

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 12th June 2024 at 6.00 pm.

PRESENT:

Councillor The Hon N Trimble (Chair)

Councillor N Eaton (Vice-Chair)

The Right Worshipful The Mayor
Councillor K Dickson

Deputy Mayor
Councillor R Carlin

Aldermen A Ewart MBE, M Gregg, A Grehan,
M Guy and H Legge

Councillors T Beckett, P Burke, A Ewing, B Higginson,
C Kemp, J Lavery BEM, and G McCleave

OTHER MEMBERS:

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
Head of Human Resources & Organisation Development
Acting Head of IT, Portfolio & Commercialisation
Member Services Officers (RN & CR)

Commencement of Meeting

The Chair welcomed those present to the meeting, in particular those Members who had not previously served on the Corporate Services Committee. The Chair advised that – after the conclusion of the business of the meeting – the Director would make a brief presentation on the Terms of Reference of the Committee.

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 Finance & Corporate Services outlined the evacuation procedures in the case of an emergency. 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.

Councillor A Ewing arrived to the Meeting at the conclusion of the housekeeping announcement. (6.02 pm)

1. Apologies

An apology for non-attendance at the meeting was accepted and recorded on behalf of Councillor A Givan.

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 made.

3. Report of Chief Executive

3.1 Draft Works Programme Proposals including Capital Programme emanating from District Electoral Area Workshops

The Committee was reminded that – following a series of workshops – each of the District Electoral Areas (DEAs) had come forward with a consensus of the projects that they wished to put forward for their respective areas. To this end, Members were provided with a draft programme which reflected the totality of the suggested works-related projects.

In his narrative report, the Chief Executive reported extensively on the principles that would be used for the progression of the projects, the key issues and the next steps in the process. The Chief Executive confirmed that the Programme would be a “rolling” document and - accordingly – an up-to-date Programme would be available at any time.

3.1 Draft Works Programme Proposals including Capital Programme emanating from District Electoral Area Workshops (Continued)

The Chief Executive responded to a number of questions posed by Members, and also noted for appropriate action, the following issues:-

- “Carryduff Community Facility – GAC” – Re-wording of project name for the purposes of clarity;
- “Standalone Recycling Centre, Dundonald – Feasibility Study” – Update to “Funding Source” information;
- “Carryduff Primary School & Killynure Community Association – 3G pitches etc” – Relevant officers to be asked to ensure that documentation was in place so as to allow for submission of a grant application to Sport NI which could have a short deadline.

It was proposed by Alderman A Ewart, seconded by Alderman H Legge and agreed to recommend that:-

- the draft works programme as outlined be approved;
- the expenditure associated with the bringing forward of the feasibility studies up to a value of £200K be approved.

In addition to the narrative report and draft works programme, Equality Screening and Rural Needs Impact Assessment documents had been provided.

4. Report of Director of Corporate Services

4.1 Department for Communities
Minister’s Initial Budget Allocations for 2024-2025
(Closing date: 3rd September 2024)

Copy of a letter dated the 5th June 2024 from the Department for Communities on the subject of the Minister for Communities’ initial budget allocations for 2024-2025 had been provided with the Director’s narrative report.

Details were available at <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/news/minister-launch-budget-consultation>

Whilst it was likely that political parties would be submitting responses to the construction, the Council would also intend to do so. Given the time scale for the submission of responses, it would be necessary to seek delegated authority from the Council for the Committee’s chair and vice-chair to approve the response.

4.1 Department for Communities
Minister's Initial Budget Allocations for 2024-2025
(Closing date: 3rd September 2024) (Continued)

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

- delegated authority be granted to the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Corporate Services Committee to approve the Council's response to the above consultation;
- a copy of the final response be presented to the Committee at its September 2024 meeting.

5. Report of Acting Head of IT, Portfolio & Commercialisation

5.1 Digital Journey – Enabling Efficiency and Customer Access

The narrative report of the Acting Head of IT, Portfolio & Commercialisation provided an overview of the Council's ongoing digital journey, and its content was duly noted.

The Acting Head of Service made a PowerPoint presentation by means of Shared Screen. The presentation supported the narrative report and dealt with the following:-

- Infrastructure – Achievements to date and upcoming plans;
- Digital progress – Achievements to date and upcoming plans;
- Upskilling and Reskilling for a future that is digital first but with no-one left behind;
- Corporate Plan 2024/2028 themes

The narrative report and the PowerPoint presentation were both noted.

The Acting Head of Service informed Members that the provision of an on-line booking system for leisure pitches was being developed.

The Acting Head of Service and the Director of Organisation Development & Innovation responded to questions posed by Members. In regard to the ongoing efficiencies, reports on the data analysis thereof would be brought back to Committee.

Box Office bookings

In response to a query raised by Alderman A Ewart at the previous meeting of the Committee regarding the use of the Box Office to sell tickets for a Mayoral event, the Head of Corporate Communications & Administration advised that she had already responded to the Member's query by e-mail.

Box Office bookings (Continued)

The issue had been resolved and ticket sales for Mayoral events of this nature would be permitted via the Box Office. Use of the Box Office to sell tickets for other off-site events organised by the Council would be considered on their own merit as a range of factors would have to be taken into consideration for each event.

6. Report of Head of Human Resources & Organisation Development

6.1 Equality and Disability Action Plans – Progress Report

In addition to the narrative report of the Head of Human Resources & Organisation Development on the above subject, the following had been provided in regard to 1st April 2023 – 31st March 2024:-

- Draft Annual Progress Report on Public Authority Statutory Equality and Good Relations Duties;
- Equality Action Plan – Progress Update;
- Disability Action Plan – Progress Update.

The Head of Service responded to questions posted by Members.

It was proposed by Councillor C Kemp, seconded by Alderman H Legge and agreed to recommend that the Draft Annual Progress Report on Public Authority Statutory Equality & Good Relations Duties for 2023/2024 be approved.

6.2 Workforce Reports

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 31st March 2024;
- Recruitment reports – (i) Advert & Selection; and (ii) Appointments;
- Workforce Profile.

The Head of Service explained the reasons for the posts which were termed as “on hold” with the recruitment report (Advert & Selection).

The Deputy Mayor, Councillor R Carlin, left the Council Chamber during presentation of this item of business. (6.47 pm)

7. Report of Head of Assets

7.1 Electric Vehicle Charging at Lagan Valley Island

In her narrative report, the Head of Assets reported extensively on the provision of Electric Vehicle Chargers at Lagan Valley Island which was ready for activation subject to a decision on the tariff to be applied.

The chargers for public use would be located as follows:-

- Lighters Café Car Park
- Staff Car Park
- Island Arts Car Park
- Main Car Park
- Car park adjacent to the LVI building and primarily used by Members.

A discussion on the tariff to be applied took place.

It was proposed by Alderman M Gregg, seconded by Councillor T Beckett and agreed to recommend that the:-

- activation of the electric charging rates at the five locations referred to above be at a rate of 40p per KWh;
- subsequent planned promotion, including an Expression of Interest for other Electric Vehicle Charging opportunities on the Council's estate, be approved.

The Head of Assets undertook to inform Councillor T Beckett of the EV charging rates applicable in the Benson Street Car Park.

The Deputy Mayor, Councillor R Carlin, returned to the Council Chamber during the presentation of this item of business. (6.49 pm)

8. Report of Head of Corporate Communications & Administration

8.1 Armed Forces Day 2027

The Head of Service referred to Armed Forces Day which is annual event taking place on the last Saturday of June. The council marks Armed Forces Day each year, however a key NI regional event is held at a different location each year. Lisburn hosted Armed Forces Day in 2019 and there is an opportunity to express an interest in hosting it in 2027.

The programme for the 2019 event had been provided with the report.

8.1 Armed Forces Day 2027 (Continued)

It was proposed by Councillor A Ewing and seconded by Councillor B Higginson that officers submit an application for Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council to host Armed Forces Day in June 2027.

Councillor G McCleave outlined the reasons as to why his political party could not support this event. Councillor McCleave also sought confirmation that an Equality screening process would be carried out. The Head of Service confirmed that the event would be screened as part of the overall Council events' calendar and that screening work for this particular event would be carried out by the Leisure & Community Wellbeing Department who would lead on this event.

The proposal in the name of Councillor A Ewing and seconded by Councillor B Higginson was put to the meeting and – on a show of hands – declared “carried”, the voting being 13 in favour and three against.

It was therefore agreed to recommend that officers submit an application for Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council to host Armed Forces Day in June 2027.

8.2 D-Day 80: 6 June 2024 - Progress Report

In addition to the narrative report, copies of the undernoted items had been provided and were duly noted:-

- the minutes of the meeting of the D-Day Working Group held on the 2nd May 2024 (subject to the inclusion of the name of Councillor T Beckett in the list of apologies);
- the programme of events, together with required budget, as of June 2024.

Details on the outworking of the event would be provided in due course, however the Head of Service relayed that the event had taken place and was well received with extensive, positive media coverage.

The Chair of the D-Day Working Group, Alderman H Legge, placed on record her thanks to the members of the Working Group, and to all officers involved in the organisation of the event, with a particular mention to the Head of Corporate Communications and Administration who had been the Lead Officer on this matter.

Alderman A Grehan endorsed these comments and asked to have recorded her appreciation of the contribution made by the immediate Past Mayor, Councillor A Gowan, to the success of the commemorations.

A number of Members endorsed their thanks to the Working Group, its Chairman and all officers involved in the success of the day.

Alderman A Ewart left the Council Chamber during presentation of this item of business. (7.08 pm) Alderman Ewart returned and left the Chamber during Members' comments (7.11 pm and 7.14 pm respectively)

8.3 Citizenship Ceremonies at Hillsborough Castle

In her narrative report, the Head of Service reported extensively on the hosting of Citizenship Ceremonies in the Council's area. The original venue for such ceremonies had been Hillsborough Castle but for various reasons, they had moved to Lagan Valley Island both in person and virtual. Circumstances now allowed for Hillsborough Castle to become the main venue for the Citizenship Ceremonies once again.

It was proposed by Alderman H Legge, seconded by Alderman A Grehan and agreed to recommend that the return of Citizenship Services to Hillsborough Castle as from October 2024 with Lagan Valley Island as a back-up location, be agreed.

Councillor A Ewing left the Council Chamber during presentation of this item of business. (7.18 pm)

The Acting Head of IT, Portfolio & Commercialisation left the Council Chamber at the conclusion of this item of business. (7.19 pm)

9. Report of Head of Finance

9.1 Northern Ireland Local Government Association National Employers and LGA Representation Services 2023/2024 Fees

In addition to the narrative report, Members were provided with copy of a letter dated the 14th May 2024 from the Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA) in regard to the Council's contribution of £3,592.48 (excluding VAT) for work carried out by the National Employers and for other related external partnership work for the year 2023/2024.

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. This particular subscription had been omitted from that schedule.

9.1 Northern Ireland Local Government Association
National Employers and LGA Representation Services
2023/2024 Fees (Continued)

It was proposed by Alderman A Grehan, seconded by Councillor J Laverty and agreed to recommend that:-

- the Council's contribution to NILGA in the sum of £3,592.48 (excluding VAT) for the period 2024/2025 in regard to work carried out by the National Employers and for other related external partnership work be approved for payment;
- approval be granted for the fees as referred to above to be paid on an annual basis up to 2026/2027 on the provision that they do not exceed the budget agreed during the relevant year's estimates process.

Councillor N Eaton left the Council Chamber at the conclusion of this item of business. (7.20 pm)

10. Any Other Business – Non-Confidential

10.1 Deafblind Awareness Week
Councillor J Laverty

Councillor J Laverty referred to the request included in the Information & Correspondence Schedule for June 2024 that Lagan Valley Island be lit on the 27th June 2024 to mark Deafblind Awareness Week. As the request had not been received within the requisite timeframe, it had been declined.

Councillor Laverty asked that – in view of the Council's involvement with the Deaf Association – some other means of support be afforded to them.

The Head of Corporate Communications & Administration agreed to look into this matter with a view to see what support could be offered.

Councillor A Ewing returned to the Chamber at the conclusion of this item of business. (7.23 pm)

The Acting Head of IT, Portfolio & Commercialisation returned to the Council Chamber at the conclusion of this item of business. (7.24 pm)

11. Confidential Report from Director of Finance & Corporate Services

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

11.1 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.

11.2 Accounting Manual

(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.

11.3 Management Accounts for Period 12 of 2023/2024 (Draft)

(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 25th June 2024.

11.4 Efficiency Review Steering Group - 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 following full Council meeting on 25th June 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 the members of the press and public left the meeting.

11.1 Report on Tender Awards

Presented by the Head of Assets.

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

11.1 Report on Tender Awards (Continued)

It was proposed by Alderman A Grehan, 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:-

- T23/24-029 – Annahilt Environmental Improvement Scheme;
- T23/24-035 – Food and Drink Programme;
- T23/24-036 – Build, Installation, Development, Maintenance and Support of a Website, Registration Portal, Database and Case Management System for the NI Landlord Registration Scheme for Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council.

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

Councillor N Eaton returned to the Chamber during the presentation of this item of business. (7.25 pm)

11.2 Accounting Manual

Presented by the Head of Finance.

The revised Accounting Manual had been provided with the narrative report. The Head of Service advised that the Financial Regulations would be reviewed to reflect the content of the Accounting Manual. These would be presented for approval as part of the Council's Constitution.

It was proposed by Alderman A Grehan, seconded by Councillor B Higginson and agreed to recommend that the revised Accounting Manual be approved, effective from the 1st July 2024.

Members were appreciative of the workshop which had been held in regard to the Accounting Manual and for the user-friendly format of the Manual.

11.3 Management Accounts – Period 12 of 2023/2024 (Draft)

Presented by the Head of Finance.

The Management Accounts for the period ending the 31st March 2024, together with an extensive narrative report by way of explanation, were provided and duly noted.

The Head of Finance responded to questions posed by Members.

11.4 Efficiency Review Steering Group (ERSG) Meetings

Presented by the Director of Organisation Development & Innovation.

In addition to the narrative report, the minutes of the undernoted meetings of the Efficiency Review Steering Group (ERSG) had been provided:-

- meeting held on the 7th May 2024;
- meeting held on the 4th June 2024.

It was proposed by Councillor N Eaton, seconded by Alderman H Legge and agreed to recommend that:-

- the minutes of the meetings of the Efficiency Review Steering Group held on the 7th May and 4th June 2024 be noted;
- the recommendation of the Efficiency Review Steering Group in regard to the proposed staffing structure as detailed in the Director's report be approved.

12. Any Other Business – Confidential

There was no further business of a confidential nature raised.

Resumption of Normal Business

It was proposed by the Deputy Mayor, Councillor R Carlin, seconded by Alderman H Legge and agreed to come "out of Committee". Normal business and audio recording were resumed.

13. Any Other Business

There were no further items raised.

The meeting concluded at 7.43 pm.

After the meeting was pronounced as closed, the Director of Finance & Corporate Services made a short presentation on the Terms of Reference of the Corporate Services Committee.

MAYOR/CHAIR