

Derry City and Strabane District Council

Minutes of Meeting of the Governance and Strategic Planning Committee (Open) held in the Guildhall, Derry on Tuesday 30 January 2018 at 4.00 pm

Present:- Members of the Committee - Councillor Fleming (in the Chair) (Item GSP25/18 et seq), Alderman Thompson (in the Chair) (Item GSP24/18), Aldermen Hussey, Kerrigan and Ramsey, Councillors Boyle (Item GSP25/18 et seq), Cooper (Item GSP25/18 et seq), Donnelly, C Kelly (Item GSP25/18 et seq), McKeever (Item GSP25/18 et seq), McKnight (Item GSP25/18 et seq), Robinson and Tierney (Item GSP25/18 et seq).

In Attendance: Chief Executive (Mr J Kelpie), Director of Legacy (Mrs O McGillion), Head of Human Resources (Mrs P Donnelly), Lead Democratic Services and Improvement Officer (Miss E Cavanagh), Business Support and Change Manager (Mrs R Craig), Lead Legal Services Officer (Mr P Kingston), Strategy Manager (Mr M Gallagher) and Committee Services Assistant (Ms N Meehan).

GSP24/17 Notice and Summons of Meeting

The Chief Executive read the Notice and Summons for the Meeting.

The Chief Executive advised that the Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson and other Members of the Committee were attending a Bloody Sunday Memorial and would return to the meeting shortly.

Subsequently Alderman Hussey Moved, Alderman Ramsey Seconded and the Committee

Resolved that Alderman Thompson be elected Acting Chairperson of the Committee in the absence of the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson.

The Acting Chairperson reminded Members that the Chairperson of the Committee would be in attendance within the next thirty minutes.

Subsequently Councillor Robinson Moved, Alderman Ramsey Seconded and the Committee

Resolved that the Committee recess until the Chairperson of the Committee was in attendance.

On his arrival the Chairperson thanked Members for agreeing the recess which allowed him to attend the Bloody Sunday Memorial.

GSP25/17 Apologies

There were no apologies for absence.

GSP26/17 Declarations of Members' Interests

There were no declarations of Members' interests.

GSP27/17 Chairperson's Business

There was no Chairperson's business.

GSP28/17 Confirmation of the Open Minutes of the Governance and Strategic Planning Committee held on Tuesday, 9 January 2018

The Open Minutes of Meeting held on 9 January 2018 (GSP1/18-GSP20/18) were accepted and adopted.

GSP29/17 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

GSP30/17 Member Development Charter Plus Assessment

The Lead Democratic Services and Improvement Officer presented the above report a copy of which had previously been circulated. She advised that the purpose of the report was to inform Members of the date and process involved in the Council's assessment for the Member Development Charter Plus standard and to seek Members' commitment and support in the assessment process.

Councillor Boyle referred to 3.5 of the report and, as a member of the Member Development Working Group, thanked those Officers involved in the work carried out to date in this regard. He acknowledged that there was still a significant amount of work to be carried out in pursuit of receiving the award however, he was very hopeful that this would be completed by the timeframe of 25 April 2018. He continued that

success in achieving this Charter depended on the work and co-operation of fellow elected Members across all of the Political Parties.

Alderman Hussey, having been involved with this previously through the former Strabane District Council, congratulated elected Members of the Development Group on the work carried out. He acknowledged, however, the considerable amount of work still requiring completion. He wished Council success on the outcome and said he would not doubt the quality of the material which would be submitted to the Assessment Panel.

The Lead Democratic Services and Improvement Officer advised that Officers would commit to briefing as many Members who were keen to become involved in the process. She said it would be advantageous to have as many Members as possible involved.

In response to a query from Alderman Hussey, the Lead Democratic Services and Improvement Officer said she understood the assessment scheduled on April 25 would consist of a group meeting. She undertook to advise Members if these details changed.

The Committee

Recommended that having noted the details on the assessment for the Charter Plus standard Members confirm their commitment and support in the assessment process.

GSP31/17 NILGA - Work Plan and Investment for 2018/19

The Business Support and Change Manager presented the above report a copy of which had previously been circulated. She advised that the purpose of the report was to provide Members with a copy of the Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA's) Work Plan for 2018/19, together with the request to approve the £48,914 subscription fee.

The Committee

Recommended that the NILGA Work Plan and Investment for 2018/19 be approved.

GSP32/17 Pay Rates for Festivals and Events

The Head of Human Resources presented the above report a copy of which had previously been circulated. She advised that the purpose of the report was to seek Members' approval for pay rates which had been agreed with the Trade Unions for Council employees who undertake various roles at Festivals and Events.

The Committee

Recommended that Members adopt the pay rates as outlined in Appendix 1.

GSP33/17 Irish Language Week 2018

The Lead Democratic Services and Improvement Officer presented the above report a copy of which had previously been circulated. She stated that the purpose of the report was to advise elected Members of correspondence received from Conradh na Gaeilge regarding Seachtain na Gaeilge (Irish Language Week) which takes place from 1 March to St Patrick's Day.

Councillor Cooper referred to the correspondence received from Conradh na Gaeilge which he felt did not highlight what events were involved. He requested that a meeting be arranged with Conradh na Gaeilge to explore what options were available in terms of collaboration and programming possibilities for Irish Language Week and Council's possible input.

In response to a query from Alderman Ramsey, the Lead Democratic Services and Improvement Officer stated that as indicated in the report each year Council and the Irish Language Officer worked with community partners to create a programme and the Irish Language Officer would make people aware of any funding which might be available. She stated that work was ongoing in preparing events in respect of the Council's Programme for Irish Language Week.

Alderman Hussey expressed confusion as he had not been aware of Council supporting Irish Language Week in the past. He queried the date of the event from 1-17 March which more than exceeded one week. He referred to the email received from Conradh na Gaeilge on 15 January and said the programme appeared to have evolved very rapidly. He enquired as to why Members had not been given an opportunity to discuss the Programme of Events. He referred to the process which had to be undertaken by other groups who made

application to Council for community funding and queried why this application was being treated differently from other community festivals.

The Lead Democratic Services and Improvement Officer advised that the correspondence received from Conradh na Gaeilge would have been circulated to the Chief Executives of all Councils. She stated that this was in order to encourage participation in Irish Language Week and was generic in nature. She stated that Council would have commenced work on Irish Language Week prior to the correspondence having been received. She referred to 2.4 of the report and pointed out that there was no specific dedicated budget in respect of Irish Language Week and it would be carried out in collaboration with a number of partners. She concluded that as Irish Language Week coincided with The Spring Carnival it was an element of this event.

Alderman Hussey expressed concern that from the email received it did not appear that Council were contributing towards this event. Nor did it appear that Conradh na Gaeilge were aware of any Council involvement or potential contribution.

Alderman Thompson referred to the Lead Democratic Services and Improvement Officer's remarks that there was no dedicated budget for this Festival and referred to 3.3 of the report which stated that Council committed approximately £30,000 to support the St Patrick's Day Spring Carnival event, a portion of which would be allocated to celebrating the Irish language within the multicultural zone. As such he suggested that Council had committed to this event in the lead-up to the St Patrick Day Festival. He referred to the need to exercise caution regarding the manner in which this information was disclosed to the public.

Subsequently the Committee

Recommended **that a Meeting be arranged with representatives from Conradh na Gaeilge to discuss their plans for Irish Language Week in order to ascertain what assistance, if any, Council could contribute.**

The Director of Legacy presented the above report a copy of which had previously been circulated. She pointed out that the purpose of the report was to advise Members of the key findings of the Post Project Report of the UK City of Culture and the potential opportunities for additional research on the impacts and of hosting the inaugural UK City of Culture 2013.

The Director of Legacy and the Strategy Manager gave a joint presentation on the Post Project Evaluation.

Councillor Cooper thanked Officers for their presentation. He stated that he was involved in City of Culture 2013 through his work within the tourism sector and he welcomed the impact of the event and the publicity surrounding it. He referred to the considerable increase in visitor numbers to the City post 2013. He pointed out that the late Deputy First Minister, Martin McGuinness, had, in conjunction with the then Minister for Culture, Arts and Leisure, Carál Ní Chuilín, sought and secured funding in respect of this event and had also been able to leverage additional funding in respect thereof. He stated that City of Culture 2013 had created great social as well as economic benefits for the City. He stated that increased visitor numbers continued throughout the entire year.

Councillor Cooper stated that from his Party's perspective the huge participation and the level of entertainment provided throughout the year reflected the success of the event. He said it was the aim of his Party to cater for as many people as possible culturally, economically and in terms of entertainment provision. Whilst acknowledging the potential of both the Millennium Forum and Templemore Sports Complex in terms of hosting events he referred to the need for larger venues in the City capable of hosting major events. However he acknowledged that this would prove extremely costly. He referred to the increase in hotel occupancy during City of Culture year. He welcomed the confidence shown by local business people in developing new hotels in the City to cater for increased visitor numbers to the City. He stated that in general he believed City of Culture 2013 had been a success. However he stated that the money available as part of the legacy was small in comparison with the overall scale of the event.

Councillor Cooper stated that the legacy of City of Culture 2013 was evident for all to see in terms of increased employment, improved infrastructure and the number of events hosted in the City. He stated that the Tourism Strategy was very detailed in terms of trying to

identify niche markets and attracting tourists to visit the City. He referred to the need for additional work to be carried out in respect of the Cultural Strategy. He concluded that City of Culture 2013 had paid great dividends.

Councillor Boyle stated that City of Culture had proved a major challenge. He said he felt some of the most gratifying figures presented were in relation to the levels of engagement and queried if figures were available in respect of current engagement levels across culture and the arts. He suggested that if not currently available this information be provided as part of a scoping exercise. He did not anticipate however that figures in respect of current engagement levels would be as high as those recorded during City of Culture. He said he felt the year produced a number of positive experiences particularly in terms of the public realm, which immensely improved the physical nature of the City and investment in infrastructure. He stated that this was key to progressing as visitors to the City often remarked on its physical beauty.

Councillor Boyle referred to the increase in hotel occupancy during 2013 and thereafter which reflected the significant increase in visitor numbers to the City which, he said must form part of the legacy as to how and why Council engaged in the City of Culture process. He continued that as a Member of the Board of Visit Derry he had witnessed an increase in hotel occupancy rates post 2013 in comparison with previous years. He anticipated that such trajectory would continue in an upward trend. He referred to those within the private sector who have been willing to invest in additional hotel accommodation and said it was both encouraging and ambitious to see this investment in the City.

Councillor Boyle referred to one major positive aspect in that the City centre was filled with visitors during the summer months and peak seasons, which, he believed, bore testament to increased visitor numbers. Whilst welcoming the number of day visitors to the City he referred to evidence which suggested that many visitors did not tend to stay overnight. He stated that this proved a key challenge for the hospitality sector and anticipated that it would be addressed in the near future. He also referred to a number of economic challenges which could lead to fluctuations in visitor numbers together with possible confrontations resulting from Brexit which should not be overlooked. Whilst he generally felt that the citizens of Derry did engage in arts and culture, City of Culture 2013 had raised this to a

completely new stratosphere. He said it was necessary to concentrate on the positive aspects of the event.

In conclusion Councillor Boyle queried how many of the jobs created during City of Culture 2013 still existed.

The Director of Legacy said she was unable to provide information on the precise number of jobs which still existed. However, she said it was only necessary to observe the number of new hotels/restaurants which had recently opened to appreciate the obvious increase in local job creation. She stated that this was a partnership between the private and public sector in terms of providing opportunities. She referred to the number of new initiatives being rolled out across the City in terms of infrastructure necessary to ensure increasing visitor numbers to the City. She also referred to potential opportunities in attracting visitors as a result of the current weak Sterling. She stated that the key objective was to increase visitor numbers and encourage spending.

Councillor Donnelly acknowledged that some economic benefits may have been derived from City of Culture 2013 however he stated that these had been minimal. He said he was not aware of any improvements in living standards in either Creggan or the Bogside as a result of Culture Year. He stated that the thousands of jobs which the City had been promised had never materialised and said it was somewhat embarrassing that only a few hundred jobs had actually been created and it couldn't be confirmed if these still existed. He referred to the report which stated that visitor numbers had been over optimistic. He stated that over thirty percent of those people questioned disagreed that City of Culture 2013 would have encouraged them to remain in the City which was reflected in the numbers of young people leaving the City to seek education and employment elsewhere. He concluded that the City of Culture 2013 would have been an entire disaster had it not been for the Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann, which in itself had caused great division within Comhaltas.

Alderman Hussey said he had no doubt as to the major catalytic impact of City of Culture 2013 for the City and the legacy thereof. He expressed concern that prior to and during the bidding process neighbouring Councils, including Strabane and Donegal, had been approached for support and were assured that they would benefit should Derry be successful in winning the bid. He stated that the support requested was forthcoming however he expressed his regret and disappointment that the benefits promised did not materialise, which he said, might explain his scepticism regarding the prospect of

any long-term benefits being realised through legacy for the entire district and in particular the rural area. He stated that lessons must be learned in terms of going forward.

The Chief Executive stated that notwithstanding the promise to neighbouring Councils it was Council's aim to address the lessons learned through City of Culture 2013 through its Tourism Strategy and its Cultural Strategy. He said Council had taken on board many of the lessons from the legacy Council and would use this positively in terms of producing constructive ideas for the rural area.

Councillor O'Reilly referred to his career which involved working with young people who would have been young teenagers during City of Culture 2013 and who had never realised any economic benefits from this event. He referred to comments regarding business development post 2013 and pointed out that the majority of the businesses had already been created. He referred to the need to engage with young people and to become more involved and radical in terms of providing them with opportunities to remain in the City.

The Director of Legacy stated that Council was currently working with the North West Regional College in terms of skills provision. She stated that it was a matter of partnering with the College to get young people trained and educated in the skills which were required to work in the hospitality and other sectors where employment opportunities were available. She stated that unemployment was currently forty per cent lower than pre 2013.

Councillor O'Reilly stated that in attempting to address existing problems among young people it would be necessary to have more projects and opportunities made available.

The Director of Legacy stated that there were models of excellence which could be examined in terms of training young people and improving their skills. She said it was about maximising potential. She stated that opportunities would become available and the key was to link young people to jobs but first provide them with the necessary skills and expertise required to carry out these jobs.

Alderman Kerrigan welcomed the Chief Executive's comments and the need to address past weaknesses. He referred to the need for hotel provision in a number of areas throughout the Council district to encourage overnight stays. Where shortfalls were identified these must be addressed. He referred to the growth and success of the hospitality

industry in Belfast. He referred to the need to build upon what was achieved during City of Culture 2013. He agreed with the need to train young people in the necessary skills and expertise required within the hospitality industry given the recent rise in the number of hotels in the City.

Councillor Boyle stated that there were clear challenges at the outset of City of Culture 2013 and he stated that a key part of the exercise was the lessons which had been learned. He said Council were now in a position where it could host major events which would not have been possible pre-2013. He said the City staged the largest Fleadh and were now in a position to host any Fleadh should such an opportunity arise in the future. He said it was acknowledged that the City of Culture legacy had not been perfect, however to suggest that 2013 had been a waste of time was indeed mistaken. Tourism figures alone reflected how the City had benefited. He stated that it was part of Council's task to create an environment where businesses and citizens would flourish. In response to comments made by Councillor Donnelly, the Director of Legacy advised that this report had been prepared prior to the submission of a Motion to Council on the European Capital of Culture bid 2023.

Councillor Cooper advised that Council was still perusing its options in relation to the European Capital of Culture bid. He stated that the North West Regional College could be availed of to train and develop young people with the skills necessary to find employment within the hospitality sector. He referred to the massive changes both economically and socially across the City and district as a result of City of Culture 2013.

Alderman Hussey referred to Alderman Kerrigan's comments regarding major hotel growth in Belfast. He referred to the Belfast Job Fair which the Department for Communities in partnership with Belfast City Council was hosting in the Europa Hotel on Wednesday 7 February 2018. He said he understood that in response to the ongoing growth in Belfast's hospitality sector, the Job Fair would have a specific Hospitality Zone with various employers from across the sector available to discuss opportunities directly with interested jobseekers.

In response to a query from Alderman Hussey, the Chief Executive advised that the Department for Communities had not invited Council to partake in a similar type event. He stated that the Belfast Job Fair was a positive move with regard to the growth of the hospitality sector in Belfast. However, he referred to the significant increase in the

hospitality sector in the North West and as the trend continued there would be problems in terms of matching correctly qualified/trained people with jobs. He stated that he would seek the support of any government department in this regard.

Subsequently the Committee

Recommended **that Council write to the Department for Communities inviting them to consider Derry City and Strabane District Council in partnership with the Department to take part in an event similar to the Belfast Job Fair.**

The Meeting terminated at 5.30 pm

The meeting ended at Time Not Specified

The Meeting went into Confidential Business

Signed: _____
(Chairperson)

Date: _____