

LISBURN & CASTLEREAGH CITY COUNCIL

Minutes of Meeting of the Corporate Services Committee held in the Council Chamber, Island Civic Centre, The Island, Lisburn on Wednesday 8th May 2024 at 6.00 pm.

PRESENT:

Alderman O Gawith (Chair)

Councillor A Ewing (Vice-Chair)

The Right Worshipful The Mayor
Councillor A Gowan

Deputy Mayor
Councillor G McCleave

Aldermen A Ewart MBE, M Guy and H Legge

Councillors T Beckett, K Dickson, N Eaton, A Givan,
B Higginson, C Kemp, U Mackin and The Hon N Trimble

OTHER MEMBERS:

Councillors G Hynds and C McCready

IN ATTENDANCE:

Director of Finance & Corporate Services
Director of Organisation Development & Innovation
Head of Assets
Head of Corporate Communications & Administration
Head of Finance
Head of Human Resources & Organisation Development
Member Services Officers (RN & CR)

Commencement of Meeting

The Chair welcomed those present to the meeting and advised that it would be audio recorded unless the item on the agenda was to be considered under confidential business.

The Chair stated that unauthorised recording was not permitted, as per 8.5 of the Council's Standing Orders. The Chair also reminded everyone to ensure that mobile phones were turned off or on silent mode for the duration of the meeting.

The Director of Finance & Corporate Services proceeded to outline the evacuation procedures in the case of an emergency. Finally, the Chair asked that any Member entering or leaving the meeting alert the Member Services Officer accordingly so that this might be accurately reflected in the minutes.

1. Apologies

Apologies for non-attendance at the meeting were accepted and recorded on behalf of Councillors P Burke and R Carlin; and the Director of Regeneration & Growth.

2. Declarations of Interest

The Chair invited Members to declare any interests they might have in relation to the business of the meeting and reminded them of the requirement that they complete Declaration of Interest forms in this regard which had been provided with the papers for the meeting and which were also available in the Chamber.

In relation to Item 5.2.1 – “Northern Ireland Local Government Association – Service Level Fee/Subscription for 2024/2025”, the following Declarations of Interest were made but noted only as the Members’ natures of interest related to their involvement in NILGA on behalf of the Council:-

- Alderman O Gawith
- Alderman M Guy
- Councillor G Hynds
- Alderman H Legge
- Councillor U Mackin

3. Report of Director of Regeneration & Growth

3.1 Single Tender Action Policy

In the absence of the Director of Regeneration & Growth who had presented an apology for non-attendance at the meeting, this item was presented by the Head of Assets. The Head of Assets, together with the Director of Finance & Corporate Services and the Head of HR&OD, responded to Members’ questions.

In addition to the narrative report, a copy of the Draft Single Tender Action (STA) Policy had been provided.

The Committee noted that – as part of the ongoing review of procurement practices and procedures – a stand-alone policy detailing how a Single Tender Action (also known as Direct Award Contract) should be approached, had been developed. The policy would become effective post its adoption by Council.

3.1 Single Tender Action Policy (Continued)

It was proposed by Councillor N Trimble, seconded by Councillor U Mackin and agreed to recommend that:-

- the Draft Single Tender Action (STA) Policy be approved and adopted;
- the guidance which was contained in the draft Policy be noted and be appended to the Policy.

Councillor C Kemp raised the issue of the equality/good relations screening document associated with the draft Policy having been referred to in the report but not provided. It was agreed that this be made available to Members.

The equality/screening documents for the D-Day 80 Programme and the Festival of Remembrance had also been referred to in their respective reports but not provided. These would also be made available.

The procedure for the loading of equality/screening documents to the Council's website was being explored in view of the Council's recently updated website.

4. Report of Head of Corporate Communications & Administration

4.1 D-Day 80: 6 June 2024 Progress Report

The Head of Service highlighted a number of additional events in the Programme for D-Day 80, namely an announcement by the Town Crier; the flying of the Flag of Peace; and the ringing of Church bells. These had been occasioned by the updated Civic Officers Guide, subsequently agreed by the Working Group and were being progressed.

In addition to the narrative report, copies of the undernoted items had been provided and were duly noted on a Proposal made by Councillor A Givan and seconded by Alderman H Legge:-

- minutes of meeting of the D-Day Working Group held on the 9th April 2024;
- the rolling D-Day Programme for the planned activities and the additional events, together with the required budgets (as of April 2024).

4.2 Festival of Remembrance - 8th November 2024

The Head of Service reported on a request from the Chairman of the Regimental Association of the Royal Irish Regiment (Lisburn Branch) that the Council become involved in a Festival of Remembrance event at Lagan Valley Island on the 8th November 2024. This had been an annual event pre-Covid.

4.2 Festival of Remembrance - 8th November 2024 (Continued)

The request is in keeping with the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant to which the Council is signed up.

The report outlined the proposals to date whereby the Council would provide the use of the Island Hall, tickets would be sold through the LVI Box Office, and the event – co-ordinated by the Chairman of the Regimental Association – would be overseen by the LCCC Civic Events team.

It was proposed by Councillor A Givan, seconded by Councillor B Higginson and agreed to recommend that:-

- the request to deliver the Festival of Remembrance at Lagan Valley Island on the 8th November 2024 in partnership with the Chairman of the Regimental Association of the Royal Irish Regiment (Lisburn Branch) be acceded to;
- in line with the Policy on Invitations to Civic Functions, Visits and Council Events, the Council be represented at the above event by the following:-
 - the Mayor of the Day;
 - the Corporate Services Committee Chair of the Day;
 - the Corporate Services Committee Vice-Chair of the Day;
 - given the nature of the event – the Veterans' Champion.

5. Report of Head of Finance

5.1 Car Parking bad-debt write off

The Head of Finance reported on the matter of Bad Debt associated with the car parking function which had transferred to the Council on the 1st April 2015. The Head of Service confirmed that this would be an on-going matter as requests for the writing-off of the car parking bad debts came to the Council from the Department for Infrastructure once that department had exhausted its debt recovery procedures.

It was proposed by Alderman H Legge, seconded by Councillor N Trimble and agreed to recommend that the debt recorded in relation to car parking is written off the ledgers of the Department for Infrastructure.

5.2 Northern Ireland Local Government Association

5.2.1 Service Level Fee/Subscription for 2024/2025

In addition to the narrative report, the following documents from NILGA had been provided:-

- letter dated the 22nd April 2024 advising of the Council's subscription for 2024/2025 in the sum of £59,368.00 (excluding VAT);
- Corporate Plan for 2023-2027;
- impact summary;
- detailed breakdown of the information contained in the impact summary.

The Head of Service referred to the decision of the Committee in June 2023 that those subscription charges normally reported to the Home Committees be approved for the 4-year council term and only be reported to the Home Committee in subsequent years if the subscription charge exceeded the approved budget. The council's Service Level Fee/Subscription to NILGA for 2024/2025 exceeded the approved budget by £558.00.

It was proposed by Councillor N Trimble, seconded by the Deputy Mayor, Councillor G McCleave, and agreed to recommend that:-

- the Council's Service Level Fee/Subscription to NILGA in the sum of £59,368.00 (excluding VAT) for the period 2024/2025 be approved for payment;
- the items of correspondence from NILGA as referred to above be noted.

5.2.2 NILGA workshop for Members – 25th April 2024

The Chair, Alderman O Gawith, referred to a Members' workshop held on the 25th April 2024 at which the Chief Executive of NILGA had made a presentation on the work of that organisation and its Corporate Plan for 2023-2027. Whilst the number of Members attending both in person and on a remote basis, had been somewhat disappointing, the content of the meeting had been very worthwhile.

6. Report of Head of Human Resources & Organisation Development

6.1 Managing Attendance Policy

In addition to the narrative report which set out the key issues in regard to the revision of the Managing Attendance Policy, an updated version of that policy in draft form was provided with the report.

6.1 Managing Attendance Policy (Continued)

The Head of Service took Members through the key points of the policy and also informed them of the key elements of the Operational Procedure which would implement that policy. The Head of Service and other Officers responded to Members' questions.

It was proposed by Alderman H Legge, seconded by Councillor A Givan and agreed to recommend that the revised "Managing Attendance Policy" be approved for review and agreement with the Council's JCNF (Joint Consultative & Negotiating Forum). It was noted that – only if the JCNF did not accept the revised policy – would there be a further report to Committee.

The Right Worshipful The Mayor, Councillor A Gowan, left the meeting during discussion of this item and prior to any decision. (6.40 pm)

7. Any Other Business – Non-Confidential

7.1 Use of Box Office for Council events outside of Lagan Valley Island
Alderman A Ewart

Alderman A Ewart referred to a recent fund-raising event for the Mayor's Charity which had been held at an external location. The purchase of tickets by means of the Box Office had not been possible, reportedly because the event was not taking place in Lagan Valley Island.

The Head of Corporate Communications & Administration agreed to look into this matter.

7.2 District Electoral Area (DEA) Capital Programme
Councillor C Kemp

Councillor C Kemp sought an update on the reporting of the DEA Capital Programme to Committee as she understood it was to have been presented to the May meeting.

The Director of Finance & Corporate Services advised that further work on the Programme was required. The Director would consult with her fellow-directors and advise Councillor Kemp as to when the DEA Capital Programme was likely to be presented to Committee.

8. Confidential Reports from Director of Finance & Corporate Services and from Director of Organisation Development & Innovation

The reasons for confidentiality were as set out in the agenda, ie:-

8.1 Report on Tender Awards

(Confidential for reason of information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information).

Redacted report to be available following ratification and signing of contracts.

8.2 Quarterly Finance Reports – Quarter 4 of 2023/2024

(Confidential for reason of information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information).

Redacted report to be available following full Council meeting on 28th May 2024.

8.3 Local Government Staff Commission
Disciplinary Policy & Procedure

(Confidential for reason of information relating to any consultations or negotiations (or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the council or a government department and employees of, or office holders under, the Council.

Report to be available in July 2024.

In Committee

It was proposed by Councillor A Ewing, seconded by Councillor C Kemp and agreed that the Confidential Reports of the Directors be considered “in Committee”. (Recording was paused at this stage in proceedings.)

9. Confidential Report from Director of Finance & Corporate Services

9.1 Report on Tender Awards

Presented by the Head of Assets.

It was proposed by Councillor A Givan, seconded by Alderman H Legge and agreed to recommend that the tenders awarded in regard to the following contracts, together with the attendant tender reports, be noted:-

- T23/24-017 – Catering Services at Lagan Valley LeisurePlex;
- T23/24-027 – Collection, Transportation, Recycling and/or Recovery of Mattresses from Council Household Recycling Centres.

9.1 Report on Tender Awards (Continued)

It was further agreed to recommend that the signing and sealing of the Tender documents be approved.

9.2 Quarterly Finance Reports – Q4 of 2023/2024

Presented by the Head of Finance who – together with the Head of Corporate Communications & Administration - responded to Members' questions.

It was proposed by the Deputy Mayor, Councillor G McCleave, seconded by Councillor N Trimble and agreed to recommend that:-

- the information contained in the narrative report be noted;
- the report on Repairs & Renewals at year-end position of 2023/2024 be noted;
- the movements detailed within the report on Department for Communities' earmarked reserves at year-end position of 2023/2024 be agreed.

10. Confidential Report from Director of Organisation Development & Innovation

10.1 Local Government Staff Commission

10.1.1 Consultation on Disciplinary Policy & Procedure
(Closing date: 7th June 2024)

The Director reported that the Local Government Staff Commission had been tasked by the Department for Communities with the development of a Draft Disciplinary Policy & Procedure for Local Government Employees in Northern Ireland. The closing date for the receipt of comments by the LGSC is the 7th June 2024.

In addition to the narrative report, the following documents had been provided:-

- Draft Disciplinary Policy & Procedure for Local Government Employees in Northern Ireland;
- outline template for response;
- draft response by Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council to the consultation.

The Director responded to Members' comments on this matter.

10.1.1 Consultation on Disciplinary Policy & Procedure
(Closing date: 7th June 2024) (Continued)

It was proposed by Councillor C Kemp, seconded by Councillor K Dickson and agreed to recommend that:-

- the principles contained within the draft response be supported;
- any Member wishing to provide feedback on the consultation do so by contacting the Director of Organisation Development & Innovation by the 1st June 2024;
- the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Day of the Corporate Services Committee be provided with delegated authority so as to agree the Council's response to the consultation;
- the final response be presented to the June 2024 meeting of the Committee for information purposes only.

10.1.2 Dissolution of Local Government Staff Commission

Alderman A Ewart referred to a Ministerial announcement in 2017 that the Local Government Staff Commission was to be wound up. However the Local Government Staff Commission remained in existence. The Director of Finance & Corporate Services advised of a recent communication from the LGSC whereby it had been informed by the Department of Communities that the provisional date for the dissolution of the LGSC was the 31st March 2027.

It was proposed by Alderman A Ewart, seconded by Councillor N Trimble and agreed that a letter be sent to the Minister for Communities expressing concern that the Ministerial announcement of 2017 to wind up the Local Government Staff Commission had still not been implemented and - indeed - that the provisional date for its dissolution was now March 2027 – some 10 years later.

The Head of Corporate Communications & Administration left the meeting during discussion of this item and prior to any decisions being taken.
(7.02 pm)

11. Any Other Business – Confidential

11.1 Report on Tribunal Matters
Alderman M Guy

In response to comments from Alderman M Guy about the provision to the Council of a report relating to recent tribunal matters, the Director of Finance & Corporate Services confirmed that preparation of this report was underway.

11.2 Thanks to Chairman

Councillor N Trimble referred to the meeting being the last one before the Annual Meeting on the 7th June 2024 and expressed his thanks to the Chair, Alderman O Gawith, and also the Vice-Chair - Councillor A Ewing – for their conduct of business during their term in office. These comments were endorsed by a number of other Members present.

Alderman Gawith responded accordingly and expressed his thanks to his Vice-Chair, Councillor A Ewing, the other members of the Committee, the Director of Finance & Corporate Services and all staff associated with the Corporate Services Committee, for their assistance and support to him during his year as Chairman.

The Vice-Chair, Councillor A Ewing, responded accordingly also.

Resumption of Normal Business

It was proposed by Alderman H Legge, seconded by Councillor N Trimble and agreed to come “out of Committee”. Normal business and audio recording were resumed.

12. Any Other Business

There were no further items raised.

The meeting concluded at 7.14 pm.

MAYOR/CHAIR