

LISBURN & CASTLEREAGH CITY COUNCIL

Minutes of the Hybrid Monthly Meeting of Council held on Tuesday 23 January, 2024 at 7:00 pm

PRESENT IN CHAMBER:

The Right Worshipful the Mayor
Councillor A Gowan

Deputy Mayor
Councillor G McCleave

Aldermen A G Ewart MBE, O Gawith, M Gregg, A Grehan,
H Legge and J Tinsley

Councillors D Bassett, R T Beckett, P Burke, S Burns,
P Catney, D J Craig, K Dickson, N Eaton, A P Ewing,
A Givan, B Higginson, G Hynds, C Kemp, P Kennedy,
J Lavery BEM, C McCready, A McIntyre, M McKeever,
R McLernon, U Mackin, A Martin, T Mitchell, G Thompson
and N Trimble

PRESENT IN REMOTE LOCATION:

Councillor S Lowry

IN ATTENDANCE:

Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council

Chief Executive
Director of Finance and Corporate Services
Director of Leisure and Community Wellbeing
Director of Organisation Development and Innovation
Director of Regeneration and Growth
Acting Director of Environmental Services
Member Services Officers
Technician
IT Officer

Mr D Roberts, Mayor's Chaplain

Commencement of the Meeting

At the commencement of the meeting, The Right Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor A Gowan, wished everyone a happy and healthy New Year. He welcomed those present to the meeting of Council which was being live streamed to enable members of the public to hear and see the proceedings. He pointed out that, should the meeting go into committee to consider confidential business, any members of the press and the public in attendance would be required to leave the Council Chamber for the duration of those matters.

The Member Services Officer read out the names of the Elected Members and Officers in attendance at the meeting.

The Chief Executive outlined the evacuation procedures in the case of an emergency.

The Right Worshipful the Mayor requested that all mobile phones be put on silent or switched off for the duration of the meeting and pointed out that, in accordance with the Council's Standing Orders, whilst the meeting was being live-streamed, unauthorised recording was not permitted.

Prayers

The Right Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor A Gowan, welcomed his Chaplain, Mr D Roberts, to the meeting. Mr Roberts gave an address and said a prayer. The Right Worshipful the Mayor thanked Mr Roberts for his attendance and he left the meeting (7.11 pm).

Councillor C McCready left the meeting (7.11 pm).

1. Business of The Right Worshipful the Mayor

1.1 Mayor's Engagements (00:12:19)

The Council noted a number of engagements attended by The Right Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor A Gowan, and the Deputy Mayor, Councillor G McCleave, since the last meeting of Council.

2. Apologies (00:12:27)

It was agreed to accept apologies for non-attendance at the meeting on behalf of Aldermen J Baird, M Guy, S P Porter and S Skillen and Councillors R Carlin, J Gallen and N Parker.

3. Declarations of Interest (00:12:56)

There were no declarations of interest.

4. Council Minutes (00:13:28)

It was proposed by Alderman J Tinsley, seconded by Councillor G Hynds and agreed that the minutes of the meeting of Council held on 19 December, 2023 be confirmed and signed.

It was proposed by Councillor A Givan, seconded by the Deputy Mayor, Councillor G McCleave, and agreed that the minutes of the special meeting of Council held on 15 January, 2024 be confirmed and signed.

Councillor C McCready returned to the meeting (7.13 pm).

5. Matters Arising (00:14:08)

There were no matters arising.

6. Deputations (00:14:19)

There were no deputations.

7. Business Required by Statute(i) Signing of Legal Documents (00:14:22)

It was agreed that the following legal documents be signed at the meeting:

- Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council and Idox Software Limited, Contracts Team – 1st Floor, 72 Gordon Street, The Grosvenor Building, Glasgow G1 3RS – STA 22/23-075 – Framework Agreement with LCCC for the provision of iDox Software (Licensing and Support); and
- Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council and Ulster Supported Employment and Learning (USEL), 182-188 Cambrai Street, Belfast BT13 3JH – Contract for Collection, transportation, recycling and/or recovery of mattresses from Council Household Recycling Centres (Ref STA23/24-026)

8. Adoption of Minutes of Committees (00:14:46)**Communities and Wellbeing Committee****2 January, 2024**

(00:14:50)

Proposed by Councillor R T Beckett

Seconded by Councillor B Higginson

Environment and Sustainability Committee**3 January, 2024**

(00:15:24)

Proposed by Alderman J Tinsley

Seconded by Alderman M Gregg

Regeneration and Growth Committee**4 January, 2024**

(00:15:54)

Proposed by Councillor J Laverty

Seconded by Councillor T Mitchell

Corporate Services Committee**10 January, 2024**

(00:16:19)

Proposed by Alderman O Gawith

Seconded by Councillor A P Ewing

Planning Committee**4 December, 2023**

(00:16:50)

The minutes of the Planning Committee meeting of 4 December, 2023 had been circulated for noting only as these minutes had been agreed at the subsequent meeting of the Planning Committee on 8 January, 2024. It was proposed by Alderman M Gregg, seconded by Councillor U Mackin and agreed that their contents be noted.

9. Report from Chief Executive (00:17:16)

9.1 Consideration of a Business Case for City Centre Management Relocation to the Museum (00:17:23)

It was proposed by Councillor T Mitchell, seconded by Councillor G Hynds and agreed that authority be delegated to the Regeneration and Growth Committee to consider the business case and approve the progression of the work relating to the relocation of City Centre Management offices to the Lisburn Museum, as outlined in the report.

10. Reports from Members on Boards (00:18:00)

There were no reports from Members on Boards.

11. Reports on Decisions Subject to the Reconsideration Procedure (00:18:04)

There were no reports on decisions subject to the reconsideration procedure.

12. Notice of Motion (00:18:10)

12.1 Electric Vehicle Charging (00:18:13)

A copy of the following Notice of Motion in the name of Alderman M Gregg, had been circulated to Members with the notice convening the meeting:

“That this Council recognises the problem with Electric Vehicle car charging specific to Northern Ireland, both for homeowners restricted to on-street parking and also with the limited availability of our public charging network; and that this council write to the Department for Infrastructure separately on both issues:

1. to ask the Department for Infrastructure to initiate a trial of gully channel and/or overhead street solutions to enable safe cable crossing of a public footpath, and to ask for a consultation with disability sectors on this; and
2. to ask the Department for Infrastructure to investigate extending permitted development planning laws to include Electric Vehicle infrastructure under permitted development and standard Utility street licences”.

The Notice of Motion was proposed by Alderman M Gregg and seconded by Councillor T Mitchell.

12.1 Electric Vehicle Charging (Contd)

The Right Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor A Gowan, advised that the above Notice of Motion would be referred to the Regeneration and Growth Committee for consideration.

12.2 Further Closure of Banks in the LCCC Area (00:19:39)

A copy of the following Notice of Motion in the name of Councillor D J Craig, had been circulated to Members with the notice convening the meeting:

“That this Council expresses concern at the proposed closure of further banks that serve residents in the Lisburn Castlereagh City Council area. Ulster banks latest list of branch closure compounds the impact of continual branch closures by all the major banks, which is impacting negatively on our residents, undermining the principle of accessible banking services for all in our communities.

We further resolve to write to all major banks in Northern Ireland expressing our opposition to any further bank closures”.

The Notice of Motion was proposed by Councillor D J Craig and seconded by Councillor A McIntyre.

Councillor D J Craig stated that this issue had been raised with him locally by people who were frustrated by the continual closure of banks in the Council area. Having researched this matter, Councillor Craig advised that in the period between 1986 and 2023, 61% of all bank branches in the UK had closed and 72% of all building society branches. This had negatively impacted on many groups in the community, in particular those who were disabled, older people, residents in rural areas and small businesses. Councillor Craig reported on the results of a number of surveys that had been conducted with those groups.

Councillor Craig acknowledged that the Government had made some efforts to try to stem bank closures. When considering the Bill that preceded the Financial Services and Markets Act, the Government had indicated amendments that required the Financial Conduct Authority to seek reasonable provision of free cash access services for those with current accounts. Amendments also required the Government to include its policy on free cash access services for current accounts of personal customers on the policy statement.

In 2023, the Financial Conduct Authority had introduced stringent rules around closures to ensure customers were listened to. There had been an effort made to introduce banking hubs. Whilst banking hubs were beneficial for those communities that had been left with no bank branches in their locality and reaction to them had been generally very positive, they had been very slow to be rolled out. There were only 31 currently in operation throughout the UK and only 1 of those was in Northern Ireland.

12.2 Further Closure of Banks in the LCCC Area (Contd)

Despite all efforts, high street bank closures in Northern Ireland had accelerated. Cash points too had disappeared from many villages. As well as the groups mentioned earlier, this also had an impact on those less well-off in communities, given the cost implications of having to travel to access banking facilities.

In seconding the proposal, Councillor A McIntyre also referred to the groups mentioned by Councillor Craig who had been disadvantaged by bank closures. He voiced his sympathy for bank staff affected and, especially in light of the current cost-of-living crisis, hoped that they would be able to be redeployed. Councillor McIntyre also commented on difficulties faced by community groups and charities who required double signatures to carry out various banking transactions. Whilst post offices had been put forward as an alternative to local bank branches, there was no guidance on how they would deal with such situations. Councillor McIntyre referred in particular to Royal Hillsborough – the Danske Bank branch had now closed, the post office was temporarily closed and there were only 2 cash machines in local shops. Alternatives required to be explored.

A number of other Members spoke in support of the Notice of Motion, namely Councillors P Catney, P Burke, N Trimble and A Givan. Reference was made to the need for legislation, the negative effect of bank closures on shops and businesses in towns and cities and the need for banks to maintain a physical presence in communities, the absence of which had the potential to impact on people's mental health.

Councillor Givan asked that the letter being sent to the major banks, as outlined in the proposal, also request that consideration be given to the provision of free cash withdrawals from ATMs to reduce the burden on those who budgeted with cash.

In concluding, Councillor D J Craig thanked Members for supporting his Notice of Motion. He reiterated that the Financial Services and Markets Act did seek the reasonable provision of free cash access services but agreed that the letter to major banks incorporate the issue referred to by Councillor Givan.

The Notice of Motion proposed by Councillor D J Craig and seconded by Councillor A McIntyre was unanimously agreed.

13. Confidential Business (00:46:22)

There was no confidential business.

14. Any Other Business (00:46:26)

14.1 Solidarity with Armed Forces (00:46:32)
Councillor G Hynds

Councillor G Hynds stated that the Armed Forces had always been hugely welcomed, supported and thanked by the people of Lisburn and trusted that would always be the case, especially when they came under threat, as had happened recently. He asked that The Right Worshipful the Mayor write on behalf of the Council expressing continued support for Armed Forces members, their families and the staff in Thiepval Barracks. Councillor Gowan agreed as Mayor to send a letter conveying the Council's thoughts and solidarity with those serving in Thiepval Barracks as they faced ongoing threat.

Conclusion of the Meeting

At the conclusion of the meeting, The Right Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor A Gowan, thanked those present for their attendance.

There being no further business for consideration, the meeting was terminated at 7.48 pm.

Mayor