

LISBURN & CASTLEREAGH CITY COUNCIL**Minutes of Meeting of the Regeneration & Growth Committee held remotely and in the Council Chamber, Island Civic Centre, The Island, Lisburn on Thursday 7th December, 2023 at 5.30 pm****PRESENT IN THE CHAMBER:**

Councillor J Lavery BEM (Chairperson)

Councillor T Mitchell (Vice Chairperson)

Aldermen J Baird, A G Ewart MBE, A Grehan

Councillors P Burke, K Dickson, U Mackin, A Martin, C McCready and N Parker

PRESENT IN REMOTE LOCATION:

Aldermen M Gregg, M Guy and S P Porter

Councillor J Gallen

OTHER MEMBERS:In Chamber:

Councillor G Hynds

IN ATTENDANCE

Director of Regeneration & Growth
 Director of Organisation Development & Innovation
 Head of Economic Development
 Head of Planning & Capital Development
 Head of Portfolio, IT & Commercialisation (Acting)
 Member Services Officers (BS and EW)
 IT Officer

Commencement of Meeting

The Chairperson, Councillor J Lavery, extended a welcome to all present at the December meeting of the Committee and advised that the meeting was being audio recorded unless the item was being considered under confidential business.

At this point in proceedings, the Member Services Officer read out the names of the Elected Members in attendance at the meeting.

The Chairperson 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 Director of Regeneration & Growth outlined the evacuation procedures in the case of an emergency.

The Vice Chairperson, Councillor T Mitchell, Councillor U Mackin and Councillor G Hynds entered the meeting at 5.33 pm.

1. Apologies (00:02:45)

Apologies for non-attendance at the meeting were accepted and recorded on behalf of The Right Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor A Gowan.

Alderman A Grehan entered the meeting at 5.35 pm.

2. Declarations of Interest (00:03:05)

There were no Declarations of Interest made at this point in the meeting.

Alderman A Grehan submitted a completed Declaration of Interest form in respect of agenda item 6.2 Grove Activity Centre – Community Asset Transfer in view of her volunteer work with the organisation concerned.

3. Report by Director of Regeneration & Growth

3.1 Draft Community Asset Transfer Policy and Draft Acquisition and Disposal of Land and Property Assets Policy (00:03:35)

The Committee had been furnished with a report outlining the background and key issues in connection with the public consultation relating to the above-mentioned two policies.

It was noted that one notable response had been received in respect of the Acquisition and Disposal of Land and Property Assets Policy on behalf of the Department for Communities (DfC) as outlined in the report. The Director advised that the response from DfC had been included as an amendment to the policy.

The Committee had been provided with copies of the consultation reports as well as a copy of the draft Community Asset Transfer policy and the amended draft policy on Acquisitions and Disposal of Land and Property Assets Policy.

The Director responded to questions from the Committee in regard to the Community Asset Transfer Policy during which he elaborated on a possible partnership agreement with a Government Department, the importance of obtaining best value for public assets and governance and audit related issues.

It was proposed by Councillor U Mackin, seconded by Alderman A Grehan, and agreed to recommend that the draft Community Asset Transfer Policy and the amended draft Policy for the Acquisition and Disposal of Land and Property Assets be approved, it being noted that the consultation reports and the policies would be advertised on the Council's website.

4. Report by Head of Economic Development

4.1 Decorative Lighting for Gateway Alleyways – Lisburn City Centre (00:08:54)

The Head of Economic Development outlined the background and key issues in connection with the Mayoral Umbrella Project which had been progressed through the previously agreed Awakening the Gateways initiative and which had been funded through the Department for Communities. This project had been in place during the spring and summer months.

The report also detailed the proposal to install decorative lighting using the already installed catenary wires in the form of either festoon lighting or a 'sky' canopy which would complement the lighting in place for the festive period. Once installed the lighting would be a permanent fixture which could be used across the seasons. The estimated cost of the lighting and installations was in the region of £16,000 for three alleyways (Haslems Lane, Graham Gardens and McKeown Street).

The Head of Economic Development responded to questions from the Committee in connection with the proposed time frame for the above project and also the option of having a more permanent feature going forward.

The Head of Planning & Capital Projects entered the meeting at 5.46 pm.

It was proposed by Councillor N Parker that the recommendation as outlined in the report to install decorative lighting to animate the alleyways at an estimated cost of £16,000 be not approved but that the matter be referred back in order that Officers come forward with proposals for a more permanent feature.

Alderman J Baird raised the issue of funding for this project from DfC, and should this still be the case, proposed that the Officer's recommendation be accepted.

Alderman A Grehan supported the proposal by Councillor N Parker.

Having taken account of further comments by the Head of Economic Development, Alderman J Baird withdrew his proposal.

The proposal in the name of Councillor N Parker was put to the meeting and agreed; namely, that the Officer's recommendation to install decorative lighting to animate the alleyways at an estimated cost of £16,000 be not approved and that a report be presented to a future meeting of the Committee outlining proposals for a more permanent feature for decorative lighting of the alleyways.

Alderman A G Ewart entered the meeting at 5.51 pm.

4.2 Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor (DBEC) Collaboration and Funding Agreement
(00:19:40)

The Head of Economic Development outlined the background and key issues in connection the Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor (DBEC) the aim of which was to explore the development of a regional proposition for economic growth. The DBEC Strategy and Action Plan had been presented to the Council in March 2023 and following agreement by all eight partner Councils of both documents a joint draft Collaboration & Funding had been prepared, a copy of which had been appended to the Officer's report.

The Head of Economic Development elaborated on the Collaboration and Funding agreement.

The Director of Regeneration & Growth and the Head of Economic Development responded to questions from the Committee in connection with the role of the lead Council of the DBEC initiative and also the purpose of the initiative which was to improve connectivity and encourage innovation in a collaborative way for the benefit of the ratepayers.

It was proposed by Councillor U Mackin, seconded by Alderman J Baird, and agreed to recommend that the Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor Draft Collaboration and Funding Agreement be approved.

5 Report of Director of Organisation Development & Innovation

5.1 BRCD Update and Strategic Investment Board Resource Assistance (00:33:36)

The Director of Organisation Development & Innovation's report outlined the background and key issues in connection with the Belfast Region City Deal initiative. The report detailed projects currently being led by Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council Officers, namely:

- a) the £26m Destination Royal Hillsborough City Deal Investment project, and
- b) capital-based programmes that would utilise external funding streams principally to develop employability and skills opportunities as a consequence of BRCD investment.

The Committee had been furnished with a summary of progress with the wider BRCD Programme for Funding.

At the outset the Chairperson, Councillor J Laverty, extended a welcome to the Director of Organisation Development & Innovation and the Head of Portfolio, IT & Commercialisation (Acting) to the meeting who were in attendance in order to present to the Committee on the BRCD Programme.

5.1 BRCD Update and Strategic Investment Board Resource Assistance (Cont'd)

With the aid of PowerPoint the Director of Organisation Development & Innovation made her presentation during which she provided an overview of the BRCD initiative. She also highlighted and elaborated on the following:

- the four pillars of funding (Digital & Innovation, Regeneration & Tourism, Infrastructure and Employability & Skills)
- Governance structure
- LCCC Governance which included a Members' Forum represented by the Chairperson of the Regeneration & Growth Committee, Councillor J Laverty, the Vice Chairperson, Councillor T Mitchell, Alderman A G Ewart and Councillor G Thompson
- key focus areas (Tourism & Regeneration, supporting Economic Growth, and links to the Private Sector)
- Destination Royal Hillsborough
- wider initiatives/projects led by the two universities
- progress of LCCC in relation to Destination Royal Hillsborough's public realm, the Labour Market Partnership, the DBEC initiative and the Digital Growth Transformation Fund

At the conclusion of the presentation the Director discussed the three posts that had been identified to support delivery of the Council's City Deal projects, which were located with the Portfolio Office; namely,

- Programme Co-ordinator (a replacement had been seconded for a period of 12 months from January 2024),
- Project Officer, and
- Project Support Officer

The Director reported that the Council required interim support from the Strategic Investment Board (SIB) to assist the Project Officer and Project Support Officer in progressing key areas as outlined in the report for the next 2-3 months.

The Director of Regeneration & Growth, the Director of Organisation Development & Innovation and the Head of Planning & Capital Development responded to a number of questions from Members in regard to:

- a) timeframes for a planning-related matter and the award of a contract for funding,
- b) negotiations with DfI Roads on the public realm in Royal Hillsborough,
- c) the transport plan for Hillsborough,
- d) car parking in Hillsborough. The Director of Regeneration & Growth gave an assurance that a report would come forward to the Committee in the near future on the matters raised.

5.1 BRC D Update and Strategic Investment Board Resource Assistance
(Cont'd)

- e) the processing of planning applications for new business seeking to set up in the Council area. The Head of Planning & Capital Development elaborated on a number of issues in relation to the requirement to consider all planning applications in line with current planning policy and the Local Development Plan. He also stated that planning applications were considered on a case-by-case basis, and
- f) the most appropriate funding source for the SIB support.

The Vice-Chairperson, Councillor T Mitchell, left the meeting at 6.18 pm and returned again at 6.21 pm.

It was proposed by Alderman J Baird, seconded by Councillor U Mackin, and agreed to recommend that:

- a) the progress across the BRC D Programme be noted, and
- b) the appointment of the interim SIB resources to assist the Council in moving forward the BRC D Destination Royal Hillsborough programme, in line with the terms and conditions as set out in the Contract for Funding, be agreed.

6. Any Other Business

6.1 Information & Noting Schedule – December 2023 (01:01:44)

The Chairperson, Councillor J Laverty, drew Members' attention to the following items which had been included in the Information & Correspondence Schedule this month:

- the positive outcomes of the Labour Market Partnership Action Plan Year 1 interim outcome report
- Council's Tourism Strategy 2024/2029. The Chairperson advised that a workshop on the Council's Tourism Strategy would take place at the conclusion of the January meeting of the Committee.
- correspondence from the Department of the Economy regarding the monitoring of performance in relation to the NI Business Start-Up Programme showing this Council having exceeded the statutory jobs target. The Chairperson welcomed the fact that Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council had exceeded its target of 85 new jobs, having created 113 new jobs in the Council area. He expressed thanks and appreciation to the Head of Economic Development and his team for their efforts thereon.

6.2 Update on the Light Festival (01:03:35)

The Chairperson, Councillor J Lavery, provided feedback to date on the Light Festival. He reported over 5,000 people had attended on one of the key nights this year which was well in excess of the number in attendance at last year's event. He encouraged Members to take time to walk round the various areas of the Light Festival.

6.3 Flooding Update – Local Businesses (01:04:46)

The Chairman, Councillor J Lavery, expressed thanks to the Head of Economic Development and his team for their efforts in assisting local businesses following recent flooding.

6.4 Local Business Updates (01:05:20)

The Chairperson, Councillor J Lavery, wished to highlight the following in connection with two local businesses:

- a) Andrew Ingredients who continue to succeed, and who were appreciative of the support that the Council offered, and
- b) Sonas Co-op who had recently become established in the City Centre. The Chairperson wished Sonas every success for the future.

The Chairperson asked that the thanks of the Committee be conveyed to the Officers concerned, including the staff from Lisburn City Centre Management, who had worked closely with both businesses.

7. Confidential Report from Director of Regeneration & Growth (01:07:14)

The Chairperson advised that the Confidential report 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 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 (6.38 pm).

The Director of Organisation Development & Innovation and the Head of Portfolio, IT and Commercialisation (Acting) left the meeting at 6.38 pm.

7.1 Estimates Process – Update

The Director of Regeneration & Growth presented his report and drew the Committee's attention to a number of significant issues that would impact the budget estimates for 2024/2025, including:

- restructuring that had been completed in the Planning Unit for which the estimates needed updated
- major projects in connection with the BRCD initiative
- human resource vacancies that affected a number of Units across the Directorate
- Planning function issues relating to legal challenges

The Director and the Head of Economic Development responded to questions on a number of key issues arising from the report during which they made a number of comments in connection with regeneration and revitalisation of the City Centre.

Alderman M Guy left the meeting at 6.50 pm.

Councillor G Hynds left the meeting at 7.08 pm.

Councillor P Burke left the meeting at 7.15 pm and returned at 7.17 pm.

Following discussion the Director undertook to:

- a) bring forward an update report on the investment in and regeneration of the City Centre in February 2024, and
- b) write to the Head of Rates and Policy Division, Department for Communities, on the issue of rates incentives for the high street.

The Chairperson, Councillor J Lavery, assured the Committee that their comments would be fed back to the Corporate Management Team.

It was agreed to recommend that the progress on the estimates for 2024/2025 be noted.

7.2 Grove Activity Centre – Community Asset Transfer

The Director of Regeneration & Growth outlined the background and key issues in connection with the pilot study of the disposal of the Grove Activity Centre by way of a Community Asset Transfer and the subsequent development of a draft CAT policy.

It was proposed by the Vice Chairperson, Councillor T Mitchell, seconded by Councillor N Parker, and agreed to recommend that:

- a) the asset be deemed surplus to requirements for delivery of direct Council services
- b) the community asset transfer be finalised and that the draft heads of terms to be presented to the applicant on a 'subject to' basis be approved, as outlined in the report,

7.2 Grove Activity Centre – Community Asset Transfer (Cont'd)

- c) in the circumstances that the proposed tenancy agreement does not proceed, an options appraisal be undertaken and presented to the Committee for consideration, and
- d) given the sequencing of policy development and the pilot, the processes aligned to the draft CAT policy as far as reasonably practicable, be regularised.

Alderman A Grehan left the meeting at 8.13 pm.

7.3 General Estates Matters

The report by the Director of Regeneration & Growth outlined the background and key issues in relation to general estates matters.

It was proposed by Alderman A G Ewart, seconded by the Vice Chairperson, Councillor T Mitchell, and agreed to recommend that:

- a) the removal of the registered burden on the land between 140 and 142 Dromore Road, Hillsborough, be agreed,
- b) the installation of a new access gates and adjoining pathway between St Joseph's Primary School and Castle Gardens be agreed,
- c) appropriate disposal and access agreements to facilitate the construction of a bridge linking Baronsgrange and Carryduff Park in line with the development agreement emanating from the planning process, be approved, and
- d) the information regarding the open space adjacent to Ashmount Gardens be noted a report be brought to a future meeting of the Community & Wellbeing Committee in due course.

7.4 Business Case for Renewal of Power Washing Contract

It was proposed by Alderman J Baird, seconded by Councillor N Parker, and agreed to recommend that a new tendering procurement exercise be undertaken to award the new Power Washing contract when the current contract expired, and that the new contract be awarded to the lowest economically advantageous tender that met Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council's tendered criteria.

8. Any Other Confidential Business

8.1 Flooding in Dromara
Councillor Uel Mackin

At the request of Councillor U Mackin, the Director of Regeneration & Growth updated the Committee in relation to the applications to the Council via the Emergency Financial Assistance Scheme in the event of flooding. The Head of Economic Development also addressed the Committee in regard to this matter.

Resumption of Normal Business

It was proposed by the Vice Chairperson, Councillor T Mitchell, seconded by Alderman J Baird, and agreed to come out of Committee and normal business was resumed.

9. Verbal Matters

9.1 Royal Hillsborough and Dundonald Christmas Markets (01:07:20)
Chairperson, Councillor J Laverty

The Chairperson reminded Members of the undernoted dates for this year's Christmas Markets:

- Royal Hillsborough Market which was taking place the following evening, Friday, 8th December from 3.00 pm – 8.00 pm, and
- Dundonald Christmas Market on Thursday, 14th December from 4.00 pm.

Conclusion of Meeting

The Chairperson thanked everyone for their attendance and wished everyone compliments of the season.

There being no further business for consideration the meeting was concluded at 8.30 pm.

Chairperson