

LISBURN & CASTLEREAGH CITY COUNCIL

Minutes of Meeting of the Corporate Services Committee held in the Council Chamber, Island Civic Centre, The Island, Lisburn on Wednesday 12th December 2018 at 6.30 pm.

PRESENT: Councillor N Anderson (Chairman)

The Right Worshipful The Mayor
Councillor U Mackin

Deputy Mayor, Councillor A Grehan

Alderman A G Ewart MBE

Councillors R B Bloomfield MBE, S Carson, J Craig, A P Ewing, O Gawith, B Hanvey and A McIntyre

OTHER MEMBERS: Councillor M Cahill

IN ATTENDANCE: Chief Executive
Director of Leisure and Community Wellbeing
Director of Environmental Services
Head of Business and Democratic Services
Acting Head of Finance & IT
Acting Head of Human Resources & Organisation Development
Member Services' Officer

Commencement of Meeting

The Chairman, Councillor N Anderson, extended a welcome to all present. He proceeded to outline the evacuation procedures in the case of an emergency.

The Chairman asked that any Member entering or leaving the Meeting alert him accordingly so that the Member Services' Officer might accurately reflect arrival and departure times in the minutes.

1. **Apologies**

Apologies for non-attendance at the meeting were accepted and recorded on behalf of Alderman M Henderson MBE, Alderman S Martin, Councillor B Mallon, Councillor T Morrow and Councillor R Walker

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. Councillor M Cahill declared an interest in relation to Agenda Item 7.1, as an employee of the Probation Board for Northern Ireland.

3. Minutes of Meeting

It was proposed by Alderman A Ewart, seconded by Councillor J Craig, and agreed that the minutes of the meeting of Committee held on 14th November 2018, as adopted by the Council at its meeting on 27th November 2018, be confirmed and signed.

4. Confidential Report of Chief Executive

The Chairman advised that the reasons for confidentiality were as set out in the agenda, i.e:

- **Lease – Bradford Court**
(Confidential for reason of (i) information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information); and (ii) information relating to individuals)
- **Efficiency Review (Report to Follow)**
(Confidential for reason of information relating to individuals)

Items for Noting

- **Citizenship Ceremonies**
(Confidential for reason of information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information))
- **Freedom of Information Requests**
(Confidential for reason of information which is likely to reveal the identity of individuals)
- **HR & OD Workforce Data**
(Confidential for reason of information which is likely to reveal the identity of individuals)

In Committee

It was proposed by Councillor J Craig, seconded by Councillor A Ewing, and agreed that the Confidential Report of the Chief Executive be considered “in Committee”, in the absence of members of the press and public.

It was proposed by Councillor S Carson, seconded by Councillor J Craig, and agreed that the Confidential Report and recommendations of the Chief Executive be adopted, subject to any decisions recorded below and other items noted.

Items for Decision:

4.1 Lease – Bradford Court

Members welcomed the update regarding the leasing of Bradford Court and reviewed the marketing material supplied by Lisneys. The Chief Executive responded to Members' queries and comments raised.

It was proposed by Councillor J Craig, seconded by The Right Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor Uel Mackin, and agreed to recommend that the marketing material be agreed and that the update on the leasing arrangements be noted.

4.2 Efficiency Review

The Committee was updated on the recent meeting held by the Efficiency Review Steering Group (ERSG) and considered the recommendations provided, including information seeking Committee's approval to progress the suppression of two posts identified under the RPA Staff Severance Scheme.

It was proposed by Councillor J Craig, seconded by Councillor S Carson and agreed that the recommendations made by the ERSG be approved by Council and that discussions with the relevant post holders would be progressed to agree the release of these officers as soon as is reasonably practicable and before the end of this financial year.

Items for Noting

It was proposed by Councillor S Carson, seconded by Councillor J Craig, and agreed that the information provided within items 4.3 to 4.5 be noted:

4.3 Citizenship Ceremonies

The Committee noted the update provided regarding the refurbishment of Hillsborough Castle and the subsequent impact this has on Citizenship Ceremonies and it was agreed that, the preference would be to continue with the ceremonies at Lagan Valley Island and that a paper outlining cost effective options relating to this issue would be brought to the Committee as soon as possible.

4.4 Freedom of Information Requests

The Committee was provided with copy and noted the summary of Freedom of Information requests received in November 2018.

4.5 HR & OD Workforce

The Committee was provided with copy and it was agreed to note reports in respect of the following, such reports being in accordance with the Council's Strategic Workforce Plan 2015-2017:

- Absence Management Report
- Workforce Profile
- Recruitment Schedule

Resumption of Normal Business

It was proposed by Councillor A Ewing, seconded by Councillor A McIntyre, and agreed to come “out of Committee” and normal business was resumed.

5. Reports of Head of Business and Democratic Services

It was proposed by Councillor B Hanvey, seconded by The Right Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor U Mackin, and agreed that the reports and recommendations of the Head of Business and Democratic Services be adopted, subject to any decisions recorded below and other items noted.

5.1 Garden of Reflection – Lagan Valley Island

It was proposed by Councillor J Craig, seconded by The Right Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor U Mackin, and agreed to recommend that a policy regarding how to use the space at the Garden of Reflection is developed and brought back to the Committee for approval prior to the official opening and dedication by The Right Worshipful the Mayor.

5.2 Committee Reports – Items for Noting

The Committee was consulted regarding a proposed change to how ‘Items for Noting’ are provided to Members in future. Following a discussion, it was proposed by The Right Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor U Mackin, seconded by Councillor B Hanvey, and agreed to recommend that all future ‘Items for Noting’, which are not deemed significant by the relevant Director, are uploaded onto SharePoint with Members being notified by email one week in advance of the monthly Council meeting. Members will be able to raise any issues under AOB.

6.0 Report of the Acting Head of Finance and IT

It was proposed by Councillor S Carson, seconded by Councillor A Ewing, and agreed that the report and recommendations of the Acting Head of Finance and IT be adopted, subject to any decisions recorded below and other items noted.

Item for Noting

6.1 Financial Statement as at 31 October 2018

Members were provided with copy and it was agreed to note the financial statement for the period ended 30th October 2018. It was highlighted that the net profiled expenditure for the period was -1.37% (-£360,396) below the approved estimates for the financial year 2018/2019.

Members were advised that the breakdown by Department was as follows:

As at 31st October 2018	(Under)/Over Spend
	£
Governance & Audit	1,865
Service Support	84,347
Leisure & Community	26,395
Environmental Services	(641,034)
Service Transformation	168,031
TOTAL	(360,396)

It was highlighted that the budgets had been profiled more accurately this year which had resulted in the year to date expenditure tracking budget much more closely than in the past. Officers would continue to monitor expenditure against budget through the monthly budget meetings with each Department and ensure that all variances are explained and any necessary corrective actions taken.

Members were reminded that, in preparing the 18/19 estimates, a cut had been made to the payroll budget of 1.05%, which was profiled into the last quarter of the year and this might result in the current favourable position reducing towards the end of the financial year.

In Committee

It was proposed by Councillor J Craig, seconded by Councillor A Ewing, and agreed that the Committee would discuss issues “in Committee”, in the absence of members of the press and public.

Officers answered a number of questions raised by Members relating to Legal Issues.

Resumption of Normal Business

It was proposed by Councillor J Craig, seconded by Alderman A Ewart, and agreed to come “out of Committee” and normal business was resumed.

7. Report of the Acting Head of Human Resources and Organisation Development

TABLED PAPER

It was proposed by Councillor J Craig, seconded by Councillor S Carson, and agreed that the report and recommendation of the Acting Head of Human Resources and Organisation Development, subject to any decisions recorded below and other items noted.

7.1 Elected Member Development Steering Group – Proposal for Capacity Building Programme for Strategic Community planning Partnership

The Committee was updated on the recent meeting held by Elected Member Development Steering Group on 10th December 2018. It was proposed by Councillor J Craig, seconded by Councillor S Carson and agreed to recommend that the capacity building programme relating to Strategic Community Planning Partnership be approved at an approximate cost of £4,800, on the understanding that the LGTG will contribute 50% of this cost.

8. Report of Chief Executive

It was proposed by Alderman A Ewart, seconded by Councillor S Carson, and agreed that the report and recommendations of the Chief Executive be adopted, subject to any decisions recorded below and other items noted.

Item for Decision
(Agenda Item 7.1 Refers)

8.1 Preliminary Report into the Law and Procedures in Serious Sexual Offences in Northern Ireland

Councillor M Cahill declared an interest in this item, as she is employed by the Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI) who are listed in this report but stated that she received no financial benefit as a participant contributing to this report in a personal capacity.

The Chief Executive reminded Members that at the Council meeting on Tuesday 27th November it was agreed that the Corporate Services Committee would be granted delegated authority relating to this issue.

The Chairman welcomed comments and advised that Members also had the option of emailing comments for inclusion in this response to officers before the 4th January 2019.

Councillor M Cahill informed the Committee that the deadline had been extended to 18th January 2019 and further advised Members that she would be raising this issue via a motion at the next Council meeting to ensure there was cross party support for this response.

Councillor M Cahill provided a number of comments in relation to the report being considered, which were welcomed by other Committee Members and it was agreed that this would form the basis of the draft response.

Councillor M Cahill stated that she welcomed the report undertaken by Sir John Gillen and the majority of the key recommendations outlined in this report. She recognised the international research that formed part of this report allowed the findings to be considered and that the recommendations dealt directly with a number of long standing issues often raised with her by victims. In particular, she welcomed that anonymity would be granted up to the point of charge as she felt that would give confidence to victims to report these serious crimes. She noted that underreporting of sexual assault and rape was a significant

issue that needs to be addressed and anything that could increase victims' confidence should be encouraged.

Councillor M Cahill stated that her main concern relates to Recommendation 15 surrounding restorative practice. Councillor M Cahill said while she accepts that restorative justice has its place within the criminal justice system, she has issues with this practice being used as an alternative method of justice in such serious cases as sexual assault and rape. She highlighted that while Sir Gillen stated that this process should only be used if guilt had been admitted by the perpetrator and if the victim agreed to this process willingly, she felt that this process could be open to abuse particularly in light of the length of time it takes for cases of this nature to make it to court. Councillor M Cahill noted the recommendation suggesting that specialised training would be provided to those within statutory organisations and the PSNI to offer support to victims during this process, but that this was not good enough. Victims could feel pressurised to use this route to find a quicker resolution to their case and to avoid the trauma of a court case. A key focus of statutory bodies should be to stop underreporting of serious crimes and not to provide an alternative justice system.

Councillor M Cahill also expressed concern that there were no details regarding the consequences faced by the perpetrator if the route of restorative justice was used e.g. would the perpetrator be listed on the National Register for Sex Offenders, how would statutory bodies monitor future behaviour of individuals and what safety mechanisms would be in place to prevent possible reoffending and protect the safety of others. She stated that it would be likely that a restorative justice process would have a confidentiality clause, meaning that any evidence gathered during these discussions could not be admissible in a court case.

Councillor M Cahill informed Members that the conviction rate within Northern Ireland for these offences were significantly lower than anywhere else in the UK and this issue was not helped by the long legal process and the re-victimisation felt by complainants in court. She further informed the Committee that a number of recommendations previously brought forward still have not been implemented by the Public Prosecution Service.

Councillor J Craig agreed with the comments made by Councillor M Cahill and reiterated that the response drafted should clearly state that the Council not does agree to the practice of restorative justice being used as an alternative system to the Criminal Justice System within Northern Ireland. Councillor J Craig stated that Northern Ireland does not have the necessary systems in place to correctly process serious crimes like this. If this recommendation was realised, Councillor J Craig felt that this 'second system of justice' could be manipulated by certain individuals to protect the perpetrator who would face less consequences and therefore, may perversely view this as a better option. Councillor J Craig stated that this did not protect or support the victim. He further stated that those accused of a crime should be subject to the Criminal Justice system.

It was proposed by Councillor B Hanvey, seconded by Councillor J Craig and agreed that a draft response reflecting Members' comments in relation to this report is brought back for approval by the Committee at its meeting of 9th January 2019.

During this discussion Councillor O Gawith and Councillor A McIntyre left the meeting at 7.11pm and 7.20pm respectively.

8.2 Request for Sponsorship – TrustFord Breakout for Ben
(Agenda Item 7.2 Refers)

The Committee received a request for sponsorship from TrustFord and noted that the date for this event had past. It was proposed by Councillor S Carson, seconded by Councillor J Craig and agreed to recommend that the Committee acknowledge receipt of this request and advise that there was not sufficient notice to allow consideration for this year's event, however the Committee are happy to consider possible future sponsorship if requested in time.

8.3 Mental Health and Domestic Violence Awareness in the Council's area
(Agenda Item 7.3 Refers)

The Committee received a further update regarding the council's approach to Mental Health and Wellbeing with current initiatives being welcomed by the Members. The Chairman gave special commendation to the staff within the Council who were involved with this and particularly those who are tackling mental health issues.

8.4 Response letter from Department for Communities regarding Late
Payments under Universal Credit
(Agenda Item 7.4 Refers)

Members noted the response provided by the Permanent Secretary at the Department for Communities regarding the issue of late payments under Universal Credit and stated their disappointment in this response.

Following a discussion, Deputy Mayor, Councillor A Grehan raised her concerns that following the Universal Credit roll out in 2020 and the introduction of the "bedroom tax", a large number of people would be adversely affected. She stated that it was not just the unemployed but those working families on low incomes who depend on working tax credits to boost their earnings. The Deputy Mayor, Councillor A Grehan, recommended that the Council should be doing what it can to soften the blow and help those affected. The Chairman advised that updates wouldn't fall within the remit of the Corporate Services Committee and the Chief Executive advised, that with the Committee's agreement, this matter could be passed to our Community Planning Officer to investigate and progress.

It was proposed by the Deputy Mayor, Councillor A Grehan, and seconded by Councillor J Craig, that the Chief Executive would progress this matter through

the Community Planning team, in partnership with relevant agencies, to assist those in receipt of Universal Credit.

Alderman A Ewart sought clarification regarding the procedure for the Members of the Council who were appointed to sit on the Citizens' Advice Bureau (CAB) board now that responsibilities of that organisation had been transferred to Advice NI. The Chief Executive agreed to return to Alderman A Ewart and the Committee with more information relating to this.

9. Any Other Business

9.1 Chairman, Councillor N Anderson

The Chairman reminded Members that it was previously agreed that the Corporate Services Committee would hold its meeting on the second Wednesday of each month at 6.00pm, on a three month trial basis. It was agreed to recommend that the Corporate Services Committee continue to meet at this day and time on a permanent basis.

There being no further business, the Meeting concluded at 7.48pm.

MAYOR/CHAIRMAN