council notes with grave concern the situation that is unfolding due to the collapse of Flybe. Flybe represented 80% of the total air routes operated through Belfast City Airport.

This collapse meant that overnight hundreds of staff lost their jobs, causing huge devastation and despair for those affected. Therefore Belfast City Council through our economic development unit will work with those affected staff where possible to help them seek an alternative job in the industry through academy's, advice and offer a retraining programme if deemed necessary.

Furthermore, this council is aware of the severe economic impact the collapse of Flybe could have on the local economy. Flybe operated several key routes which were essential for an island economy. It is crucial for this City's economy that these vital air routes are restored.

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As a result, this council will conduct an urgent meeting consisting of the Minister for Economy, Trade Unions, Belfast City Airport and the Belfast MPs to come together and discuss ways to how we can collectively work together to help the staff at Flybe, mitigate the economic impact the FlyBe collapse has on the local economy and to try and restore the vital air links to our City.

At the request of Councillor Heading, the proposer agreed to amend his motion to allow for the inclusion of “and MLAs from each of the Political Parties” after MPs in the final paragraph.

After discussion, the motion, as amended, was put to the meeting and passed.

Alderman Spence

The Lord Mayor advised the Council that this would be the last meeting of the Council at which Alderman Spence would be in attendance following his resignation and he paid tribute to him for the service which she had provided to the Council and his constituents during his time as an Elected Member and wished him well.

Alderman Spence thanked all those who had supported and assisted him during his term of office.

Adjournment

The Council agreed to adjourn for a period of time to allow the Members to give consideration to the motion which was being submitted by the Lord Mayor in relation to the St. Patrick’s Day Event.

(The Council stood adjourned from 6.42p.m. until 7.00p.m.)

Motion – St. Patrick’s Day Event

The Lord Mayor (Councillor D. Baker) proposed:

“Given the growing level of concern in regards to the Covid-19 outbreak and the developments in regards to a number of St Patrick’s Day celebrations throughout this island, Belfast City Council will postpone its St Patricks Day celebration parade as a precaution in the interests of public health and safety.

The motion was seconded by Councillor McLaughlin.

Amendment

The proposer declined a request from Councillor de Faoite to amend his motion with an additional paragraph.

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Accordingly, it was

Moved by councillor de Faoite,
Seconded by Councillor O'Hara.

That the motion standing in the name of the Lord Mayor, Councillor D. Baker, be amended to provide that the following be added to the end:

“Notes the decision of the Government in Dublin to provide a €200m liquidity fund to support businesses and communities, in recognition of the economic impact of coronavirus and the cancellation of major events like St. Patrick’s Day.

Calls on the Finance Minister, Conor Murphy, to prepare a similar package to support businesses and communities in Northern Ireland.”

On a recorded vote, thirteen Members voted for the amendment and twenty-four against and it was declared lost:

<u>For 13</u>	<u>Against 20</u>
The Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor McReynolds); and Councillors Matt Collins, de Faoite, Ferguson, Flynn, Groogan, Heading, M. Kelly, Long, Lyons, McDonough-Brown, McMullan, and O'Hara.	The Lord Mayor (Councillor D. Baker); The High Sheriff (Councillor Verner); Aldermen Copeland, Haire and Sandford; and Councillors Black, Brooks, Bunting, Canavan, Carson, Donnelly, Dorrian, Garrett, Graham, Groves, Hussey, Hutchinson, T. Kelly, Kyle, Magennis, McAteer, McLaughlin, Newton, and Walsh.

After discussion, the motion was put to the meeting and passed, with twenty- four Members voting for and two against.

Lord Mayor
Chairperson