

# Minutes of Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum

## Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> April 2026

### Attendance

Members:

Councillor Micky Murray

Councillor Sarah Bunting

Councillor Brian Smyth

Councillor Séamas de Faoite

Alderman Sonia Copeland

Councillor Ciaran Beattie

Councillor Ryan Murphy (*joined meeting for Cllr Beattie*)

**Apologies:** Councillor Natasha Brennan

### Officers:

John Walsh, Chief Executive

Trevor Wallace, Director of Finance

Colin Campbell, Divisional Solicitor

David Sales, Strategic Director of City & Neighbourhood Services

Sinead Grimes, Director of Property & Projects

Damien Martin, Strategic Director of Place & Economy

Stephen Leonard Director City & Neighbourhood Services (*for Item 3*)

Mark McCann, City Innovation Manager (*for Item 3*)

Brenda Murphy, City Innovation Broker (*for Item 3*)

Jim Girvan Director of Neighbourhood Services (*for Item 6*)

Eunan McConville, Director of Communications, Marketing & External Affairs

Joanne Delaney, Portfolio and Programme Coordinator (secretariat)

## 1. Finance Update

The Director of Finance updated on the current financial position of the Council, Members noted the update and that further discussions will take place at the next Transformation and Efficiency workshop. The Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) will be presented to members at the workshop in order to inform the discussions to ensure integration with both the corporate planning process and capital strategy so that any budgetary gaps can be identified in a timely manner. Members also noted current central government budgetary pressures and the potential implications for Council, updates on this will be provided going forward.

The Director also provided an update on the discretionary funding reserve and advised that significant further funding requests had been received since March SP&R Committee. He outlined for Members a high-level overview of those requests received and provided an update on those requests that February SP&R Committee had approved. Members noted the current

funding allocation available and that recommendations will be included in the report to April SP&R Committee for consideration.

## **2. Events Space**

The Director of Property and Projects presented an update on the work which has taken place to identify and assess suitable event sites across the city following the decision by Council to restore playing pitch provision at the Boucher Road Playing Fields site. The Director outlined the engagement that had taken place to date with key stakeholders and the viable options that have emerged following that process. It was noted that further exploration is required, including site surveys, programming considerations and continued engagement in advance of a detailed proposal being brought to SP&R Committee. The report will be brought to May SP&R Committee in order to allow for exploration work to be undertaken. A number of queries were raised by Members for which the Director provided clarity. In relation to some of the specific queries around event management and infrastructure issues it was agreed that a special PGL's meeting is arranged along with key stakeholders to discuss further.

## **3. Bloomberg Fund Update**

The Director City & Neighbourhood Services and the City Innovation Manager provided an update on the Bloomberg Philanthropies Mayoral Challenge award following acceptance of the letter of offer. It was noted that work will now commence to deliver a two-year programme to transform alleyways across the city that's supportive of a neighbourhood's needs and ambitions. Members noted the key milestones for the programme of work, programme resources and governance arrangements. Members provided feedback in terms of potential piloting approaches for those groups that already existed and the Director to consider further in line with the programme of work going forward. The detail discussed will be included in a City Innovation update report to April SP&R Committee

Arising from discussion, Members made a number of points about the council's alleyway programme including the allocation of funding set aside in specified reserves for the transformation of alleyways. Officers agreed to explore with a view to bringing a further report back to committee.

#### **4. Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann 2026**

The Strategic Director of Place & Economy presented a summary update in relation to the Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann work programme and outlined the work underway across a number of core workstreams including, event management, traffic management and accommodation.

Members raised some points in relation to park and ride arrangements and waste management for which clarity was provided. In relation to a point raised about funding for fringe events the Director to follow up with the Director of Finance. A report on the detail discussed will be brought to April SP&R Committee.

#### **5. Planning Update**

The Strategic Director of Place & Economy updated the Forum on a number of planning matters which were currently live including an update in relation to short term lets.

#### **6. AOB**

##### **Transformation & Efficiency Workshop**

Members agreed that the Transformation and Efficiency workshop be reconvened on Thursday 30 April following postponement of the workshop in March.

##### **Illuminate Requests**

The Divisional Solicitor outlined for Members a number of illuminate requests received. Members noted the following requests would be agreed under the City Solicitors delegated authority.

- **Golf Now Sports Awards** – 17 April 2026
- **Family Memory Walk** – 19 April 2026
- **World Refugee Day** – 20 June 2026
- **Baby Loss Awareness** – 18 October 2026

## **Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund**

The Director of Property and Projects gave an update on the Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund (NRF) and referred to March SP&R Committee whereby Members had asked that consideration is given to options for increasing the fund. The Director outlined the current NRF projects and the anticipated funding gaps for each given the current challenges in the construction industry and the wider global impact on capital projects. The Director did caveat that what was presented to Members was a high level estimate only and that this was subject to fluctuation given the current market. It was noted that any increase in the fund would need to be considered alongside the year end financial position to be presented to SP&R Committee.

Members noted that officers in the Property and Projects Department continue to work closely with applicants to explore other funding streams that could offset any gaps that have arisen.

## **European City of Sport 2026**

The Director of Neighbourhood Services sought the view of Members in relation to the monies allocated by SP&R Committee for the additional programme support for European City of Sport for 2026. It was noted that whilst grass roots participation was the main focus for the monies, sponsorship of sporting bodies events could be considered. The Director to consider the feedback provided and an update brought back in due course.

The Director to follow up on the request for funding for a grass roots project that was highlighted by a Member.

## **Northern Ireland Football Fund**

The Strategic Director of City & Neighbourhood Services and Director of Property and Projects advised that the application process for grassroots football facilities funding across Northern Ireland had recently been launched. Stream two of the programme is open to Councils and Members noted the site that officers recommended putting forward for this funding stream and the rationale for the recommendation proposed. A report will be brought to April SP&R Committee for Members consideration.

## **St George's Market**

The Strategic Director of Place & Economy briefed Members on recent commentary on social media in relation to St George's Market and Members noted the update provided and that the issue was being reviewed by Legal services.