

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 8th March 2023 at 6.00 pm.

PRESENT IN COUNCIL CHAMBER (COMMITTEE):

Councillor S Hughes (Chairman)

Councillor U Mackin (Vice-Chairman)

Aldermen A Ewart MBE, O Gawith, S Martin and P Porter

Councillors A Ewing, J Laverty BEM, T Mitchell, and The Hon N Trimble

PRESENT IN A REMOTE LOCATION (COMMITTEE):

The Right Worshipful The Mayor
Councillor S Carson

Councillors R Carlin and S Lowry

OTHER MEMBERS OF COUNCIL PRESENT IN A REMOTE LOCATION

Alderman A Grehan

IN ATTENDANCE:

Director of Finance & Corporate Services
Director of Service Transformation
Head of Assets
Head of Communities
Head of Corporate Communications & Administration
Head of Finance
Head of Human Resources & Organisation Development
Member Services Officers (CH & RN)

Commencement of Meeting

The Chairman, Councillor S Hughes, advised that the meeting would be audio recorded unless the item on the agenda was to be considered under confidential business.

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 unauthorised recording was 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 Member Services Officer accordingly so that this might be accurately reflected in the minutes.

1. Apologies (00:02:15)

Apologies for non-attendance at the meeting were accepted and recorded on behalf of Aldermen M Henderson MBE and J Tinsley.

2. Declarations of Interest (00:02:42)

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.

The following declaration was made:-

Councillor T Mitchell - Item 7.1 of Confidential Report of Director of Finance & Corporate Services - "Community Investment Fund Update - Ballymacash Sports Academy " – (Shareholder of Ballymacash Sports Academy) Councillor Mitchell left the meeting for the duration of this item of business.

3. Report of Director of Finance & Corporate Services (00:03:36)

3.1 Finance & Corporate Services – Performance Report (00:03:46)

The following appendices to the report in regard to the performance of the Finance & Corporate Services Directorate had been provided:-

- Management Accounts for Q3 (1st October – 31st December 2022);
- Operational Metrics/Service KPIs for Q3.

It was agreed that the reports referred to above be noted.

3.2 Acquisitions & Disposals' Policy (00:04:20)

Presented by the Director of Service Transformation.

The following appendices to the report had been provided:-

- Draft Policy for the Acquisition and Disposal of Land and Property;
- Department for Communities guidance for District Councils entitled "Local Government Disposal of Land at Less Than Best Price".

3.2 Acquisitions & Disposals' Policy (Continued)

The Director outlined the background to the preparation of an Acquisitions & Disposals Policy.

It was proposed by Councillor N Trimble, seconded by Councillor U Mackin and agreed to recommend that the draft Policy on Acquisitions and Disposals be approved and that – post the pre-requisite engagement as outlined in the report – it be forwarded for public consultation. The final policy in draft form would then be presented to Members for consideration and adoption.

The Committee was reminded that in the redrafting of the terms of reference for the various committees, Acquisitions and Disposals would be within the remit of the future Regeneration & Growth Committee.

3.3 Community Assets Transfer Policy (00:07:50)

Presented by the Director of Service Transformation.

The following appendix to the report had been provided:-

- Community Assets Transfer Draft Policy and Guidance.

The Director provided the background to the preparation of a Community Assets Transfer Policy.

It was proposed by Alderman P Porter, seconded by Councillor N Trimble and agreed to recommend that the draft Policy and Guidance on Community Assets Transfer be approved and that – post the pre-requisite engagement as outlined in the report – it be forwarded for public consultation. The final policy in draft form would then be presented to Members for consideration and adoption.

The Committee was reminded that in the redrafting of the terms of reference for the various committees, Community Asset Transfer would be within the remit of the future Regeneration & Growth Committee.

The Director of Service Transformation left the Chamber. (6.15 pm)

4. Report of Head of Corporate Communications & Administration (00:13:51)

4.1 Health Working Group (00:14:00)

4.1.1 Special Meeting – 13th December 2022

A special meeting of the Health Working Group had been held on the 13th December 2022 to receive representatives of the group COLD (Carers of Learning Disabled). The minutes of that meeting were provided.

It was proposed by Alderman P Porter, seconded by Councillor J Laverty and agreed to recommend that the aforementioned minutes be adopted.

4.1.1 Special Meeting – 13th December 2022 (Continued)

The South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust had been requested to respond to the Council and/or COLD in regard to issues raised at the above meeting. The Head of Service stated that such engagement had taken place with a number of Members. Other issues had been conveyed to the Trust for response.

4.1.2 Meeting – 27th March 2023

A meeting of the Health Working Group to which all Members had been invited to attend was scheduled for the 27th March 2023. In addition to their usual update, the SE Trust had been asked to address issues raised by COLD. Furthermore an official from the Department of Health would be in attendance to address Members' concerns about GP services.

The Director of Service Transformation returned to the Chamber during this item of business. (6.16 pm)

4.1.3 Engagement with Health Trusts

In response to comments from Councillor J Lavery, the Head of Service confirmed that the mechanism by which the Council would engage with Health Trusts in the future, eg by way of a Special Meeting of Council as opposed to the Health Working Group, was currently being considered within ongoing discussions on the terms of reference of the various committees. A change in procedure for engagement with the Health Trusts would be presented for agreement.

4.1.4 Mrs Margaret O'Kane – Retirement from SE Trust

Alderman P Porter made Members aware of the recent retirement from the South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust of Mrs Margaret O'Kane (Director of Adult Services and Prison Healthcare). Mrs O'Kane had been employed by the Trust for a considerable number of years and in other Health Trusts prior to that. Alderman Porter and Alderman S Martin paid tribute to the work carried out by Mrs O'Kane, particularly in the areas of disabled persons and mental health.

It was agreed that the Chairman of the Committee and The Right Worshipful The Mayor send a letter to Mrs O'Kane wishing her a long, happy and healthy retirement and expressing appreciation for her long and dedicated service with the SE Trust and the Health Service in general.

The Director of Service Transformation left the Chamber during this item of business. (6.20 pm)

4.2 Members' Focus Groups: IT Provision and Noting Schedule Review
(00:20:25)

4.2.1 Members' Focus Group
Terms of Reference & Membership

The Head of Corporate Communications & Administration outlined the background to the formation of a Members' Focus Group to consider Members' requirements in the carrying out of their Council duties. The group would consider such matters in advance of the new Council term commencing May 2023.

The terms of reference for the Members' Focus Group, together with the membership thereof, were provided and their contents duly noted.

4.2.2 IT Provision and Noting Schedule Review

It was proposed by Councillor U Mackin, seconded by Alderman A Ewart and agreed to recommend that the following recommendations as made by the Members' Focus Group be agreed:-

"Items for Noting" schedule

To be renamed the "Information & Correspondence" schedule with a separate schedule being published for each committee and being released on Decision Time at the same time as the reports for the monthly meeting of that committee.

Broadband

Members to source their own Broadband provision and to claim the allowance that is made available for such provision. (Contracts arranged by the Council will be terminated on the 30th May 2023 so those Members affected should source and install their own Broadband in advance of that date. IT Services can – if so required - assist in the identification of a suitable Broadband package.)

Mobile Devices

Provision of iPads to continue with a trial taking place to assess the suitability of laptops. The option of a laptop would be trialled by the Planning Committee and any other Member who might wish to be part of the trial.

Printers and Ink

Printer to be available on request.

(Ink is not provided as Members received an uplift in allowance in 2015 to cover consumables. Information dated the 9th February 2023 from the Department of Communities in regard to this matter had been provided with the report.)

4.2.2 IT Provision and Noting Schedule Review (Continued)

Stationery

Personalised digital letterheads to be provided with a hard copy version available on request.

Business cards available on request.

Date stamps provided.

Meeting Packs

Hard copies of meeting packs to be provided on request to the Mayor, to Chairs of Committee for their respective committee; to members of the Planning Committee for that committee only. (Also to any Member with a specific need.)

This procedure is in line with pre-Covid arrangements; in support of digital and sustainability agenda; and as supported by Local Government Circular LG 23/2019 (Section 9 v) which states "Councils should not provide councillors with hard copies of electronic documents where the council has provided a portable IT device".

Training and/or Support

To be provided in regard to the following:-

- Broadband support
- Use of iPads
- Decision Time
- SharePoint
- Outlook
- GDPR

Mobile Phones

IT Services to facilitate a clinic for Members in the new term advising on mobile phone provision, including security risks associated with each arrangement, ie provision by the Council or a monthly allowance in lieu of a Council-provided device.

Councillor J Laverty referred to user difficulties associated with joining a meeting remotely but in the absence of a hard copy of papers for that meeting and asked that consideration be given to the provision of hard copies in such circumstances. The Head of Service took this point on board but was hopeful that the provision of a device to address this scenario should suffice.

The Director of Service Transformation entered the Chamber during presentation of this item of business. (6.22 pm)

4.3 Lagan Valley Island – Building Illumination Requests (00:23:49)4.3.1 Requests

It was proposed by Councillor N Trimble, seconded by Councillor T Mitchell and agreed to recommend that the requests for LVI illuminations as set out below be acceded to, both requests being in compliance with the Building Illuminations' Policy:-

Organisation	Date	Colour
Fostering Fortnight	16 th May 2023	Yellow
Go Blue for Meso (Mesothelioma UK)	7 th July 2023	Blue

The Committee noted that the following requests had been approved under Exceptional Circumstances

Organisation	Date	Colour
European Victims' Day	11 th March 2023	Red
National Day of Reflection	23 rd March 2023	Yellow

The Committee also noted that – in line with the policy – a request from Leukaemia & Lymphoma (LLNI) to light LVI in red on the 1st September 2023 to mark the commencement of Blood Cancer Awareness Month had been declined.

4.3.2 St Patrick's Day

Alderman S Martin enquired if the building would be lit for St Patrick's Day, the 17th March 2023. The Head of Corporate Communications & Administration agreed to look into this matter.

This matter is further reported under Any Other Business later in the meeting. (Item 7.1)

5. Report of Head of Finance (00:26:40)5.1 Car Parking Bad Debt Write-Off (00:26:53)

The Head of Finance reported on the matter of Bad Debt associated with the car parking function which had transferred to the Council on the 1st April 2015. The Head of Service also drew attention to the revised figure in regard to that notified to the Committee in November 2022.

5.1 Car Parking Bad Debt Write-Off (Continued)

It was proposed by Councillor N Trimble, seconded by Councillor A Ewing and agreed to recommend that the debt recorded in relation to car parking is written off the ledgers of the Department for Infrastructure.

The following issues relating to car parking provision in the Council's area were raised. These matters would be referred to the Environmental Services directorate for progressing:-

- the introduction of one hour free on-street parking so as to attract shoppers and to assist local businesses;
- the tariffs that apply for parking by the disabled in Council car parks, ie do they enjoy free car parking, and - if not - could that be introduced.

Alderman A Grehan joined the meeting remotely during discussion of this item of business. (6.33 pm)

5.2 Local Government Staff Commission (00:32:12)
Contribution for 2023/2024

Members had been provided with copy of a letter dated the 22nd February 2023 from the Local Government Staff Commission for Northern Ireland from which it was noted that the provisional date for dissolution of the LGSC had been extended to the 31st March 2025. A financial scheme up to the 31st March 2024 in the first instance was therefore required.

The Council's contribution for 2023/2024 had been calculated at £25,974.00 to be paid by the 30th April 2023.

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

- payment of the Council's contribution to the Local Government Staff Commission (LGSC) be deferred;
- a letter be forwarded to the LGSC:-
 - expressing dissatisfaction that the provisional date for its dissolution had again been extended, this time to the 31st March 2025; and
 - seeking the following:-
 - the remit of the LGSC, together with details of their activities over the past 12 months so that a comparison between remit and tasks carried out could take place;

5.2 Local Government Staff Commission
Contribution for 2023/2024 (Continued)

- the Key Performance Indicators of the LGSC;
- LGSC's customer service survey/questionnaire.

6. Report of Head of Human Resources & Organisation Development (00:38:10)

6.1 Workforce Reports (00:38:20)

It was agreed to recommend that reports on the undernoted topics in relation to Council staff across all Departments be noted:

- Workforce
- Attendance Management
- Recruitment

There was a lengthy discussion on attendance management during which those employees absent due to ill health were wished a speedy recovery.

A number of Members placed on record their appreciation of the work carried out by the HR & OD Team in supporting employees in times of illness and for the initiatives put in place to encourage and support good mental health.

The Head of Service confirmed that the installation of a new HR system would allow for the provision of the actual cost of absenteeism, not just a general average daily rate. Such information would be provided to the Committee on a quarterly basis with the Workforce reports.

Councillor N Trimble left and returned to the Chamber during discussion of this item of business. (6.45 pm and 6.47 pm respectively)

The Head of Corporate Communications & Administration left and returned to the Chamber during discussion. (6.54 pm and 6.55 pm respectively)

7. Agenda Item Brought Forward (00:55:40)
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 proceedings were being recorded. This was agreed.

7.1 Lagan Valley Island (00:55:57)
Illumination for St Patrick's Day (17th March 2023)

Further to earlier in the meeting when Members had expressed concern that – given discussions in previous years – the above light-up was not scheduled for 2023, the Director of Finance & Corporate Services confirmed that the illumination of LVI to mark St Patrick's Day was indeed not on the schedule of light-ups for 2023 nor was it an annualised date for a light-up.

It was proposed by Alderman S Martin, seconded by Councillor U Mackin and agreed that:-

- the light-up of LVI on the 17th March 2023 to mark St Patrick's Day be supported;
- St Patrick's Day be included in the annual calendar of light-ups;
- the annual calendar of light-ups be initially populated with annual Council commemorations such as St Patrick's Day and Armistice Day/Remembrance Sunday; with charities being added thereafter.

The consultees for Exceptional Circumstances, ie The Right Worshipful The Mayor (Councillor S Carson) and the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee (Councillors S Hughes and U Mackin) were in agreement that Lagan Valley Island should be lit on the 17th March 2023 to mark St Patrick's Day. Therefore under Exceptional Circumstances, the above light-up would take place.

8. Confidential Report from Director of Finance & Corporate Services (01:03:17)

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

8.1 Community Investment Fund Update – Ballymacash Sports Academy
(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 available on completion of funding process.

8.2 Parks Accommodation & Equipment Husbandry – New Lease
(Confidential for reason of information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information).

Redacted report to be available once new lease has been signed.

8.3 Estates' Strategy 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 available post negotiations.

8.4 Box Office Ticketing System

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

Redacted report to be available when tender process is complete.

8.5 Management Accounts Period 10

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

Redacted report to be available after full Council meeting. (28th March 2023)

8.6 Shared Cost Additional Pension Contribution

(Confidential for reason of information (i) relating to any individual; (ii) which is likely to reveal the identity of a individual; and (iii) related to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information).

Report to never become available.

In Committee

It was proposed by Councillor J Laverty, seconded by Councillor A Ewing and agreed that the Confidential Report of the Director be considered "in Committee". (Recording was paused at this stage in proceedings.)

Councillor T Mitchell left the Chamber (7.05 pm)

The member of the press left the Chamber (7.06 pm)

8.1 Community Investment Fund Update – Ballymacash Sports Academy

Having declared an interest in this item of business, Councillor T Mitchell had already left the Chamber.

In the absence of the Director of Leisure & Community Wellbeing, her report was presented by the Head of Communities.

The following appendix to the report had been provided:-

- Letter dated the 14th February 2023 from Ballymacash Sports Academy.

8.1 Community Investment Fund Update – Ballymacash Sports Academy
(Continued)

It was proposed by Alderman P Porter, seconded by Councillor N Trimble and agreed to recommend that - subject to the following conditions - the proposal from Ballymacash Sports Academy to phase its development as outlined in the report be agreed:-

- Partner funders being in agreement;
- Phase 1 to not materially impact the business case outcomes of the financial sustainability of the scheme;
- Regulatory compliance being attained.

Given that the above conditions had been recommended for agreement by the Committee, it was further agreed to recommend that a Letter of Offer be issued to Ballymacash Sports Academy reflecting the updated position.

The Director of Service Transformation agreed to confirm that the Council's involvement in this scheme from a financial point of view was all in order.

The Head of Corporate Services & Administration left and returned to the Chamber during discussion of this item. (7.12 pm and 7.15 pm respectively)

8.2 Parks Accommodation & Equipment Husbandry
New Lease at Altona Road, Lisburn

Presented by the Head of Assets.

The following appendices to the report had been provided:-

- Lease for Unit 24 Altona Road, Lisburn;
- Lease Map for Unit 24 Altona Road, Lisburn.

It was proposed by Alderman A Ewart, seconded by Councillor A Ewing and agreed to recommend that the Lease for Unit 24 Altona Road, Lisburn be approved and be submitted to Council for signing and sealing.

Councillor N Trimble left and returned to the Chamber during presentation of this item of business. (7.26 pm and 7.27 pm respectively)

Councillor T Mitchell returned to the Chamber during presentation of this item. (7.27 pm)

8.3 Estates Strategy Update

Presented by the Director of Service Transformation.

The report set out an update on a series of disposals and the following appendices to the report had been provided:-

- “Policy & Procedures in Response to Encroachment on Council Lands/Properties”;
- Proposed action plan of improvements arising from Audit recommendations.

The Director of Service Transformation noted a number of comments in regard to several of the projects listed on the Action Plan.

It was agreed to recommend that the update on the series of disposals be noted.

Having scrutinised the action plan, it was agreed to recommend that its content be noted.

The Head of Communities left the Chamber during presentation of this item. (7.29 pm)

8.4 Box Office Ticketing System

Presented by the Head of Corporate Communications & Administration.

Details in regard to the contract which had been awarded for a new integrated box office ticketing system were noted.

Councillor A Ewing left the Chamber during presentation of this item. (7.52 pm)
Councillor S Lowry left the meeting on a remote basis. (7.53 pm)

8.5 Management Accounts Period 10

Presented by the Head of Finance.

It was agreed that the Management Accounts for the period ending the 31st January 2023, together with an extensive narrative report by way of explanation, be noted. Also noted was an updated position as at January 2023 of the 2022/2023 expenditure items being funded by monies from the Department for Communities.

It was noted that point 15 of the Head of Service’s report in regard to Waste Services should read April 2023 and not April 2022.

The Director of Service Transformation and the Head of Assets left the Chamber during presentation of this item of business. (7.54 pm)

Councillor A Ewing re-entered the Chamber during discussion of this item. (7.55 pm)

8.6 Shared Cost Additional Pension Contribution

Presented by the Head of Human Resources & Organisation Development.

It was proposed by Alderman O Gawith, seconded by Councillor J Lavery and agreed to recommend that – given that the conditions for the buy-back of lost pension had been met - the buy-back of pension for a Council employee through a Shared Cost Additional Pension Contribution (SCAPC) be approved.

9. Any Other Business – Confidential

There were no items of a confidential nature raised under Any Other Business.

Resumption of Normal Business

It was proposed by Councillor J Lavery, seconded by Alderman A Ewart and agreed to come “out of Committee”. Normal business and audio recording were resumed.

10. Any Other Business (01:03:56)

Dealt with at Item 7.

There being no further business, the Meeting concluded at 7.59 pm.

MAYOR/CHAIRMAN