

LISBURN & CASTLEREAGH CITY COUNCIL**Minutes of the Communities and Wellbeing Committee held in the Island Civic Centre, Lisburn on Tuesday 9th April 2024 at 18:00**

PRESENT: Councillor J Gallen (Vice-Chairperson)

The Right Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor A Gowan

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

ALSO ATTENDED: Councillors G Hynds and C Kemp.

IN ATTENDANCE: Director of Leisure and Community Wellbeing
Head of Communities
Acting Head of Parks and Amenities
Head of Sports Services
Member Services Officer (BF & EW)

1. Apologies

Apologies were received on behalf of the Chairperson (Councillor R T Beckett), the Deputy Mayor (Councillor G McCleave), Alderman S Skillen and Councillor R Carlin.

2. Declarations of Interest

- The Right Worshipful the Mayor declared an interest in item 4.2 re: D-Day Grants Scheme in that family members were associated with an organisation which had applied for funding under the scheme.
- In respect of item 5.1, re: Lisburn Féile – Use of Wallace Park, Councillor A McIntyre indicated that he would be conducting a tour for the organisation as part of a programme of events.

3.0 Director of Leisure and Community Wellbeing

3.1 Anti-Poverty Strategy

At the meeting of the Council on 26th March, the following notice of motion, which was moved by Councillor C Kemp and seconded by Alderman H Legge, was, in accordance with Standing Order 16.1., referred to the Committee for consideration:

"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. The 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.

The 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. The 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. The 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; and
3. Increase the visibility of the Council’s anti-poverty action plans, including the resources available to those within the council area experiencing poverty.”

Councillor C Kemp presented the notice of motion. She pointed out that, within the Council area, 17.3% of the population was aged over-65 and that Age NI had estimated that almost 40% of pensioners were living below the poverty line. She added that poverty impacted adversely on people with disabilities and that the current cost-of-living crisis had exacerbated the situation. She sought the Committee’s endorsement for the creation of an anti-poverty strategy and concluded by that it was vital that the Council promoted the visibility of its ongoing anti-poverty work for the benefit of those in most need of support.

Councillor A McIntyre formally proposed the motion to the Committee.

In seconding the motion, Alderman H Legge added that there existed a deep sense of frustration across society since an anti-poverty strategy for Northern Ireland had been first proposed in 1998. She emphasised that poverty impacted on all age groups and particularly the most vulnerable. She referred also to the rising cost of food prices and the valuable work undertaken by food banks to alleviate such costs. She thanked Councillor Kemp for bringing the motion before the Council.

Councillor D Bassett, on behalf of the Sinn Fein party grouping, endorsed the motion as presented.

The Committee agreed that the course of action outlined within the motion be approved and it was noted that a further report would be submitted in due course.

4.0 Head of Communities

4.1 Community Bursary Scheme

The Head of Communities reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 5th March, it had approved the DEA Investment Programme for 2024/25, in respect of which provision had been included for the delivery of a Community Bursary Scheme. She outlined the principal aspects of the scheme and gave an overview of its aims and objectives, the types of projects that would be eligible for support, together with the criteria that would be applied within the application process.

It was moved by Councillor D J Craig, seconded by Councillor T Mitchell, and agreed that the Committee:

- notes the content of the paper in regard to the Community Bursary Scheme and the outline guidance notes with a view that the scheme be launched in May/June of 2024;
- delegates authority to the Head of Communities, in consultation with the Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson, to approve applications received on an ongoing basis within the cycle of the scheme; and
- notes also that applicants and the outcome of the decisions be placed on the Information and Correspondence Schedule in the month in which the applications had been assessed, or as soon as possible thereafter.

(Councillor G Hynds entered the Chamber at 18:14).

4.2 D-Day Grants Scheme

The Head of Communities informed the Committee that, in response to an open call for applications for support under the above-mentioned scheme, 47 had been received and assessed against pre-agreed criteria, all of which have been deemed successful, with a total amount of £23,400 recommended for award.

It was moved by Alderman S P Porter, seconded by Alderman H Legge, and agreed that the Committee approve the payment of the grants as set out.

Arising from discussion, the Committee noted that there remained an underspend of £11,600 in respect of the original budgeted amount of £35,000. Accordingly, the Committee agreed that a request be submitted to the Corporate Services Committee, at its meeting on 11th April, that permission be granted to utilise the underspend with a view to increasing the participation of schoolchildren at planned D-Day events.

4.3 Arts Grants

The Committee agreed to note the outcome of the assessment processes for the awarding of grants in the following categories:

1. Arts Organisations
2. Individual Artist
3. Making Art in the Communities Grant Scheme
4. Tyrone Guthrie Bursary
5. John Hewitt Summer School

5.0 Acting Head of Parks and Amenities

5.1 Lisburn Féile – Use of Wallace Park

The Acting Head of Parks and Amenities reported that a request had been received from Lisburn Féile for the use of Wallace Park on Friday 26th July for the purposes of a family fun day.

On the proposal of Councillor D Bassett, which was seconded by Councillor G Thompson, the Committee acceded to the request, and it was noted that, in accordance with the Council's infrastructure policy, small scale support would be provided to the organisers in the delivery of the event.

6.0 Any Other Business – Non-Confidential Matters

6.1 Lisburn Pickleball Club

The Committee noted the comments of the Head of Sports Services in relation to the successful hosting of the Kukri Pickleball Ireland National Championships at Lagan Valley LeisurePlex from 5th to 7th April, which had been attended by participants from across the island of Ireland.

The Committee commended those staff officers who had been involved in the delivery of the event.

6.2 Aberdelgy Golf Course

Councillor G Hynds extended his thanks to those members of staff who had been involved in the opening of the new driving range at Aberdelgy Golf Course.

7.0 Confidential Report of the Director

The Chairperson advised that the reasons for confidentiality for the following matters were by virtue of the Section 6, Part 1, of the Local Government Act (2014) Northern Ireland, namely, in that it contained information relating to the financial or business affairs of any person (including the Council holding that information).

It was moved by Councillor T Mitchell, seconded by Councillor D Bassett, and agreed that the confidential report of the Director be considered 'in committee'.

7.1 Static Attendants – Variation of Contract

It was moved by Councillor D J Craig, seconded by Councillor T Mitchell, and agreed that the Committee approve a variation to the contract for Cobra Services for the provision of the above-mentioned service.

7.2 Hanging Baskets Contract

It was moved by Alderman H Legge, seconded by Councillor D Bassett, and agreed that the Committee approve the contract value for the delivery of the Council's Hanging Baskets Scheme until September 2024.

8.0 Any Other Business – Confidential Matters

8.1 Santos Football Club

The Director and the Head of Sports Services provided clarity in relation to the former use of a Council pitch at 698 Saintfield Road by Santos FC. In addition, it was noted that the future use of the site would be considered under the pitches' strategy.

8.2 Council Funding Streams

The Director answered a query in relation to the overall provision of funding streams by central government and how the Council was preparing for any reduction in such funding.

Resumption of Normal Business

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

The meeting ended at 18:51.

Chairperson