

**Minutes of the Joint Group of the Party Leaders' Forum  
and Historic Centenaries Working Group  
Tuesday, 21 May 2013**

<b>Present:</b>	Cllr Hendron (Chairman), Ald Ekin, Ald Rodgers, Cllr Attwood, Cllr Maskey and Cllr Reynolds.
<b>In attendance:</b>	Peter McNaney, Chief Executive; Ciaran Quigley, Assistant Chief Executive and Town Solicitor; Hazel Francey, Good Relations Manager, Denise Wheatley, Consultant (item 2); Stephen McCrory, Democratic Services Manager and Jim Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer.
<b>Agenda Item 1</b>	<b>Routine Matters</b>
1.1	Apologies were received from Cllrs Hanna and McVeigh.
1.2	The minutes of the previous meeting held on Tuesday 16 April were agreed.
1.3	No declarations of interest were made.
<b>Agenda Item 2</b>	<b>Language Policy - Revised Initial Draft</b>
2.1	The Group was reminded that it had, on a number of occasions, discussed the Council's Language Policy and had requested that the current policy be revised.
2.2	At its meeting on 16th April, the Joint Group had received an update report on the progress which had been achieved. It had noted that the Assistant Chief Executive and Town Solicitor had reviewed the legal aspects of the language policy and had liaised with Senior Counsel regarding the statutory obligations of Councils in Northern Ireland in the context of both local and international law, since the legal opinion which had been obtained would inform the revision of the language policy.
2.3	The Joint Group had approved also the Terms of Reference for the commissioning of a consultant to revise the current language policy taking recent developments into account. That decision had been ratified by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 19 <sup>th</sup> April.
2.4	A draft policy had been circulated for the information of the Group. This represented an initial draft and it was expected that Members would wish to consider the issues raised in it with their own Political Parties before making any decisions.

2.5	To ensure effective implementation, an Action Plan with timescales and allocation of resources would have to be drawn up and the consultant recommended that an audit of existing practice across the Council be undertaken for this purpose.
2.6	<p><b>Following discussion, the Joint Group agreed the following:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. that the draft policy be referred to the Political Parties on the Council for consideration;</li> <li>2. that the consultant provide briefings to those Parties who so wished; and</li> <li>3. to an audit being undertaken of existing practice across the Council and that the Action Plan be drawn up and presented to the Parties as part of the briefings.</li> </ol>
<b>Agenda item 3</b>	<b>Irish Language Officers Scheme – Possible 50% Funding Availability</b>
3.1	The Group was reminded that some Councils in Northern Ireland employed Irish Language Officers using a scheme which was funded by Foras na Gaeilge.
3.2	During previous discussions, the Joint Group had discussed the possibility of the Council employing an Irish Language Officer under this scheme and the Good Relations Manager had been requested to check the position regarding funding.
3.3	The scheme, which was directed at the local Councils in Northern Ireland, offered 50% funding towards the salary of an Irish Language Officer and had just re-opened to receive applications. The aim was to promote the Irish language in the public sector and funding was available for a period of three years 2013-2016.
3.4	However, the deadline for a signed hard copy application to be received at the Foras na Gaeilge HQ in Dublin was 31st May.
3.5	Obviously, the timing of this funding window was not ideal, since the Council had not yet made a decision in this regard.
3.6	The Joint Group was requested to consider whether an application for funding under this scheme should be made. It would be possible to submit an application form on behalf of the Council at this stage; this could either be progressed or withdrawn at a later

	date should the Council decide not to progress with this option.
3.7	During discussion, the Group was advised that the any decision taken by the Group was have to be approved subsequently by the Strategic Policy and resources Committee and ratified by the Council on 3 <sup>rd</sup> June which would be past the date for submitting applications.
3.8	It was suggested that the Group could be contacted to ascertain whether or not it would be willing to accept a late application from the Council. In addition, the point was made that clarification on the overall costs needed to be obtained.
3.9	<p>After further discussion, the Group agreed the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. that the question of the submission of the application for funding for the Irish Language Officers Scheme be referred to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee;</b></li> <li><b>2. prior to the meeting of the Committee, clarification be sought as to whether or not a late application from the Council would be accepted; and</b></li> <li><b>3. to details of the overall costs being provided for the Committee's consideration.</b></li> </ol>
<b>Agenda item 4</b>	<b>Armed Forces Day</b>
4.1	The Group considered a report in relation to Armed Forces Day
4.2	<b>The Group agreed that the matter be referred to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for consideration and noted that party groups might need to consult on the issue and that a decision might be deferred to the Council meeting.</b>