

Minutes of Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum

Thursday 15th February 2024

Attendance

Members:

Councillor Michael Long
Councillor Ciaran Beattie
Councillor Brian Smyth
Councillor Christina Black
Councillor Áine Groogan (*for Councillor Brian Smyth*)
Councillor Sarah Bunting

Apologies: Councillor Séamas de Faoite, Alderman Sonia Copeland, Chief Executive.

Officers:

Sharon McNicholl Deputy Chief Executive/Strategic Director of Corporate Services
Jim Girvan, Neighbourhood Services Manager (for item 1)
Trevor Wallace, Director of Finance (for Item 2)
Christine Sheridan, Director of Human Resources (for Item 3)
Sinead Grimes, Director of Property & Projects (for item 4 & 7)
Nora Largey, Interim City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services (for Items 5, 6 & 7)
Joanne Delaney, Portfolio and Programme Coordinator (secretariat)

1. Segregation and the Environment

The Neighbourhood Services Manager provided an update on research that was undertaken as part of the Good Relations Action Plan on the links between segregation and its impact on the environment and climate change. He advised that the report had previously been considered by the Shared City Partnership and SP&R Committee and following feedback some revisions had been made. The Neighbourhood Services Manager then outlined the key summary points, the four strategic themes that had emerged from the research and the actions being taken to implement the recommendations within the report. Members noted the next steps to publish and disseminate the report and the report will be circulated to Members following the meeting. In relation to a query raised by a Member it was also agreed to circulate the stakeholder engagement list. Members noted the report would be circulated in confidence at this stage.

2. Finance Update

The Director of Finance presented the Quarter 3 financial position for 2023-24 which would be presented to members at the February SP&R Committee. He outlined for Members the forecasted underspend for year end and noted that no reallocations would be considered until the year end position is presented to SP&R Committee in June 2024. In response to some queries raised by a Member in relation to loss of income outlined and grant allocations the Director provided clarity. He advised that Members would be kept updated as this work progresses.

3. Elected Member Development Programme

The Director of Human Resources provided an update on the Charter Plus Assessment programme of work and outlined the insights and learning Corporate HR had gained from observing another Council Charter Plus assessment panel. She advised that following the recent observation current BCC process had been reviewed and updated and that the new Member Development Strategic Framework would be circulated to Party Group Leaders following the meeting for discussion with their individual parties. Plans for identifying a strategic case study were also outlined. It was also noted that this item would be considered bi-monthly at the Forum going forward given the timelines for assessment had now been extended.

Members also noted the upcoming political management development training for Council Officers and the dates required for Members participation in the training sessions.

4. Installation of Statues in City Hall Grounds

The Director of Property & Projects provided a briefing on the upcoming installation of two Statues in City Hall Grounds. She advised that a report was considered by the City Hall/City Hall Grounds Working Group on Wednesday 8th February which included an update on the status of the manufacture and installation of the statues, the arrangements/date for the installation ceremony and associated evening event and the arrangements for participation at both events. Members also noted an additional request to host a special event after the official ceremony has taken place. The details discussed along with the communications plan will be circulated to Party Group Leaders imminently and it was noted that if Members wished to add anyone to the guest list for either event to forward those names directly to the Director of Property & Projects.

5. Illuminate Requests

The City Solicitor outlined for Members a number of illuminate requests received. The City Solicitor advised that a previous request considered by the Forum for which there was no consensus on will be brought to SP&R Committee in February for Members consideration.

Members then noted the following requests would be agreed under the City Solicitors delegated authority.

- **Hydrocephalus awareness week** - 6th March 2024
- **Global Intergenerational Week** – 24th April 2024
- **Organ Donation Week 2024** – 23rd September 2024

6. Planning Update

The City Solicitor updated the Forum on the live planning applications and informed the Forum of applications that were being presented to the Planning Committee in the coming months.

7. AOB

Draft Irish Language Policy

The City Solicitor provided an update on the ongoing work to develop a corporate Irish Language Policy for the Council. She advised that an update had been considered by the Language Strategy Working Group at its February meeting following stakeholder consultation. Members noted the recommendations made by stakeholders following the consultation which have been incorporated into the redrafted policy that will be brought to February SP&R Committee for Members consideration. A query was raised by a Member in relation to consultation with staff going forward, the City Solicitor to further consider for inclusion in the report going to SP&R Committee.

Wild Frontier Memorial Project

The Director of Property and Projects referred to a recent media article in relation to the Wild Frontier Memorial project and a Crowdfunding campaign set up to finance a memorial statue for guitarist Gary Moore in the City. It was noted that Officers will contact the organisers and

explore if the Council could provide any non financial assistance. An update to be brought back to the Forum in due course.

Party Group Leaders Study Visit

The Deputy Chief Executive/Strategic Director of Corporate Services referred to correspondence previously issued to Party Group Leaders on behalf of the Director City Regeneration & Development in relation to a study visit in April. The scope and details of the study visit was previously approved at December CG&R Committee. Members to confirm attendance or provide name of nominee with the Director City Regeneration & Development.

Belfast Stories

The Deputy Chief Executive/Strategic Director of Corporate Services provided an update for Members on the Belfast Stories project and outlined the contracts for the project now appointed. She also advised that there would be a third contract appointed in the near future. Given the nature of these contracts and the complexities involved it was noted that a specialised resource would be put in place in order to manage these contracts over a fixed period.

Members raised the matter of development of content for Belfast Stories and how the stories would be represented. They emphasised the importance of updates being presented to Members in a timely manner to allow for informed decision making. It was agreed that an update on the governance arrangements which had been put in place to ensure the efficient and effective delivery of each key stage of the project would be brought back to the Forum at a future meeting.

Belfast Transport Hub

A member raised a query in relation to the Belfast Transport Hub and an update to be circulated to the Forum members.