

Minutes of Budget and Transformation Panel Meeting

14th January 2016

Attendance

Members:

Councillor Declan Boyle (chair)
Alderman Pat Convery
Councillor Billy Hutchinson
Councillor Deirdre Hargey (for Cllr McVeigh)
Alderman Brian Kingston
Councillor Nuala McAllister (for Cllr Long)
Alderman J Rodgers (for Alderman D Browne)

Apologies:

Councillor J McVeigh,
Alderman D Browne
Councillor M Long

Officers:

Suzanne Wylie, Chief Executive
Ronan Cregan, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Resources
Jill Minne, Director of Organisational Development
Phil Williams, Director of Planning and Place
Mark McBride, Head of Finance and Performance
Emer Husbands, Strategic Performance Manager

1. Peace IV

The Chief Executive informed the Panel that the deadline for submission of applications to the new Peace Programme (capital) had been extended to June. This has therefore allowed officers more time to review potential projects to assess their feasibility and fit with SEUPB's criteria. This information would then be submitted to a future SP&R meeting for agreement on the Council's preferred projects. Members asked that information on the various proposed projects are brought to the relevant area working group and also party group briefings so that they could be appraised of all the available information. The Chief Executive also updated the panel that the available revenue spend had been increased and the previously agreed Peace Plan was being revised to take account of this. The updated plan would also be brought to members for approval.

2. Revenue Estimates 2016/17

The Chief Executive updated the panel on the proposed revenue estimate figures which were still being considered through party group briefings. She highlighted the additional financing requirements (including uncontrollable costs) and a number of additional savings

that had been identified through the process. The Director of Finance and Resources also outlined the position in relation to the regional rate (1.7% increase in line with the GDP deflator). He also outlined for the panel the elements for a proposed efficiency programme which would be presented to SP&R and the Director of Organisational Development discussed some of the key areas of work in relation to OD that would contribute to the overall programme.

3. Waterfront

The panel was updated on the ongoing work in relation to the Waterfront Hall, in particular the progress on the establishment of the Board and the new staffing structure. A progress report had been drafted for January SP&R Committee which included key dates in relation to preparations for the opening of the new Convention Centre.

4. Anti Poverty / Social Value

The Director of Organisational Development circulated a draft paper outlining the key areas of work the council and its partners are involved in to address aspects of poverty, which would be presented to the January SP&R meeting. The members welcomed the proposal to work with partners, including the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, to develop a joint approach to tackling poverty in the city.

5. Update on Planning Improvement Programme

The Director of Planning and Place outlined to the members a programme of improvement work that was underway in relation to elected member engagement and customer care. In particular he highlighted the need to look at response times to queries, the role of NI Direct and the need to review engagement processes and timeframes with both internal and external consultees. A report and subsequent improvement plan was being developed to cover all of these areas which would be completed by the end of January. The members noted the issues in relation to statutory consultees response times to planning applications and raised concerns that the ongoing redundancy scheme across all the government departments could make these response times more problematic. It was suggested that possibly a letter should be written, from the Chair of the Planning Committee, to the head of the reform programme outlining these concerns.

6. Planning applications

The Chief Executive informed the panel of the applications that were being presented to the Planning Committee in October.

7. AOB

City Deals

The Chief Executive circulated a briefing note on City Deals to the Panel and said that future reports on the Council's proposals in relation to this would be brought to Members for consideration.

Somme Commemoration 2016

The members agreed to the proposal to allocate the previously agreed £125,000 to the Ulster History Hub to develop and deliver a Council led civic programme to celebrate the centenary of the Battle of Somme.