

LISBURN & CASTLEREAGH CITY COUNCIL

Minutes of Meeting of the Corporate Services Committee held remotely and in the Council Chamber, Island Civic Centre, The Island, Lisburn on Wednesday 11th December 2024 at 6.00 pm.

PRESENT IN COUNCIL CHAMBER (COMMITTEE):

Councillor The Hon N Trimble (Chair)
Councillor N Eaton (Vice-Chair)
Aldermen A Ewart MBE, A Grehan and H Legge
Councillors T Beckett, A Ewing, A Givan, J Harpur, B Higginson, C Kemp and G McCleave

PRESENT IN A REMOTE LOCATION (COMMITTEE)

The Right Worshipful The Mayor
Councillor K Dickson
Deputy Mayor
Councillor R Carlin
Councillor J Lavery BEM

OTHER MEMBERS OF COUNCIL PRESENT IN COUNCIL CHAMBER:

Councillor G Hynds

IN ATTENDANCE:

Chief Executive
Director of Finance & Corporate Services
Director of Organisation Development & Innovation
Head of Assets
Head of Corporate Communications & Administration
Head of Finance
Member Services Officers (CA & RN)

Commencement of Meeting

The Chair welcomed all 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. 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 Finance & Corporate Services outlined 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 Alderman M Gregg and Councillor D Lynch.

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.

There were no Declarations of Interest.

3. Report of Chief Executive

3.1 Elected Members' Project Dashboard

A District Electoral Area (DEA) Works Programme had been agreed by the Committee in June 2024. Further to that, the Corporate Management Team had agreed that an update on all projects – not just those under the DEA Works Programme - be shared with Members.

The Chief Executive provided an update on ongoing projects, the content of which was noted.

By means of shared screen, the Chief Executive demonstrated an Elected Members' Dashboard which had been developed and which displayed information on the progression of projects throughout the Council area. The dashboard would be refreshed by exception.

Subject to Council ratification of this item of business, the app for the Elected Members' Dashboard would be available from the end of December 2024. Members will be e-mailed with a request that they call into IT to have this app installed on their mobile device and also a link to "Favourites" on their laptop.

4. Report of Director of Organisation Development & Innovation

4.1 Outcomes of Interim Corporate Plan 2021-2024

The Council had agreed a four-year Interim Corporate Plan for 2021-2024 which would recognise the impact of the Covid pandemic. In addition to the narrative report, the Outcomes of the Interim Corporate Plan 2021-2024 were provided and duly noted.

5. Report of Head of Corporate Communications & Administration

5.1 2025 Anniversaries Programme & Budget

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

- Minutes of meetings of the 2025 Anniversaries Working Group held on the 6th and 25th November 2024, the Terms of Reference of the Group being agreed at the former meeting;
- Draft 2025 Anniversaries Programme, together with estimated costs.

It was proposed by Councillor B Higginson and seconded by Councillor A Ewing to recommend that:-

- the 2025 Anniversaries Programme be agreed;
- the necessary funding be drawn from Reserves;
- the minutes of the Working Group meetings held on the 6th & 25th November 2024 be noted.

Councillor G McCleave, endorsed by Councillor R Carlin (Deputy Mayor), stated that the extensive funding for the 2025 Anniversaries Programme was not something which their party (Sinn Fein) could support. Councillor McCleave asked if consideration had been given to one single event and if other funding sources were considered. The Head of Service responded to the issues concerning funding and confirmed that the programme of events was put forward by the Members of the Working Group. Consideration had been given to a range of options.

A Recorded Vote was taken on the Proposal in the name of Councillor B Higginson and seconded by Councillor A Ewing. The voting was as follows:-

For the Proposal: Councillor T Beckett, Councillor K Dickson, Councillor N Eaton, Alderman A Ewart, Councillor A Ewing, Councillor A Givan, Alderman A Grehan, Councillor J Harpur, Councillor B Higginson, Councillor C Kemp, Councillor J Laverty, Alderman H Legge, Councillor N Trimble. **(Total = 13)**

Against the Proposal: Councillor R Carlin, Councillor G McCleave. **(Total = 2)**

The proposal as set out above in the name of Councillor B Higginson and seconded by Councillor A Ewing was therefore declared as "carried".

5.2 Illuminations 2025

In addition to the narrative report, the draft Calendar of Illuminations for 2025 had been provided. The narrative report explained how the calendar had been compiled.

It was proposed by Councillor C Kemp, seconded by Alderman H Legge and agreed to recommend that the draft Calendar of Illuminations for 2025 be approved.

It was further agreed on a Proposal made by Alderman A Grehan and seconded by Councillor T Beckett that the 12th July be designated as an Annual Building Illumination for 2025 and thereafter.

Officers were commended for the significant amount of work which had gone into compiling the 2025 Calendar of Illuminations.

6. Report of Head of Human Resources & Organisation Development

6.1 Workforce Reports

In the absence of the Head of Human Resources & Organisation Development, his report was presented by the Director of Organisation Development & Innovation.

Reports on the undernoted topics in relation to Council staff across all Departments had been provided with the report and their contents duly noted.

- Attendance Management Report for period ended 30th September 2024;
- Recruitment Reports – (i) Advert & Selection; and (ii) Appointments;
- Workforce Profile.

By way of update, the Director of Organisation Development & Innovation verbally advised that:-

- in regard to the revised Policy for Managing Attendance – Consultations with the trade unions were ongoing and final feedback was due by mid-January 2025 with an anticipated implementation date of the 1st April 2025;
- a report on the Council workforce establishment including vacancies had been made to the most recent meeting of the Efficiency Review Steering Group (3rd December 2024).

6.1 Workforce Reports (Continued)

The Director also responded to a number of questions from Members and assured them that – whilst actual costs associated with absenteeism were not readily available and were dependent on a wide range of factors – a reduction in absenteeism was being actively addressed and a reduction in the number of days lost by way of long-term absence should be noted from the report.

Employees with no days lost through sickness absence were to be commended. These comments were noted by Officers for suitable consideration.

7. Any Other Business – Non-Confidential

7.1 Neonatal Leave
Councillor J Harpur

Councillor J Harpur enquired if the Council was considering a policy on neonatal leave.

The Director of Organisation Development & Innovation advised that a policy was in the latter stages of development and would be tabled for consideration at a future meeting early in 2025.

8. Confidential Report from Director of Finance & Corporate Services

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 Provision of Contract Cleaning Services
(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 on commencement of the contract (anticipated to be 1st December 2025).

8.3 Estimates Process 2025/2026 – Corporate Status Update
(Confidential for reason of information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information.)

Report will never become available. Final estimates will be released.

8.4 Estimates Process 2025/2026 – Directorate Update

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

Report will never become available. Final estimates will be released.

8.5 Finance Reports – Period 8 of 2024/2025

(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 after ratification on the 17th December 2024.

8.6 Treasury Outturn – Quarter 2 of 2024/2025

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

Report to be available after ratification on the 17th December 2024.

8.7 Management Accounts – Period 8 of 2024/2025

(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 after ratification on the 17th December 2024.

8.8 Efficiency Review Steering Group (ERSG) - Meetings

(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.)

Redacted report to be available after ratification on the 17th December 2024.

In Committee

It was proposed by Councillor A Ewing, seconded by Councillor C Kemp and agreed that the Confidential Report of the Director be considered “in Committee”. (Recording was paused at this stage in proceedings, and any members of the press and public left the meeting.) (6.42 pm)

8.1 Report on Tender Awards

Presented by the Head of Assets who also responded to Members’ questions.

Tender Reports and a Summary of Tenders Awarded had been provided with the narrative report.

8.1 Report on Tender Awards (Continued)

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

- F24/25-014 – Lisburn & Castlereagh Transport Academy;
- T2425-019 Schedule AT3 – Supply/delivery/laying of quarry & bituminous bound materials and associated works;
- T24/25-024 – Self-Employment Support Programme.

It was further agreed on the Proposal made by Councillor Kemp and seconded by Councillor Givan to recommend that the signing and sealing of the Tender documents be approved.

8.2 Provision of Contract Cleaning Services

Presented by the Head of Corporate Communications & Administration.

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

- Business Case for the Provision of Contract Cleaning Services;
- Equality Screening document.

It was proposed by Alderman A Grehan, seconded by Councillor A Givan and agreed to recommend that the Business Case for the Provision of Contract Cleaning Services be approved, and that the recommendation contained therein on the manner by which this procurement should progress be agreed.

8.3 Estimates Process 2025/2026 – Corporate Status Update

Presented by the Director of Finance & Corporate Services who responded to Members' questions.

An extensive narrative report had been provided. The Director took Members through the report and its content was duly noted.

Councillor B Higginson left and returned to the Chamber during discussion of this item. (7.00 pm and 7.02 pm)

Alderman A Ewart left and returned to the Chamber during discussion of this item. (7.08 pm and 7.09 pm)

8.4 Estimates Process 2025/2026 – Directorate Update

Presented by the Director of Finance & Corporate Services who responded to Members' questions.

The report and appendices covered the Finance & Corporate Services Directorate; the Organisation Development & Innovation Directorate; and the Governance & Audit Unit.

An extensive narrative report together with the following had been provided:-

- Year-End Budget Report (as of 28th November 2024);
- 2025/2026 Estimates;
- 2025/2026 Civic Events' Schedule.

Councillor C Kemp placed on record that her party – the Alliance Party – would be purely noting the update and looked forward to receiving the information in January 2025 presented in a more meaningful way as had been the case in December 2023 for the 2024/2025 Estimates.

The Director of Finance & Corporate Services gave an assurance that – despite the complexities of the new accounting system and the fact that committee dates were later than usual in January 2025 due to the bank holiday period – Members would have the Estimates' information in sufficient time so as to allow consideration with their political party colleagues in advance of the Committee meetings.

The update on the 2025/2026 Estimates process for the Finance & Corporate Services Directorate; the Organisation Development & Innovation Directorate and the Governance & Audit Unit was noted.

8.5 Finance Reports – Period 8 of 2024/2025

Presented by the Head of Finance.

Members noted the content of the following:-

- the information contained in the narrative report;
- the report on Repairs & Renewals for P8 of 2024/2025;
- the report on Department for Communities' budgets for P8 of 2024/2025.

8.6 Treasury Outturn – Quarter 2 of 2024/2025

Presented by the Head of Finance.

Members noted the content of the following:-

8.6 Treasury Outturn – Quarter 2 of 2024/2025 (Continued)

- the information contained in the narrative report;
- the Treasury Management Report for Q2 of 2024/2025 including the Prudential and Treasury Indicators for that period, setting out a review of the Council's performance against the indicators approved for 2024/2025 up to the 30th September 2024.

8.7 Management Accounts – Period 8 of 2024/2025

Presented by the Head of Finance.

The Management Accounts for the period ending the 30th November 2024, together with an extensive narrative report by way of explanation, were provided and duly noted.

Councillor C Kemp left and returned to the Chamber during discussion of this item. (7.22 pm and 7.25 pm)

Councillor J Lavery left the meeting on a remote basis during discussion of this item. (7.25 pm)

8.8 Efficiency Review Steering Group (ERSG)

Presented by the Director of Organisation Development & Innovation who responded to Members' questions.

8.8.1 Meetings

In addition to the narrative report, the minutes of meetings of the Efficiency Review Steering Group (ERSG) held on the 1st October and 3rd December 2024 had been provided, and it was agreed to recommend that they be noted.

Concern was expressed that the minutes of the ERSG did not provide sufficient information for the Corporate Services Committee (which was the decision-making body for the ERSG) to make informed decisions.

It was proposed by Alderman A Ewart, seconded by Alderman A Grehan and agreed that:-

- consideration of the recommendations on the proposed staffing structure and on the specific delivery service referred to in the ERSG minutes be deferred to the next meeting, pending receipt of a more explanatory minute and detail of the proposed structure;
- cognisance be taken of the fact that the ERSG minutes required to be of such detail that informed decisions could be taken by its decision-making committee, ie the Corporate Services Committee.

8.8.2 Change in Membership

The Director of Organisation Development & Innovation reported that Alderman P Porter had been replaced by Councillor J Craig on the membership of the Efficiency Review Steering Group.

9. Any Other Business – Confidential

No further business of a confidential nature was raised.

Resumption of Normal Business

It was proposed by Councillor A Ewing, seconded by Alderman A Ewart and agreed to come “out of Committee”. Normal business and audio recording were resumed.

10. Any Other Business

Dealt with under Item 7.

The meeting concluded at 7.42 pm.

MAYOR/CHAIR