

LISBURN & CASTLEREAGH CITY COUNCIL

Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Council held on Tuesday 26 March, 2024 at 7:00 pm

PRESENT IN CHAMBER:

The Right Worshipful the Mayor
Councillor A Gowan

Aldermen J Baird, A G Ewart MBE, O Gawith, A Grehan,
M Guy, H Legge, S P Porter, S Skillen and J Tinsley

Councillors D Bassett, R T Beckett, P Burke, S Burns,
R Carlin, 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, A McIntyre, M McKeever,
R McLernon, A Martin, T Mitchell, N Parker, G Thompson and
N Trimble

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
Member Services Officers
Technician
IT Officer

Mr D Roberts, Mayor's Chaplain (remote)

Commencement of the Meeting

At the commencement of the meeting, The Right Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor A Gowan, 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. In particular, he extended a welcome to members of the Youth Council who were in attendance to observe proceedings. The Mayor 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 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, expressed condolences in respect of the following bereavements:

- Mr Colin Craig, long-standing Council employee within the Waste Management and Operations Unit; and
- Mr Michael Smythe, father of Russell Smythe, employee within the Facilities Management Unit.

Councillor Gowan referred to the recent death of his father, John, and thanked both his Elected Member colleagues and Council staff for the support and sympathy they had extended to him, which had been greatly appreciated.

The Right Worshipful the Mayor welcomed his Chaplain, Mr D Roberts, to the meeting. Mr Roberts gave an address and said a prayer during which he also referred to the above bereavements and offered his sympathy to the families. The Right Worshipful the Mayor thanked Mr Roberts for his attendance and he left the meeting (7.13 pm).

1. Business of The Right Worshipful the Mayor

1.1 Mayor's Engagements

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.

In particular, Councillor Gowan highlighted the following:

- the Mayor's Dinner which had raised £27,500 for the Mayor's Charity, Cancer Fund for Children. The Mayor thanked all those involved for their hard work in making this event such a huge success, as well as his Elected Member colleagues for their support and donations; and
- the Mayor's Community Awards, which had been a celebration of the work carried out by the community of volunteers throughout the Council area. He extended his thanks to the capable, passionate team of staff for their efforts in making this such a successful event.

2. Apologies

It was agreed to accept apologies for non-attendance at the meeting on behalf of the Deputy Mayor, Councillor G McCleave, Alderman M Gregg, Councillors J Gallen, S Lowry, U Mackin and C McCready and the Acting Director of Environmental Services.

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4. Council Minutes

It was proposed by Alderman A G Ewart, seconded by Councillor G Hynds and agreed that the minutes of the meeting of Council held on 27 February, 2024 be confirmed and signed.

5. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

6. Deputations

There were no deputations.

7. Business Required by Statute

(i) Signing of Legal Documents

It was proposed by Alderman J Tinsley, seconded by Councillor D Bassett and agreed that the following legal documents be signed at the meeting:

- Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council and Profile Tree Web Design and Digital Marketing – Award Letter to deliver the Digital Academy (T23/24-019);
- Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council and DFPP Ltd t/a People 1st – Award Letter to deliver the Into Employment Programme (T23/24-014)
- Lisburn and Castlereagh City and Skillgate Ltd – Contract for Learning Management System (T23/24-013); and
- Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council and Martson (Holdings) Limited – Contract for the provision of car parking management/off street parking enforcement and penalty charge processing service for a consortium of 8 councils in NI.

8. Adoption of Minutes of Committees

Communities and Wellbeing Committee

5 March, 2024

Proposed by Councillor R T Beckett

Seconded by Councillor B Higginson

Environment and Sustainability Committee

6 March, 2024

Proposed by Councillor R Carlin

Seconded by Alderman J Baird

Regeneration and Growth Committee

7 March, 2024

Proposed by Councillor J Laverty

Seconded by Councillor A Martin

MM 26.03.2024

Corporate Services Committee

13 March, 2024

Proposed by Alderman O Gawith

Seconded by Councillor A P Ewing

The Chair of Corporate Services Committee, Alderman O Gawith, advised that the next meeting of the Committee would take place on 11 April, 2024, not 10 April as previously scheduled.

Governance and Audit Committee

20 March, 2024

Proposed by Councillor R McLernon

Seconded by Councillor D Bassett

The Chair of Governance and Audit Committee pointed out that the above minutes remained subject to the call-in procedure until 10.00 am on Friday, 29 March, 2024.

Planning Committee

5 February, 2024

The minutes of the Planning Committee meeting of 5 February, 2024 had been circulated for noting only as these minutes had been agreed at the subsequent meeting of the Planning Committee on 4 March, 2024. It was proposed by Councillor P Catney, seconded by Alderman J Tinsley and agreed that their contents be noted.

9. Report from Chief Executive

9.1 Department for the Economy Adverse Weather Financial Package

It was proposed by Councillor J Lavery, seconded by Councillor P Catney and agreed to:

- (a) note the additional scheme outlined in the Chief Executive's Report; and
- (b) give approval to Officers administering the DfE Scheme in line with the prescribed eligibility criteria.

9.2 Council Remote/Hybrid Meetings

The Chief Executive reported that an amendment to Standing Orders was required to reflect the current legislative position in relation to remote meetings, which had changed with effect from 7 March, 2024. Suspension of Standing Order 27.2 was required to allow for consideration of this amendment.

It was proposed by Councillor P Catney, seconded by Councillor R Carlin and agreed that Standing Order 27.2 be suspended for consideration of the amendment to Standing Orders.

Standing Order 27.2 was suspended at this juncture.

9.2 Council Remote/Hybrid Meetings (Contd)

It was proposed by Councillor T Mitchell, seconded by Alderman O Gawith and agreed that:

- (a) the amended Standing Orders, as circulated, be adopted;
- (b) the conditions applied to Members who chose to observe meetings via zoom, as outlined in the report, be noted;
- (c) Chairs, in consultation with their Committees, may alter the start time of Committee meetings to 6.30 pm; and
- (d) the consultation response on the Draft Local Government (Remote Meetings) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024 for submission to the Department of Committees, as set out in the report, be noted.

10. Reports from Members on Boards

There were no reports from Members on Boards.

11. Reports on Decisions Subject to the Reconsideration Procedure

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

12. Notice of Motion

12.1 Anti-Poverty Strategy

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

“That this Council recognises that poverty is a pervasive issue across Northern Ireland. The Department for Communities reported in October 2023 that 60,000 children were living in absolute poverty – and 1 in 4 children are living in relative poverty.

Council acknowledges the high cost of living – particularly fuel, housing, essential goods, childcare and transport, combined with a low wage economy have created particularly dire economic conditions for many. This combined with the austerity budget of 23/24 has had devastating consequences for the most vulnerable in society.

Council recognises that the Assembly still does not have an Anti-Poverty Strategy “based on objective need” – almost 20 years after the St. Andrew’s agreement placed a legal requirement on the Executive to enact a Strategy.

12.1 Anti-Poverty Strategy (Contd)

Council commits to supporting the call by the Equality Coalition, NI Anti-Poverty Network (NIAPN), Barnardo's and others for the creation and implementation of an Anti-Poverty Strategy based on objective need to be a priority for the Northern Ireland Executive.

Council will:

1. Invite a representative from NIAPN or the Equality Coalition to present to the council about the key asks for an anti-poverty strategy
2. Endorse the recommended vision for the anti-poverty strategy:
“Northern Ireland is an equal society where poverty and its impacts are eradicated, and that respects, protects, promotes and fulfils the rights of those at risk of poverty to ensure they achieve their aspirations.”
3. Increase the visibility of the council's anti-poverty action plans, including the resources available to those within the council area experiencing poverty”.

The Notice of Motion was proposed by Councillor C Kemp and seconded by Alderman H Legge.

The Right Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor A Gowan, advised that the above Notice of Motion would be referred, without debate, to the Communities and Wellbeing Committee for consideration.

12.2 Abolitionist Frederick Douglass

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

“Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council:

Recognises the historic impact of the abolitionist Frederick Douglass' visit to Ireland in 1845 as he campaigned against slavery, including an address at Lisburn First Presbyterian Church on Monday 29th December 1845;

Acknowledges that despite the district having the third highest population of an ethnic minority group in Northern Ireland (Census 2021), there are currently few examples of public commemoration for ethnic minority people or their history;

Condemns all forms of slavery and commends those involved in contemporary efforts to end modern day slavery; and

12.2 Abolitionist Frederick Douglass (Contd)

Resolves to undertake a feasibility study, including planning considerations and costings for further review by Members, to erect a statue or memorial in Market Square, adjacent to Lisburn First Presbyterian Church, in commemoration of Frederick Douglass' address there in 1845."

The Notice of Motion was proposed by Councillor P Catney and seconded by Councillor P Burke.

Councillor P Catney stated that Frederick Douglass had spent the first two decades of his life as a slave and, at the age of 20, had taken the courageous step to escape. At the age of 27 he had begun a tour of Ireland, raising funds for the abolitionist cause by selling copies of his first autobiography "Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass". On 29 December, 1845, he had made a historic anti-slavery speech in Lisburn First Presbyterian Church, with Minister Alexander Henderson welcoming him and stating that the Lisburn congregation had a heart to feel for the oppressed. Mr Douglass had stated that, since arriving in Ireland, he had spent some of the happiest moments of his life, had undergone transformation and had lived a new life. When he had come to Lisburn, Mr Douglass had not come to a town ignorant of the abolitionist movement; from the early 19th century, Lisburn had an active and committed anti-slavery movement, which was not the case for all towns and cities in Ireland at that time.

Councillor Catney stated that Lisburn City was rich in history, with working men and women of the linen industry commemorated in the Irish Linen Museum and soldiers of the First and Second World Wars immortalised in war memorials. This showed who the people of Lisburn were – generational hard workers who stood up in the face of oppression – and this was what Frederick Douglass did. Modern slavery was on the rise and Councillor Catney stated that his proposal to commemorate Frederick Douglass would send a clear message that the people of Lisburn did not tolerate oppression or slavery of any kind, be it sexual exploitation, domestic servitude, forced labour or criminal exploitation.

In seconding the proposal, Councillor P Burke emphasised the rich history of the city of Lisburn, the impact it and its citizens had on the promotion of equality and diversity and the important role that the ethnic population played in society. He stated that Frederick Douglass was best known for his anti-slavery writings and campaigning, was also an early campaigner of women's rights and was an influential leader not only now, but of his time. His values and beliefs were as relevant now as they were in the 19th century and, by commemorating him in Lisburn, this would demonstrate the Council's desire to link together the past, present and future. It would go a long way in providing a better understanding for people of the positive and progressive role he played in not only the city's early development, but the role Lisburn and the surrounding areas had played in global events and it becoming a bedrock for many historical figures, some of which Councillor Burke went on to refer to. He stated that Lisburn's history should be embraced and utilised in promoting everything Lisburn, Castlereagh and the surrounding areas had to offer. The Council area had the basis of something unique and different to offer, with Hillsborough Castle, the River Lagan and a

12.2 Abolitionist Frederick Douglass (Contd)

deep-rooted history of the British Military, amongst many other attractions. In order to entice people to want to visit, the Council needed to be welcoming and inviting to everyone and work in partnership regardless of differing political opinions and personal beliefs for the common good. Identity was important and no-one should fear another person's identity, as long as it was expressed in a respectful manner. Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council was becoming more diverse and that should be welcomed, embraced and nurtured. The Council had a responsibility to ensure its shared society was one where diversity was celebrated and he urged everyone to find innovative ways to capture all that the Council had to offer, making the slogan "A City For Everyone" a reality.

Councillor A McIntyre, on behalf of the Alliance Party, voiced support for the Notice of Motion. Recognising the impact of Frederick Douglass' visit to Lisburn would mark a key moment in the Council's journey towards inclusivity. Mr Douglass set an example that could be followed – to lobby and fight against injustices regardless of your situation in life. Commemorating Mr Douglass would provide an opportunity for the Council to use the city's heritage to promote its tourism offering and an opportunity to acknowledge a wider breadth of the communities' experiences. Slavery still existed today in form of human trafficking, sexual exploitation and forced labour. The Council should offer its unwavering support to those in the front-line of tackling those issues. Whilst it was recommending that a feasibility study be presented to Members for consideration at a future date, Councillor McIntyre urged everyone to support the Notice of Motion to pay tribute to a champion of freedom and as individuals, as parties and as a Council, to reaffirm values of diversity, equality and justice for all.

Councillor A Givan spoke of how formidable a man Frederick Douglass had been, surviving a childhood of slavery to become a great leader in the anti-slavery movement. However, he pointed out that in order to have blue plaques erected, the Ulster History Circle required certain criteria to be met, and he considered that a statue would require even stricter criteria. He stated that the proposal did not meet the necessary criteria for the erection of a blue plaque and went on to outline the reasons why. Many famous people had passed through Lisburn, some of whom Councillor Givan mentioned, and there were no statues of them in place even though they had had a profound effect on Ulster. Councillor Givan advised that Frederick Douglass had been commemorated in his own country, with 12 full-sized statues of him having been erected throughout the USA. He suggested that perhaps the Council could recognise him in some way other than a statue, eg. an educational event in the museum or Lisburn First Presbyterian Church could be asked if it wished to erect a plaque to acknowledge his presence in that building. Councillor Givan stated that he could not support the Notice of Motion.

Councillor N Trimble, on behalf of the UUP, expressed support for the Notice of Motion. He stated that it was right and proper that Frederick Douglass be acknowledged in some way. The Notice of Motion was calling for a feasibility study and he was fully supportive of that; however, he would not wish the study to be limited to only the options of a statue or plaque. Thought was required on

12.2 Abolitionist Frederick Douglass (Contd)

what was appropriate and what was cost-effective, given that statues were expensive and the Council was a steward of ratepayers' money.

Councillor G Hynds stated that Frederick Douglass was a significant figure in history and Lisburn had a significant history that should be tapped into a lot more. He voiced his support for the Notice of Motion but concurred with Councillor Trimble that the feasibility study should not be limited.

Alderman S P Porter thanked Councillor Catney for bringing forward the Notice of Motion. There may be issues around what form or recognition would come forward but he was content for a feasibility study to be carried out on a wider basis than was called for in the Notice of Motion. He stated that it may be more beneficial for the museum to run an event for people to learn about the wonderful life of Frederick Douglass. Alderman Porter also pointed out that there was already a statue of Mr Douglass 8 miles away in Belfast.

Councillor R T Beckett stated that modern day slavery was an issue. He referred to legislation that had been passed in the last term of the Northern Ireland Assembly and the work of Lord Morrow in the House of Lords to address this issue. Councillor Beckett also referred to the existing statue of Frederick Douglass in Belfast and stated that there were many ways in which he could be commemorated by the Council, including the possibility of locating something in Lisburn First Presbyterian Church.

Councillor P Catney confirmed that he would be liaising with Lisburn First Presbyterian Church. He stated that Frederick Douglass' family had carried on his traditions and suggested that perhaps the family could be invited to come to Lisburn. Given the comments made regarding the widening of the feasibility study, Councillor Catney agreed that the last paragraph of his Notice of Motion be amended to read "Resolves to undertake a feasibility study, including planning considerations, and other options, and costings for further review by Members, to erect a statue or memorial in Market Square, adjacent to Lisburn First Presbyterian Church, in commemoration of Frederick Douglass' address there in 1845".

The Notice of Motion proposed by Councillor P Catney, seconded by Councillor P Burke, with the amendment to final paragraph outlined above, was unanimously agreed.

Prior to considering confidential business, The Right Worshipful the Mayor stated that Any Other Business would be taken at this time.

13. Any Other Business

13.1 Best Wishes to the Princess of Wales
Alderman S P Porter

Alderman S P Porter referred to the recent announcement of the ill health of the Princess of Wales and stated his disappointment at media coverage in advance of that time. He asked that The Right Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor A Gowan, write a letter on behalf of the Council passing on the thoughts and prayers of the people of Lisburn & Castlereagh to her and her family at this time and looking forward to her visiting in the future. Councillor G Hynds concurred with the sentiments of Alderman Porter.

The Right Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor A Gowan, confirmed that he had already sent such a letter, as well as a letter to His Majesty King Charles III.

13.2 Reception for Emerge Counselling Services
Councillor G Hynds

Councillor G Hynds referred to having attended a 5th anniversary event at Emerge Counselling Services, a wonderful charity that had gone from strength to strength almost entirely through community donations. Councillor Hynds proposed that The Right Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor A Gowan, host a reception for Emerge Counselling Services to celebrate its anniversary and this was seconded by Alderman S P Porter. Councillor Gowan agreed to host such a reception.

14. Confidential Business

The matters contained in the confidential report would be dealt with “In Committee” due to containing information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information).

“In Committee”

It was proposed by Councillor D J Craig, seconded by Councillor A P Ewing and agreed that the following items be considered “in committee”, in the absence of members of the press and public being present. The livestream was paused at 8.17 pm.

14.1 Requirement to Enter into a Section 76 Planning Agreement for Planning Application LA05/2023/0292/F
(Report would be available after the Agreement was signed and sealed)

It was proposed by Alderman O Gawith, seconded by Councillor P Catney and agreed that approval be given to the signing and sealing of the Agreement by the Mayor and Chief Executive.

- 14.2 Requirement to Enter into a Section 76 Planning Agreement for Planning Application LA05/2023/0662/F
(Report would be available after the Agreement was signed and sealed)

The Chief Executive pointed out a typographical error under the Finance and Resource section of the report.

It was proposed by Alderman H Legge, seconded by Alderman J Tinsley and agreed that approval be given to the signing and sealing of the Agreement by the Mayor and Chief Executive.

At this stage, The Right Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor A Gowan, asked if Members wished to raise any other business of a confidential nature. No Members had anything to raise.

Resumption of Normal Business

It was proposed by Alderman S P Porter, seconded by Councillor T Mitchell and agreed to come out of committee and normal business was resumed. The live stream of the meeting was recommenced at this stage (8.21 pm).

There being no further business for consideration, the meeting was terminated at 8.21 pm.

Mayor