

Minutes of Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum

9 December 2019

Attendance

Members:

Alderman Brian Kingston (Chair)

Councillor Ciaran Beattie

Councillor George Dorrian

Councillor Billy Hutchinson

Councillor Donal Lyons

Councillor Nuala McAllister (for Cllr Long)

Officers:

Ronan Cregan, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Resources

John Walsh, City Solicitor

Alistair Reid, Director of Planning and Place

Aidan Thatcher, Director of Planning and Building Control

Grania Long, City Resilience Commissioner

Emer Husbands, Strategic Performance Manager (secretariat)

Apologies: Councillors Long and O'Hara, Alderman Copeland

1. Planning Update

The Director of Planning and Building Control updated the members on the live planning applications and informed them of the applications that were being presented to the Planning Committee this month.

The forum asked for an update position in relation to the George Best hotel development and they were informed that the planning service was continuing to work with the developer and hoped to report on the Planning application to the January Planning Committee.

2. Developer Contributions - Framework and Revised Governance Arrangements

The Director of Place and Economy provided an update to members on two issues relating to developer contributions, revised governance arrangements and the developer contributions framework. Both issues had already been considered by the Planning Committee and would now be presented to the December SP&R committee for approval. Members highlighted the need for flexibility within the framework and also asked that consideration is given to the impact of possible public space being managed by private developers and how we can mitigate against future issues.

3. Finance

Revenue Estimates and District Rate 2020 / 21

The Director of Finance and Resources provided an update on the revenue estimate setting process for 2020 / 21. He outlined additional areas of expenditure which had been included following party group briefings as well as additional income due to a projected increase in the EPP. The SP&R committee will be asked to consider the overall position with a view to recommending the rate for 2020 / 21. This will allow individual committee budgets to be agreed at the January meetings. Members highlighted that the council already undertakes work to support inclusive growth and noted that the allocation in the budget is additional to that. Members also asked for details of the budgets which are directly linked to the delivery of the Inclusive Growth Strategy.

4. SMART Belfast – Digital Commissioner

The Deputy Chief Executive outlined to members the development of the partnership between the council, the two universities and Belfast Harbour to support the Belfast Smart district, Smart Port and Innovation district. He outlined the importance of the private sector in particular, in securing and maximising the benefit of around £150m digital investment from the Belfast Region City Deal. Given the complexities of this programme of work a request would be going to December SP&R to jointly fund a Digital Commissioner with the three partners for a period of three years. A further report on 5G will be taken to the committee in January 2020.

5. Resilience Strategy

The Resilience Commissioner provided a short presentation on the Resilience Strategy which would be presented to the December SP&R meeting. Party Group Briefings were also being held on the Strategy in advance of the SP&R meeting.

6. AOB

Partnership Framework

Anne McMurray is undertaking a piece of work to inform future partnership working and has asked to meet with party leaders to discuss their views. Members agreed that Anne should contact them to arrange a suitable time. John Tully's office will circulate a briefing note to Party Group Leaders outlining the topics for discussion.

Use of City Hall

Councillor Lyons requested an update on the investigation into the use of City Hall and also highlighted that his understanding was that it should have been an item for discussion at

this meeting. The Town Solicitor said the report would be brought to the Party Group Leaders meeting in January but he would send out an interim update to the Forum.