

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Thursday, 9th July, 2020

SPECIAL MEETING OF STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor Black (Chairperson);
Aldermen Dorrian, Haire, Kingston and Sandford;
Councillors Beattie, Bunting, Carson, Garrett,
Groogan, Heading, Long, Lyons, McAllister,
McDonough-Brown, McLaughlin, Murphy,
Nicholl, Spratt and Walsh.

Also attended: Councillors de Faoite, Flynn, T. Kelly, Kyle and O'Hara.

In attendance: Mr. R. Cregan, Director of Finance and Resources;
Mr. J. Walsh, City Solicitor;
Mr. R. Black, Director of Neighbourhood Services;
Mrs. S. Toland, Director of City Services;
Mrs. A. Allen, Neighbourhood Services Manager;
Mrs. L. McLornan, Democratic Services Officer; and
Mrs. S. Steele, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

No apologies were received.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

Restricted Item – Delegated Matter

Bonfire Update

The Committee was reminded that the Council's Bonfire Governance Arrangements stated that the Press and public will be excluded from meetings in relation to bonfire-related issues having regard to the sensitive nature of the business to be transacted and for the protection of officers who might be required to provide information to assist in decision-making. In addition the information provided was to be treated as sensitive and confidential.

Accordingly, the Committee agreed that the Press and public be excluded from the meeting.

The Committee was advised also that, in accordance with Standing Order 37a - Duties of Committees: Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, it had full delegated authority to take decisions in relation to bonfire related issues.

The Director of Neighbourhood Services presented a report which provided details on a number of bonfire sites and current issues on which the Committee was asked if it wished to make any decision.

Adam Street

The Director of Neighbourhood Services indicated that a bonfire had been partially constructed close to an interface gate. He advised that there had not been a bonfire at this location for significant number of years. The Committee was advised that no community resolution had been possible to date and that the NI Fire and Rescue Service had indicated that it had concerns regarding a local warehouse within close proximity to the bonfire. He outlined that Department for Communities and the Department for Infrastructure, as the main landowners, had indicated their wish to remove the bonfire, given the above circumstances and had requested access to the Council contractor.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor Beattie
Seconded by Councillor McDonough Brown,

That the Committee agrees to give the Department for Communities and the Department for Infrastructure access to its contractor to enable the removal of the bonfire at Adam Street, including the associated Officer support to manage the contractor, noting that there would be a full cost reimbursement from both DfC and DfI.

On a vote by show of hands, fourteen Members voted for the proposal and six against and it was declared carried.

Pitt Park

The Director advised the Members that a bonfire had been held at this location for a number of years and advised that Belfast City Council was the landowner. However, there was some concern this year in that NIFRS felt that it was slightly larger than it had been in previous years and had indicated it was not possible to rule out possible damage to neighbouring property.

A Member stated that he had liaised with the NIFRS immediately prior to the meeting and that it was his understanding that the matter was being addressed.

The Committee noted the update in respect of the bonfire.

Ashdale Street

The Members were advised that, whilst material had been gathered at the site, the erection of the bonfire had not yet commenced. The Director advised that Belfast City Council was the landowner of the site. A number of Members expressed concerns at the proposed location for the bonfire given its close proximity to local shops. The Committee was advised that a bonfire had been located at this site in 2019 but that, following concerns raised by the NIFRS, the bonfire builders had consented to its removal.

A Member advised that elected representatives had been liaising with the bonfire builders at the site and indicated that they were willing to remove the materials from the site.

Following discussion, it was agreed that the Council contractor be appointed to remove the materials at Ashdale Street carpark, in the event that they were not removed by the bonfire builders.

Contractor and Resources

The Committee agreed that any decisions regarding the aforementioned decisions would be undertaken subject to the capacity of a contractor and any necessary police support and ongoing risk assessments. It was noted that this might include further requests from other landowners, who might request the use of the Council's contractor.

Call-in

The Committee agreed, in accordance with Standing Order 47 (a) (2) (c), that the aforementioned decisions would not be subject to call-in, on the basis that an unreasonable delay could be prejudicial to the Council's or the public's interest.

Chairperson