

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 26th January, 2024

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

HELD IN THE LAVERY ROOM AND
REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor Black (Chairperson);
Alderman McCoubrey; and
Councillors Beattie, Bunting, Cobain, de Faoite,
M. Donnelly, R.M. Donnelly, Ferguson, Garrett,
Hanvey, Long, Maghie, Maskey, I. McLaughlin,
R. McLaughlin, Nelson, Nic Bhranair, Smyth
and Whyte.

In attendance: Mr. J. Walsh, Chief Executive;
Ms. S. McNicholl, Deputy Chief Executive/Director of
Corporate Services;
Ms. N. Largey, Interim City Solicitor/Director of Legal and
Civic Services;
Mr. J. Tully, Strategic Director of City and Organisational
Strategy;
Mr. D. Martin, Strategic Director Place and Economy;
Mr. T. Wallace, Director of Finance;
Mr. J. Greer, Director of Economic Development; and
Mr. J. Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

No apologies were received.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

Restricted Items

The information contained in the reports associated with the following three items is restricted in accordance with Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

Resolved – That the Committee agrees to exclude the members of the press and public from the meeting during discussion of the following ten items as, due to the nature of the items, there would be a disclosure of exempt information as described in Section 42(4) and Section 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

The Members were also reminded that the content of 'restricted' reports and any discussion which took place during closed session must be treated as 'confidential information' and that no such information should be disclosed to the public as per Paragraph 4.15 of the Code of Conduct.

Revenue Estimates and District Rate 2024/25

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 19th January, it has agreed the cash limit for the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for 2024/25 and the recommended cash limits for the People and Communities, City Growth and Regeneration and the Planning Committees, subject to consultation with the other Committees prior to the special meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 26th January.

He reported that those Committee had now met and agreed their cash limits. Accordingly, he submitted a report in this regard, together with recommendations on the district rate for 2024/25.

After discussion, the Committee agreed to defer consideration of the report on the Revenue Estimates and District Rate 2024/25 to afford officers the opportunity to attempt to address those issues raised in respect of the pay and grading review.

It was agreed also that a special meeting of the Council be held to consider the setting of the district rate.

Extended Cultural Support Programme

The Members were reminded that, during discussion at the January meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, officers were asked to consider support for groups that have been underrepresented within Belfast City Council's historic funding programmes. This was also discussed at the January meeting of the City, Growth and Regeneration Committee.

Accordingly, the Director of Economic Development submitted a report seeking approval to progress with an extended cultural support programme to provide co-design support for groups requiring additional assistance to overcome barriers to accessing funding and to agree additional investment to support Belfast's bid for Fleadh Cheoil.

After discussion, the Committee agreed to defer consideration of the report to enable a further report on the full Belfast 2024 Programme to be presented to the special meeting of the Committee agreed earlier in the meeting.

Pay and Grading Review

Pursuant to its decision of 19th January, the Committee considered a further report on details of the proposed new Pay and Grading structure for NJC staff on Belfast City Council Terms and Conditions and seeking the Committee's approval to note the next steps within the Industrial Relations Framework.

The Committee:

- Noted the next steps to assess the equality impact of various proposals for a non-consolidated payment;
- Noted the proposed next steps to bring a preferred option back to the Committee for approval;
- Noted that following a decision of the strategic Policy and Resources Committee a formal offer will be issued to Trades Unions for the agreed pay and grading model;
- Noted that the costs for the new pay and grading model have been included in the rate setting process for Financial Year 2024/25;
- Noted that the cost for an updated non-consolidated payment for 2023/24 are not yet finalised and will be offset by either in-year underspends and/or realignment of specified reserves; and
- Noted the proposed next phase of the Pay and Grading Review.

Chairperson