

LISBURN & CASTLEREAGH CITY COUNCIL

Minutes of Meeting of the Corporate Services Committee held in the Cherry Room, Island Civic Centre, The Island, Lisburn on Wednesday 11th March 2020 at 6.00 pm.

PRESENT:

Councillor R Carlin (Chairman)

The Right Worshipful The Mayor
Councillor A Givan

Deputy Mayor
Councillor J McCarthy

Aldermen A G Ewart MBE, S Martin and S P Porter

Councillors S Carson, A P Ewing, M Guy, S Hughes,
J Laverty BEM, John Palmer, A Swan and N Trimble

OTHER MEMBERS:

Councillors S Lowry and G McCleave

IN ATTENDANCE:

Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council

Chief Executive
Head of Human Resources & Organisation Development
PSCP/Member Services Manager
Assistant IT Manager - ICT Support Services
Member Services Officer

Conradh na Gaeilge

Conchúr Ó Muadaigh – Advocacy Manager

Commencement of Meeting

The Chairman, Councillor R Carlin, extended a welcome to all present at the meeting and proceeded to outline the evacuation procedures in the case of an emergency.

The Chairman reminded everyone to ensure mobile phones were turned off or on silent mode for the duration of the meeting and also advised that unauthorized recording was not permitted as per 8.5 of the Council's Standing Orders. Finally the Chairman asked that any Member entering or leaving the meeting alert the Member Services Officer accordingly so that this might be accurately reflected in the minutes.

1. Apologies

Apologies for non-attendance at the meeting were accepted and recorded on behalf of Alderman A Grehan, Councillors J Gallen and U Mackin, and the Administration Manager.

2. Declarations of Interest

The Chairman invited Members to declare any interests they might have in relation to the business of the meeting and reminded them of the requirement that they complete Declaration of Interest forms in this regard which had been provided at the meeting.

Alderman S P Porter declared an interest in the following item of business:-

Item 7.4 of Additional Confidential Report of Chief Executive – “Coronavirus (COVID19) – Operational Planning” - Declaration of Interest as a Non-Executive Member of the Public Health Agency.

3. Conradh na Gaeilge

Presentation on the Use of the Irish Language in Councils and also other related Irish language issues

The Chairman, Councillor R Carlin, extended a welcome to Conchúr Ó Muadaigh, the Advocacy Manager of Conradh na Gaeilge, who had been invited to make a presentation in relation to the use of the Irish language in Councils and also other related Irish language issues.

Mr Ó Muadaigh thanked the Committee for the opportunity to address the meeting and with the aid of PowerPoint, he made his presentation entitled “Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council, Obligations and the Irish Language: A Framework for Compliance”.

The presentation covered the following areas:-

- the promotion and use of the Irish language both locally, nationally and internationally as contained within treaties and agreements;
- a document entitled “Local Councils, Obligations and the Irish Language: A Framework for Compliance” which had been jointly produced by the Committee for the Administration of Justice, Conradh na Gaeilge and the Ulster University, copies of which were provided to those Members present at the meeting;
- the five overarching measures of the above document and suggested ways as to how the Council could address such measures, ie:-

3. Conradh na Gaeilge
Presentation on the Use of the Irish Language in Councils and also other related Irish language issues (Continued)

- Irish language Policy;
- Resourcing the promotion and safeguarding of the Irish language;
- Tackling prejudice and promoting tolerance and understanding of the Irish language;
- Service provision in the Irish language;
- Preventing discrimination, retrogression and barriers.

Mr Ó Muadaigh answered several questions put to him by Members and after the Chairman had thanked him for his informative presentation, he left the meeting at 6.35 pm.

Members were reminded that the Council had agreed in February 2020 that:-

- relevant officers from the Communities Unit would engage with Conradh na Gaeilge with a view to the organisation of events in the Council area during Seachtain na Gaeilge [Irish Language Week] during 1st - 17th March 2020 and engagement in future years;
- the Leisure & Community Development Committee would consider a report at a future date regarding the obligations placed on local councils following the out workings of the 'New Decade, New Approach' Deal which specifically refers to the Irish language and culture and the Ulster Scots language and British culture, including possible funding opportunities that would arise from this. In the meantime, all funding opportunities would be forwarded to Conradh na Gaeilge.

Following discussion, it was agreed on a Proposal made by Alderman S P Porter and seconded by Councillor N Trimble that:-

- the presentation from Conradh na Gaeilge be noted;
- a report on the obligations of the Council in regards to the Irish language be presented to the Committee in three months' time (June 2020), such a report to take account of:-
 - the authenticity of the report entitled "Local Councils, Obligations and the Irish Language: A Framework for Compliance" in the context of Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council;
 - any legislation introduced by the NI Assembly in regards to the Irish language;
 - any ongoing discussions by the NI Assembly in regards to the Irish language should legislation not already have been introduced.

Councillor G McCleave left the meeting. (7.00 pm)

4. Report from Chief Executive

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

4.1 Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA)
Annual Investment & Work Plan and Subscription for 2020/2021

Further to the previous meeting of the Committee, Members were provided with the following:-

- copy of a letter dated the 3rd March 2020 from NILGA providing information and clarification on certain of their activities as requested by the Committee at its previous meeting;
- details of the Council's annual subscription to NILGA as from the 2015/2016 financial year;
- copies of the items of correspondence from NILGA as provided to the previous meeting of the Committee.

It was proposed by Councillor John Palmer, seconded by Councillor N Trimble and agreed to recommend that:-

- the Annual Investment & Work Plan of NILGA for 2020/2021 be approved;
- the Council's subscription in the sum of £44,809.00 (excluding VAT) be agreed and be paid on receipt of an invoice expected on or after the 1st April 2020.

5. Report from Business and Democratic Services

In the absence of a Head of Service, the report from Business and Democratic Services was presented by the PCSP/Member Services Manager and the Chief Executive (in the absence of the Administration Manager).

It was agreed that the report and recommendations from Business and Democratic Services be adopted, subject to any decisions recorded below and other items noted.

The PCSP/Member Services Manager presented items 5.1 and 5.2 of the report.

5.1 Conradh na Gaeilge
Presentation on the Use of the Irish Language in Councils and also other related Irish language issues

The above item had been dealt with under Item 3.

5.2 Northern Ireland Local Government Association
Seminar – “Caring Councils: A local government response to poverty, addiction and improving mental health”
27th March 2020 - Girdwood Community Hub, Belfast

Details of the above seminar had been furnished to all Members on the 13th February 2020. To date Alderman D Drysdale and Councillors H Legge, S Lowry, Jenny Palmer and A Swan had asked and had been registered for the event. Councillor Swan had since withdrawn his registration. There was no fee for the seminar.

It was agreed to recommend that:-

- the attendance of Alderman D Drysdale and Councillors H Legge, S Lowry and Jenny Palmer, together with any other Member who might ask to be registered at above seminar, be approved on a retrospective basis;
- the Council be responsible for the payment of approved expenses in this regard.

The Chief Executive presented items 5.3 and 5.4 of the report in the absence of the Administration Manager who had presented an apology for non-attendance at the meeting.

5.3 Endometriosis Support NI
Request to light LVI in yellow on 28th March 2020

Members were advised of a request from Endometriosis Support NI to light the Civic buildings in yellow on the 28th March 2020 so as to raise awareness of endometriosis. The worldwide Endo March was taking place that day also, one of the venues being Belfast.

It was agreed to recommend that the request referred to above be acceded to.

5.4 National Malaya & Borneo Veterans Association (NI Branch)
Professor Pantridge Ceremony - Saturday 12th September 2020

Members were provided with a copy of an e-mail dated the 19th February 2020 from the Pantridge Ceremony Co-ordinator of the National Malaya and Borneo Veterans Association (NI Branch) seeking for the Council to permit and host the Association's annual ceremony at the Professor Pantridge Memorial, LVI, on the 12th September 2020.

The Council had – for a number of years – hosted this annual ceremony. The 2020 ceremony would have particular poignancy given that 2020 is the 75th anniversary of the end of World War II and the 75th anniversary of the release of Professor Pantridge from captivity (on the 11th September).

Whilst the format of the event would be the same as in previous years, the Association would like to mark its significance in the life of Professor Pantridge by a more enhanced ceremony, details of which being provided in the report.

It was agreed to recommend that the request referred to above be acceded to and that the ceremony be permitted and hosted by the Council on the 12th September 2020 or on an alternative date to be identified and agreed with the Mayor of the Day.

The PCSP/Member Services Manager left the meeting. (7.01 pm)

6. Report of Head of Human Resources & Organisation Development

It was agreed to recommend that the report and recommendations of the Head of Human Resources & Organisation Development be adopted, subject to any decisions recorded below and other items noted.

6.1 Employee Wellbeing – “The Big Walk”

Members were reminded of the “Big Walk” held on the 21st June 2019 at the Billy Neill Country Park. The event had proved very successful.

In order to encourage a healthy lifestyle and to support the Council's health and wellbeing agenda, the Head of Service reported that it was hoped to repeat the event in the Lisburn area towards the end of June 2020.

It was agreed to recommend that – in order to encourage staff participation at the Big Walk at the end of June 2020, such participation be:-

- done so within the working day without a requirement to take leave;
- subject to line managers being able to provide appropriate operational cover.

6.2 Workforce Reports

Copies of the undernoted reports had been provided with the Head of Service's report and it was agreed that they be noted:-

- Absence Analysis for the period ending the 31st December 2019;
- Workforce Profile as at the 12th February 2020;
- Recruitment Report for posts advertised, both internally and externally.

The Head of Service expanded on the content of the above within her report and also responded to Members' comments. The Head of Service advised that further to the meeting of Committee on the 11th December 2019 – an analysis had shown there to be no correlation between length of service and absence for the past 12 months.

The Head of Service agreed to brief Councillor S Hughes on the steps involved in the recruitment process which could extend such an exercise should he wish to speak to her outside of the Committee meeting, it being noted that the recruitment time for posts was currently noted on the dashboard provided to CMT.

Comments relating to the impaired quality of the appendix in relation to Workforce Profile were noted for attention in future reports.

Alderman A G Ewart left the meeting. (7.08 pm)

The Assistant IT Manager left the meeting. (7.09 pm)

7. Confidential Reports of Chief Executive

One confidential report had been provided in advance of the meeting and two additional reports had been made available earlier in the day. The Chief Executive apologised for the late provision of the additional reports and explained the reasons in this regard.

The Chairman advised that the reasons for confidentiality were as set out in the agenda for item 7.1 and as advised for items 7.2 – 7.4, ie:-

7.1 Travel & Subsistence Policy

(Confidential for reason of Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the Council or a Government Department and employees of, or office holders under, the Council.)

7.2 NILGA consultation on New Burdens

(Confidential for reason of Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person including the Council holding that information.)

7.3 Strategic Procurement Review – Update

(Confidential for reason of Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person including the Council holding that information.)

7.4 Coronavirus (COVID19) – Operational Planning

(Confidential for reason of 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 A Swan, seconded by Councillor S Hughes and agreed that the Confidential Reports of the Chief Executive be considered “in Committee”, in the absence of members of the press and public.

The member of the press left the meeting. (7.10 pm)

It was agreed that the Confidential Reports and recommendations of the Chief Executive be adopted, subject to any decisions recorded below and other items noted.

7.1 Travel & Subsistence Policy

Presented by the Head of Human Resources & Organisation Development.

It was proposed by Councillor S Carson, seconded by Councillor J Lavery and agreed to recommend that, subject to consultation with trade unions through the LCCC Joint Consultation and Negotiation Forum (JCNF), the Travel and Subsistence Policy (Draft) be approved.

Alderman A G Ewart re-entered the meeting. (7.12 pm)

7.2 Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA)
Consultation on New Burdens
(Closing date for receipt of comments: 31st March 2020)

It was proposed by Councillor S Hughes, seconded by Alderman S P Porter and agreed to recommend that:-

- a confidential Council response be submitted to NILGA so as to provide a starting point for the further exploration of the transfer of functions and shared services;
- any transfer of functions and shared services be subject to sufficient Council coverage through a Northern Ireland specific New Burdens Doctrine which would provide greater assurances in regards to the funding for new burdens and transferring functions.

7.3 Strategic Procurement Review – Update

It was agreed to recommend that:-

- the update in regards to the strategic procurement review be noted;
- Procurement be added to the Corporate Risk Register for review by CMT on an ongoing basis, alongside other corporate risks.

7.4 Coronavirus (COVID19) – Operational Planning

The Chief Executive reported extensively on the above and this was noted.

It was agreed to recommend that delegated authority be granted if required to the Chief Executive and Directors, in consultation with the relevant Chair or Vice-Chair or the Mayor of the Day, to agree to any Council event or gathering being postponed or cancelled as a result of COVID19 implications.

Arising from comments made, the Chief Executive agreed to speak with Facilities Management to ensure that contact had been made with all persons/groups/organisations who had bookings with the Council so as to make them aware of the way in which the Council was handling the effects of COVID19 on an ongoing basis.

Resumption of Normal Business

It was proposed by Alderman S P Porter, seconded by Councillor J Lavery and agreed to come “out of Committee” and normal business was resumed.

8. Any Other Business

8.1 Catering at Council events and meetings Councillor S Carson

Councillor S Carson referred to a recent Civic event when catering provision was well in excess of the number of persons in attendance (as not all who had accepted the invitation to the event were in fact present). Other comments were made about occasions when catering had been inadequate both in terms of amount and the nature of food provided.

The Chief Executive agreed to speak with Facilities Management about this matter and to ensure that – as far as possible - bookings for catering at Council events, meetings, training sessions were realistic. The Chief Executive also asked that – should a Member find that they are unable to attend an event etc – they inform the organisers accordingly so that catering numbers could be adjusted.

8.2 Health Checks
Councillor N Trimble

Councillor N Trimble expressed appreciation of the recent health checks which had been made available to Members and Staff. The Chief Executive advised that all sessions had a 100% uptake.

There being no further business, the meeting concluded at 7.47 pm.

MAYOR/CHAIRMAN