

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Monday, 9th July, 2018

SPECIAL MEETING OF STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Members present: Alderman Rodgers (Chairperson);
the Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor McDonough-Brown);
Aldermen Browne, Haire and Spence; and
Councillors Attwood, Beattie, Campbell, Carson,
Garrett, Graham, Hutchinson, Long, McAteer, O'Donnell,
Reynolds and Walsh.

Also attended: Councillor Armitage.

In attendance: Mrs. S. Wylie, Chief Executive;
Mr. J. Walsh, City Solicitor;
Mr. N. Grimshaw, Director of City and
Neighbourhood Services; and
Mr. H. Downey, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies were reported on behalf of Alderman Convery and Councillors Craig and McAllister.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

Audio Recording of Meeting

The Committee agreed that the meeting be audio recorded.

Restricted Item

The information relating to the following item 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 Committee meeting during discussion of this item as, due to the nature of the item, there would be a disclosure of exempt information as described in Section 42(4) and Section 6 of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014.

THE COMMITTEE DEALT WITH THE FOLLOWING ITEM IN PURSUANCE OF THE POWERS DELEGATED TO IT UNDER STANDING ORDER 37(a)

Contingencies Relating to the Summer Months

The Director of City and Neighbourhood Services provided an update on a number of potentially problematic bonfires across the City and confirmed that the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service had advised that, given the current scale of the Bloomfield Walkway structure, it would be required to put measures in place to protect a number of local properties.

The Chief Executive reported that the Department for Infrastructure, which owned the land on which the Bloomfield Walkway bonfire had been built, had indicated in an email that, whilst the structure was deemed to be well outside the safety limit, it still considered it to be manageable. The Department had indicated also that, in light of the progress which had been made by the East Belfast Community Initiative, it felt that intervention would not be appropriate at this stage and that the situation would be kept under review. In addition, the Northern Ireland Office, which the Committee on 5th June had agreed should be made aware of the invidious position which councils faced in dealing with bonfire issues, had confirmed that it had been in contact with the Department for Infrastructure, the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service and the Police Service of Northern Ireland to discuss bonfires and had requested regular updates.

The Chief Executive highlighted the fact that, on several occasions that morning, media coverage had referred to the role of Council officers in the decision-making process around bonfire issues. She tabled for the Committee's approval a draft position statement, which referred to the Council's duty of care to its staff and which stressed that its approach to managing bonfires was led by Elected Members and that a Member-led decision-making process had been agreed, which allowed for bonfires to be considered on a site-by-site basis.

After discussion, the Committee agreed:

- i. to endorse the position statement on Council staff and the bonfire decision-making process;
- ii. that an urgent meeting be sought with senior representatives of the Department for Infrastructure, the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service and the Police Service of Northern Ireland, to be attended by the Party Leaders; and
- iii. that a special meeting of the Committee be held immediately following the inter-agency meeting to allow Members to be briefed on the outcome.

Call-in

The Committee agreed, in accordance with Standing Order 47 (2) (c), that the 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