

# **Social Policy Working Group**

Tuesday, 18th October, 2022

## **MEETING OF THE SOCIAL POLICY WORKING GROUP HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS**

- Members present: Councillor O'Hara (Chairperson);  
Alderman Copeland; and  
Councillors Bunting and McLaughlin.
- In attendance: Mr. J. Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy;  
Ms. N. Bohill, Head of Commercial and Procurement  
Services;  
Mr. C. Campbell, Divisional Solicitor;  
Mr. K. Heaney, Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty;  
Ms. C. Patterson, Inclusive Growth-Policy and  
Programme Officer;  
Ms. C. Hutchinson, Strategic Planning and Policy Officer;  
Ms. N. Irvine, Enterprise and Business Growth Officer;  
Mr. J. Uprichard, Business and Research Development  
Manager;  
Ms. C. Sheridan, Head of Human Resources;  
Ms. M. Robinson, Employability and Skills Officer;  
Mr. L. Murray, Strategic Category Manager;  
Ms. V. Smyth, Democratic Services Officer;  
Mrs. S. Steele, Democratic Services Officer;  
Dr. L. Boreland, Strategic Investment Board; and  
Mr. G. Kirk, Regional Director, GLL.

### **Apologies**

An apology for the inability to attend was received from Councillor Hutchinson.

### **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of 16th August were taken as read and signed as correct.

### **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were reported.

### **Actions Updates**

The Working Group noted the actions update report which had been circulated in advance.

A Member raised the matter relating to the reliance on agency staff. In response, the Director of City and Organisational Strategy advised that a report was going to October's Strategic Policy and Resources Committee meeting in relation to this and that Terms of Reference would need to be agreed for approval.

### **Social Value and Public Procurement Note Implementation – Presentation from SIB**

The Head of Commercial and Procurement Services introduced Dr. L. Boreland, SIB - Social Value Unit, who delivered a presentation on 'Scoring Social Value' which set out requirements of Procurement Policy Note (PPN) 01/21 (Scoring Social Value Policy), outlined the two approaches to scoring social value, detailed the implementation process of PPN 01/21 and showcased the outcomes and impact. She informed the Members that the NI Government spend was circa £3 billion annually and Social Value referred to the wider financial and non-financial impacts on the wellbeing of individuals, communities and the environment. Dr. Boreland explained that Social Value derived from a public contract was the positive legacy which would be created through its performance such as a more diverse workforce, fewer single use plastics in the environment and more cohesive communities.

Dr. Boreland advised that from, 1st June 2022, it was mandatory to allocate a minimum of 10% of the award criteria to social value on services and works contracts, with a value above the Public Contract Regulations threshold. For works contracts, the threshold was £5,336,937 and for services contracts the threshold was £138,760. She added that the policy would be reviewed ahead of 2023, scoring would be based on 4 themes, aligned to the Programme for Government, and it included a requirement to consider reserving contracts.

Dr. Boreland provided the Members with details of the two approaches: the Social Value Points approach and the Alternative Approach. She concluded her presentation with a PPN 01/21 implementation timeline emphasising the importance of building the capability and capacity of stakeholders, including the market, through training sessions and the availability of on-demand webinars. She referred Members to a video which showed the outcomes and impact to beneficiaries of Social Value.

Dr. Boreland advised that the SIB website offered a suite of documents, information and on-demand webinars which she encouraged contracting authorities to make use of and highlight to potential suppliers..

A Member enquired about protections around Social Value Procurement and Dr. Boreland provided clarification around the 10% scoring. Dr. Boreland advised that the Central Procurement Department (CPD) was collecting Social Value Procurement data via e-tenders which would inform the review. The importance of contract management in delivering social value was also discussed.

A Member asked for the rationale for the £5.3m in the public contract regulations and she confirmed that CPD and the Department of Finance had set the financial thresholds. In response to questions about its application to supplies contracts and the numbers of contracts focusing on each of the four social value themes, she explained that this would be considered as part of the planned review of the policy.

Noted.

### **Social Impact of Leisure - Presentation from GLL**

Mr. G. Kirk, GLL, delivered a presentation on the Social Impact of Leisure in Belfast. He informed the Members that it was GLL's purpose to improve the physical, mental and social wellbeing of local communities and it was committed to the provision of leisure, fitness and cultural activities and facilities at affordable prices across the city.

He explained that it was GLL's aim to ensure the financial viability of the organisation meeting its charitable social objectives, harnessing employee ownership and maintaining and expanding its existing services while continually exceeding customer expectations. He referred to the Council's investment in the Leisure Transformation Programme and provided statistical and financial insights and a progress update in relation to GLL's award-winning leisure programmes, people, customer service centre and supply chain.

Mr. Kirk extended an invitation to the Social Policy Working Group to visit GLL's customer service centre located at Lanyon Place.

A Member highlighted the health benefits and services that leisure centres offered and asked what more could be done, particularly in areas of deprivation, to improve health outcomes using Whiterock as an example. Mr. Kirk responded that leisure centres should be seen as an accessible space and strong partnerships were needed. In the longer term, the model was likely to transition from focusing on leisure to health outcome delivery, with a reference to the cohabitation model at Grove. He explained that there had been a move from a sport to leisure offer and the direction of travel was towards a health model to achieve a 'Healthy Belfast'.

A Member raised the matter of sustainability within leisure centres and at an operational level referred to the use of plastic cups. Mr. Kirk agreed to follow-up on the issue of single-use plastic cups and advised that GLL had a green agenda around achieving net zero. He added that it was facing a significant increase in the cost of utilities, therefore, there was a focus on financial sustainability. He explained that GLL's utilities in Belfast cost £1.5 million in 2019 and it was expected to rise to £5 million by next year. Mr. Kirk informed the Members that GLL was investing in energy saving technology, for example, the use of pool covers to preserve heating which reduced gas usage and the installation of LED lighting in every venue. He concluded that the energy crisis had sharpened efforts in sustainability and its approach to utilities.

Mr. Kirk was thanked for the work that had been done by GLL in relation to asylum seekers.

The Working Group noted the information which had been provided.

### **Social Value Procurement Reporting**

The Head of Commercial and Procurement Services referred to the draft report on Social Value Procurement Policy Delivery Report 'SV Delivery Report' (Annexe 1), and requested feedback from the Members on the format and content of the report. She explained that there had not been any contracts awarded to date which had included the new approach to including Social Value in tenders that is., SVPP or the CPD Buy Social Model). This was primarily due to the time lag between advertising tenders, evaluating and subsequently awarding.

The Strategic Category Manager provided an overview and explanation around the tables contained within the report. The Working Group agreed that this would provide the detail necessary for oversight as previously discussed and that the report would be brought as a standing item to the Social Policy Working Group meetings.

A Member suggested that the report should also be brought to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee. Following clarification, it was agreed that the report would also be brought to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for notation purpose only, to close the loop on the reporting and to make Members aware.

### **Social Value Procurement Policy (SVPP)**

The Strategic Category Manager brought to the attention of the Members a concern raised about the planned prohibited use of zero hours contracts by suppliers from April 2023 and the potential implications of this. The Social Value Procurement Policy 'SVPP' was applied to any new applicable open tender exercises with approval dated from 1st June 2022.

The Strategic Category Manager explained that Members might wish to consider amending the Social Value Procurement Policy wording to be consistent with the Belfast Business Promise to refer to the responsible and appropriate use of zero-hours contracts rather than prohibiting use of zero hours contracts. Suppliers, through the tender process, would need to demonstrate that any use of zero hours contracts would meet the responsible use threshold. The Head of Commercial and Procurement Services anticipated this would only be used in limited circumstances and would provide the flexibility required for suppliers and employees; whilst still targeting suppliers who misuse zero hours contracts.

With regards to the proposal that the wording in the SV Procurement policy be amended to be aligned to that of the Belfast Promise', it was proposed by Councillor McLaughlin; seconded by Councillor O'Hara: Resolved - that the Working Group would not proceed with the recommendation to update the wording of the Social Value Procurement Policy (SVPP).

With regards to the current wording in the Policy "*Use of zero-hour contracts to be prohibited by all suppliers the council contracts with*", it was agreed that further advice around the wording in the policy would be sought from Legal Services to avoid potential misinterpretation.

### **Belfast Business Promise Update and Current Status**

The Strategic Planning and Policy Officer provided an update on the Belfast Business Promise Progress and an initial high-level indication of the Council's position in relation to gaining accreditation over a 2-year period. It was noted that the Council had many of the foundational aspects in place and that further action on each of the pledges would be required.

Along with the Council, the Members suggested that they would expect to see the city's anchor institutions become early adopters of the Belfast Business Promise.

The Members welcomed the initial assessment of the Council's position and agreed that a focused discussion be scheduled for the February meeting on the Council's

approach and action plan to become an early adopter and to progress with the Belfast Business Promise.

#### **Living Wage Accreditation Update (Verbal Update)**

The Director of City and Organisational Strategy advised that Delegated Authority was approved at August's Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for officers to submit an application for Living Wage Accreditation and that this would be submitted this week.

The Chairperson acknowledged the progress that staff had made in submitting the application.

Noted.

#### **Up-Coming Events: Community Wealth Building Summit and Inclusive Growth Conference**

In order to gauge the Members' interest, the Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti - Poverty provided the Members with details of upcoming events being planned by the Centre for Local Strategies (CLES) and the Centre for Progressive Policy (CPP) / Inclusive Growth Network (IGN) which were scheduled to take place in November 2022 in London and Birmingham.

The Members noted the Community Wealth Building Summit and the Inclusive Growth Conference. The Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty advised that the programme and information about on-line elements of both events would be circulated to Members when available.

It was agreed that the matter of Council representation at the events would be taken to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for approval.

#### **Date of Next Meeting**

It was agreed that the next meeting would be scheduled for Tuesday, 13th December, 2022 at 2.00 p.m.

Chairperson