

Zoo Long-Term Financial Sustainability Group

Wednesday, 10th December, 2025

MEETING OF THE ZOO LONG-TERM FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY GROUP

Members present: Councillor Murphy (Chairperson); and Councillors Anglin, Brennan, Flynn, R. McLaughlin, Nelson and Whyte.

Also attended: Alderman McCullough.

In attendance: Mr. D. Martin, Strategic Director of Place and Economy; Mr. K. Forster, Director of Economic Development; Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Property and Projects; Mrs. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and Development; Mr. F. Grant, Operations Development Manager; Mr. D. Orr, Departmental Business Manager; and Mr. C. Mealey, Committee Services Officer.

Apologies

An apology was reported on behalf of Councillor Doran.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest reported.

Election of Chairperson

Moved by Councillor Anglin,
Seconded by Councillor Nelson, and

Resolved – That Councillor Murphy be elected to serve as Chairperson for the Zoo Long-Term Financial Sustainability Group until the date of the Annual Council Meeting in 2026.

Draft Terms of Reference

The Strategic Director for Place and Economy submitted a copy of the draft Terms of Reference which outlined that the purpose of the Group was to examine options in relation to the long-term financial sustainability of the zoo and complementary assets. The Terms of Reference also outlined the Group's membership and proposed governance arrangements.

During discussion, Members highlighted the need for the purpose of the Group to incorporate a focus on not only the Zoo and the old Zoo site, but also Belfast Castle.

The Strategic Director advised the Group that a final Terms of Reference would be submitted to its next meeting for consideration.

Noted.

Overview of Current Position / Scope of Work

The Group was presented with an overview of the Zoo's current position which included information on visitor numbers, education programmes, commercial packages, on-site services, animal collection, animal welfare, financial position and the operational and strategic challenges.

The Strategic Director of Place and Economy outlined the proposed scope of work. The Group was advised that the scope of work would involve a phased approach which would initially look at a detailed analysis of the current position; a review of previous visioning work; consideration of related plans and strategies; short-term measures and options; research and benchmarking; and planning and resourcing going forward.

During discussion, the officers answered a range of questions from the Members in relation to the Zoo's financial position and modelling, benchmarking, resourcing, visitor numbers, animal care and welfare, conservation, and the scope of work.

After discussion, the Group noted the information that had been provided, and that further information would be provided at the next meeting of the Group in respect of the issues highlighted by Members and the initial phase of work.

Chairperson