

# **Minutes of Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum**

## **12<sup>th</sup> June 2020**

### **Attendance**

#### Members:

Councillor Christina Black  
Councillor Ciaran Beattie  
Alderman Sonia Copeland  
Councillor Billy Hutchinson  
Councillor Tracy Kelly (for Alderman Dorrian)  
Councillor Michael Long  
Councillor Donal Lyons  
Councillor Mal O'Hara

Apologies: Councillor Fiona Ferguson, Alderman George Dorrian

#### **Officers:**

Suzanne Wylie, Chief Executive  
Ronan Cregan, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Resources  
John Walsh, City Solicitor  
Nigel Grimshaw, Director of City and Neighbourhood Services  
Alistair Reid, Director of Planning and Place  
Emer Husbands, Strategic Performance Manager (secretariat)

### **1. Response to Recovery**

The Chief Executive informed members that the SP&R Committee will receive a presentation on the key elements of the Council's recovery plan for the city, its communities and the organisation which would also be set out in a report. She outlined the key areas of focus of the plan and highlighted the importance of the work which is underway with central government to identify potential funding available to support recovery efforts.

The Director of City and Neighbourhood Services updated the Forum on the work that was underway to develop plans for the safe opening of council facilities including play parks, sports facilities, cemeteries and markets and an update on this would be presented to members the following week. A number of meetings had also been taking place with GLL and a report on the opening of Leisure Centres will be presented to the SP&R Committee in July. Following requests from members, the Director agreed to ensure that GLL communicated with the various user groups to keep them updated on emerging plans.

Members of the panel raised a number of specific queries including access to closed parks and pitches leading to noise and anti social behaviour, reports of anti social behaviour in the Holylands, car parking enforcement in the city centre, engagement with trade unions and issues around drug use and paraphernalia in communities and the city centre. The Director outlined some work underway to deal with these issues and agreed to follow up on the specific requests.

The Director of City and Neighbourhood Services then outlined the specific work that was underway with relevant government departments and outside bodies to open up the city. Members outlined the need to engage with local communities in developing local recovery plans to tackle poverty and deprivation. A report on Community Recovery will be brought to the next Party Group Leaders Recovery meeting.

## **2. Finance**

### **Quarter 4 Finance 2019/20**

The Director of Finance and Resources informed the Forum that the year end finance report 2019 / 20 which had previously been discussed would be presented to the June SP&R Committee for approval. The only change being the need to create a specified reserve of £400k to support the increase in the Council's rates bill due to revaluations. This would be financed through a transfer from the VR reserve.

### **Finance Update - Impact of Covid-19 2020/21**

The Director of Finance and Resources presented to members details of the council's financial position in light of the Covid emergency, highlighting loss of income and increased spend relating to the emergency response. He also outlined the proposed finance strategy to manage the impact of Covid-19 including reviewing finances with members on a monthly basis. A detailed paper would be provided to the SP&R committee in June.

## **3. Core Multi-Annual Funding – Events and Festivals**

The Director of Planning and Place provided an update to Members on the current status of festival and events, as funded through the Core Multi Annual Grants, in the context of Covid-19 and outlined proposals for the funding for the remainder of the financial year. A report on this including proposals for any underspend will be presented to the June SP&R Committee. The Director also highlighted that the previously approved allocation for groups from the PUL community was still available and undertook to engage with members on emerging

proposals and bring back a report including timeframes for allocation of spend. The Parties were agreeable with the proposals for additional allocations of CMAF.

The Director of City and Neighbourhood Services outlined to the Forum that a separate report with proposals on alternatives to Summer Schemes will also be brought to June SP&R Committee

#### **4. Dual Language Street Signs Policy**

The City Solicitor outlined the content of the previously circulated report in respect of the notice of motion on Dual Language Street Signs Policy, which would be presented to the June meeting of the SP&R committee. A query was raised in relation to developing protocols around the consultation process and the City Solicitor agreed to include this in his paper.

#### **5. Planning Update**

The Chief Executive updated the Forum on the live planning applications and informed the Forum of the applications that were being considered this month. She also informed members that a note would be circulated to them on the ongoing issues at the Chinese Consulate building.

#### **6. AOB**

##### **Belfast – Dublin Corridor**

The Chief Executive informed the panel that an update on the Belfast – Dublin economic corridor outlining the research paper prepared by UU Economic Policy and Dublin City University will be reported to the June SP&R committee.

##### **Council Webinars**

The Chief Executive reminded members of the dates and arrangements for the upcoming webinars scheduled for the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> June 2020.

##### **Annual Leave**

In order to manage leave arrangements and support staff homeworking a note would be circulated to all staff recommending that they take at least two weeks leave by the end of September 2020.