

LISBURN & CASTLEREAGH CITY COUNCIL

Minutes of the hybrid Communities and Wellbeing Committee held in the Island Civic Centre on Tuesday 5th December 2023 at 5:30pm

PRESENT: Councillor R T Beckett (Chairperson)

The Right Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor A Gowan

Aldermen A Grehan, H Legge, S P Porter and S Skillen;
Councillors D Bassett, D J Craig, B Higginson, S Lowry,
A McIntyre, T Mitchell and G Thompson

PRESENT REMOTELY: Deputy Mayor Councillor G McCleave; and
Councillors R Carlin, N Eaton and J Gallen

ALSO ATTENDED: Councillors G Hynds and A Givan (Zoom)

IN ATTENDANCE: Director of Leisure and Community Wellbeing
Head of Communities
Head of Sports Services
Acting Head of Parks and Amenities
Acting Business Support Manager
Member Services Officers (BF and EW)

1. Apologies (1.54)

There were no apologies.

2. Declarations of Interest (2.05)

The Right Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor A Gowan, declared an interest in item 4.1, viz., 'Hardship Grant Programme' in that a family member was associated with Anahilt Play Group and Dromara Village Football Club.

Alderman S Skillen declared an interest also in item 4.1, in that she was a member of the Ballybeen Improvement Group's Sports and Wellbeing Committee.

3. Report of the Director of Leisure and Community Wellbeing

3.1 Notice of Motion – Childcare (2.20)

(Alderman M Guy attended in connection with this item).

At the meeting of the Council on 28th November, the following motion, which was moved by Alderman M Guy and seconded by Councillor G Thompson, was referred to the Committee for consideration, in accordance with Standing Order 16.1.

"That this Council recognises childcare as a vital social and economic infrastructure, a crucial form of early intervention, early education, an anti-poverty tool, and a means by which to

improve productivity and gender equality in the labour market across Lisburn and Castlereagh; believes childcare should be child-centred, high quality and accessible to all children; and commits to reviewing how the Council and community planning partners can support childcare provision in the area, including reviewing whether holiday/wider schemes supported by the Council can be expanded."

Alderman M Guy reminded the Committee that it had been almost ten years since the NI Executive's draft childcare strategy had been introduced, with a view to having it implemented by 2025. She added that the delay had been exacerbated by the pandemic, which had highlighted the importance of childcare settings and early years provision for children, their families and the economy. In respect of the Council area, she referred to the results of Employers for Childcare's NI's survey in 2021, which had found that 66% of parents in the district had felt that there existed insufficient childcare provision. She acknowledged the work which the Council had undertaken thus far in addressing childcare provision and requested that this be reviewed and refined to enhance the level currently available.

Councillor N Eaton formally proposed the motion to the Committee.

Councillor G Thompson, who had seconded the motion, spoke in support of Alderman M Guy, and urged the Council to continue to review childcare provision to establish if schemes could be expanded further to benefit families, particularly those on low incomes.

Representatives of each of the political parties on the Council expressed their support for the motion and commended Alderman M Guy for submitting it for consideration.

The motion was passed unanimously by the Committee.

The Director indicated that officers would consider the proposals and a report in this regard would be submitted for consideration.

4.1 Hardship Grant Programme 2023/24 (18.05)

(Alderman M Guy left the chamber at 5.50pm; and Councillor A Givan left meeting at 5.52pm).

(The Right Worshipful the Mayor left the chamber whilst this matter was under discussion and Alderman S Skillen did not partake in any discussion or decision-making in the matter).

The Head of Communities outlined the background to the Hardship Grant Programme and reported that 79 applications had been received in response to an open call for applications, 77 of which had been deemed eligible for assistance. The total amount requested had been £147,878 and the Committee was advised that sufficient resources had been identified to provide full funding to all successful applicants.

The Committee was informed further that £35,000 remained of the original grant from the Department for Communities and it was recommended that this sum be allocated to Lisburn Foodbank for the purpose of delivering a Fuel Support Programme across the district as an extension to an existing arrangement.

Moved by Alderman S P Porter,
Seconded by Councillor D J Craig and

Resolved - that the Committee agrees that a sum of £147,878 be provided to the successful applicants for support under the Hardship Grant Programme, in accordance with the delegated power granted by the Council at its meeting on 28th November and agrees further that a sum of £35,000 be provided to Lisburn Foodbank for the purpose of delivering a Fuel Support Programme.

4.2 Department for Communities - Hardship Grant Programme 2023/24

4.2.1 Good Relations Action Plan 2023/24 (27.12)

The Head of Communities reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 5th September, it had deferred consideration of the Good Relations Action Plan for 2023/24 to enable workshops to be held to consider how the reduction in Executive Office funding could be addressed. The subsequent workshops had considered the Council's response on a collective basis to overall funding cuts, but it had been agreed that the Action Plan 2023/24 be delivered within the budget recommended to the Committee on 5th September. Accordingly, it was recommended that the Action Plan for 2023/24 be endorsed retrospectively.

4.2.2 Draft Good Relations Action Plan 2024/25 (29.27)

The Committee was provided with an overview of the work which had been undertaken in the formulation of the above-mentioned plan. The Head of Communities outlined the key themes and programmes that would oversee the delivery of the plan in 2024/25, within the context of the overall Good Relations Strategy for 2022/25. She advised the Committee that the Plan had been formulated within the context of a full budgetary allocation which may require further revision should the projected allocation not materialise.

On the proposal of Councillor D Bassett, which was seconded by Councillor S Lowry, the Committee endorsed the Good Relations Action Plan for 2023/24 and approved the draft Good Relations Action Plan for 2024/25 for its onward submission to the Executive Office.

5.1 Killeaton Open Space (36.00)

The Acting Head of Parks and Amenities reported that a request has been received from Derriaghy District LOL No. 11 seeking the use of Killeaton Open Space as the demonstration and dispersal point for the South Antrim Combine on 12th July 2024.

Moved by Councillor D J Craig,
Seconded by Councillor A McIntyre and

Resolved - That the Committee agrees to accede to the request from Derriaghy District L.O.L. No. 11 and grant the use of the open space for the purpose requested, subject to the following conditions:

- that event management, risk assessment and health & safety requirements were met;
- that adequate public liability insurance was put in place; and that the area be cleared of litter by the event organisers.

6. Any Other Business – Non-Confidential

6.1 Council Community Events (38.50)

In response to a query from Alderman S P Porter, the Director clarified the arrangements to collate feedback from recent community events and how such feedback would be used to inform future programmes.

(Alderman H Legge and Councillor D J Craig left the Chamber at 6.14pm).

6.2 Use of Council Community Centres (40.10)

In response to a query from Alderman S Skillen, the Director undertook to examine room usage within the Council's community facilities with a view to establishing if un-booked rooms could be utilised for wider community-based activities.

6.3 Laurelhill 2G Pitch (41.12)

The Director agreed, in response to a request from Councillor G McCleave, to provide an update on the request to use the above-mentioned pitch on a Sunday.

7. Confidential Report of the Director of Leisure & Community Wellbeing

The Chairperson advised that the reasons for confidentiality for the following matters was by virtue of the Section 6, Part 1, of the Local Government Act (2014) Northern Ireland, specifically the provisions therein as outlined within each report.

It was moved by Councillor D Bassett, seconded by Councillor D J Craig, and agreed that the confidential report of the Director of Leisure and Community Wellbeing be considered 'in committee', in the absence of members of the press and public.

7.1 Communities and Wellbeing – Estimates Process Update 2024/25

The Committee considered a report which gave an overview of the estimates process for the department for 2024/25, together with the additional assumptions that would be incorporated within the final draft.

After discussion, the Committee agreed to note the progress achieved in the formulation of the departmental estimates for 2024/25 and approved, the additional amendments and assumptions to be incorporated within the final draft, as outlined in the report.

7. Resumption of Normal Business

It was moved by Councillor A McIntyre, seconded by Councillor T Mitchell, and agreed that normal business be resumed.

The meeting ended at 6.34pm.

Chairperson