

LISBURN & CASTLEREAGH CITY COUNCIL

Minutes of Meeting of the Corporate Services Committee held remotely and in the Council Chamber, Island Civic Centre, The Island, Lisburn on Wednesday 9th March 2022 at 6.00 pm.

PRESENT IN COUNCIL CHAMBER (COMMITTEE):

Councillor J Lavery, BEM (Chairman)
Deputy Mayor
Councillor T Mitchell

Aldermen J Dillon MBE, A Ewart MBE, A Grehan and P Porter

Councillors A Ewing, S Hughes and U Mackin

PRESENT IN A REMOTE LOCATION (COMMITTEE):

Alderman M Henderson, MBE (Vice-Chairman)
Alderman O Gawith

Councillors R Carlin, S Carson and S Lowry

OTHER MEMBERS OF COUNCIL PRESENT IN A REMOTE LOCATION:

Councillor S Skillen

IN ATTENDANCE:

Director of Finance & Corporate Services
Director of Leisure & Community Wellbeing (Remote)
Head of Assets (Remote)
Head of Finance
Head of Human Resources & Organisation Development
Administration Manager (Remote)
Acting PCSP/Member Services Manager (Remote)
IT Officer
Events Technician
Member Services Officers (RN & BS)

Commencement of Meeting

The Chairman, Councillor J Lavery, welcomed everyone to the meeting and advised that it was being live-streamed to enable members of the public to both hear and see the proceedings.

The names of those Elected Members who were in attendance at the meeting, both in person and on a remote basis, were read out by the Member Services Officer.

The Chairman stated that, although the meeting was being live-streamed, unauthorised recording was still not permitted, as per 8.5 of the Council's Standing Orders. The Chairman also reminded everyone to ensure that mobile phones were turned off or on silent mode for the duration of the meeting.

The Director of Finance & Corporate Services proceeded to outline the evacuation procedures in the case of an emergency. Finally the Chairman asked that any Member entering or leaving the meeting alert the Acting Member Services Manager accordingly so that this might be accurately reflected in the minutes.

Councillors S Carson and R Carlin joined the meeting remotely during the housekeeping announcements. (6.01 pm and 6.03 pm respectively.)

1. Apologies

Apologies for non-attendance at the meeting were accepted and recorded on behalf of The Right Worshipful The Mayor, Alderman S Martin; Councillor The Hon N Trimble; the Chief Executive and the Head of Corporate Communications & Administration.

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 with the papers for the meeting and which were also available in the Chamber.

During the course of the meeting, the following Declarations were made:

- Alderman M Henderson – Item 1 of Report of Head of Corporate Communications & Administration – “NI Veterans Awards – Belfast – 26th October 2022 - Request for Sponsorship”. (Former member of the UK Armed Forces)
- Councillor U Mackin – Item 4 of Report of Director of Finance & Corporate Services – “NILGA Planning Programme – Study Visit to Edinburgh”. (Participant in Study Visit)

3. Report of Director of Finance & Corporate Services

3.1 Finance & Corporate Services Performance Report

Members had been provided with reports on the following in regard to (i) the Finance & Corporate Services Directorate and (ii) Governance & Audit:-

- Trading accounts for the period 1st October – 31st December 2021;
- KPIs for Q3 (1st October – 31st December 2021).

Due to the implementation of a new HR and Payroll system, a report on attendance and absenteeism could not be provided this quarter (Q3). A report for Q3 would be provided in the Q4 performance reports.

It was agreed to recommend that the trading accounts and the outturn of operational metrics/service KPIs for Q3 (1st October – 31st December 2021) in regard to the Finance & Corporate Services Directorate and Governance & Audit be noted.

3.2 Downshire Tennis Club
NI Open Tennis Tournament (11th – 18th June 2022)
Request for Financial Assistance

Members had been provided with copy of an e-mail dated the 23rd February 2022 from the Chairman of Downshire Tennis Club seeking financial assistance towards their hosting and organisation of the NI Open Tennis Tournament from the 11th – 18th June 2022.

It was proposed by Alderman M Henderson, seconded by Alderman A Ewart and agreed that:-

- the award of financial assistance to Downshire Tennis Club for the hosting and organisation of the 2022 NI Open Tennis Tournament in June 2022 be agreed in principle;
- the source of funding and any other assistance that could be provided be passed to the Leisure & Community Wellbeing Directorate for dealing with.

Councillor U Mackin entered the Chamber during discussion of this item.
(6.09 pm)

3.3 National Association of Councillors

3.3.1 Forthcoming Events

Notification had been received from the National Association of Councillors (NAC) in regard to the following events:-

NAC NI Region Members' Meetings 2022		
Date	Venue	Council area
16 th March 2022	TBC	Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon
25 th May 2022	TBC	Belfast City
20 th July 2022	TBC	Causeway Coast & Glens
21 st September 2022	TBC	Derry City & Strabane
21 st October 2022 (AGM)	TBC	TBC
16 th November 2022	TBC	Fermanagh & Omagh

NAC National Meetings & Conferences 2022		
Date	Event	Location
24 th – 26 th June 2022	Conference	TBC
25 th – 27 th November 2022	Conference including National AGM	TBC

It was proposed by the Deputy Mayor, Councillor T Mitchell, seconded by Councillor S Lowry and agreed to recommend that:-

- approval be granted for the attendance of any NAC member who might wish to attend any of the above events;
- the Council be responsible for the payment of Members' approved expenses in this regard.

The table above reflected additions to that previously reported to the Committee in October 2021. The Director stated that – in regard to future years - it would be her intention for the complete programme of NAC meetings and conferences to be presented to the Committee at the one time so that approval for Members' attendance on an annual basis might be obtained.

3.3.2 NAC Conference – “Community Empowerment” Glasgow - 25th/27th February 2022

Alderman A Grehan referred to the above conference which she, along with other Members, had attended. Alderman Grehan considered the conference to have been very beneficial and gave a brief outline of its subject content which was Community Asset Transfer. Alderman Grehan considered that a presentation to the Council by the conference speaker would be useful.

3.3.2 NAC Conference – “Community Empowerment”
Glasgow - 25th/27th February 2022 (Continued)

It was agreed that:-

- the materials from the conference referred to above be sourced from one of the attendees and placed on SharePoint;
- a report on training/information sessions in regard to Community Asset Transfer be presented to the Elected Member Development Group;
- issues raised about Members becoming more informed about Community Asset Transfer be conveyed to the Directors of Leisure & Community Wellbeing and Service Transformation who were considering the holding of a Members’ workshop in this regard;
- the development of a policy regarding Community Asset Transfer was within the remit of the Development Committee;
- given the interest of community groups in the topic of Community Assets, their involvement in this matter or a means by which they could be informed of pertinent information would be welcomed.

Having declared an interest in the next item of business (NILGA Study Visit), Councillor U Mackin left the Council Chamber. (6.20 pm)

3.4 NI Local Government Association
Planning Programme Study Visit (2nd & 3rd March 2022)
Hilton Edinburgh Carlton

The Committee noted that Councillor U Mackin was participating in a NILGA Planning Programme. As part of this programme, a study visit to Edinburgh on the 2nd & 3rd March 2022 had taken place. Expenditure incurred for flights, accommodation and car parking was detailed in the report.

It was proposed by Alderman A Grehan, seconded by Alderman J Dillon and agreed to recommend that the attendance of Councillor U Mackin at the above NILGA Planning Programme Visit be approved on a retrospective basis, together with the expenditure of £286.77 already incurred and also any further approved expenditure that might be incurred.

Councillor U Mackin returned to the Council Chamber after this item of business had been dealt with. (6.21 pm)

3.5 Lisburn & Castlereagh Policing & Community Safety Partnership
Action Plan 2022/2023

Presented by the Acting PCSP/Member Services Manager on behalf of the Head of Communities who had prepared the report.

The PCSP is required on an annual basis to submit an action plan to the Department of Justice and the NI Policing Board. This is used to secure funding against delivery.

The Northern Ireland Executive had agreed that its spending priority for the incoming year was health and in its draft budget consultation, the Department of Finance was asking that all departments take a reduction in their baselines of 2% to divert resources to health and social care. Whilst this consultation had been paused, departments continued to assume the requirement to reduce their budgets by 2%. The Chairman of the Lisburn PCSP had written to the Ministers of Finance and Justice expressing her concerns in the reduction of funding to PCSPs.

The action plan for Lisburn & Castlereagh PCSP incorporating the requested 2% reduction (equating to £5,502.00 to be spread across administration and operational costs) had been agreed by the PCSP at its meeting held on the 15th February 2022. The action plan was duly noted also by the Committee.

4. Report of Head of Corporate Communications & Administration

In the absence of the Head of Corporate Communications & Administration who was involved in another Council commitment that evening, her report was presented by the Director of Finance & Corporate Services.

4.1 Northern Ireland Veterans' Awards
Stormont Hotel, Belfast – 26th October 2022
Request for Sponsorship

Alderman M Henderson declared an interest in this item of business as a former member of the UK Armed Forces.

The report from the Head of Service detailed the above event and the sponsorship packages that were available as follows:-

- Feature Sponsor at a cost of £1,200.00 inclusive of two complimentary tickets (No longer available);
- Category Sponsor at a cost of £800.00 inclusive of one complimentary ticket;
- Awards Ceremony Dinner at a cost of £700.00 for a table of 10 or £85 per guest if less than 10 attending.

4.1 Northern Ireland Veterans' Awards
Stormont Hotel, Belfast – 26th October 2022
Request for Sponsorship (Continued)

The request for the Council to provide sponsorship did not fall within the Council's policy on financial assistance. However the Council had signed up to the Armed Forces Covenant in 2017. Furthermore, Alderman J Tinsley represents the Council on the Reserve Forces & Cadets Association for NI and he also (i) sits on the NI Veterans Support Committee and (ii) is the Council's Veterans' Champion. Exceptional factors could therefore allow for the request to be considered.

The Director advised that the Feature Sponsor package was no longer available.

It was proposed by Councillor A Ewing, seconded by Alderman P Porter and agreed that – given that the combined purchase of a Category Sponsor package and the Awards Ceremony Dinner did not greatly exceed the cost of a Feature Sponsor and would allow for 11 guests (as opposed to two) - the following two packages be purchased:-

- Category Sponsor at a cost of £800.00 (inclusive of one complimentary ticket)
- Awards Ceremony Dinner at a cost of £700.00 for a table of 10.

It was further agreed that the allocation of the tickets for the event include the Corporate Services Committee Chairman of the Day, the Mayor of the Day and the Veterans' Champion (or their nominees) with the remaining eight tickets being allocated by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman in consultation with the Director. The allocation of tickets to outside organisations such as the Royal British Legion would only apply in the event of Council members and relevant staff not being available to attend.

4.2 Building Illumination Requests

4.2.1 Requests acceded to

A number of requests to have the Council offices lit so as to mark different charities/commemorative days had been received and were set out in the Head of Service's report.

4.2 Building Illumination Requests (Continued)4.2.1 Requests acceded to (Continued)

It was proposed by Councillor A Ewing, seconded by the Deputy Mayor, Councillor T Mitchell, and agreed that the following requests be acceded to:-

Organisation	Date	Colour
Action for Brain Injury Week	16 th May 2022	Green & Blue
World Neurofibromatosis Awareness Day	17 th May 2022	Blue
Queen's Platinum Jubilee	2 nd – 5 th June 2022	Purple

In addition to the above, the Committee noted that exceptional circumstances had been identified and agreed by the Chair, Vice-Chair and Mayor to allow LVI to be lit as follows:-

- to show solidarity and to stand by the people of the Ukraine - in yellow and blue on the 26th February 2022;
- International Women's Day 2022 – in purple on the 8th March 2022.

4.2.2 Requests Declined/Additions to Annual Schedule for 2023

Members noted that the following requests had been declined for the reasons as set out below but requests from the organisations in question had since been made to have light-ups added to the 2023 calendar of illuminations:-

Organisation	Date Received	Reason for decline
Parkinson UK Northern Ireland for light-up on 11 th April 2022	24 th February 2022	Request received outside the necessary timeframe.
CDH International (Cognitive Diaphragmatic Hernia Awareness Day) for light-up on 19 th April 2022	23 rd February 2022	Request received outside the necessary timeframe.

It was proposed by Councillor A Ewing, seconded by the Deputy Mayor, Councillor T Mitchell, and agreed that Parkinsons UK (NI) and CDH International be added to the 2023 illumination calendar for the 11th and 19th April 2023 respectively, both light-ups to be in blue.

4.3 South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust
Consultation – “Public Consultation on the Temporary Changes to
Urgent and Emergency Care Services at Lagan Valley Hospital,
Lisburn”
(Closing date: 22nd April 2022)

Members noted that the above consultation had been launched on the 23rd February 2022. Members had been furnished with the consultation on the 24th February and had been asked to provide their comments to Member Services by the 18th March 2022 so as to allow for a response to be drafted and presented to the Committee on the 13th April 2022.

The Director reported that a meeting of the Health Working Group had been arranged for Tuesday 29th March 2022 at 6.00 pm and the Chairman had agreed that all Members of Council would be invited to attend. SE Trust officials would be in attendance to present on the consultation.

It was proposed by Alderman A Ewart, seconded by Alderman O Gawith and agreed to recommend that – in order to meet the closing date of the consultation on the 22nd April 2022 – delegated authority be sought from the Council on the 22nd March 2022 for the Committee on the 13th April 2022 to agree the draft response to the consultation for submission to the Trust. The draft response would be based on comments received from Members and issues raised at the meeting of the Health Working Group.

5. Report of Head of Finance

5.1 Repairs & Renewals
Quarter 3 of 2021/2022

It was agreed to recommend that the breakdown of the Repairs & Renewals spend for 2021/2022 (Quarters 1 – 3), together with an extensive narrative report by way of explanation be noted.

5.2 Local Government Staff Commission
Contribution for 2022/2023

Members had been provided with copy of a letter dated the 10th February 2022 from the Local Government Staff Commission for Northern Ireland from which it was noted that an Executive decision on the future of the LGSC was awaited but that, in the meantime, a financial scheme was required for the Commission to perform its statutory functions.

The Council's contribution for 2022/2023 had been calculated at £31,359.00 which represented an increase of £3,744.00 on the previous year and also an overspend of £2,919 on that budgeted by the Council. Payment is due by the 30th April 2022.

5.2 Local Government Staff Commission
Contribution for 2022/2023 (Continued)

A number of Members spoke to the fact that – each year since 2015 – the LGSC was to have been wound up but this had still not happened.

It was proposed by Alderman J Dillon, seconded by Alderman M Henderson and agreed that:-

- a letter be sent to the Local Government Staff Commission expressing concern that – despite the winding up of the LGSC having been spoken of since 2015, it continued to exist and seeking the following information:-
 - a breakdown of what the funding covers;
 - the activities being carried out by the LGSC;
 - the management structure of the LGSC;
 - if commissioners are still in post and in receipt of remuneration;
 - the number of staff in post and if this number had been affected by furlough during the pandemic;
 - justification for an increase in funding given that the pandemic may have resulted in fewer activities and less expenditure, thereby leading to savings;
 - justification as to why the Council should pay for an organisation whose future is the subject of a consultation and on which a delay in the outcome of that consultation is not the fault of the Council.
- payment of the Council's contribution to the LGSC be deferred pending receipt of a response to the letter referred to above;
- in the event of a response not being available for the April meeting of the Committee which would therefore allow for payment of the Council's contribution to be further discussed, the matter of payment of the Council's contribution by the 30th April 2022 be delegated to the Chair and Vice-Chair in consultation with the Director.
- subject to a response being received, consideration would be given to other actions such as attainment of legal advice if deemed appropriate. This would be done in conjunction with the Chair and Vice Chair;
- the letter to the LGSC be copied to the Department for Communities, ie the department responsible for the LGSC.

The Acting PCSP/Member Services Manager left the meeting at the conclusion of this item of business. (7.00 pm)

6. Report of Head of Human Resources & Organisation Development

6.1 Quarterly Workforce Reports

Reports on the undernoted topics in relation to Council staff across all Departments were noted:-

- (i) Workforce Report; and
- (ii) Recruitment Report

The Head of Service pointed out that – due to the implementation of a new HR and Payroll system – a report on absence management could not be provided this quarter. The information was still being captured and reports would however be available for the next round of quarterly reports.

The Head of Service referred to the success of the recent open recruitment exercise at the Lagan Valley LeisurePlex and this was welcomed.

The Head of Service responded to comments made by Members and:-

- agreed that for future reports on recruitment, the presentation of the report be amended to include unit as well as department;
- agreed that future reports would include information on the number of substantive posts not filled, once the new system was in a position to provide this information;
- noted the comment made by Councillor S Carson that – whilst the induction of new employees included Elected Member introductions – this process did not always seem to be working effectively. The Head of Service undertook to investigate this procedure so as to make it more efficient.

7. Agenda Item Brought Forward
Any Other Business

As the remainder of the business before the meeting was of a confidential nature, the Chairman sought agreement to bring forward Item 8 of the agenda – Any Other Business – so that items of a non-confidential nature might be raised when the Committee was in Live Stream. This was agreed.

7.1 Telephony System
Councillor U Mackin

Councillor U Mackin expressed concern at the manner by which the telephony system was currently working in LVI. In particular, Councillor Mackin referred to the fact that calls were not always automatically redirected to the intended recipient. In addition to this, callers on occasion could not get their calls answered at all.

The Director agreed that an interim report be brought to the next meeting, it being noted that the telephony system at LVI was already under review.

The Director also asked that Councillor Mackin provide specific details on the incidents to which he had referred so that they might be investigated.

Alderman O Gawith left the meeting during discussion of this item. (7.12 pm)
Alderman A Grehan left and returned to the Chamber during discussion of this item. (7.16 pm and 7.18 pm respectively)

8. Confidential Report from Director of Finance & Corporate Services

The reasons for confidentiality were as set out in the agenda, ie:-

8.1 Letting of Bradford Court - Update

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

Report to be redacted following meeting of Council on 22nd March 2022.

8.2 Community Investment Fund

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

Report to be redacted in September 2022.

8.3 CDEA Investment Programme – Q4

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

Report to be redacted in June 2022.

8.4 Centralisation of Registration Service

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

Report to be redacted in April 2022.

8.5 Freedom of the City - Update

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

Report to be redacted following the event.

8.6 Management Accounts – Period 10

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

Report to be redacted following meeting of Council on 22nd March 2022.

In Committee

It was proposed by the Deputy Mayor, Councillor T Mitchell, seconded by Councillor U Mackin and agreed that the Confidential Report of the Director be considered “in Committee”. (The live-stream was paused at this stage in proceedings.)

8.1 Letting of Bradford Court - Update

Presented by Head of Assets.

The Head of Assets provided a comprehensive report in regard to the current lettings of Bradford Court and responded to Members’ questions in this regard.

It was proposed by Councillor A Ewing, seconded by Alderman M Henderson and agreed to recommend that - provided they remained within the designated planning use – the letting arrangements and granting of future leases for Bradford Court be delegated to the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee for dealing with.

It was further agreed that a report on the expenditure in relation to Bradford Court be made to the next meeting of Committee.

8.2 Community Investment Fund – Pilot Extension

Presented by Director of Leisure & Community Wellbeing.

The Director reported extensively on the Community investment Fund and the proposal to launch an extension of the pilot scheme. The Directors of Leisure & Community Wellbeing and Finance & Corporate Services responded to Members' questions.

It was proposed by Alderman P Porter, seconded by Alderman A Grehan and agreed to recommend that - subject to inclusion of a community reference at sections 2(a) and 6 - the launch of the extension to the Community Investment Fund pilot be commenced, with experiences from the pilot scheme for Ballymacash Sports Academy being incorporated.

Councillor S Skillen joined the meeting remotely during discussion of this item. (7.48 pm)

Councillor S Hughes left the Chamber at the conclusion of this item of business. (7.51 pm)

8.3 DEA Investment Programme – Q4

Presented by Director of Leisure & Community Wellbeing.

The Director reported extensively on this matter.

It was agreed to recommend that the updates on the DEA Programme as contained within Q4 be noted.

It was further agreed that consideration be given to an allocation of budget to the DEA Investment Programme from which funding for small projects or requests for financial assistance which might arise during the course of the year could be sourced. The Director of Leisure & Community Wellbeing confirmed that this was being considered.

Alderman P Porter left the Chamber during presentation of this item. (7.53 pm)

Councillor S Hughes returned to the Chamber during discussion. (7.54 pm)

Councillor A Ewing left the Chamber during discussion. (7.56 pm)

8.4 Centralisation of Registration Service

A comprehensive report prepared by the Head of Corporate Communications & Administration had been provided and was presented by the Director of Finance & Corporate Services in her absence.

8.4 Centralisation of Registration Service (Continued)

It was proposed by Alderman M Henderson, seconded by Alderman A Grehan and agreed to recommend that:-

- the centralisation of the Registration Service to Lagan Valley Island be approved;
- a comprehensive communications plan be implemented to ensure that the changes to arrangements were widely understood.

Councillor A Ewing returned to the Chamber during discussion of this item.
(7.59 pm)

8.5 Freedom of the City - Update

A comprehensive report prepared by the Head of Corporate Communications & Administration had been provided and was presented by the Director of Finance & Corporate Services in her absence.

The Director and the Administration Manager responded to Members' questions.

8.5.1 Keith and Krysten Getty

Discussions with the Gettys' management company were ongoing in regards to available dates etc. Accordingly it was agreed that more detailed proposals for the Freedom of the City event for the Gettys be presented to the next meeting of the Committee, thereby allowing for more considered decisions.

8.5.2 Health & Social Care

It was proposed by Alderman A Ewart, seconded by Alderman A Grehan and agreed that:-

- the outline arrangements as detailed in the report for the Freedom of the City event for the HSC be agreed;
- the event be based on Option 6 as detailed in the report but duly amended to reflect a reduction in the number of civic guests as put forward at the meeting.

The following persons left the meeting during discussion of this item:-

Councillor S Skillen at 8.04 pm;
Director of Leisure & Community Wellbeing at 8.08 pm;
Deputy Mayor, Councillor T Mitchell, at 8.19 pm.

8.6 Management Accounts – Period 10

Presented by the Head of Finance.

It was agreed to recommend that the Management Accounts for the period ending the 31st January 2022, together with an extensive narrative report by way of explanation be noted.

The Head of Finance advised of a number of additional factors which would be in the Period 11 report, all of which having a substantial financial impact.

9. Any Other Business - Confidential

9.1 Island Hall and Conference/Event Bookings
Councillor S Carson

In response to comments from Councillor S Carson, the Director confirmed that bookings for the Island Hall, conferences and events were considered to be reopened in terms of the Covid-19 regulations. The Director gave a recap of bookings that had been made. The revised budget for the Island Hall and conference/event bookings would be presented to the next meeting.

Resumption of Normal Business

It was proposed by Councillor S Hughes, seconded by Alderman A Grehan and agreed to come “out of Committee”. Normal business and the live-stream were resumed.

10. Any Other Business

There was no other business raised.

There being no further business, the Meeting concluded at 8.39 pm.

MAYOR/CHAIRMAN