

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, 14 February, 2017 at 5:35 pm

PRESENT:

Councillor T Mitchell (Chairman)

The Right Worshipful the Mayor
Councillor R B Bloomfield MBE

Aldermen G Rice MBE and J Tinsley

Councillors D J Craig, A Girvin, A Grehan, B Hanvey and
V Kamble

IN ATTENDANCE:

Chief Executive
Director of Corporate Services
Director of Leisure & Community Services
Community Planning Manager
Audit and Risk Manager
Policy Officer
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 Councillors J Baird, S Carson, P Catney and J Gallen.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest expressed at the meeting.

3. Minutes

It was proposed by Alderman J Tinsley, seconded by Councillor A Girvin and agreed that the minutes of the meeting of the Governance and Audit Committee held on 10 January, 2017, as adopted at the meeting of Council held on 24 January, 2017, be confirmed and signed.

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 Requests for Changes to Service Provision

Members were advised that, at the request of the Corporate Management Team, a Head of Service Team had been convened to consider how best the Council could receive and address requests for changes to service provision. Having been provided with a copy of a report in this regard, it was proposed by Alderman J Tinsley, seconded by Councillor A Grehan and agreed to recommend that:

- (a) the Council's Customer Care System be adapted to include a feature to facilitate a 'Change to Service Provision' as requested by a local resident, which would be logged by the Chief Executive's Office before being delegated to the relevant Head of Service for appropriate action; and
- (b) the cost of the necessary adaptations (£1,100) be met from within the Continuous Improvement budget, which was part of the Chief Executive's Budget.

4.2 Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council Corporate Plan 2017

Members were reminded that the Council's current Corporate Plan had been developed to cover the transformation period and had laid the foundations for the first two years of operation of the Council and that it was to be reviewed in 2017.

Following the Corporate Managers Discussion Forum on 1 February, 2017, Officers had now begun to scope the work required for the new Plan and its possible content. This may require some consultancy assistance to pull the new Plan together and assist with the consultation phase. It was estimated that this could cost up to £8,000. Competitive quotations would be sought and it may be possible to reduce the estimated cost in this manner.

The Chief Executive pointed out that Elected Members were considered crucial to the planning process and would be involved heavily once the initial scoping and data collection works had been carried out.

It was proposed by Alderman G Rice, seconded by Councillor B Hanvey and agreed to recommend that expenditure of up to £8,000 be approved for consultancy assistance in compiling the new Corporate Plan, if required, and that this cost be met from within the Continuous Improvement budget, which was part of the Chief Executive's budget.

Items for Noting

4.3 Datahub Future Plans

Alderman J Tinsley left, and returned to, the meeting during consideration of this item of business (5.41 pm and 5.44 pm respectively).

Members were reminded that the Council had agreed to work with Newry, Mourne and Down District Council to develop a Datahub to present information about the Council area on maps to build a picture of trends or issues which could

4.3 Datahub Future Plans (Contd)

be addressed through the Council's service delivery or through collaboration with the Community Planning Partnership. The Council had agreed a budget for the Datahub of £28,500 per year for 4 years, but had not paid anything to date as there had been nothing of use presented to the Council as yet. In discussion at the time when the Datahub was first suggested, Members were clear that it would only be pursued if it was clearly showing value for money.

In the meantime, the Northern Ireland Statistics & Research Agency (NISRA) Statistician had become embedded in the Council and had carried out many projects for different departments and sections, although the majority of the work had been with Community Planning and the Local Development Plan team. In the last few weeks, the Council had entered an agreement with Land & Property Services (LPS) to employ as Geographical Information Systems (GIS) Officer who had been working on a number of projects since January of this year with the statistician to analyse and evaluate information specific to Lisburn and Castlereagh.

At this stage, it appeared that Newry, Mourne and Down District Council was experiencing some internal difficulties which may also be diverting attention away from the development of the Datahub.

During discussion, Members stressed the importance of having a Datahub, which would be a very valuable tool, and asked if Newry, Mourne and Down District Council did not progress this matter, could another partner be found for Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council to move forward with. It was noted that the Chief Executive would be contacting the Chief Executive of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council and a further update would be provided at next month's meeting, at which time alternatives could be considered, if necessary.

4.4 Council's Standing Orders – Continuing Effect of Schedule 3 to the Local Government (Transitional, Supplementary, Incidental Provisions and Modifications) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014

The Chief Executive reported receipt of a letter from the Department for Communities, which dealt with draft and existing governance legislation. This was currently being investigated and a legal opinion had been sought. It was noted that there may be a requirement to change the Council's Standing Orders as a result of this and that a further report on this matter would be made at the March Committee meeting.

4.5 Corporate Risk Register – Review Process and Update

Members were reminded that the Council's Corporate Risk Register was reviewed and presented to the Committee on a quarterly basis, with the latest presentation of the document having been in October 2016. Members noted from the Chief Executive's report, activity that had impacted on the risk environment and which would influence the Council's corporate risks. Currently, senior managers (ie. risk owners) were being asked to review the risks within their service area, whilst having regard to the activities that had taken place since October 2017, as outlined by the Chief Executive. It was anticipated that all

4.5 Corporate Risk Register – Review Process and Update (Contd)

reviews would be completed and presented to the Corporate Management Team before the end of February and that the fully reviewed and updated Corporate Risk Register would be presented to the Committee at its March meeting.

4.6 APSE Performance Networks

Members were reminded that the Council had joined APSE Performance Networks during the summer of 2016. The NI Local Government Act (NI) 2014 legislated that councils must demonstrate benchmarking within the sector during 2017/18 and it was expected that Performance Networks would help facilitate this.

It was noted that APSE had provided Performance Networks training to all Heads of Service on 30 January, 2017 to enable them to collect data for their individual service area. Retrospective data for 2015/16 would be reported to APSE for the end of February using the Council's 2015/16 audited data and this would be considered a pilot exercise. The normal timescales for compiling the Performance Networks data would be during the summer, annually, and the data would always be reported retrospectively. Following the pilot, the Council would then fall back into the normal reporting timetable for reporting the 2016/17 data. It was further noted that a NI Performance Networks working group was hoping to meet in March and this would be the forum to influence the changing of any Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). The appropriate Head of Service and the Performance Improvement Officer would attend this working group.

4.7 Performance Manager

Members were reminded that the Council had purchased a bespoke performance management system called Performance Manager, which had been implemented during the summer of 2016 and captured a small 'basket' of KPIs for each service area within the Council. The majority of KPIs were collected quarterly and Heads of Service had just updated the system with the third quarter's data. Performance Manager was primarily a dashboard system on all Heads of Service and Directors' computers and was proving to be a beneficial management information system. It was noted that it was planned to populate the system with the APSE Performance Network's KPIs so that information was being collected in one central location.

4.8 Performance Improvement Plan Update

Members were reminded that the Council must have a Performance Improvement Plan in order to meet the requirements of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014. Work had commenced on the Plan for 2017/18, with questions around performance improvement objectives included in the current Community Plan consultation. It was noted that a further update on this matter would be provided at the March meeting of the Committee.

4.9 Draft Community Plan Consultation

Members were reminded that the consultation for the draft Community Plan had commenced on 16 January, 2017 and would run until 13 March, 2017. This had been promoted through a wide-ranging campaign developed by the Marketing & Communications Unit, details of which were set out in the Chief Executive's report. Members also noted from the Chief Executive's report, how the consultation process was being promoted by a number of the statutory and support partners. During discussion, the Community Planning Manager agreed to investigate a request by Councillor A Girvin that the Council's Twitter and Facebook pages provide a direct link to the online survey.

Councillor B Harvey took the opportunity to commend the facilitators who had been present at the community conversations that had taken place. The Chief Executive also thanked the Community Planning Manager and other Officers involved for the huge amount of work that had gone into the consultation process.

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 containing (a) information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information); (b) information which was likely to reveal the identity of an individual; and (c) information relating to any individual.

"In Committee"

It was proposed by Alderman G Rice, seconded by Councillor D J Craig and agreed that the following matters be considered "in committee", in the absence of members of the press and public being present.

Item for Decision

5.1 Internal Audit Function

Members were reminded that there had been some challenges within the Internal Audit Service in regard to recruitment of posts in the last 8 months and information in this regard was set out in the Chief Executive's report.

The Council's Audit Plan had been reviewed and revised to the end of the current fiscal period and Members were provided with a copy of this Plan. The resource required to fulfil the revised Audit Plan had been reassessed and a shortfall of some 28 days had been indicated. It was proposed by Councillor D J Craig, seconded by Councillor A Grehan and agreed to recommend that approval be granted to the outsourcing of those internal audit functions normally provided by the vacant Internal Audit post, at a net estimated cost of £7,418, until such time as the post was filled.

Items for Noting

5.2 Retrospective Reporting of Redundancies

Members noted details of redundancies that had been progressed through the Corporate Services Committee in January 2017.

5.3 List of Purchase Order Signatories

Further to a request at the last meeting of the Committee, Members were provided a list of all staff who could sign-off and approve for payment, invoices paid via the Council's Purchase Order System. The Director of Corporate Services pointed out that very strict controls were in place in regards to purchase orders and payments and that whilst an Officer was authorised to raise an order, this was subsequently subject to both Line Manager and Director authorisation.

Resumption of Normal Business

It was proposed by Councillor A Girvin, seconded by Councillor B Hanvey 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 6.06 pm.

Mayor/Chairman