

LISBURN & CASTLEREAGH CITY COUNCIL

Minutes of the Communities and Wellbeing Committee held in the Island Civic Centre, and remotely, on Tuesday 5th September 2023 at 18:00

PRESENT: Councillor T Beckett (Chairperson)

Deputy Mayor Councillor G McCleave

Aldermen H Legge, S P Porter and S Skillen; and
Councillors D Bassett, R Carlin, N Eaton, B Higginson,
S Lowry, A McIntyre and G Thompson.

PRESENT REMOTELY: Alderman A Grehan, Councillors J Craig,
J Gallen and T Mitchell.

OTHER MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor G Hynds and A Givan (Zoom)

IN ATTENDANCE: Director of Leisure and Community Wellbeing
Head of Communities
Head of Sports Services
Member Services Officers (BF and EW)

1. Apology (2.25)

An apology was submitted on behalf of The Right Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor A Gowan.

2. Declaration of Interest (2.50)

Regarding item 4.2 re: 'Good Relations Project Fund' Councillor B Higginson declared an interest in that he was associated with an organisation which had applied for funding.

3. Report of the Director of Leisure and Community Wellbeing

3.1 Moira Food Fair – Council Byelaw (4.15)

The Committee was provided with an update on the success of the Moira Food Fair, which had taken place at Moira Demesne on 19th August. The Director reported that, in 2023 and in previous years, the relevant byelaw which had precluded the consumption of alcohol within the Council's parks and open spaces had been relaxed for the event's duration. Accordingly, it was recommended that the Committee agree that the relevant byelaw be set aside henceforth for the purposes of the hosting of the Moira Food Fair and similar-type events.

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

3.2 DAERA Environmental Fund - Water Quality Improvement Strand (5.10)

(Alderman A Grehan joined the meeting remotely at 18:05).

The Director reported that the Council had been awarded £30,000 from within DAERA's Environmental Fund, Water Quality Improvement Strand, which sought to promote the use of pesticide-free weed control to improve water quality within the River Lagan. The funding would enable the Council to appoint an ecologist to undertake research, and it was anticipated that students from SERC would be involved in a project to develop a Council Weed Control Strategy and to raise awareness amongst the wider community.

The Director added that the funding had been offered subject to the Council providing a sum of £4,500 in part-funding, an amount which would be sourced from within budgetary underspends.

It was proposed by Councillor A McIntyre, seconded by Alderman H Legge, and agreed that a sum of £4,500 be provided for the purpose outlined.

4.1 Good Relations Programme 2023/24 (6.20)

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 7th February, it had approved a draft Good Relations Action Plan for 2023/24, 75% of which would be funded by the Executive Office, with the remaining 25% funded by the Council. The Head of Communities reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 13th June, it had been reported that correspondence had been received from the Executive Office which had indicated that a budgetary reduction of 47% would be applied across all councils in respect of Good Relations budgets. That reduction would see the Council's allocation reduce from £118,729 to £62,926 for 2023/24. At the June meeting, the Committee had noted that, given the reduction in funding, a revised Good Relations Action Plan would be drafted and submitted for consideration.

4.1.1 Good Relations Action Plan 2023/24 (6.55)

Prior to considering the revised Good Relations Action Plan, Alderman S P Porter stated that the cut in funding to the Good Relations Programme was just one of several reductions which would impact across the Council. As such, he suggested that the Council should seek to identify budgetary underspends or additional income streams that could be used to offset external funding shortfalls.

There was a general consensus amongst the Committee that, whilst Good Relations was a vital aspect of the Council's remit, any funding identified internally should be distributed on an all-inclusive basis and that support should be targeted across a wider range of projects which may be impacted upon over the financial year.

The Director indicated that a Members' workshop would take place to examine all funding cuts on a collective basis.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor A McIntyre,
Seconded by Councillor R Carlin,

That, the Committee agrees to defer, to a future meeting, consideration of the Good Relations Action Plan – with the exception of the Good Relations Project Fund – to enable the Director to examine departmental budgets with a view to identifying any underspend or additional income received that could be used on a holistic basis to provide funding and

support to those groups who would be most impacted upon by the reduction of central government funding.

The Committee agreed to endorse the proposal as set out and noted the comments of Members in relation to providing support on an all-inclusive basis across a wider range of projects and schemes. It was agreed also that additional income streams would be explored as part of that process.

At the request of Alderman S P Porter, the Committee agreed further that a letter be submitted to the Executive Office outlining the Council's disappointment at the funding reduction to the Good Relations Programme and the late notification which had been received.

4.1.2 Good Relations Project Fund (26.55)

(Councillor B Higginson, who had declared an interest in this matter, left the Chamber whilst it was under discussion).

The Head of Communities presented a report which gave an overview of the assessment process in relation to the above-mentioned fund. She reminded the Committee that it had approved that a sum of £30,000 would be allocated to the project fund. However, given the 47% reduction in the amount available for the Good Relations Programme, that amount had been reduced to £20,000.

The Head of Communities reported that 23 applications had been received, 15 of which had been deemed eligible for support. The total amount requested i.e., £31,299, had exceeded the revised budget and it was recommended that the successful applicants be funded, based on their weighted score with a reduction of 36.1% applied.

It was proposed by Alderman S P Porter, seconded by Councillor R Carlin, and agreed that the Committee approve the funding allocations and that the fund be revisited as part of the process agreed previously to ascertain if further support could be provided to successful applicants.

(Councillor A Givan left the meeting at 18:40 and Councillor T Mitchell joined the meeting remotely at 18:41).

4.2 Period Poverty Consultation (35.00)

(Councillor B Higginson returned to the Chamber at this point).

It was moved by Alderman H Legge, seconded by Councillor S Lowry, and agreed that the Committee endorse the contents of the Council's response to the Executive Office's consultation exercise on the provision of free period products. In addition, the Committee noted an update regarding the Council's pilot scheme which provided free period products at various locations.

It was agreed further, on the proposal of Councillor S Lowry, that the Council would increase its promotion of the scheme and the number of locations where free period products would be available.

4.3 Arts Grants Schemes 2023/24 (38.10)

The Committee noted a list of awards which had been made by the Head of Communities under delegated authority in respect of the above-mentioned awards schemes.

4.4 Moneyreagh Community Centre – Fireworks Display (42.20)

On the proposal of Councillor S Lowry, which was seconded by Alderman S Skillen, the Committee approved the hosting of a fireworks display in the grounds of Moneyreagh Community Centre, by Moneyreagh Community Church, on 21st October, subject to scrutiny by the Safety Advisory Group, the production of appropriate insurance documents and compliance certificates, together with an event management plan.

It was agreed further that delegated authority be granted to the Head of Parks and Amenities (or in his/her absence the Director or other departmental heads of service) to approve future requests for the holding of similar-type events within parks and open spaces, subject to the organisers meeting all relevant stipulations and conditions as set by the Council.

5.0 Any Other Business - Non-Confidential Matters

5.1 PCSP – Recruitment of Independent Members (42.40)

The Head of Communities reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 13th June, it had nominated Councillor J Gallen as a reserve member of the panel that would oversee the recruitment on Independent Members for the Policing & Community Safety Partnership. However, Councillor J Gallen had since indicated that he would be unable to attend the mandatory training and would, therefore, be unable to act as a reserve member of the panel.

The Committee agreed that Councillor C Kemp, a serving member of the PCSP, would fill the position vacated by Councillor J Gallen.

5.2 Billy Neill MBE Country Park (43.40)

In response to a proposal by Alderman S Skillen, which was seconded by Alderman S P Porter, the Director undertook to examine the feasibility of football clubs utilising advertising space at their home pitches within the Billy Neill MBE Country Park.

5.3 Lisburn Féile (47.11)

Councillor A McIntyre placed on the record his congratulations to the organisers of a series of events which had been held as part of Lisburn Féile in July 2023, particularly a family fun day at Wallace Park.

5.4 Funding Opportunities (48.11)

In response to a query by Councillor G Thompson, the Director outlined the Council's processes for accessing external funding given that there had been an internal delay in the appointment of Members to external bodies.

5.5 East Belfast GAA (50.10)

Councillor R Carlin referred to an incident which had taken place at the premises of East Belfast GAC the previous evening and expressed his solidarity with club members.

5.6 Community and Leisure Department – Staff (50.45)

At the request of the Chairperson, the Director undertook to convey the Committee's thanks to those staff members who had worked in the delivery of the various schemes across the department throughout the summer period.

6. Confidential Report of the Director of Leisure & Community Wellbeing

The Chairperson advised that the reasons for confidentiality for the following matters was by virtue of the Section 6, Part 1, of the Local Government Act (2014) Northern Ireland, specifically the provisions therein as outlined within each report.

It was proposed by Councillor S Lowry, seconded by Councillor R Carlin, and agreed that the confidential report of the Director of Leisure and Community Wellbeing be considered 'in committee', in the absence of members of the press and public.

6.1 Winter 2023 – Draft Programme of Events

(Report confidential in that it related to the financial or business affairs of any particular person – including the Council holding that information).

The Committee considered further a report in respect of the above-mentioned matter and, after discussion, on the proposal of Alderman S P Porter, which was agreed to adopt the recommendations of the Director of Leisure and Community Wellbeing as set out within the report.

In addition, the Committee agreed that further information be provided regarding the interdepartmental working group and consideration given to Elected Member representation thereon.

Arising from discussion, the Director clarified also an issue which had been raised by Councillor D Bassett regarding the viability of hosting a previously-agreed Christmas event within a vacant car park site in the Carryduff area.

6.2 Sports Services – Financial Appraisals for Tendering Exercises

(Report confidential in that it related to the financial or business affairs of any particular person – including the Council holding that information).

The Committee endorsed four financial appraisals for tendering exercises within Sports Services.

6.3 Leisure Services – Management Services

(Report confidential in that it related to the financial or business affairs of any particular person – including the Council holding that information).

The Committee endorsed the financial appraisal for the above-mentioned tendering exercise.

6. Any Other Business - Confidential

In response to a request from Councillor A McIntyre, which was endorsed by Alderman S P Porter, the Committee agreed that a letter be forwarded to the Department of Infrastructure expressing the Council's support for the work undertaken in the Lagan Valley Regional Park.

7. Resumption of Normal Business

It was proposed by Councillor R Carlin, seconded by Alderman S Skillen, and agreed that normal business be resumed.

The meeting ended at 19.30.

Chairperson