

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Party Group
Leaders' Consultative Forum
13th May 2021**

Attendance

Members:

Councillor Christina Black (Chair)
Councillor Billy Hutchinson
Councillor Nuala McAlister
Councillor Donal Lyons
Councillor Mal O'Hara
Alderman Brian Kingston
Alderman Jim Rodgers (*for Alderman Copeland*)
Councillor Fiona Ferguson
Councillor Ronan McLaughlin (*for Councillor Beattie*)

Officers:

Ronan Cregan, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Resources
John Walsh, City Solicitor
Alistair Reid, Director of Place and Economy (for Items 1 & 3)
John Tully, Director of City & Organisational Strategy (for Item 4)
Ryan Black, Director of Neighbourhood Services (for Items 5, 8 and 9 Decade of Centenaries)
Joanne Delaney, Portfolio and Programme Coordinator (secretariat)

1. Covid 19 Planning

The Director of Place and Economy provided an update for Members on the reopening of outdoor hospitality and non-essential retail in the city since the easing of restrictions commenced on 30 April 2021. The Director advised that Officers have been working closely with businesses and engaging with owners to provide support and advice in relation to the regulations set out by the NI Executive. Whilst there were some issues at the outset most of these have since been resolved and work continues to provide assistance where required and to ensure that businesses have all the information they need to provide a safe environment for their staff and customers. A query was raised by a Member in relation to the limited covered outdoor space in the city centre, the Director to consider and report back to Members if this is something that can be looked at in the future as more restrictions ease.

2. Update on City Region Growth Deal

The Deputy Chief Executive & Director of Finance and Resources provided an update on the Belfast Region City Deal including an update on the progress that has been made in Outline

Business Cases (OBCs) development for all projects. He advised that over the past few months work has continued at pace and a draft Deal document has been developed. The overarching Deal document is supported by both an Implementation Plan and Financial Plan and these documents are also currently being developed. Members noted the proposed timeline and process for negotiation and approval of the key documents. An update report outlining progress to allow phased delivery to commence will be brought to May SP&R.

3. Destination Hub

It was noted that the Members of the SP&R Committee and Party Leaders were invited to a briefing session held on 12 May to receive an update on the proposed site acquisition for the Destination Hub. Given that not all of the Party Leaders were able to attend the Director of Place and Economy outlined the key points discussed at the briefing session. Following detailed discussion Members agreed given that May committee decision will be taken under delegated authority, the report for site acquisition approval will go to June SP&R for Members consideration.

4. Community Renewal & Levelling up fund

The Director of City & Organisational Strategy provided an update on the UK Community Renewal Fund (UKCRF), which will provide £220 million for investment during 2021/22 to help places across the UK prepare for the introduction of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF). He outlined the anticipated funding allocation for Northern Ireland and outlined the thematic areas the fund aims to support. Members discussed potential bids and the Director to consider in advance of a report to May SP&R Committee.

Members were also updated on the UK Levelling Up Fund, a capital fund announced as part of the UK Government's agenda to invest in local infrastructure and uplift communities and local areas that have fallen behind. The Director outlined the challenges involved in the Council submitting suitable bids for Round 1 given the imminent deadline and the level of detail required for applications. It is proposed that officers work towards progressing suitable bids for Round 2. Members asked if the Director could seek clarity on the timeframes for Northern Ireland for Round 2. An update on this fund will be included in the report to May SP&R Committee.

5. Alleygates Update

The Director of Neighbourhood Services provided an update on phase 5 of the alley gating scheme and outlined the proposed framework to assist Members in their decision making around final gate locations. The Director also provided an update on the proposed Alleyway

Transformation Programme considered by the P&C Committee and how this work would be closely aligned with the alley gating scheme. In relation to some queries raised by Members around the allocation of funding the Director advised that it had already been agreed at March SP&R to allocate the £500K funding equally across the four quadrants of the city. Members noted that with the level of demand and Member priority attached to the alley gating scheme, that options for the longer term financing of the scheme will be considered. A report outlining the detail of the proposed framework and the proposed approach will be brought to May SP&R Committee.

6. Standards and Business Committee

The City Solicitor advised that the Council, at its meeting this month, approved the Terms of Reference for the new Standards and Business Committee. He updated Members that subsequent to the issuing of the Forum agenda a Call In has been received and therefore this item would be deferred from today's meeting. He reminded members that approval for the standards element of the committee and terms of reference had previously been approved.

A Member raised a query in relation to the Brexit Committee and if alternative governance arrangements should be considered. Following discussion, it was agreed this will be discussed at a future meeting.

7. Planning Update

The Director of Place and Economy updated the Forum on the live planning applications and informed the Forum of applications that were being presented to the Planning Committee in May. Members also noted the timeline for the recruitment of the Director (Operational) of Planning & Building Control.

8. Summer Programming

The Director of Neighbourhood Services outlined for Members the departments proposed summer programme offer to families, children & young people and older people. He advised that the proposed recommendations will focus on reconnecting and reducing social isolation. Planning is in line with the NI Executive Office Pathway to Recovery approach and timetable. As restrictions are further eased plans will be reviewed accordingly and in line with public health guidance. Members asked that programmes are aligned with partners to maximise participation opportunities. In relation to a query raised by a Member the Director of Place and Economy to consider how the summer programming proposals will align with City events over the Summer period. A report on the detail of the Summer programme will be brought to May SP&R Committee

9. AOB

Decade of Centenaries Update and Funding Opportunity

The Director of Neighbourhood Services updated Members on the current Decade of Centenaries programme and outlined that additional funding has become available from the Northern Ireland Office. A report including the detail of the funding opportunity will be brought to May SP&R Committee.

Recruitment Update: Strategic Director of C&NS

The Deputy Chief Executive & Director of Finance and Resources provided an update for Members on the recruitment process for the Strategic Director of City & Neighbourhood Services

Selection of Remaining Places for Committees 2021/22 (Year 3) and Additional Positions of Responsibility

The City Solicitor advised that the previously agreed governance arrangements included an annual review of Committee membership, with Members to be appointed for one-year terms and reappointed at each Annual Meeting. Therefore, a meeting would be arranged week commencing 17 May 2021 for Party Group Leaders to select the additional places for the standing Committees for 2021/22 and for the additional Positions of Responsibility. He stressed that the Nominating Officers need to be in attendance in order to hold the meeting.

Motion - Invitation to President-elect Biden and Vice President-elect Harris

The City Solicitor provided an update on correspondence issued to President Biden following the Motion agreed at December Council meeting. Following discussion City Solicitor to follow up.

Greater Whitewell Community Surgery

Councillor O'Hara briefed Members on an ongoing application the Greater Whitewell Community Surgery are involved in for the asset transfer of Ballygolan primary school. He asked if Party Leaders would agree to issue a letter from Council in support of the application. Councillor O'Hara to forward on further information when he receives it and Members agreed to consider and feedback to Councillor O Hara and the City Solicitor by Friday 14th May due to the timeframe involved. Once the feedback is received the Director of Physical Projects to progress