

LISBURN & CASTLEREAGH CITY COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of Council held in the Council Chamber, Lagan Valley Island on Tuesday 24 September, 2024 at 7:00 pm

PRESENT

The Right Worshipful the Mayor
Councillor K Dickson

Deputy Mayor
Councillor R Carlin

Aldermen A G Ewart MBE, O Gawith, M Gregg,
A Grehan, H Legge, A McIntyre, S P Porter and J Tinsley

Councillors P Burke, S Burns, P Catney, D J Craig, N Eaton,
A P Ewing, J Gallen, A Givan, A Gowan, J Harpur,
B Higginson, G Hynds, C Kemp, P Kennedy, J Lavery BEM,
U Mackin, A Martin, G McCleave, C McCready, M McKeever,
T Mitchell, N Parker, G Thompson and Hon N Trimble

REMOTE:

Aldermen J Baird and S Skillen, and Councillor S Lowry

IN ATTENDANCE:

Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council

Chief Executive
Director of Finance & Corporate Services
Director of Leisure and Community Wellbeing
Director of Organisation Development and Innovation
Director of Regeneration and Growth
Director of Environmental Services (Acting)
Member Services Officers (BS, EW)
Technician
IT Officer

Commencement of the Meeting

At the commencement of the meeting, the Right Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor K Dickson, welcomed those present to the September meeting of Council which was being live streamed to enable members of the public to hear and see the proceedings. He pointed out that, should the meeting go into committee to consider confidential business, any members of the press and the public in attendance would be required to leave the Council Chamber for the duration of those matters.

The Chief Executive outlined the evacuation procedures in the case of an emergency.

The Right Worshipful the Mayor requested that all mobile phones be put on silent or switched off for the duration of the meeting and pointed out that, in accordance with the Council's Standing Orders, whilst the meeting was being live-streamed, unauthorised recording was not permitted.

Prayers

In the absence of the Mayor's Chaplain, Councillor A Martin addressed the Council and said a prayer. The Right Worshipful the Mayor thanked Councillor Martin for carrying out devotions.

Councillor G Hynds entered the meeting at 7.06 pm.

The Right Worshipful the Mayor, on behalf of the Council, extended condolences to Alderman S P Porter on the passing of his brother, Albert.

1. Business of The Right Worshipful the Mayor

1.1 Mayor's Engagements

The Council noted a number of engagements attended by The Right Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor K Dickson, since the previous meeting of Council.

2. Apologies

It was agreed to accept apologies for non-attendance at the meeting on behalf of Councillors D Bassett, R T Beckett and R McLernon.

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no Members' Declarations of Interest declared at the meeting.

4. Council Minutes

4.1 Meeting of Council – 27 August 2024

It was proposed by Councillor A Givan, seconded by Councillor B Higginson, and agreed that the minutes of the meeting of Council held on 27 August 2024 be confirmed and signed.

5. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising from the above minutes.

6. Deputations

There were no deputations.

7. Business Required by Statute

(i) Signing of Legal Documents

It was proposed by Alderman J Tinsley, seconded by Councillor T Mitchell, and agreed that the following legal documents be signed at the meeting:

- Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council and Choice Housing Ireland Limited, Leslie Morrell House, 37-41 May Street, Belfast BT1 4DN – Deed of Variation between Choice Housing Ireland Limited and Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council
- Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council and Dunbridge Ltd, c/o Omniplex Holdings (NI) Limited, Governor’s Road, Lisburn BT28 1PP and Shen Cloud Ltd, Unit 2a East Point Entertainment Village, Old Dundonald Road, Dundonald, Belfast BT16 1YG and Hasan Topal and Hakan Sakalli, both of 8 Tullynagardy Grove, Newtownards BT23 4ZJ – Contract for Lease of Unit 2A, Omni Park, Dundonald

8. Adoption of Minutes of Committees

Communities & Wellbeing Committee

3rd September 2024

Proposed by Alderman H Legge

Seconded by Councillor T Mitchell

Adopted subject to the following additional detail being included at the request of Alderman A McIntyre:

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European Heritage Open Days (14th & 15th September 2024)

“Alderman McIntyre requested that Officers from the Communities and Wellbeing Directorate and also the Regeneration & Growth Directorate engage actively with local churches and historical buildings across the Lisburn & Castlereagh Council area to encourage them to apply to Heritage Open Days 2025. Alderman McIntyre also made comment in relation to the Lisburn Museum submitting an application to be included in this programme of events.”

Alderman McIntyre, by way of an update, advised the Council that the closing date for applications to Heritage Open Days 2025 was April 2025.

Alderman Legge, Acting Chairperson, indicated that she was content that the minutes be amended to reflect Alderman McIntyre’s comments.

Environment & Sustainability Committee

4th September 2024

Proposed by Councillor P Catney

Seconded by Councillor G Hynds

Adopted subject to the undernoted items being referred back to Committee:

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Street Naming Proposal off Ballynahinch Road, Carryduff

and

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New Public Health Bill Consultation

Regeneration & Growth Committee

5th September 2024

Proposed by Alderman A Grehan

Seconded by Alderman A G Ewart

Corporate Services Committee

11th September 2024

Proposed by Councillor N Trimble

Seconded by Councillor N Eaton

Governance & Audit Committee

12th September 2024

Proposed by Councillor S Burns

Seconded by Alderman O Gawith

Planning Committee

5 August 2024

The minutes of the Planning Committee meeting of 5 August, 2024 had been circulated for noting as these minutes had been agreed at the subsequent meeting of the Planning Committee on 2 September 2024. It was proposed by Alderman M Gregg, seconded by Councillor U Mackin, and agreed that their contents be noted.

9. Report from Chief Executive

There was no reports from the Chief Executive.

10. Reports from Members on Boards

There were no reports from Members on Boards.

11. Reports on Decisions Subject to the Reconsideration Procedure

There were no reports on decisions subject to the reconsideration procedure.

12. Notices of Motion

12.1 No. 1 on the subject of Winter Fuel Payment Policy Change

A copy of the undernoted Notice of Motion in the name of Councillor T Mitchell had been circulated to Members with the notice convening the meeting:

“This council strongly opposes the Government’s recent Winter Fuel Payment policy change. We resolve to write to the Prime Minister, urging the Government to reverse this harmful decision. **Furthermore to write to the Minister for Communities to request an update on the Fuel Poverty Task Force.** As detailed in the 2021 census, Lisburn and Castlereagh has an ageing population with 18% of the population aged 65 or over. Therefore this decision will have a far reaching devastating impact on pensioner households throughout Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council. Furthermore, we seek assurance that the Pension Credit minimum income guarantee will be increased, ensuring that more low-income pensioner households become eligible for pension credit.”

Councillor T Mitchell read out his Notice of Motion which contained an addendum that he wished to have included (as highlighted in bold above).

The Notice of Motion as proposed by Councillor T Mitchell, was seconded by Alderman H Legge.

The Right Worshipful the Mayor advised that the Notice of Motion be considered at the meeting that evening.

Councillor Mitchell elaborated on his Notice of Motion during which he highlighted a number of significant related issues, including:

- Age UK estimate that 2.5 million pensioners who badly need the Winter Fuel payment to stay warm will not now receive it and will suffer as a result, and the impact within the Lisburn and Castlereagh Council area where 18% of the population are over 65 will be no less significant
- whilst energy prices have fallen during summer months the global uncertainty such as the war in Ukraine and the current volatile situation in the Middle East will inevitably lead to fuel prices increases during the autumn and winter months
- the Department for Communities (DfC) has indicated that the estimated additional cost to the block grant of maintaining universal entitlement for this Winter Fuel payment is £44.3 m and this does not include additional delivery for staffing costs.
- these restrictions will exclude many pensioners who are not receiving specific benefits but need help financially and pensioners who miss qualifying for pension credit due to the current income threshold are of particular concern.
- in NI 28% of potentially eligible households are not receiving pension credit
- the removal of this essential assistance will lead to an increase in health inequalities which in turn will lead to further pressure on an already underfunded Health Service as older people who are unable to heat their homes are at greater risk of poorer health.
- enhancing awareness of Pension Credit would mitigate against the impact of these changes.

12.1 No. 1 on the subject of Winter Fuel Payment Policy Change (Cont'd)

In closing Councillor Mitchell thanked Members for considering his Motion.

Alderman H Legge, having seconded the Notice of Motion, spoke in support of the issued raised by Councillor Mitchell. Alderman Legge emphasised that the reality was that this decision by the Labour Government would affect the most vulnerable in society. She stated that many of us are too proud to claim benefits and that we must encourage improved uptake in the Pension Credit and other benefits.

Councillors G Thompson, P Burke, J Gallen and D J Craig, on behalf of their respective political parties, spoke in support of the Notice of Motion. Aldermen S P Porter and S Skillen also spoke in support of the Motion. Alderman Skillen suggested that the Communities & Wellbeing Committee consider if it could support groups across the Council area through any underspends with hardship funding grants, the aim of which would be to support the most vulnerable in communities across the Council area. Councillor D J Craig, Chairperson of the Communities & Wellbeing Committee, undertook to raise this matter with relevant Officers.

The Notice of Motion as proposed by Councillor T Mitchell, seconded by Alderman H Legge, was put to the meeting and agreed unanimously.

13. Any Other Business

13.1 Support for Caleb's Cause NI and Request to Light Up Council Building
Councillor M McKeever

Councillor M McKeever advised that he had met recently with a mother of an autistic child who had expressed concern about the lack of adult services for her son after he leaves school. The mother had requested to Councillor McKeever that the Council writes to the appropriate Minister in the Northern Ireland Executive to highlight the serious concerns regarding the lack of opportunities for these young people compared to those opportunities that were available in the mainland UK and also to highlight the work of a new group that this mother had formed called Caleb's Cause NI. Councillor McKeever also requested that the Council considers the lighting up of the Council building to promote Caleb's Cause NI.

The Chief Executive advised that in view of the detail of Councillor McKeever's requests that a formal Notice of Motion to the next meeting of Council would be the most appropriate course of action.

Councillor A Gowan spoke in support of the issues raised.

13.2 Rat Sightings in Hillsborough Forest Park
Councillor A Gowan

Councillor A Gowan reported having been contacted in recent weeks by constituents who had had sightings of rats whilst walking with their families in

13.2 Rat Sightings in Hillsborough Forest Park (Cont'd)

Hillsborough Forest Park. Councillor Gowan requested that Council Officers look into this matter.

13.3 Hillsborough GP Medical Practitioner, Dr Chris Hall
Councillor A Gowan

Councillor A Gowan advised that Dr Chris Hall from Hillsborough Medical Centre had been awarded GP of the year in the Royal College of General Practitioners NI 'GP and Practice of the Year 2024' awards and requested that a letter from the Council conveying congratulations be sent to Dr Hall on this significant achievement. Councillor Gowan put on record that Dr Hall was a dedicated health professional.

13.4 Thanks to Officers in the Regeneration Unit
Councillor A Gowan

Councillor A Gowan expressed thanks and appreciation in connection with the recent efforts by Officers in the Regeneration Unit regarding the regeneration works in Anahilt which he stated looked fantastic.

13.5 Vacant and Overgrown Property, Bridge Street, Lisburn
Councillor N Trimble

Councillor N Trimble put on record his praise and thanks in regard to the work that had been carried out by two Council employees at a vacant and overgrown property in Bridge Street, Lisburn. Councillor Trimble stated that unfortunately there were a number of vacant properties in a poor state of repair across the city area, a number of which were privately owned. Councillor Trimble asked if the Council could explore options or initiatives to compel property owners to keep their properties in a good state of repair.

13.6 Aghalee Surgery
Councillor C Kemp

Councillor C Kemp advised that Aghalee Surgery had been awarded NI GP Practice of the year in the Royal College of General Practitioners NI 'GP and Practice of the Year 2024' awards and requested that a letter from the Council conveying congratulations be sent to Aghalee surgery on this significant achievement.

13.7 Support for Calebs Cause NI and Request to Light Up Council Building
Alderman M Gregg

The Chief Executive responded to questions and comments from Alderman M Gregg in regard to the request that Councillor McKeever bring forward a Notice of Motion for consideration at the next Council meeting on the issues he had raised. Following further comments from Alderman Gregg it was agreed that Councillor McKeever's motion be presented and considered at the next meeting of the Communities & Wellbeing Committee and that the Council grants the Committee delegated authority thereon.

13.8 Employee Long Service Awards Event and NILGA Employee 2024 Award
Alderman H Legge

Alderman H Legge advised that as one of NILGA's Office Bearers she had been invited to attend the Council's Employee Long Service awards event which she stated had been a great event which honoured those employees who had completed 25 years or more with local government. Alderman Legge congratulated those employees who had received long service awards and for their dedication to the Council over many years.

Alderman Legge also put on record the significant achievement of one of the Council's employees, Lesley Wilson, Arts Officer, who had been awarded NILGA's Local Government Employee of the Year 2024 having been one of 14 other finalists. Alderman Legge stated that it was with much pride that Lesley had won this award who had overcome some personal difficulties during the past year. Alderman Legge also commended Lesley on the success of recent major Arts projects during this time.

Councillor D J Craig, Chairperson of the Communities and Wellbeing Committee, wished to be associated with Alderman Legge's sentiments and stated that it was only right that the Council marks Lesley's remarkable achievement.

14. Confidential Business

The Right Worshipful the Mayor advised that the undernoted Confidential items were confidential due to containing information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information).

In Committee

It was proposed by Alderman A G Ewart, seconded by Councillor A P Ewing, and agreed that the Confidential Reports be considered "in Committee" in the absence of press or members of the public. The livestream was paused at this stage in proceedings (7.47 pm).

14.1 UK Shared Prosperity Fund - End of Year Programme
(Redacted report to be published following the Council Call-In Period)

The Chief Executive outlined the background and key issues in connection with the availability of a UK Shared Prosperity Fund for Northern Ireland, the investment priority of which was themed on Communities and Place.

A copy of the UK Prosperity funding guidance document and a proposed schedule of compliant projects had been appended to the Chief Executive's report.

The Chief Executive and the Director of Regeneration & Growth responded to, and provided clarification on, questions and comments from Members on issues arising from the report and appended documents.

Councillor P Catney left the meeting at 7.59 pm.

14.1 UK Shared Prosperity Fund – End of Year Programme (Cont'd)

It was proposed by Councillor U Mackin, seconded by Alderman A Grehan, and agreed that the recommendations as set out in the Officer's report be approved.

14.2 Requirement to enter into a Section 76 planning agreement for planning application LA05/2022/0612/F

(Redacted report to be made available after the agreement has been signed and sealed)

The Chief Executive and the Director of Regeneration & Growth, having responded to a number of comments and questions from Members in regard to the above agreement, undertook to revert to two Members on specific issues. It was noted that a workshop on Section 76 Planning Agreements would take place in the near future which would address the issues raised.

It was proposed by Alderman M Gregg, seconded by Alderman A Grehan, and agreed that approval be granted to the signing and sealing of the above Agreement by the Mayor and Chief Executive.

Resumption of Normal Business

It was proposed by Councillor A P Ewing, seconded by Councillor D J Craig, and agreed to come out of Committee and normal business was resumed.

At the conclusion of the meeting, The Right Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor K Dickson, thanked those present for their attendance.

There being no further business for consideration, the meeting was terminated at 8.21 pm.

Mayor