

LISBURN & CASTLEREAGH CITY COUNCIL**Minutes of Meeting of the Regeneration & Growth Committee held in the Council Chamber, Island Civic Centre, The Island, Lisburn and in remote locations on Thursday 7 November 2024 at 6.00 pm****PRESENT IN THE CHAMBER:**

Alderman A Grehan (Chairperson)

Alderman A G Ewart MBE (Vice Chairperson)

Aldermen J Baird and M Gregg

Councillors J Gallen, J Harpur, C Kemp, D Lynch, U Mackin, C McCready, T Mitchell and N Parker

REMOTE ATTENDANCE:

Councillors A Gowan and J Laverty BEM,

OTHER MEMBERS: (PLANNING COMMITTEE)

Alderman O Gawith (remote), Councillors S Burns (Chamber) and Hon N Trimble (remote)

OTHER MEMBER:

G McCleave (Chamber)

IN ATTENDANCEDirector of Regeneration & Growth
Head of Economic Development
Head of Planning & Capital Development
Member Services Officers (BS and EW)
IT Officer**Commencement of Meeting**

The Chairperson, Alderman A Grehan, extended a welcome to all present at the November meeting of the Committee, including those Members of the Planning Committee, the Planning Committee having been invited to attend in respect of the relevance of two planning-related reports by the Head of Planning & Capital Development. The Chairperson also extended a welcome and best wishes to Councillor D Lynch who was in attendance at his first meeting since his recent appointment to the Council.

The Chairperson reminded those present that the meeting was being audio recorded unless the item was being considered under confidential business and asked that any Member entering or leaving the meeting advise the Member Services Officer accordingly so that this might be accurately reflected in the minutes. The Chairperson also outlined the evacuation procedures in the case of an emergency.

1. Apologies

Apologies for non-attendance at the meeting were accepted and recorded on behalf of Councillor A Martin.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest declared at the meeting.

3. Report of Planning & Capital Development

3.1 NI Water Infrastructure Update

The Committee noted a report from the Head of Planning & Capital Development outlining the background and key issues in connection with an update in relation to NI Water's (NIW) limited capability to increase capacity for new connections to the wastewater system due to its 2024/2025 budget allocation and likely budget allocation in 2025/2026. A letter dated 15 October from NI Water entitled "NI Water Economic Constraints" together with a document detailing the areas and proposals impacted across the Council area had been appended to the Officer's report. NIW indicated in their letter that a solution to these capacity constraints would, in their assessment, take several fully funded Price Control periods to resolve.

The Head of Planning & Capital Development elaborated on some of the key issues which were detailed in his report and advised that Officers would be writing to NIW seeking more detailed information on the evidence that has informed the letter, in order that challenge, if required, could be brought to minimise any adverse impact on growth in the Council area.

The Head of Planning & Capital Development responded to questions from a number of Members arising from the report, including:

- the possibility of addressing NIW constraints through section 76 planning agreements with developers
- identifying other suitable areas for development
- the need for engagement with the Permanent Secretary or relevant Minister and Council Officers. The Head of Planning & Capital Development undertook to raise the matter of water infrastructure with the relevant director within the Department for infrastructure's Strategic Planning Group at a meeting scheduled locally in the near future.

3.1 NI Water Infrastructure Update (Cont'd)

- NIW's capacity constraints in respect of a current planning application in Glenavy as well as potential future housing development in that area. The Head of Planning & Capital Development undertook to address this matter separately off-line with the Member concerned.
- continued engagement with NIW. The Head of Planning & Capital Development having referred to the Planning Service Improvement Plan, a report on which would be considered later in the meeting that evening, elaborated on the importance of continued engagement with NIW to ensure continued growth and regeneration across the Council area. He discussed the issue of waste water impact assessments which typically took place after the planning application process had commenced. He also discussed the issue of NIW establishing an up-to-date position on statistical information used to assess infrastructure capacity. In some cases the information being used could be 10 years out of date.
- benefit in aligning the completion date for NIW Investment Plans and end date for the Council's LDP Plan Strategy. The Head of Planning & Capital Development discussed the requirement to carry out a review of the Plan Strategy prior to 2032.
- the significant number of development projects coming forward in the Carryduff and Four Winds areas and the need to know what exactly is required in terms of waste water infrastructure. The Head of Planning & Capital Development discussed the development of waste water treatment works to include two separate systems to serve West Lisburn/Blaris and separate this from New Holland. More specifically on Carryduff what is required must be examined on a case by case basis to understand whether network improvements, upgrades to works or private works were suitable for adoption. Council Officers were engaging with NIW in regard to whether or not NIW could adapt a private treatment plant.

It was agreed that the latest update from NIW be noted along with the action outlined in regard to Officers writing to NIW seeking further evidence on the impact that capacity constraints would have on the growth in the Council Area over the period of the Local Development Plan.

3.2 Planning Service Improvement Plan

The Head of Planning & Capital Development's report outlined the background and key issues in connection with the Planning Service Improvement Plan. It was noted that the Council's draft Service Improvement Plan had taken account of the findings of a number of assurance audits carried out by the Council's Audit team and an external audit by the NIAO into the delivery of planning in Northern Ireland as well as the findings of the Public Accounts Committee report that had followed.

The Head of Planning & Capital Development reported that the main focus for improvement was linked to the operation of the Development Management function and

3.2 Planning Service Improvement Plan (Cont'd)

aimed at addressing the following key issues:

- Speed of decision making
- Reporting, governance and resilience aligned to reducing the cost burden to ratepayers
- Communication with stakeholders and
- Alignment of planning and sustainable growth interests

A copy of the draft Planning Service Improvement Plan had been appended to the Officer's report which outlined a detailed action plan. It was noted that the recommendation was that the planning service should aim to be within the top 25% performing local planning authorities within the next 24 months and that the Improvement Plan sets out the steps necessary to achieve this whilst actively addressing the identified issues which were outlined in the report.

The Head of Planning & Capital Development responded to questions from the Committee in connection with issues arising from his report, including:

- number of older planning applications in the system and number of staff within the Planning Unit. The Head of Planning & Capital Development advised that the efficiency review of the Planning Unit had been completed with the necessary actions having been implemented.
- the post review sample of completed planning applications and review of practices/ procedures and enforcement
- the aim to be sitting in the top 25% of local planning authorities and how this compares to where the Council's Planning Unit sits currently with reference to the three areas of business - those being the Local Development Plan, Development Management and Enforcement
- update at the end of year one on the Planning Service Improvement action plan. The Head of Planning & Capital Development undertook to bring an update to the Committee after year one. He stated that the Planning Committee also would be kept informed of progress thereon.
- Action 1 (Quality – Performance) and how this might affect capacity in teams. The head of Planning & Capital Development explained that the review of the structure of the Planning Unit allowed for more flexibility across teams whilst ensuring that Officers were not distracted from their primary role.
- current processing times for planning applications compared to statutory target figures

3.2 Planning Service Improvement Plan (Cont'd)

A Member having welcomed the report on the Planning Service Improvement Plan congratulated Officers for their efforts in regard to those efficiencies and improvements that had been achieved to date.

Councillor N Parker left and returned to the meeting during the above discussion (6.37 pm and 6.39 pm respectively).

It was proposed by Vice Chairperson, Alderman A Ewart, seconded by Alderman M Gregg, and agreed to recommend that the report on the Planning Service Improvement Plan, including the reasons for developing the Service Improvement Plan, be noted and that the actions arising to improve the service be approved.

4.0 Report of Head of Economic Development

4.1 New Department for Economy Proposals – Sub-Regional Economic Strategy

The Director of Regeneration & Growth presented this item of business.

The Head of Economic Development's report highlighted the background and key issues in connection with the New Sub-Regional Economic Plan for Northern Ireland which had been published by the Department for Economy in October 2024 and which detailed a locally led approach to deliver regional balance based on partnership working. Councils would be required to establish new Local Economic Partnerships (LEPs), involving central government, Invest NI and local stakeholders. It was noted that the Department would provide financial resources for locally based initiatives.

The following documents had been appended to the Officer's report:

- DfE & Invest NI Sub-Regional Plan
- DfE & Invest NI Sub-Regional Plan – Technical Annex (which detailed the process of collecting the evidence used to inform and shape the Sub-Regional Plan
- PowerPoint presentation by DfE/Invest NI/Councils/NILGA/Co-Design on the Sub-Regional Plan Workshop October 2024
- Invest NI 3-Year Business Strategy Document 2024-2027
- Draft Consultation response to Invest NI 3-Year Business Strategy

The Director of Regeneration & Growth and the Head of Economic Development responded to questions and comments from the Committee in connection with the proposals contained in the Sub-Regional Economic Strategy.

4.1 New Department for Economy Proposals – Sub-Regional Economic Strategy (Cont'd)

In response to concerns raised by a Member the Director assured the Committee that the proposals contained in this Strategy would give local councils an improved position and would provide opportunities to refine programmes further locally.

The Head of Economic Development undertook to feed back to DfE an amendment to a colour of a performance indicator against Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council on page 7 of the Sub-Regional Plan. He also undertook to go back to Invest NI on the specific questions raised around FDI.

It was proposed by Councillor J Gallen, seconded by Councillor C Kemp, and agreed to recommend that:

- a) the DfE proposals to establish a sub-regional economic plan, as outlined in the Officer's report and in the associated appendices, be noted, and that Officers develop local delivery plans in line with the formal guidance when received, with further reports provided to the Committee in due course.
- b) the Invest NI draft 3-year Business Strategy 2024-27, as appended to the Officer's report, be noted
- c) the draft Council response to the Invest NI consultation document be agreed along with any additional comments for inclusion in the final response prior to submission by 14 November 2024.

4.2 LCCC Labour Market Partnership (LMP) Job Fairs

The Head of Economic Development's report outlined the background and key issues in connection with the Lisburn & Castlereagh Labour Market Partnership (LMP) and the associated action plan 2024/2025. It was noted that the action plan included strategic priority 3, the aim of which was to promote and support delivery of existing employability or skills provision available either regionally or locally.

It was noted that it was anticipated that a minimum of four events would be delivered by the Council to include two job fairs and two other industry specific events such as female returners, disability inclusion, business start; the next scheduled events being as follows:

- *Dundonald International Ice Bowl – Thursday 21st November 2024, 10.30am to 2.30pm (to focus on employability, primarily within the Castlereagh area), and*
- *Lagan Valley LeisurePlex - Thursday 27th February 2025, 10.30am to 2.30pm. (to focus on employability, primarily within the Lisburn area).*

4.2 LCCC Labour Market Partnership (LMP) Job Fairs (Cont'd)

It was agreed that the update on the LCCC Labour Market Partnership (LMP) Job Fairs programme be noted and that Members of the Committee promote the events across their constituency networks to maximise interest and impact.

4.3 Northern Ireland Tourism Alliance – Correspondence Requesting Support

The Director of Regeneration & Growth presented this item of business.

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Economic Development in connection with correspondence received by the Council on 31 October 2024 from the Northern Ireland Tourism Alliance (NITA) in regard to a request that the Council writes to the UK Minister for Immigration and Citizenship raising concerns around the proposed roll-out of the Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA).

The Vice Chairperson, Alderman A G Ewart, proposed that each political party on the Council writes to the UK Minister outlining their own party's position on this matter. Councillor N Parker seconded Alderman Ewart's proposal.

Councillor J Gallen proposed that Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council writes a letter of support collectively to NITA to the UK Minister. This counter proposal was seconded by Councillor D Lynch.

The Chairperson acknowledged that there were two proposals before the Committee, and with Councillor Gallen's agreement, proceeded to put Alderman Ewart's proposal to the meeting.

On a vote being taken, Alderman Ewart's proposal that each political party on the Council writes to the UK Minister outlining their own party's position on this matter, as seconded by Councillor N Parker, was declared 'carried' there being 11 votes in favour.

Councillor Gallen requested that the SDLP position be recorded as being in favour of the NITA request to support concerns about the imposition caused by ETA.

5. Any Other Business

5.1 Temporary Changing Places Toilet Facility in Castle Gardens Councillor N Parker

Councillor N Parker expressed thanks to Council Officers following her request to bring costs forward for a temporary Changing Places toilet facility in Castle Gardens. Councillor Parker stated that the event in question had been a huge success in that it brought increased footfall into the Council area.

5.2 Moria Public Realm Scheme
Vice Chairperson, Alderman A G Ewart

In response to comments from the Vice Chairperson, Alderman A G Ewart, the Director of Regeneration & Growth having advised that the Public Realm scheme in Moira was on the Council's Programme of Works, assured that he would bring a report on this piece of work back to the Committee in due course.

6. Confidential Report from Director of Regeneration & Growth

The Chairperson, Alderman A Grehan, advised that confidential report items were required to be considered under confidential business 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 Councillor J Gallen, seconded by Alderman J Baird, and agreed that the Confidential Reports be considered "in Committee" in the absence of press or members of the public. The audio recording was paused at this stage in proceedings.

6.1 BRCD Destination Royal Hillsborough – Proposed Addendum to Outline Business Case

(Redacted Report to be published following completion of land deal and acceptance of Business case Addendum by the Programme Board)

The Committee considered a report outlining the background and key issues in connection with the Belfast Region City Deal's Destination Royal Hillsborough programme and a proposed addendum to the Outline Business Case.

The Director of Regeneration & Growth responded to questions from a Member on one of the key issues pertaining to the above-mentioned proposed addendum.

It was proposed by the Vice Chairperson, Alderman A G Ewart, seconded by Alderman J Baird, and agreed to recommend that the recommendations in connection with the addendum to the business case relating to BRCD for Royal Hillsborough, as set out in the report circulated, be approved.

6.2 Event Marquees Business Case

(Redacted Report to be published following ratification by Council)

The Committee considered a report outlining the background and key issues in connection with the business case in relation to event marquees, a copy of which had been appended to the Director's report.

The Director of Regeneration & Growth and the Head of Economic Development responded to questions from two Members in connection with the above-mentioned

6.2 Event Marquees Business Case (Cont'd)

business case, it being noted that a report on one of the issues raised would be brought to the Committee in January 2025.

It was proposed by Alderman J Baird, seconded by Councillor J Gallen, and agreed to recommend that business case and the procurement of a suitable marquee provider for a 3 year period (1+1+1), with an initial contract for the first year only, be agreed.

7. Any Other Confidential Business

7.1 Update Report on CityWatch CCTV
Councillor J Lavery

At the request of Councillor J Lavery, and following on from the update provided to the Committee at its meeting in October, the Director made a number of comments in regard to recent progress on the Citywatch CCTV matter and undertook to bring a comprehensive report on this matter to the Committee in due course.

Resumption of Normal Business

It was proposed by the Vice Chairperson, Alderman A G Ewart, seconded by Alderman J Baird, and agreed to come out of Committee and normal business was resumed.

8. Any Other Business

8.1 Change of Time for December Meeting of the Regeneration & Growth Committee

It was proposed by the Vice Chairperson, Alderman A G Ewart, seconded by Councillor T Mitchell, and agreed to recommend that the start time of the December meeting of the Committee be brought forward to 5.30 pm to facilitate Members' attendance at the Christmas Switch-On event in Aghalee on Thursday, 5th December.

Conclusion of Meeting

The Chairperson thanked everyone for their attendance and there being no further business for consideration the meeting was concluded at 7.30 pm.

Chairperson