

Minutes of Party Group Leaders' Consultative Forum

10th February, 2022

Attendance

Members:

Councillor Áine Groogan
Councillor Billy Hutchinson
Councillor Michael Long (*for Councillor Nuala McAlister*)
Councillor Donal Lyons
Councillor Mal O'Hara
Alderman Brian Kingston
Councillor Ciaran Beattie
Alderman Sonia Copeland

Apologies: Councillor Nuala McAlister and Councillor Fiona Ferguson

Officers:

Ronan Cregan, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Resources;
John Walsh, City Solicitor; and
Joanne Delaney, Portfolio and Programme Coordinator (secretariat)

1. Finance

The Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Resources presented the Quarter 3 financial position for 2021-22 which would be presented to members at the February SP and R Committee. He outlined for Members the financial position in relation to the reserves agreed for Covid-19 related costs and losses of income. Members also discussed the forecasted underspend for year end and noted that no reallocations would be considered until the year end position is presented to SP and Committee in June 2022. He advised that Members would be kept updated on any proposed reallocations as they progress.

It was noted that Members have agreed an increase in the district rate for 2022/23 of 2.99%, by the required deadline of 15 February 2022. A press release has now been issued outlining key messages in relation to the district rate.

2. Covid Update

The Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Resources provided an update on the organisational approach to recovery and ongoing Covid-19 management. Members noted that the organisational recovery timeline will be reviewed on an ongoing basis in line with anticipated easing of restrictions and upcoming announcements. Current infection rates

and the number of staff who are reporting as Covid positive and unable to work will continue to be monitored on a regular basis and staff reallocated as and when required to allow for continuity of service delivery.

In relation to a query raised by a Member, the City Solicitor advised that it was assumed at present that the February SP and R Committee would be held as a remote meeting with the expectation that the March Council meeting be resumed in hybrid format should current restrictions be eased.

3. Her Majesty The Queens Platinum Jubilee

The City Solicitor provided an update in relation to the motion referred to SP and R Committee to mark Her Majesty The Queen's Platinum Jubilee. He outlined a proposed programme of events to be held over the upcoming four day bank holiday in June which had previously been considered by Party Group Leaders. The motion also included a request for funding for events organised by local communities across the city. There was detailed discussion by Members with some issues raised and some suggestions made in relation to the potential to fund other one off events that may arise throughout the year for the wider community. Members discussed the option of a potential rolling funding programme mechanism and it was agreed Officers would consider options going forward. Party Group Leaders to further consider the issues and suggestions raised in advance of a report being presented to February SP and R Committee.

4. Flying of the Union Flag - Designated Dates 2022

The City Solicitor advised Members that correspondence had been received from the NI Executive Office outlining the designated dates for the Flying of the Union Flag in 2022. Members noted the Flags Regulations (NI) (Amendment) 2021 to remove two dates from the list of Flag flying dates on which the Union Flag should be flown. Members also noted the decision already agreed by February Council in relation to Prince Andrew's birthday.

5. Alleygates Update

The Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Resources provided an update on Phase 5 of the alley gating scheme. He referred Members to the decision made at May SP and R Committee to agree a framework to identify a 'long list' of potential alleygate locations for each quadrant of the city. Officers have now analysed the data to support the framework and collated the requests received. A report will be brought to February SP and R Committee for Members' consideration which will also outline options for prioritisation.

Members discussed some issues with the Alleyway Transformation Programme previously considered by the P and C Committee particularly in relation to un-adopted alleyways and what options could be explored in the long term in order to address ongoing issues. An update report will be presented to the Forum in March.

6. Planning Update

The City Solicitor updated the Forum on the live planning applications and informed the Forum of applications that were being presented to the Planning Committee in February.

Members discussed the recent joint meeting with representatives from NI Water and the Department for Infrastructure regarding planning issues. The City Solicitor outlined the next steps required to address ongoing concerns and an update will be provided at a future meeting.

Members noted the recent publications by the NI Audit Office and the Department for Infrastructure and that officers will take a report on both reviews to the February Planning Committee.

7. AOB

Glencairn Park

Members noted that an issue in relation to a memorial stone in Glencairn Park has now been resolved.

City Centre Bye-Laws

Members noted the update in relation to the city centre bye laws report, following the revisions being presented to Members at their meeting in January. The report will now be presented to February SP and R Committee outlining the key next steps for consideration.

Motion Pay Rise for Leisure Workers

The Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Resources provided an update on the motion referred to SP and R Committee in January in relation to a Pay rise for Leisure Workers. He outlined the potential cost that would be incurred by GLL and the City Solicitor advised that GLL negotiations are ongoing with Trade Union representatives. The motion included a request for a joint meeting, it was agreed that a report would be brought to March SP and R in order to allow time for the discussions to take place in advance of SP and R.

Bonfire Management

The Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Resources outlined that a request in relation to the programmes of work associated with bonfires had been received. Members to consider the request at SP and R in February.

Request for Funding

The Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Resources advised that he had received a letter for a request for funding. He advised that this would be brought to SP and R Committee in February as an ad hoc funding request. He provided clarification in relation to a query raised by a member on the process and criteria for ad hoc funding requests.

Patty Group Leaders Consultative Forum – April 2022 Meeting

It was agreed the meeting in April be moved to Friday 8th April at 10.00 am.