

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, 10 November, 2015 at 5:30 pm

PRESENT:

Councillor V Kamble (Acting Chairman)

The Right Worshipful the Mayor

Councillor R T Beckett

Aldermen D Drysdale, A G Ewart and J Tinsley

Councillors A P Ewing, J Gallen, O Gawith, A Girvin,
A Grehan, J McCarthy, U Mackin, B Mallon and T Mitchell

OTHER MEMBERS:

Alderman G Rice MBE

IN ATTENDANCE:

Chief Executive

Director of Finance

Transition Manager

Head of Audit

Community Planning Manager

Equality Officer

Audit Officer

Committee Secretary

Chairman

In the absence of the Chairman, Alderman W A Leathem, the Vice-Chairman, Councillor V Kamble, took the Chair and conducted the business on the agenda.

1. **Apologies**

It was agreed to accept apologies for non-attendance at the meeting on behalf of the Chairman, Alderman W A Leathem, and Councillor H Legge.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

The following declarations of interest were made:

- Alderman A G Ewart, in his capacity as Special Advisor to the Minister of Social Development, declared a pecuniary interest in item 4.3 Department of Social Development Campaign – Improving the Uptake of Benefits; and
- Councillor A P Ewing, as a member of the South Eastern Local Commissioning Group, declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 4.2.4 Update Report on Community Planning.

3. Minutes

It was proposed by Councillor U Mackin, seconded by Councillor O Gawith and agreed that the minutes of the meeting of the Governance and Audit Committee held on 13 October, 2015, as adopted at the meeting of Council held on 27 October, 2015, be confirmed and signed.

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

4. Report from Chief Executive

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 Independent Review of NILGA

Further to consideration of this matter at the Committee meeting held on 13 October, 2015, an extension to the deadline of 6 November for submission of a response to the Independent Review of NILGA document had been sought and granted. The new deadline was 11 November.

Members having been provided with a draft response to the Independent Review of NILGA document, it was proposed by Alderman J Tinsley, seconded by Alderman D Drysdale and agreed to recommend that the response be submitted on 11 November, 2015, with a caveat advising that the response was subject to ratification by Council on 24 November.

4.2 Report by Community Planning Manager

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

4.2.1 NI Courts and Tribunal – Rationalisation of the Courts' Estate

Members were provided with a copy of a letter dated 14 October, 2015 from the Minister of Justice regarding the future of Lisburn Courthouse, implying that a decision would be issued soon and that the Council should liaise with a number of Department of Justice (DOJ) Officers to discuss proposals.

It was agreed, on a proposal by Alderman J Tinsley, to recommend that Council Officers, together with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, or their nominees, meet with DOJ Officers to discuss proposals and report back to the Committee in due course.

4.2.2 Statutory Guidance for the Operation of Community Planning

Members agreed to note the contents of the Statutory Guidance for the Operation of Community Planning Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

4.2.3 Community Planning Engagement Strategy

Members noted the contents of the Community Planning Engagement Strategy, which had been amended to take account of Members' previous comments.

4.2.4 Update Report on Community Planning

Members were provided with a copy of an update report on Community Planning outlining what had been achieved to date, the emerging themes and potential pilot projects. Arising from the report, the following was agreed:

(a) Emerging Themes

The Community Planning Manager set out in her report, details on how information had been gathered and collated since the beginning of the year. She also reported on emerging themes and provided Members with detailed feedback from each of the Community Conversations. This information was noted.

(b) Pilot Projects

The Community Planning Manager advised that a number of the agencies who were likely to be the statutory partners had identified early pilot projects for the new Partnership to consider and Members noted from her report a brief outline of suggestions received.

(c) Structures

Councillors J Gallen and A Girvin arrived to the meeting during consideration of this item of business.

Members were advised that no two existing Community Planning Partnerships were operating with the same structure. Over the last number of months, the Community Planning Manager had liaised with partners in relation to how this Council's Partnership should be designed, as well as carrying out desktop research into what was happening in other councils in Northern Ireland and Scotland. The Community Planning Manager set out in her report, the results of her research, together with a number of options for the Lisburn and Castlereagh Community Planning Partnership.

Following discussion, it was proposed by Councillor U Mackin, seconded by Councillor A Grehan and agreed to recommend that consideration of this matter be deferred until the next meeting to allow parties to discuss the options set out by the Community Planning Manager.

4.3 Department of Social Development Campaign – Improving the Uptake of Benefits

Members having been provided with a copy of a report by the Equality Officer in relation to the above, it was proposed by Alderman J Tinsley, seconded by Councillor A Grehan and agreed to recommend that the Council support the roll out of the "Improving the Uptake of Benefits Campaign" across the Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council area.

4.4 Local Government Draft Code of Audit Practice Consultation Document

Members having been provided with a copy of a draft response to the above consultation document, it was proposed by Councillor U Mackin, seconded by Alderman J Tinsley and agreed to recommend that the draft response be approved.

5. Confidential Business

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

The matters contained in the confidential report would be dealt with "In Committee" due to items containing (i) information which revealed that the Council proposed to make an order or direction under any statutory provision; and (ii) information relating to any individual.

"In Committee"

It was proposed by Alderman A G Ewart, seconded by Councillor J McCarthy, and agreed that this matter be considered "in committee", in the absence of members of the press and public being present

5.1 Flying a Flag or Flags at Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council Headquarters Building (Lagan Valley Island)

Both the former Lisburn City Council and Castlereagh Borough Council had their own policy with regards to flag flying. As a result of the merger of both Councils into the new Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council, it was now required under the new Equality Scheme for the Council to develop its own policy in relation to the flying of flags. Members were advised that an Equality Impact Assessment would require to be carried out. It was agreed to recommend that appropriate legal advice be sought in relation to the approach to developing such a policy.

5.2 Review of Internal Audit Effectiveness

Further to consideration of the above matter at the special meeting of Committee held on 27 October, 2015, Members were provided with a copy of a report by the Director of Finance arising from the action sheet which corresponded with the recommendations set out in the report from Ernst & Young.

In considering the Director's report:

- (i) it was proposed by Councillor U Mackin, seconded by Councillor A Grehan and agreed to recommended that the temporary Audit Assistant post currently within the in-house Internal Audit Team be made permanent on a full-time basis, with immediate effect;

5.2 Review of Internal Audit Effectiveness (Contd)

- (ii) it was proposed by Alderman A G Ewart, seconded by Alderman J Tinsley and agreed to recommend that, rather than engaging Capita (who had provided internal audit services for the former Castlereagh Borough Council) for the four month period from 1 December, 2015 to 31 March, 2016, attempts would be made to have this service provided by current employees on a secondment basis;
- (iii) it was agreed to recommend that a formal rotation of staff to Internal Audit, in line with details set out in the Director's report, would be implemented with immediate effect, it being noted that the Director would monitor this arrangement and report back to the Committee in due course;
- (iv) it was agreed to recommend that the vacant Risk Management post be recruited with immediate effect and located within Internal Audit;
- (v) it was agreed to recommend that training would be provided by the Director of Finance to all Members of Council on the Internal Audit Approach, as contained within the report from Ernst & Young;
- (vi) it was agreed to recommend that training would be provided by the Director of Finance to all Council staff on the Internal Audit Approach, in conjunction with awareness training;
- (vii) it was proposed by Councillor U Mackin, seconded by Alderman A G Ewart and agreed to recommend that consideration of the matter of Externalised Internal Audit be deferred pending the outcome of item (ii) above;
- (viii) it was agreed to recommend that in-house awareness training for all Council staff be maintained and that a higher level of training, covering duties and responsibilities aligned to membership of Governance and Audit, be afforded to Members of Council; and
- (ix) it was agreed that a further detailed Action Plan be presented to the December meeting of the Committee.

Resumption of Normal Business

It was proposed by Alderman A G Ewart, seconded by Councillor B Mallon, 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 6.36 pm.

Mayor/Chairman