

Social Policy Working Group

Wednesday, 30th June, 2021

MEETING OF THE SOCIAL POLICY WORKING GROUP

HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor O'Hara (Chairperson);
Alderman Dorrian; and
Councillors Hanvey, Heading, Kyle and McLaughlin.

In attendance: Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Physical Programmes;
Ms. C. Robinson, Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty;
Ms. N. Bohill, Head of Commercial and Procurement Services;
Ms. C. Sheridan, Head of HR
Ms. L. Toland, Head of Economic Initiatives and International Development
Mr. D. Logan, Project Manager;
Ms. S. O'Regan, Economic Development Manager
Ms. C. Hutchinson, Policy and Performance Analyst;
Mr. H. Downey, Democratic Services Officer; and
Ms. K. McCrum, Democratic Services Officer.

Election of Chairperson

It was proposed by Councillor Heading, seconded by Councillor Kyle and agreed that, Councillor O'Hara be reappointed as the Chairperson of the Social Policy Working Group from June, 2021 to May, 2022.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported on behalf of Alderman Copeland.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 25th May were taken as read and signed as correct.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

Actions Update

Living Wage Accreditation

The Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty advised that staff had met with the Living Wage Foundation and work was ongoing to develop a Low Pay Action Report which had been broken down into 3 strands:

- Corporate Commitments, as they relate to Pay and Contracts;
- Corporate Commitments, as they relate to Procurement; and
- City Leadership Issues – Actions to be picked up within Charter and driven by anchor institutions.

She added that a toolkit which outlined the process, and provided examples of cities and towns that had begun this work, would be circulated for information.

The Head of HR outlined the steps within the Human Resources strand that were being actioned as the Council worked towards achieving Living Wage Accreditation, which included:

- Assessment of the current living wage payment, looking at both employees within the Council, but also, companies which were owned by the Council;
- Benchmarking with other Local Authorities who had gone through the process;
- Consideration of how payment of the living wage, and annual increases, would have the potential to impact on the Council's agreed approach to job evaluation, points to grading and post relativity;
- A review of the Single Status Agreement to ensure fair and equal payment for all NJC employees;
- Consideration of what the impact would be on higher grades, on the estimates process, and any additional resources that would be required to process this; and
- A review of the requirements alongside the current Trade Union pay claim which was currently seeking a reduction in the working week;

She added that a cross departmental working group had been established to progress with these actions, and that the Living Wage Foundation was also available to assist with the work.

In response to a query as to what the timeline for implementation was, the Head of HR confirmed that staff were actively working on the outlined key steps and financial modelling would be done, taking into account previous annual increases, so as to estimate the financial implications. She noted that these were significant pieces of work, and that she would have a better idea of the timescales once the benchmarking exercise had been completed, with reports brought back to the Working Group.

At the request of a Member, the Head of HR agreed to include a review of apprenticeship payments within the benchmarking exercise.

The Head of Commercial and Procurement Services advised that she had also met with the Living Wage Foundation and the Central Procurement Directorate within the Department of Finance to understand how the NI Civil Service were rolling this out, given the impact on contractors and the Council's supply chain. She advised that regular staff on site (as per the Living Wage Foundation definition), all contracts, and those in the pipeline, were being reviewed to understand what contracts would be effected, and the financial implications where it was believed that the Living Wage was not being paid. As with the HR strand, she confirmed that an action plan of work was in place and a report would be brought back to the Working Group as work progressed.

The Working Group noted the updates provided.

BCC/CLES: CLES Communities of Practice Nominee

The Members were reminded of the Council's bespoke membership of CLES and the CLES Members Workshop that was held on 27th April.

The Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty advised that CLES had extended an invitation to the Council to participate in its Communities of Practice networks, which operated at two levels: political (Leaders Network); and officer level (Officer Network). She explained that these would provide the opportunity to network with community wealth builders and to share practical experience and good practice.

The Working Group agreed that the Chairperson of the Social Policy Working Group would be the Council representative to the Leaders Network and that an appropriate officer would be nominated to attend the officer Network, both of which were expected to meet on a quarterly basis.

The Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty agreed to obtain and circulate a list of the existing participants following the meeting.

Procurement and Commissioning Group

The Members were advised that work was progressing with the Anchor Institution Network to look at how they procure and commission goods and services across the City.

The Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty advised that CLES was engaging directly with the Belfast and South Eastern Health and Social Care Trusts, given the impact of their procurement, and that the anchors had signed up to participate in spend analysis training in early July.

In response a to query about the other anchors, she confirmed that both Universities, the NI Housing Executive, PSNI, Libraries NI, the Public Health Agency and representatives from the community and voluntary sector had participated in the first meeting. She also confirmed that the Belfast Area Partnerships and the Chair of the Voluntary Sector Panel had been invited.

A Member welcomed to involvement of the community and voluntary sector and it was agreed that the information should be shared with NICVA.

New Consultancy Framework – Capital Projects

The Director of Physical Programmes advised that a new consultancy framework was being developed to replace the existing framework which had now expired. She explained that KPMG had been appointed to help with its development and that Corporate Procurement Services had been involved at all stages.

The Project Manager presented information on the tender for a new 4-year Consultancy Framework to provide the design advice and cost management required to deliver Belfast City Council's investment programme, as well as other externally funded capital projects.

He explained that, following a review of the previous approach taken, and the Council's requirements, alongside external consultants and stakeholders, the new

framework would allow for some lots to be procured under a Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS), as used by central government, which would allow greater flexibility and encourage submissions from local small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

DPS Lots:

Lot	Description
1	Integrated Consultancy Team (projects with a capital value up to £1m)
4a	Building Cost Management Services (works projects up to £1m)
6	Feasibility Studies, Economic Appraisals and Business Cases

Framework Lots:

Lot	Description
2	Integrated Consultancy Team (projects with a capital value £1m - £4.5m)
3	Integrated Consultancy Team (projects with a capital value of £4.5m and over)
4b	Building Cost Management Services (works projects above £1m)
5	Landscape Architecture Services
7	Planning Services

He added that this approach would provide the Council with a pre-approved list of consultants after which project specifics could be developed and, throughout, the Council would be able to promote social values through social clauses.

The Working Group was advised that social values would be promoted within the framework, as follows:

- Contract clauses – utilisation of the Council’s identified targets and values as a baseline using the Social Value toolkit in the selection criteria;
- Secondary Competition Assessment – for suitable projects, tenderers could provide targets and goals beyond the baseline, assessed using the Social Value toolkit during the award stage;
- Specific KPIs – reporting tools for contract clauses to ensure contractors were working towards the targets, with substantial penalties if not achieved;
- Utilisation of DPS to promote local SMEs – providing greater flexibility for both Tenderers and Clients to utilise the local market;
- Adhering to Economic Development Social Value requirements and objectives at all stages of procurement, competition and design, providing increased flexibility;
- Utilisation of individual projects and wider programmes to achieve Social Value.

The Project Manager explained that these measures were to be seen as a starting point for projects, and that social values would be carried through into the construction stage, with the opportunity to build on initial design values and/or targets. He added that the Department would keep this under review and update it as required.

The Director of Physical Programmes added that the market was aware that the Framework was coming forward and that pre-engagement had been involved in its development. She also advised that construction works for projects would be tendered separately and that these would also include social value clauses/targets.

A Member queried how the emergence of a Social Value Strategy from the Department of Finance, the possibility of a Social Value Act and changes in legislation, would impact the Framework.

The Project Manager confirmed that the Framework was designed to remain flexible within procurement legislation.

The Social Policy Working Group noted the approach to the new Consultancy Framework and that the approach had been based upon legal feedback received and had been signed off by Corporate Procurement Services. The Working Group also noted the opportunities for social value which had been built into the Framework and noted that these would be kept under review.

City Charter Branding

The Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty advised the Working Group that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee had approved the next steps of delivery of the Charter, including brand development and progression to the formal consultation and engagement stage.

She explained that the Council's Internal Communications Team, alongside some external advice, had recently developed 4 branding concepts to replace the 'City Charter' name:

- Making a Better Belfast – For Business, For Employees, For Everyone
- Belfast Commitment – A City For Everyone / Shaping Our City For Everyone
- Belfast Business Promise – A Better City For Everyone
- Belfast People's Promise - A Better City For Everyone

She advised that initial thoughts from both staff and businesses was that the 'Business Promise' was the most suitable option as it clearly demonstrated the purpose of the work. She added that further testing would be undertaken with the internal working group and small businesses, and welcomed views from the Working Group on each of the options.

A number of the Members stated that, while branding was not their area of expertise, they did not see the 'Business Promise' as the best fit, but saw merit in the 'Belfast Commitment' and 'People's Promise' options. An additional option was also suggested, 'Belfast's Social Promise/Commitment'. It was also suggested that a brief on the Charter be circulated again to remind the Working Group of the proposed outcomes.

The Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty thanked the Members for their comments and advised that the aims, benefits and overall unique selling points (USP) were currently being worked on by the Council's Communications Team and would soon be available for circulation.

Noted.

Social Value Procurement Policy

The Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty thanked the Members for their input into the development of the Social Value Framework Policy, which once approved by the Council, would move on to the consultation and engagement stage.

The Head of Commercial and Procurement Services advised that her team were currently devising questions for the consultation document, both for the public and for potential suppliers. She confirmed that the questions would cover a number of topics, including the objectives of the policy, the social value weightings, the phased approach, minimum thresholds, the award criteria and monitoring. Once feedback had been received, she advised that the information would be brought back to the Working Group and then to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in September or October.

Noted.

Forward Work Plan

The Members agreed that the following agenda items would be considered for inclusion at future meetings of the Social Policy Working Group:

August

- An update on Living Wage Accreditation (to remain a standing agenda item);
- A paper on minimising the Council's use of employment agencies, as per the Notice of Motion;
- Staff analysis – high level data regarding the percentage of staff residing in Belfast;
- An update regarding the request for changes to be made to the Procurement 1992 Order;
- Consideration of the Council's role in launching the City Charter and the early adopters who would be involved.

September

- An update on the City Charter consultation and engagement work;
- An update on the Social Value Framework Policy consultation and engagement work, to include spend analysis information;
- A presentation from the Strategic Investment Board (SIB), if the timing was appropriate.

Date of Next Meeting

The Working Group agreed that the next meeting would be held on a date, as yet to be agreed, in late August.

As this was her last meeting before leaving the Council, the Members of the Working Group thanked the Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty for her dedication and ambition over recent years and wished her well in her future endeavours.

Chairperson