

Zoo Long-Term Financial Sustainability Group

Thursday, 17th September, 2026

MEETING OF THE ZOO LONG-TERM FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY GROUP

Members present: Councillor R. McLaughlin (Chairperson); and
Councillors Brennan, Murphy
and Whyte.

Also attended: Alderman McCullough.

In attendance: Mr. D. Martin, Strategic Director of Place and Economy;
Mr. K. Forster, Director of Economic Development;
Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Property and Projects;
Mr. T. Wallace, Director of Finance;
Ms. L. Frew, Zoo Operations Manager;
Ms. A. Fox, Assets Development Officer;
Mr. F. Grant, Operations Development Manager;
Ms. S. Kalke, Client Manager;
Ms. L. Frew, Zoo Operations Manager; and
Mr. C. Mealey, Committee Services Officer.

Election of Chairperson

The Group agreed that Councillor R. McLaughlin would assume the role of the Chairperson for the meeting.

Apologies

No apologies were received.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 27th May, 2026, were taken as read and signed as correct.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest reported.

Recap and Updates

The Strategic Director of Place and Economy provided the Group with a recap of the key issues discussed at its workshop held in March, 2026, and its previous meeting in May, 2026.

The Operations Development Manager provided the Group with an overview of recent updates relating to the Zoo.

Visitor and Financial Data

The Group was provided with an update in respect of the Zoo's visitor and financial performance for Quarter 1 of 2026/27.

The Operations Manager provided the Group with an overview of the visitor data for Q1, which included the monthly footfall figures in comparison with the same period of last year, a five-year overview covering the period from 2021-22 to 2025-26, and information relating to the income and spend per visitor.

In relation to the financial performance of the Zoo, the Group was presented with Q1 figures for 2026/27 alongside comparative figures for the same period of 2025/26, a five-year financial overview covering the period from 2021-22 to 2025-26, pricing, and income and expenditure data.

The Strategic Director of Place and Economy outlined for the Group's information some of the key issues and challenges faced by the Zoo during the first quarter.

During discussion, officers answered a range of questions from the Members in relation to the Zoo's expenditure against income, footfall, pricing, and associated costings for maintenance issues.

Noted.

Zoo Annual Plan for 2026/27 and 2027/28

The Group was provided with an overview of the Zoo's Annual Plan highlights for 2026/27, which included an update on staff recruitment, the implementation of additional health and safety measures, income opportunities, the addition of new animals, site improvements, and the actions undertaken and planned in the short to medium term.

The Operations Manager outlined the key considerations looking forward to the Zoo's plan for 2027/28, including challenges, procurement exercises and capital works.

The Assets Development Officer provided the Group with an update in respect of corporate partnerships and the Zoo's pricing structure.

Noted.

Proposed Site Visits

The Director of Property and Projects highlighted a number of potential site visits for the Group's consideration.

The Group agreed to undertake a site visit to Dublin Zoo and Emerald Park, and the Director advised that a date would be confirmed in due course.

Operational Models

The Strategic Director of Place and Economy provided the Group with brief overview in respect of operation models and advised that, following the Group's site visits, further information would be brought back for its consideration.

Noted.

Chairperson

