

Party Leaders Forum, 27 September 2012, Malone House

Present

T Attwood, W Humphrey, M Hendron, J Kyle, T Hartley

Apologies – D Brown

P McNaney, Chief Executive (Part 2)

J Huish (Facilitator)

Part 1 – Members Only

1 – Longer Term Vision & Values

- Need to begin a discussion on 15-20 year future of the City
- Need to involve other partners in developing the vision, though need for an internal view first
- Needs to build on
 - existing strategies and frameworks
 - work of SP&R, committees and area working groups
 - evidence of need
- Need to establish an agreed set of values and ambitions
- Discussion to start at joint meeting of Party Leaders & Chairs
- Lobbying needs to become more joined up and strategic – role for PLF

2 – Area Working Groups

- All up and running, welcoming move to more strategic view
- Need to consider number – possible move to 4 given future funding streams and other external partnerships, need to work through
- AWG Workshops well received
- Move to being chaired by member, formalized as the spatial focus of the Council
- Need to consider relationship with external partnerships and bodies
- Need to consider community forums and planning

3 – Governance Issues

- The introduction of AWG's and the onset of RPA necessitates a fundamental review of Governance Structures,
- Range of thoughts for future discussion, beginning with Joint PL & Chairs meeting
 - Need to evolve structures so they are fit for future purpose
 - Need to ensure all members clearly involved
 - Opportunity to lead governance across NI
 - Governance needs to be more joined up across structures
 - Need to develop scrutiny function – especially external
 - Need to develop area working
 - Move to a more themed approach
 - SP&R to take on strategic co-ordination role
 - Consider a hybrid cabinet / committee style model with corporate strategic responsibility
 - Consider delegation of decision making to committees
 - Need to consider impact of RPA – especially community planning, planning, wellbeing, regeneration etc
 - Need to streamline structures and reduce meetings for members

- Need to build development activities into Belfast Members Academy to ensure members have capacity and knowledge to meet new challenges
- Evolve existing processes
 - Develop 18 month rolling forward work plan for Council, PLF, SP&R & Committees – linked to Group Meetings and briefings
 - To build a clear schedule and cycle of meetings as the basis for that workplan
 - For example, PLF Wk1, Budget & Transformation Wk2, SP&R Wk3, Council Wk4?
 - Other Committees and Group to follow workplan
 - Regular briefing note (monthly) for all members raising key issues from Party Leaders' Forum
 - Need to develop scrutiny function – internal and external
 - Need a review of external partnerships – mapping exercise
 - Need to build member capacity for new world
 - Need to use Belfast Members Academy to ensure member understanding and skills are appropriate
 - Fundamental review of member roles
 - Review of allowances – NI approach?
 - Need to consider support mechanisms for each Party Group

Part 2 – Joined by Chief Executive

Chief Executive provided updates across a range of current and future activity

- RPA and planning
- The Investment Package and other key projects
- The Leisure Estate
- Council financial position
- Evolving governance structures and development activity
- Council Influence
- Need for external scrutiny
- Council Strategic Frameworks – including the Masterplan
- Need for lobbying strategy and role of Party Leaders