

**LISBURN & CASTLEREAGH CITY COUNCIL**

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Governance and Audit Committee held in the Island Civic Centre, The Island, Lisburn, on Tuesday, 8 November, 2016 at 5:30 pm**

**PRESENT:**

Councillor T Mitchell (Chairman)

The Right Worshipful the Mayor  
Councillor R B Bloomfield MBE

Aldermen G Rice MBE and J Tinsley

Councillors J Baird, S Carson, P Catney, D J Craig,  
J Gallen, A Girvin, A Grehan and B Hanvey

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Chief Executive  
Transition Manager  
Community Planning Manager  
Performance Development Officer  
Policy Officer  
Internal Audit Assistant  
Member Services Officer

1. Apologies

It was agreed to accept apologies for non-attendance at the meeting on behalf of Aldermen M Henderson MBE and W A Leathem and Councillor V Kamble.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes

It was proposed by Councillor B Hanvey, seconded by Councillor J Gallen and agreed that the minutes of the meeting of the Governance and Audit Committee held on 11 October, 2016, as adopted at the meeting of Council held on 25 October, 2016, be confirmed and signed.

4. Report from Chief Executive

Councillor A Grehan arrived to the meeting at this point (5.32 pm).

It was agreed that the report and recommendations of the Chief Executive be adopted, subject to any decisions recorded below.

Items for Decision

4.1 CIPFA Annual Governance & Leadership Conference  
24 November, 2016 – QUB, Riddel Hall, Belfast

The Committee having been provided with a copy of details of the above conference, the estimated cost of a Member's attendance at which was £206.70, it was proposed by Councillor J Gallen, seconded by Councillor A Girvin and agreed to recommend that the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, or their nominees, attend the conference.

4.2 Performance Improvement

Members were provided with a copy of a report prepared by the Performance Development Officer containing the following matters:

4.2.1 APSE Performance Networks Seminar 2016  
Measure to Survive: "How Public Services Can Withstand Austerity  
By Measuring and Improving Performance"  
1-2 December, 2016 – Hilton Hotel, Blackpool

The Committee having been provided with a copy of details of the above seminar, the estimated cost of a Member's attendance at which was £551.24, it was proposed by Alderman J Tinsley, seconded by Councillor J Baird and agreed to recommend that the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, or their nominees, together with appropriate Officers, attend the seminar.

4.2.2 Performance Improvement Event

The Performance Development Officer reminded Members that the Chief Executive chaired the NI Local Government Performance Improvement Working Group. It was noted that an event entitled "Post Improvement Audit 2016 – Where Do We Go From Here?" had been organised for Monday, 14 November, 2016 in the Council's Bradford Court Offices. All 11 Council Chief Executives and their Performance Improvement and Community Planning Officers had been invited to attend this facilitated event, which was being sponsored by the Local Government Training Group.

4.3 The General Power of Competence – Guidance Document

Members were reminded that the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 provided councils with a new statutory power called The General Power of Competence (GPC), which allowed councils to have the power to do anything an individual may do, unless specifically prohibited. It was anticipated that the GPC would give councils the opportunity to develop new and innovative business models in ways that were previously disallowed.

Members were provided with a copy of the first draft of a "General Power of Competence Guidance Document", which had been produced to assist Members and Officers when considering the use of the GPC. During discussion, Members

#### 4.3 The General Power of Competence – Guidance Document

noted the following points by the Chief Executive:

- it was important to ensure that any plans or projects the Council wished to take forward were included in the Community Plan;
- Officers were currently endeavouring to clarify the resolution the Council would be required to make to enable it to invoke the GPC; and
- some issues around the GPC would be raised at the Performance Improvement Event on 14 November, 2016 (as referred to in item 5.2.2), such as partnerships between Local Government and Central Government Departments that would require to be formed in taking forward some projects.

Following discussion, it was proposed by Councillor P Catney, seconded by Alderman G Rice and agreed to recommend that Officers take account of the following comments by Members and that a further draft of this guidance document be presented to a future meeting of the Committee:

- the indication from the Policy Officer that training would be provided for Members in respect of the GPC was welcomed and it was hoped that this would include case studies;
- given the forthcoming projects the Council was to take forward, the early implementation of a policy around the GPC was important; and
- clarification should be sought in relation to the fact that the GPC would not provide councils with new powers to borrow.

#### 4.4 Developing a Scheme/Guidance for Handling Petitions Made to Council

Councillor J Baird left and returned to the meeting during consideration of this item of business (6.00 pm and 6.03 pm respectively). Having left the meeting earlier, Councillor D J Craig returned to the meeting at 6.14 pm. The Right Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor B Bloomfield, left the meeting at 6.14 pm.

At the September meeting of the Committee, Members were reminded that an independent investigator had suggested that a policy and guidance document for handling petitions made to Council should be developed. It was further suggested that guidance should be produced for Elected Members and staff about the completion of petitions.

Members were provided with a draft “Developing a Scheme/Guidance for Handling Petitions Made to Council”. Following discussion on this matter, it was proposed by Alderman J Tinsley, seconded by Councillor A Grehan and agreed to recommend that this paper be noted and that a more simplified version be presented to the next meeting of the Committee, taking into account the following comments/concerns by Members:

4.4 Developing a Scheme/Guidance for Handling Petitions Made to Council (Contd)

- having a protocol around the handling of petitions would be in line with the Council's core values of transparency and accountability and it was important for the Council to be aware of the concerns of the community. However, there was a concern that petitions would be used by the public as a mechanism to raise issues rather than contacting Elected Members directly to have issues addressed;
- guidance should refer to how Elected Members were required to deal with petitions;
- the protocol should not indicate how many signatures a petition should contain in order to be valid, but state that the petition should contain valid signatures of people who lived, worked or studied in the Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council area. There was a concern, however, about the length of time it could take to verify the validity of signatures on a petition;
- the title of a petition should be specific to what it was about and be relevant to the Council; and
- petitions should not be submitted to Elected Members. They should be submitted to the Chief Executive or via a dedicated LCCC Petitions email address. If deemed appropriate, they should then be referred to the relevant Committee for consideration.

Items for Noting

4.5 Partnership Panel Meeting – 12 October, 2016  
Key Outcomes Paper

Members were provided with, and noted the contents of, a copy of a key outcomes paper prepared by NILGA following the Partnership Panel meeting held on 12 October, 2016. The Chief Executive, who had attended this meeting with Alderman W A Leathem, stated that the Partnership Panel was a very important point of contact between councils and Central Government Departments and stressed the importance of the Council continuing to bring forward strategic issues for consideration by the Panel.

4.6 Corporate Risk Register Amendment

As reported to the October Committee meeting, consideration was being given to the risk around delivering the Rural Development Programme. In this regard, Members were provided with, and noted the contents of, a copy of the new Corporate Risk 14 – Failure to Deliver the Rural Development Programme, which had been added to the Corporate Risk Register.

4.7 Use and Approval of Confidentiality Clauses/Agreement in Dispute Settlements

Members had been provided with, and noted the contents of, a copy of email correspondence received from the Northern Ireland Audit Office on 25 October, 2016 regarding the above matter. The Audit and Risk Manager had distributed the guidance to the Corporate Management Team for its review and distribution to relevant Officers.

#### 4.8 Community Planning

Members were provided with a copy of an update report by the Community Planning Manager containing the following matters:

##### 4.8.1 Appointment of Consultants to Write the Draft Community Plan

The Committee was reminded that a procurement process had been undertaken to appoint consultants to write the draft Community Plan. It was noted that Stratagem NI had been appointed and had started work on drawing together all the information collected to date, focussing on the Council's priorities. Stratagem NI would attend and help to facilitate the next Thematic Working Group meeting on 18 November, 2016 as part of the process and would present the first draft plan on 1 December, 2016 at the next meeting of the Strategic Community Planning Partnership.

##### 4.8.2 Thematic Working Group Meeting

Councillor J Baird left the meeting during consideration of this item of business (6.19 pm).

It was noted that the next meeting of the Thematic Working Group would take place on 18 November, 2016 in the Island Hall, Lagan Valley Island. This would be a joint meeting with all those who had been involved in the community planning process so far, as well as those who had been involved in the Local Development Plan (LDP) process. The workshop session would be facilitated by Stratagem NI and would focus on making connections between the community planning outcomes and how the LDP could assist to deliver on them.

##### 4.8.3 Strategic Community Planning Partnership

Councillor J Baird returned to the meeting during consideration of this item of business (6.21 pm).

It was noted that the next meeting of the Strategic Community Planning Partnership (SCPP) would be held on 1 December, 2016. It was expected that Stratagem NI would have circulated the draft Community Plan to the SCPP members in advance of this meeting in order that discussion could focus on amendments and clarification.

In response to comments by Alderman G Rice in relation to the importance of the involvement of TransportNI in particular, the Community Planning Manager advised that TransportNI was engaging at both a strategic level and Officer level. Stratagem NI had made contact with TransportNI and a meeting had been arranged for later in the week.

##### 4.8.4 Datahub

Members were reminded that the Council had agreed to have access to the Datahub through the website, which would become a useful resource for Members, staff, community groups and the public. Initial meetings had taken place with Newry, Mourne and Down District Council and work was underway to

#### 4.8.4 Datahub (Contd)

have the first Lisburn and Castlereagh information available on the website before Christmas. It was proposed by Councillor B Hanvey, seconded by Councillor A Girvin and agreed to recommend that, prior to the Datahub being available on the website for the public, a training session be provided for all Members of Council in order that they would have previous knowledge of the system and be better placed to answer any queries they would receive from the public.

#### 4.8.5 Lisburn Courthouse

The Community Planning Manager advised that the Minister for Justice had overturned the decision to close Lisburn Courthouse. However, Lord Justice Gillen had prepared a report on a Civil Family Justice Review which made a number of recommendations very closely aligned with the information this Council had collated during the consultation on the potential closure of the Courthouse. There was still an opportunity to investigate a one stop shop for family justice in Lisburn and Council had agreed that a small focus group would continue to research potential enhanced uses in the Courthouse. It was noted that the Chief Executive was due to meet Janice Spence from Donaldson McConnell Solicitors in Lisburn at the start of December. Ms Spence had been working closely with the Council on the Courthouse project.

The Chairman, Councillor T Mitchell, thanked all those involved, particularly the former Chairman, Alderman W A Leathem, the Chief Executive and the Community Planning Manager for their hard work and efforts in lobbying to retain Lisburn Courthouse. Councillor P Catney paid particular tribute to the Community Planning Manager for the excellent presentation she had made to the Justice Committee in this regard.

#### 4.8.6 Age Friendly Conference

Members were reminded that the Age Friendly Conference was taking place on the morning of 16 November, 2016 and any Member wishing to attend should notify the Community Planning Manager as soon as possible.

The Community Planning Manager verbally advised those present that the Public Health Authority (PHA) had granted funding for a co-ordinator, to be shared between Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council and Ards and North Down Borough Council, to take forward the Age Friendly Strategy. This would commence in January 2017 for two years, with the opportunity for the PHA to extend funding.

The Right Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor B Bloomfield, returned to the meeting at this point (6.29 pm).

### 5. Confidential Business

It was agreed that the reports and recommendations of the Chief Executive be adopted, subject to any decisions recorded below.

5. Confidential Business (Contd)

The matters contained in the confidential reports would be dealt with “In Committee” due to containing information (a) likely to reveal the identity of an individual; and (b) relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information).

“In Committee”

It was proposed by Councillor J Baird, seconded by Councillor P Catney and agreed that the following matters be considered “in committee”, in the absence of members of the press and public being present.

5.1 Statistical Services

Members were provided with a copy of a report from the Community Planning Manager regarding the future services of a statistician in the Council. Following discussion, it was proposed by Councillor J Baird, seconded by Councillor J Gallen and agreed to recommend that the agreement with NISRA, which was due to end in March 2017, be extended for another year on a part-time basis (22 hours per week) and that this be reviewed after that period.

It was further agreed that the statistician make a short presentation at a future meeting of the Committee giving an overview of her work.

5.2 Performance Improvement Audit

Councillor A Grehan left the meeting at this point (6.48 pm).

Members were provided with, and noted the contents of a copy of the draft Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council Improvement Audit and Assessment, which set out the findings of the NI Audit Office work to date. Officers had been working on compiling further evidence and providing additional clarifications in order to agree the detail of the report by mid/late November. A copy of the final report would be presented to the Committee in due course.

Resumption of Normal Business

It was proposed by Councillor J Gallen, seconded by Councillor P Catney and agreed to come out of committee and normal business was resumed.

6. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

There being no further business, the meeting was terminated at 6.50 pm.

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Mayor/Chairman