

Minutes of Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum

16th January 2020

Attendance

Members:

Alderman Brian Kingston (Chair)

Councillor Ciaran Beattie

Councillor George Dorrian

Councillor Billy Hutchinson

Councillor Donal Lyons

Councillor Mal O'Hara

Councillor Emmett McDonough Brown (for Cllr Long)

Officers:

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

Alistair Reid, Director of Planning and Place

Nigel Grimshaw, Director of City and Neighbourhood Services

John Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy

Sean Dolan, Acting Director City Regeneration and Development (for item 1)

Emer Husbands, Strategic Performance Manager (secretariat)

Apologies: Councillors Long and Ferguson, Alderman Copeland

1. City Centre Connectivity

The Director of Planning and Place introduced phase 1 of the City Centre Connectivity Study which aims to support the creation of a more attractive, safe and vibrant city centre. Sean Dolan took the members through a short presentation outlining the proposed vision and principles for re-imagining the city centre, which draws on stakeholder engagement and best practice from elsewhere. The members welcomed the study and the scale of ambition but also highlighted the need to secure funding. The outcome of phase 1 will be presented to the City Growth and Regeneration committee in February along with proposals to move forward with phases 2 and 3.

2. 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 which will be presented to the January meeting of SP&R Committee. He also raised a number of issues which had arisen as a result of the recent non domestic rate revaluation exercise and the possible impacts that this could have on the regeneration of the city centre. The finance section have requested detailed information from LPS to enable them to carry out a full analysis, which would then be presented to members. The

Director has also asked for a meeting with LPS to discuss the impacts. The members of the panel also asked that this be raised with the Finance Minister.

3. Stormont Deal – New Decade, New Approach

A short briefing note and a summary of the 'New Decade, New Approach' document was circulated to the Forum and the Chief Executive advised members that a more detailed analysis was being undertaken, including specific issues that will impact on the Council. This will be circulated to the Party Group Leaders by Friday 24th January and cross party meetings will be arranged with Executive Ministers.

4. Party Group Leaders' and Corporate Management Team Planning Day

The PGL/CMT planning session has been scheduled for the 5th February and a draft agenda was circulated for discussion. Party Group Leaders were asked to send through their party priorities so that these could be incorporated into the discussions. Members highlighted the need to ensure that ongoing discussions through members working groups, on issues such as customer focus and climate change are fed into the session to ensure alignment.

5. Area Working Groups

The Director of City and Neighbourhood Services advised members that a paper on the proposed agendas and dates for the Area Working Groups will be brought to the January SP&R meeting. Members asked that the purpose of the working groups should be made clear and they highlighted the need to ensure that there were mechanisms for communities of interest to feed into relevant discussions at a citywide level. The Director outlined that the paper also included terms of reference for the groups and members would be asked input any changes to these to ensure the role of the groups were clear and covered issues both at a local and citywide level.

6. Belfast Policing and Council Service Delivery

Following discussion with the PSNI in relation to issues such as community safety and the need to join up services at a local level, the Chief Constable has offered to second a senior officer to the council. It is proposed that this officer would be based in City and Neighbourhood Services to develop the partnership between the two organisations and other agencies to deal with issues around crime and safety across the city. This proposal will be presented to the SP&R committee at its January meeting.

7. Planning Update – including NI Water letter

The Chief Executive updated the Forum on the live planning applications and informed the Forum of the applications that were being presented to the Planning Committee this month. She also circulated a letter from NI Water outlining the Northern Ireland's current wastewater infrastructure crisis. It was agreed that the Chief Executive would respond to the letter and that this issue should be raised as part of the upcoming ministerial meetings.

8. AOB

Asset Management

The Chief Executive outlined proposals in relation to the council's assets in the city which would be brought to the January SP&R Committee for a decision.

Process for shaping Consultation Response

Councillor O'Hara raised a query of how members and parties could feed into consultation processes before they were presented to committee. The members of the panel felt that the committee was generally the appropriate way to have their comments discussed and if the committee was not in agreement then parties should submit their own responses. The Chief Executive also suggested that significant consultation requests would be circulated to party group leaders to allow them to input to the response at an earlier stage.

Webcasting of Committee Meetings

The Panel asked for further details in relation to the costs involved in webcasting committee meetings and it was agreed that this would be brought back to the next meeting.

Freedom Ceremonies

Members agreed to discuss this at a future meeting.