

Minutes of Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum

Thursday 17th October 2024

Attendance

Members:

Councillor Jenna Maghie (*for Councillor Long*)

Councillor Ryan Murphy

Councillor Áine Groogan

Councillor Sarah Bunting

Councillor Séamas de Faoite

Councillor Ciaran Beattie

Alderman Sonia Copeland

Officers:

John Walsh, Chief Executive

Sharon McNicholl, Deputy Chief Executive/Strategic Director of Corporate Services

David Sales, Strategic Director of City & Neighbourhood Services

Jim Girvan, Neighbourhood Services Manager (for Items 1, 4 & 10)

Pól Hamilton, Lead Officer, Community Provision (for item 1)

Trevor Wallace, Director of Finance

Damien Martin, Strategic Director of Place & Economy

Lisa Toland Senior Manager, Economy (for Item 3)

Cathy Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration & Development (for Item 10)

John Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy

Joanne Delaney, Portfolio and Programme Coordinator (secretariat)

1. Summer Community Diversionary Festival Fund - Dr Jonny Byrne

The Chief Executive welcomed Dr Jonny Byrne who presented the findings from his review of the Summer Community Diversionary Festival Fund (SCDFF) programme along with an update on the Beacons programme. He outlined the key observations derived from the review along with proposed options/recommendations in relation to the programme going forward. Members highlighted the tight timescales involved in previous years and the impact this then had on organisations applying for the funding. Following detailed discussion in relation to the aims of the programme and the need for them to be reviewed it was agreed a report will be brought back to the Forum for further consideration.

2. Finance Update

The Director of Finance provided a summary of the Medium Term Financial Plan along with an update on the setting of the district rate for 2025/26. The Director outlined the work that has been undertaken to date and advised that Departmental estimates and growth proposals

have now been submitted for further consideration. Members noted the timeframes involved and that Party Group Briefings will be scheduled imminently in order that priorities and any budgetary gaps can be identified in a timely manner. A report will be brought to October SP&R Committee for Members consideration.

3. Update on programme of support for the business owners impacted by the August Attacks

The Senior Manager, Economy provided an update on the support provided to date for those businesses affected by the attacks in August 2024. She outlined the engagement that has taken place with the affected businesses and the key challenges identified. Members discussed the proposed next steps and what potential additional support might be required in conjunction with other departments and agencies. Some Members highlighted a number of issues for consideration in terms of additional support and the Senior Manager to further consider in advance of a report being brought to October SP&R Committee. It was also noted that this item be added to the agenda for the upcoming Ministerial Meeting with the Department of Justice.

4. The Community Recovery Fund

The Neighbourhood Services Manager referred to a report previously circulated in relation to the Community Recovery Fund and outlined how the financial package could potentially support communities impacted by the public disorder that took place in Belfast between July and August 2024. He outlined the suggested approach for the available funding and that a report outlining the proposed approach will be brought to October SP&R Committee for consideration.

5. Draft Amenity Byelaws - City Centre

The City Solicitor provided a briefing in relation to the consultation undertaken on the new draft amenity bye laws for the City Centre. Following detailed discussion, it was agreed a workshop would be arranged for Members to further discuss the consultation responses and any proposed changes to the byelaws in advance of a report going to SP&R Committee. It was noted that this item also be added to the agenda for the upcoming Ministerial Meeting with the Department of Justice.

6. Aisling Awards

The Chief Executive outlined correspondence he had received in relation to Council representation at the Aisling Awards in November. A report will be brought to October SP&R Committee outlining the options discussed in relation to proposed attendance.

7. The Executive Office (TEO)– Ending Violence Against Women and Girls

The Strategic Director of City & Neighbourhood Services provided an update on the proposals being brought forward by TEO to provide funding to councils to support the implementation of the recently published Strategic Framework to End Violence Against Women and Girls. He also advised that TEO were proposing that the Council adopt a lead role for the allocation of funding to support a region-wide programme. There were a number of issues raised by Members in relation to how this would be resourced, the specifics around the allocation of funding particularly in relation to Belfast, and the challenging timeframe being proposed. The Director noted these and advised they would be raised with TEO. A report on the proposals outlined will be brought to October SP&R Committee. It was noted that this item should also be added to the Ministerial meeting being arranged with TEO.

8. Forth Meadow Community Greenway – Signage

The City Solicitor provided an update for Members in relation to the erection of dual language signage at the Forth Meadow Community Greenway which had previously been subject to call-in. She advised that equality screening has now been undertaken and following review by the City Solicitor it is anticipated a report will be brought to October SP&R Committee.

9. Planning Update

The City Solicitor updated the Forum on the live planning applications and provided an update on the applications considered at the October Planning Committee and also informed the Forum of applications that were being presented to the Planning Committee in the coming months. There was an issue raised by a Member in relation to Environmental Health resources connected to planning applications. The Strategic Director of City & Neighbourhood Services to follow up with the Member.

10. AOB

Illuminate Requests

The City Solicitor outlined for Members a number of illuminate requests received. Members noted the following requests would be agreed under the City Solicitors delegated authority.

- **Caleb's Cause** - 5th November 2024
- **Ending Violence Against Women and Girls** - 6th November 2024
- **Holocaust Memorial Day 2025** - 27th January 2025

Human Rights Day 2024

A Member raised a query in relation to a previous approval to fly the Human Rights Day flag and the United Nations flag from the City Hall to mark Human Rights Day and if this had been for one year only or included subsequent years. The City Solicitor advised that it had been for one year only.

Following discussion there was consensus to fly both from the City Hall on 10th December to mark Human Rights Day 2024. Members noted that this would be agreed under the City Solicitors delegated authority for this year. A report will go to a future SP&R Committee for subsequent years.

NICVA Future Thinking Summit

The Director of City and Organisational Strategy advised that Officers had received a late request for Council to provide financial support for an upcoming NICVA Future Thinking Summit due to be held in October. Given the timing of the request the event will have taken place before consideration at October SP&R Committee, however it was noted that the support could be met from within the existing City and Organisational Strategy budget. There was consensus for the request outlined and Members noted that a subsequent report would then be brought to October SP&R with the detail discussed.

Belfast City Centre Regeneration & Investment Strategy (BCCRIS)

The Director of City Regeneration & Development advised that a report had gone to October CG&R Committee outlining the emerging findings from the BCCRIS 10 year stock take, in the context of the existing strategy. Members were asked to provide any further comments to inform the final report and a summit event will be organised in November to launch the key

messaging. The details of the event will be brought back to Party Group Leaders in due course.

Housing Led Regeneration Programme - Private Sector Partner

The Director of City Regeneration & Development provided an update for Members on the public procurement exercise to appoint a Private Sector Partner for delivery of housing led regeneration at scale as part of the housing led regeneration programme. She advised that the procurement process has successfully been concluded and that a detailed report will be brought to October SP&R Committee with recommendation on appointment.

Request for Memorial Bench

The Neighbourhood Services Manager outlined a request that had been received for a memorial bench at Olympia Leisure Centre. There was consensus for the request made. Following discussion, it was also noted that consideration is given to guidelines for any future memorial requests at council owned sites. The Strategic Director of City & Neighbourhood Services to bring a report back to a future meeting.

A Member also referred to a previous request raised in relation to the erection of a memorial in City Hall and how this and other such requests should be discussed in relation to City Hall and City Hall grounds. It was agreed that the request go to a future meeting of the Installations - City Hall/City Hall Grounds Working Group for consideration.

Portrait Former Lord Mayor

Following a request received the Forum agreed to remove the portrait of a former Lord Mayor. The Chief Executive advised that this would be done immediately.

Safeguarding

It was noted that safeguarding awareness sessions will be arranged with the Council's Safeguarding Compliance Manager, timing of these to be agreed with Members.

Dual Language Signage at Olympia Leisure Centre

The Chief Executive provided an update on the counsel opinion only just received on the recent call-in in relation to dual language signage at Olympia Leisure Centre. It was noted that this will be brought to October SP&R Committee.