

LISBURN & CASTLEREAGH CITY COUNCIL

Minutes of Meeting of the Communities & Wellbeing Committee held remotely and in the Council Chamber, Island Civic Centre, The Island, Lisburn on Tuesday 1st October 2024 at 6.00 pm.

PRESENT IN COUNCIL CHAMBER (COMMITTEE):

Councillor D J Craig (Chairperson)
Alderman H Legge (Vice Chairperson)
Deputy Mayor, Councillor R Carlin
Aldermen A Grehan and A McIntyre
Councillors D Bassett, R T Beckett, J Gallen, B Higginson, C Kemp, S Lowry, and G Thompson

PRESENT IN A REMOTE LOCATION (COMMITTEE)

The Right Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor K Dickson
Alderman S Skillen

OTHER MEMBERS OF COUNCIL PRESENT IN COUNCIL CHAMBER & IN A REMOTE LOCATION

Councillors A Gowan and M McKeever (Chamber)
Councillors G Hynds and P Kennedy (Remote)

IN ATTENDANCE:

Director of Leisure & Community Wellbeing
Head of Communities
Head of Sports Services
Acting Head of Parks & Amenities
Member Services Officers (BS & CH)

Commencement of Meeting

The Chairperson, Councillor D J Craig, welcomed everyone to the October meeting of the Communities & Wellbeing Committee and advised that the meeting would be audio recorded unless the item on the agenda was to be considered under confidential business. Unauthorised recording was not permitted, as per 8.5 of the Council's Standing Orders. Mobile phones were to be turned off or on silent mode for the duration of the meeting.

The Director of Leisure & Community Wellbeing outlined the evacuation procedures in the case of an emergency.

The Chairperson 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.

Commencement of Meeting (Cont'd)

The Chairperson, Councillor D J Craig, put on record his thanks and appreciation to the Vice-Chairperson, Alderman H Legge, for her help and support during the past month. He expressed appreciation that Alderman Legge had stood in for him at very short notice on occasions.

1. Apologies

Apologies for non-attendance at the meeting were accepted and recorded on behalf of Councillors G McCleave and T Mitchell.

2. Declarations of Interest

During the course of the meeting the following Members declared a non-pecuniary declaration in respect of item 5.1 Sports Accelerator Fund – DEA Sports Funding 2024-2025:

- Councillor A Gowan - in view of a family member being a member of Dromara Village Football Club and Lisnagarvey Hockey Club.
- Alderman H Legge, Vice Chairperson - in view of a family member being a member of Pheonix Basketball Club
- Councillor C Kemp - in view of her membership of the Committee of St Joseph's GAC, Glenavy.
- Alderman A Grehan - in view of her membership of the Board of Ballymacash Football Club.

3. Report of Director of Leisure & Community Wellbeing

3.1 Motion - Caleb's Cause

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Leisure & Community Wellbeing on the subject of Caleb's Cause, it being noted that this motion had been raised by Councillor M McKeever under Any Other Business at the meeting of Council on 24 September 2024. The Committee had been granted delegated authority by the Council to consider this motion.

Councillor A Gowan entered the meeting at 6.05 pm.

The Chairperson, Councillor D J Craig, invited Councillor M McKeever to present his motion, as outlined below:

3.1 Motion - Caleb's Cause (Cont'd)

"This Council supports the spirit of Caleb's Cause NI, a grass-roots movement started by Caleb's mother, Alma White, whose son lives with autism and learning disabilities. At its core, Caleb's Cause NI aims to close the disparity in opportunities for young adults with disabilities accessing further education opportunities and to develop as individuals.

Caleb's Cause NI calls for the introduction of legislation to bring in post-19 Education Health and Care (EHC) Plans for these young people.

As a show of support, this Council will:

- a) pass this motion showing its support for Caleb's Cause NI demonstrating the Council's commitment to improving post-19 provision for individuals with Special Educational Needs
- b) write to the Minister for the Economy, Minister for Health and Minister for Education urging them to consider introducing legislation to introduce post-19 EHC plans; and furthermore asks them to prioritise cross-departmental collaboration on planning and implementing any changes given the cross-cutting nature of this request, and
- c) lights up Lagan Valley Island in blue and purple to raise awareness and show solidarity with the campaign using the hashtag #Caleb's Cause NI on social media posts.

Councillor McKeever thanked the Committee for the opportunity to present his motion that evening. which he stated was a subject close to his own heart both personally and professionally.

The Deputy Mayor, Councillor R Carlin, entered the meeting at 6.09 pm.

Councillor McKeever addressed his motion during which he highlighted a number of key issues, including:

- the several charities across the Council area that are carrying out good work in the area of autism and learning difficulties
- having worked with adults and children in the field of social work he was well aware of the challenges many of these individuals, their families and carers faced,
- a change in legislation to introduce Education Health and Care plans would improve the quality of the lives of these individuals and their families,
- a recent review of Children's Social Care in Northern Ireland by Ray Jones highlighted the challenges to workstreams in place across Northern Ireland.

3.1 Motion - Caleb's Cause (Cont'd)

In concluding, Councillor McKeever paid tribute to Alma on her campaign for her son and others like him, and urged Members to listen to the voice of Alma and to support his motion.

Councillor A Gowan left the meeting at 6.13 pm.

In view of Councillor M McKeever not being a Member of the Community & Wellbeing Committee, Alderman A McIntyre formally proposed the motion as presented.

Alderman S Skillen having seconded the motion, spoke in support of Councillor McKeever's motion. She too referred to her own experience of a close family member having an autistic and non-verbal child, stating that she was very much aware of the challenges that lay ahead for this child's family. Alderman Skillen commended the efforts of Johnny Walker, the founder of the Four G Day Opportunity Service based in the Ballyoran Community Centre which provided opportunities for individuals with autism and learning difficulties. She referred also to other support groups in her DEA which were doing fantastic work, but which unfortunately were oversubscribed.

The Deputy Mayor, Councillor R Carlin, Alderman H Legge and Councillor J Gallen, on behalf of their respective political parties, spoke in support of the motion. The Chairperson, Councillor D J Craig, also spoke in support of the motion, having stated that this was a matter close to his heart also, his Mayoral charity having been Autism NI.

The motion on the subject of Caleb's Cause NI, as proposed by Alderman A McIntyre and seconded by Alderman S Skillen, was put to the meeting and agreed unanimously.

The Right Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor K Dickson, joined the meeting remotely during this item of business (6.14 pm).

4. Report of the Head of Communities

4.1 Good Relations Project Support Fund 2024/2025

The Head of Communities outlined the background and key issues in connection with the Good Relations Project Support Fund 2024/2025 which had been developed as a key element of the overall Council's Good Relations Action Plan 2024/2025 and which received financial assistance from The Executive Office. It was noted that the Good Relations Action Plan had been approved by the Committee at its meeting on 3 September 2024, and which included the above-mentioned Good Relations Project Support Fund initiative.

4.1 Good Relations Project Support Fund 2024/2025 (Cont'd)

A copy of the applications received and the outcomes of the assessments had been appended to the Officers report along with the Equality Screening report and the Rural Needs Impact Assessment.

In her report, the Head of Communities had recommended to the Committee that in order to remain with the budget of £20,000 the award of a grant be awarded to each successful applicant with a 29.6% reduction in the financial allocation, and that the unsuccessful applicants receive feedback and support from Officers as required.

Following discussion it was proposed by Councillor B Higginson, seconded by Alderman A McIntyre, and agreed to recommend that:

- a) the 29.6% reduction be not applied to the financial allocations and that Officers identify the sum of £8,000 from a suitable budget which would ensure that the successful groups received their full allocation of funding applied for, and
- b) the unsuccessful applicants receive feedback and support from Officers as required.

In response to questions from a Member the Director of Leisure & Community Wellbeing provided clarification on the different funding streams for various projects across the Directorate and undertook to identify the most appropriate budget from across the Department which would ensure the full allocation of funding, based on their weighted score, to all successful groups in respect of the Good Relations Project support fund.

Councillor A Gowan returned to the meeting during this item of business (6.26 pm).

5. Report of Head of Sports Services

5.1 Sports Accelerator Fund - DEA Sports Funding 2024/2025

The Head of Sports Services outlined the background and key issues in connection with the Sports Accelerator Fund – DEA Sports Funding 2025/2025 which had been allocated a budget of £100,000 as part of the DEA Investment Programme to support local constituted and affiliated to Sport Lisburn Castlereagh Clubs. It was noted that the maximum allocation per Club was £3,000.

Details of the scoring mechanism had been set out in the Officer's report which included thresholds which ensured that all eligible clubs received an allocation.

The Committee had been furnished with a copy of a paper setting out each of the funding allocations as well as the scoring result for each club.

5.1 Sports Accelerator Fund - DEA Sports Funding 2024/2025 (Cont'd)

It was noted that following the assessment based on the agreed scoring mechanism there was a shortfall of £4,883, and that this additional contribution could be accessed through the DEA Investment Programme as the Director had responsibility to re-direct small amounts of budget across Investment Programme whilst remaining within the overall budget.

The Head of Sport Services responded to questions and comments from Members in connection with a) the criteria that clubs had to be registered with Sport Lisburn and Castlereagh in order to be eligible to apply for funding from the Sports Accelerator Fund, b) the reason why some groups had scored below threshold, and c) the importance of feedback.

It was proposed by Alderman A McIntyre, seconded by Councillor R T Beckett, and agreed that the award of grants to all 46 successful applicants be noted and that Officers provide feedback and support to the unsuccessful applicants.

6. Any Other Business

6.1 Newtownbreda Football Pitch
Councillor B Higginson

The Head of Parks and Amenities (Acting) responded to comments from Councillor B Higginson in regard to repairs that were required to the netting at the football pitches in Newtownbreda as well as repairs that were required to the goal posts at the smaller pitch.

6.2 Change in Winter Fuel Payment Policy and Support to Most Vulnerable
Alderman S Skillen

Alderman S Skillen referred to the matter she had raised at the Council meeting on 24 September in regard to the need to support groups across the Council area through any underspends in hardship funding grants, the aim of which would be to support the most vulnerable across the Council area who would suffer as they were no longer eligible to receive the Government's Winter Fuel payment. Alderman Skillen asked if a report on this area of work could come to the Committee for consideration.

The Director of Leisure & Community Wellbeing advised that the Chairperson, Councillor Craig, would be discussing this matter with relevant Officers and that the outcome would be communicated to Members accordingly.

The Director reminded the Committee that at the Meeting of Council the previous week the Notice of Motion on the change of policy for the Winter Fuel Payment scheme had been considered and agreed, and that letters from the Council had been issued to the Prime Minister and the Minister for Communities.

6.2 Change in Winter Fuel Payment Policy and Support to Most Vulnerable (Cont'd)
Alderman S Skillen

In response to comments from the Committee, Alderman Skillen elaborated on the type of support that she would welcome, such as the provision of warm spaces at community centres or the provision of winter warmer packs.

Alderman A Grehan put on record that the Labour Government had a responsibility to assist local councils in supporting the most vulnerable residents who would suffer as a result of this policy change to the Winter Fuel payment.

7. Confidential Report from Director of Leisure & Community Wellbeing

The Chairperson, Councillor D J Craig, advised that the confidential reports would be considered in Confidential Business due to containing relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information).

In Committee

It was proposed by Councillor R T Beckett, seconded by Alderman A Grehan, and agreed that the Confidential Reports of the Director be considered "in Committee". The recording was paused at this stage in proceedings, and any members of the press and public left the meeting.

7.1 Update Position on the Refurbishment and Reinvigoration of the former Hilden Primary School
(Redacted report to be published following ratification)

Presented by the Head of Communities.

In response to questions and comments from Members the Director:

- a) clarified the process for the reporting of Tender reports and undertook to furnish the Committee with the Tender report for the above capital project, and
- b) undertook to consider the suggestion of including a book launch within this programme of events in association with the Irish Linen Centre & Lisburn Museum.

It was proposed by Alderman A McIntyre, seconded by Councillor B Higginson, and agreed that the Director's report on the updated position on the refurbishment and reinvigoration of the former Hilden Primary School be noted, including:

- a) the full business case and associated appended documents, and

7.1 Update Position on the Refurbishment and Reinvigoration of the former Hilden Primary School (Cont'd)

- b) the Activity Plan setting out the engagement and heritage work being planned to be undertaken by the Lisburn Museum in partnership with the Resurgam Trust.

7.2 Agahlee Changing Pavilion – Business Case
(Redacted Report to be published November 2024)

Presented by the Head of Parks & Amenities.

It was proposed by Councillor R T Beckett, seconded by Councillor C Kemp, and agreed to recommend that the business case for the provision of a new changing pavilion at Aghalee football pitch be approved and that this project progresses to tender stage.

7.3 Seycon Park Changing Pavilion – Business Case
(Redacted Report to be published November 2024)

It was proposed by Councillor R T Beckett, seconded by Alderman H Legge, and agreed to recommend that the business case for the provision of a new changing pavilion at Seycon Park football pitch be approved and that this project progresses to tender stage.

8. Any Other Business – Confidential

8.1 Re-Development of Dundonald International Ice Bowl
Director of Leisure & Community Wellbeing

The Director of Leisure & Community Wellbeing provided the Committee with a verbal update in connection with the progress of the above re-development project, it being noted that the contractor was on site. The Director advised that the Contractor was due to provide an update on the programme timeframe for this project and that a further update report would be presented to a future meeting of the Committee.

In response to comments from a Member the Director undertook to liaise with the Communications team in connection with the preparation of a suitable 'comms piece' for issue to constituents and communities.

Councillor C Kemp left and returned to the Chamber during this item (7.04 pm and 7.07 pm respectively).

8.2 Departmental Finances & UK Shared Prosperity Fund
Deputy Mayor, Councillor R Carlin

The Director of Leisure & Community Wellbeing responded to questions from the Deputy Mayor in regard to the current financial position across all

8.2 Departmental Finances & UK Shared Prosperity Fund (Cont'd)
Deputy Mayor, Councillor R Carlin

Directorates and also in regard to the impact of the funding that was due to come to councils from the Government's UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

The Director responded to a number of comments by another Member in regard to the Council's assets and the need for a more strategic approach. The Director undertook to raise these issues at the next meeting of the Corporate Management Team.

Councillor B Higginson left the meeting at 7.21 pm.

8.3 Lough Moss Leisure Centre Roof
Councillor D Bassett

Councillor Bassett raised the issue of the on-going leak in the roof of Lough Moss Leisure Centre and requested that Officers progress the repair of same.

8.4 Carryduff Christmas Market
Councillor D Bassett

In response to Councillor Bassett's question in regard to the location of the Carryduff Christmas Market the Director advised that she would liaise with the Director of Regeneration & Growth as there had been ongoing discussions, and revert to Councillor Bassett thereon.

Resumption of Normal Business

It was proposed by Councillor D Bassett, seconded by Councillor S Lowry, and agreed to come "out of Committee". Normal business and audio recording were resumed.

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 7.25 pm.

MAYOR/CHAIR