

## **Derry City and Strabane District Council**

**Minutes of Meeting of the Governance and Strategic Planning Committee (Open) held in the Guildhall, Derry on Tuesday 2 October 2018 at 4.00 pm**

**Present:- Councillor Hastings (Chairperson), Aldermen Hussey, Ramsey, and Thompson, Councillors Cooper, Duddy, Fleming, Gallagher Gardiner, M McHugh, McKeever, McKnight and Tierney.**

**Non-Members of Committee – Alderman M Hamilton and Councillor P Kelly.**

**In Attendance:- Chief Executive (Mr J Kelpie), Lead Finance Officer (Mr A Dallas), Lead Democratic Services and Improvement Officer (Ms E Cavanagh), Lead Human Resources Officer (Mrs P Donnelly), Funding Manager (Mr R Osterhaus) and Committee Services Assistant (Ms N Meehan).**

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### **GSP143/18 Notice and Summons of Meeting**

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

### **GSP144/18 Apologies**

The Chief Executive completed the roll call and there were no apologies recorded.

### **GSP145/18 Declarations of Members' Interests**

Councillor Fleming declared an interest in Item 4 of the Agenda – Deputation.

### **GSP146/18 Deputation - To receive Mr. D O'Hara, Manager, Destined, Mr G Craig, Board Member, Foyle Down Syndrome Trust and Ms Tracy Rogers, Participant in Pilot Programme to discuss the WAM Project.**

The Committee received Mr O' Hara, Manager, Destined and Mr Craig, Board Member, Foyle Down Syndrome Trust who gave a joint presentation on the WAM Project covering the following areas:

#### **What About Me – WAM**

## **Creating Employment Opportunities within Derry City and Strabane District Council for People with Learning Disabilities**

**Partnership** - **Derry City and Strabane District Council Destined + Foyle Down Syndrome Trust**

### **Project AIMS**

**Pilot** – 6 month pilot programme with Derry City and Strabane District Council

**Implementation** – Long-term employment Initiative for people with Learning Disabilities

**Continuation** – Promotion of Model to Councils

### **Rationale**

- 42.9% adults are economically inactive in NI
- 51.8% adults are economically inactive in DCSDC
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- 10% of population – Learning Disabilities
- 94% adults with Learning Disabilities are economically inactive
  
- Long-term relationships
  
- Living Independently
  
- Health & Wellbeing – 40% of People with Learning Disabilities experience poor Mental Health

### **Employment Initiative**

- Ring-fenced at least 1% of workforce for People with Learning Disabilities
- Equating to approx. 9 full-time posts or equivalence i.e. 27 part-time posts

- Meaningful and Purposeful opportunities

### **Benefits to DCSDC**

Fulfil commitments:

- Strategic Growth Plan
- Local Community Plans
- Social Inclusion Commitment
- Disability-Friendly Area

### **Recommendations**

1. Employment Policy for People with Learning Disabilities
2. Training and Support Structures
3. Employers Forum in Council Area
4. Promotion of Model to other Councils

The Committee then received Miss Rodgers who shared with Members her experience of participating in the WAM Project.

Mr Craig stated that the purpose of the deputation was to request Council to develop an employment policy which would allow for the full inclusion of people with a learning disability into the workplace in order that they could benefit from paid employment within the organisation.

Mr O'Hara thanked Members for providing the deputation with an opportunity to address the Committee. He reaffirmed that the Pilot Project had been established to create employment opportunities within Council for people with learning disabilities.

Members from all Parties thanked the deputation for their presentation. They commended them on the Pilot Project and expressed their support for such a concept. Members also thanked Miss Rodgers for sharing her experience with the Committee and congratulated her on her delivery. They welcomed the fact that Miss Rodgers had such a positive, beneficial and enlightening experience during her employment with Council and wished her every success in her future endeavours.

Councillor Cooper welcomed Miss Rodger's comments which he said had highlighted the positive impact her participation in the project had particularly in terms of confidence building, being able to deliver in a

proper working environment and encouraging her to undertake additional skills based training. He continued that this was a pioneer project which could provide an excellent example to other Councils. He referred to the fact that sixteen years previously, a former Sinn Fein Councillor had endeavoured to get Council to formalise a similar agreement for people with learning disabilities in the workforce. He did not consider the request being put forward by the deputation to be excessive and he felt Council must proceed to formalise this arrangement with Destined and Foyle Down Syndrome Trust. He acknowledged the excellent work which had been carried out to date but referred to the need for this to be put in a formal context for implementation before the end of the current Council term in May 2019. He further suggested the establishment of a working group with the organisations concerned to progress the proposal and develop a policy in relation thereto.

Councillor Tierney expressed his astonishment at the statistics provided in terms of employment opportunities for people with learning disabilities. He stated that social inclusion was something which Council must strive towards. He welcomed the fact that Miss Rodgers work experience with Council had proved such a success which had ultimately led her to enrol for further training. He queried if the suggestion that at least one per cent of Council's workforce be ring-fenced for people with a learning disability was a starting point and if it was anticipated that this would be expanded in future years. In terms of support he queried what action would be taken to ensure that the individual was comfortable within their role. He supported the approach outlined by Councillor Cooper that a policy be prepared for implementation before the end of the current Council term and the establishment of a working group to progress this concept.

Mr Craig advised that the main aim of the project was to assist people with a learning disability to become as independent as possible. He stated that there were a number of organisations who were willing to become involved in helping through this transition process. He said there was greater awareness in terms of assisting people with learning disabilities to encourage independent living and paid employment. He expressed concern that currently only work experience was offered to people with learning disabilities and referred to the frustration which would result from such an experience.

Councillor Gallagher expressed his support for the proposal. He queried what measures would be taken to ensure the protection of benefits/entitlements for those participating in the scheme together

with a guarantee that this would not impact negatively on the assessment process.

Mr Craig explained that people in full time employment could still be entitled to benefits.

In response to further concerns expressed by Councillor Gallagher regarding benefit entitlement, Mr Craig pointed out that it was a matter for the individual concerned, their family and carers if taking up paid employment was the best option. However, it was necessary to move forward. He concluded that Personal Independence Payment (PIP) was not affected by undertaking an employment placement.

Councillor Gallagher expressed concern that being in paid employment would hinder the PIP assessment process.

Mr O'Hara advised that Destined had supported people into employment in different arenas. He stated that a benefit analysis was carried out through Dove House and the Citizens' Advice Bureau to determine if an individual's income would be negatively impacted by taking up paid employment. He continued that in terms of PIP consideration was given to the reason why the individual concerned was in receipt of this benefit and if they required support to enter into employment which could be provided for e.g. assistance in terms of travel. He stated that there were a number of organisations who could provide this type of support and who were committed to doing so. He stated that all aspects of an individual's financial status would be considered to ensure that they were not financially worse off after taking up paid employment.

In response to a query from Councillor Gardiner, Miss Rodgers explained that her experience with Council was notable compared to other placements because the staff were very friendly and were aware of her learning disability and were prepared to take time to explain, demonstrate and encourage her in terms of the tasks she was required to carry out. She said they had also provided her with valuable information and the training she required.

Councillor Gardiner welcomed Miss Rodger's comments. She queried as to the role of job mentors/coaches in the pilot project. She referred to the suggested nine full-time posts or an equivalent 27 part-time posts which she felt was considerable and would require a significant number of job coaches/mentors.

Mr O'Hara explained that an intense level of support had been available for the pilot project from Destined, Mencap and Ulster Supported Employment Limited (USEL) with one mentor facilitating two participants. However it was unlikely that this level of support would continue with main employment. He stated that training had been provided to staff working on the pilot project and regular meetings had been held to review the process and consider any problems which had arisen. He stated that a commitment had been received from both Mencap and USEL to continue to provide support as well as Destined and Foyle Down Syndrome Trust. He stated that it was not envisaged that there would be twenty seven people in employment with Council immediately and this would be a lengthy process which would allow time to develop in terms of structures which would provide a smooth transition process.

Alderman Thompson congratulated Miss Rodgers on her presentation to the Committee and welcomed the fact that her experience with Council had proved so enlightening and beneficial in terms of pursuing further skills and training. He also commended the dedication shown by Mr O'Hara and Mr Craig in terms of their work for people with learning disabilities and on their endeavours to progress this concept to a fruitful proposition. He referred to previous discussions which he had regarding this issue. He expressed his support for the proposal being put forward and stated that the necessary action would be taken to ensure that Council provided a meaningful resolution to assist people with a learning disability into the work place.

Alderman M Hamilton expressed her Party's support for the proposals put forward by the deputation.

Subsequently the Committee

**Recommended that (a) Officers prepare a draft policy on the concept of creating employment opportunities within Council for people with learning disabilities for implementation before the end of the current Council term; and (b) a Working Group be established to advance the proposals outlined by the deputation.**

#### **GSP147/18 Chairperson's Business**

There was no Chairperson's Business.

**GSP148/18 Confirmation of the Open Minutes of the Governance and Strategic Planning Committee held on Tuesday 4 September 2018**

The Open Minutes of the e and Strategic Planning Committee held on Tuesday 4 September 2018 (GSP128/18-GSP140/18) were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

**GSP149/18 Members' Alcohol and Drugs Policy**

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 provide Members with information and seek views on the consideration of whether to develop an Alcohol and Drugs Policy for Members or to extend the scope of the existing employee policy to include Members.

Councillor Gallagher referred to the need for Members to treat staff with respect and to be aware that Council was a place of work and refrain from taking drugs or alcohol when engaging with Officers. He referred to the need for some form of complaints process for those employees who had come into contact with Elected Members under the influence of alcohol who may not wish to go through the Code of Conduct.

The Committee

- Recommended**
- (a) that Council offer a drugs and alcohol awareness programme within the Elected Member Training and Development Plan; and**
  - (b) not to develop a separate Alcohol and Drugs Policy for Members or to include Members in the existing employee policy.**

**GSP150/18 Representation for Appeal Panels**

The Lead Human Resources Officer presented the above report, a copy of which had previously been circulated. She advised that the purpose of the report was to seek nominations for a panel to hear appeals from employees who may be dismissed due to gross misconduct or for their ability to continue to provide regular and effective service.

The Committee

**Recommended that Aldermen M Hamilton and Thompson and Councillors McKnight, Gallagher and Tierney be nominated to sit on the Appeals Panel as outlined in the report.**

**GSP151/18 Update on the Development of a City Deal for the Derry/Londonderry Region**

The Lead Finance Officer presented the above report, a copy of which had previously been circulated. He advised that the purpose of the report was to update Members on the progress towards securing a City Deal for the City Region and to endorse the Vision and Outline Bid Proposal Document.

The Lead Finance Officer then gave a power-point presentation on the Vision and Outline Bid Proposal document entitled "Delivering Inclusive Growth – City Deal for the Derry-Londonderry City region".

The Chief Executive pointed out that the Committee had been provided with a number of updates throughout the previous year, the most comprehensive of which had been delivered at the July Meeting of the Committee. He stated that at that time the major issue was to receive formal recognition from government that it would be willing to work with the region to advance the City Deal proposal. He stated that at the end of July there had been a major step forward following the visit from the Chancellor, Phillip Hammond, when he had pledged his support and had invited a formal bid from the City Region. Since that time a huge amount of work has been carried out across Council with all of the strategic partners subscribing to Strategic Outline Cases in respect of the projects to be considered as part of the Growth Deal. He stated that the current focus was on the Strategic Outline Cases and noted that considerable resources had been invested to progress the Strategic Outline Case proposals for Council. He said Council and its partners were in regular contact with the Northern Ireland Office, the British Treasury and Senior Civil Servants. He said work would continue with all government departments to ensure acceptance of the projects coming forward.

The Chief Executive referred to two significant events which had taken place in recent weeks which had allowed the opportunity to further promote the City Region and the City Deal proposal, namely, the visit

by the Lord Mayor of London to the City in September when a major event was hosted in the City's Guildhall by Mayor Boyle and a subsequent visit by the Mayor to the City of London, to attend an event hosted by the Lord Mayor of London in the London Guildhall which was attended by over 200 investors/potential investors and academics. He stated that Council was also working with its colleagues in Belfast City Council in respect of the emerging proposals to ensure clarity and harmony.

Alderman Hussey sought information regarding contact with neighbouring Council's.

The Chief Executive advised that this had been discussed on a number of previous occasions. He stated that the neighbouring Councils were aware of Council's proposals and it was widely acknowledged that this was a Derry-Londonderry Region proposal based on the evidence and the projects contained in the Strategic Growth Plan.

The Chairperson referred to the considerable amount of work required in order to finalise the bid and expressed concern that this was being thrust upon existing staff thereby extending their daily work load beyond acceptable levels of sustainability. He enquired as to the possibility of assigning a dedicated team of workers specifically for this task.

The Chief Executive pointed out that internal restructuring had taken place during the summer months, following which a significant and experienced team of officers had been assigned to work on this project. He stated that this involved people from all the partners involved. He reminded Members that this was not a Council bid but a City Region bid. The Chief Executive said he was not aware of any concerns regarding available resources and assured Members that resources had been significantly realigned around this project with professional input from a range of partners. He concluded that he was comfortable that the level of resources invested in this project was adequate.

Councillor P Kelly queried if the neighbouring Councils had signed off on the projects to ensure that the bid was stronger. He expressed concern that the Londonderry Chamber of Commerce logo had been displayed on the outline bid document however, there was no evidence of the Strabane Chamber's logo. He also suggested that surely the success of the bid was dependant on the Stormont Assembly returning to power. He queried what the bid had to offer for the rural area.

The Chief Executive advised that the structure of the bid varied significantly from the structure of the Belfast bid. He said each bid was based on the specific needs and requirements of the particular city region. He continued that the concept of the Derry-Londonderry region bid was to drive the City forward in economic terms and was based on the main requirements of the region as set out in the Strategic Growth Plan.

The Chief Executive undertook to address the absence of the Strabane Chamber of Commerce logo on the outline bid document.

The Chief Executive explained that in terms of the wider rural benefits, one of the key projects was the provision of rural broadband. He said there was also a very significant project for the centre of Strabane which would have a transformative effect on the entire town. He stated that the City Deal did not deliver on all of the objectives for both the urban and rural areas. He continued that up until July 2018, Council had committed £130m for projects across the entire city and rural areas. He stated that Council was committed to delivering on all of its objectives across the urban and rural area and where possible, would use the City Deal to assist in achieving its objectives. He pointed out that not all of Council's objectives would be delivered through a City Deal.

Councillor Cooper stated that from his Party's perspective this was not just about this City and referred to the importance of Donegal. He stated that the Foyle MP Elisha McCallion had been overseeing this for many months and his Party had no concerns regarding Council's ability in terms of delivering the Deal. He referred to the fact that it was early in the process but pointed out that Deal would not be a panacea for all. He felt however, that given its current situation the City was well positioned to have the bid accepted. He referred to the fact that the bid included a number of strategic partners and stated that the expansion of the University was vital. He also referred to the regional benefits for Derry, Strabane and Donegal. He believed that the proposals could contain a cross border element. He referred to the considerable progress which had been made to date despite the fact that the Stormont Executive was no longer in operation. He referred to the extensive work which had been carried out to date which would bear fruits regardless.

Councillor Gardiner expressed concern at the previous speaker's comments regarding a Donegal link given that funding would be coming from the British government and would be allocated in respect of Northern Ireland only. She expressed concern that this constant

wish to include Donegal could sabotage the Deal for the City. She said she could not understand Sinn Fein's reluctance to submit a bid without the inclusion of Donegal, which, Council had been advised would not be considered in the bid. She referred to the need to adhere to the rules set down by the British government in order that the funding would be forthcoming.

Councillor Gallagher referred to the comments made in regards to a vision of a thriving prosperous and sustainable City and district with equality of opportunity for all and expressed concern that the outline bid plan lacked evidence of equality in terms of the Strabane district. He stated that if the Deal was for the City and the Region equality should be apparent throughout the district. He referred to the fact that all of the main projects included in the proposals were in respect of the City and were not reflective of the entire region. He stated that a regional deal should include specific monies for inward investment into the Strabane area. He referred to the visit by the Foyle MP Elisha McCallion to London and queried if this invitation had been extended to all of the MPs within the Council district. He said he would require greater transparency that the bid was reflective of the City and Region.

Alderman Hussey, whilst acknowledging the work being carried out by the Foyle MP in regards to the bid, pointed out that she did not represent him and expressed concern that the MP for his area was not involved in the process. He also expressed concern that all of the key regional anchors appeared to be located in the City. He acknowledged the significance of the Ulster University but raised concerns about the University's commitment to a City Deal for Derry as it was also working alongside Belfast for its City Deal while both cities appeared to be vying for medical school facilities. He referred to issues within the university sector which must be addressed if the two bids were to be complimentary to each other. He also referred to issues included in the Belfast deal in regards to the economic corridor. He stated that this region's economic corridor was the A5 which should be prioritised above the A2 for the region. He referred to the fact that there were two major manufacturing firms operating in Strabane which required support in order to develop. He queried if there was wholehearted support from the NI Civil Service.

The Chief Executive reminded Members of the numerous reports which had been presented to the Committee regarding the level of the projects all of which were based on the Strategic Growth Plan which had been endorsed by Council and the wider area partners. In relation to the previous Member's comments regarding the A5, he agreed that

this was one of the principle strategic corridors which had to be delivered. He emphasised however that the A5 and A6 projects were not part of the proposals and could not be delivered through the City Deal as they were not eligible for support and were regarded as regional infrastructure. He assured that both Ulster University and the Vice Chancellor were in total support of the proposals being put forward and had their own resources to prepare their business cases. He referred to the fact that they did have a footprint across four campuses throughout the Province and were in this regard also involved in the Belfast Deal. He stated that there could be no duplication in the bids being put forward by Derry and Belfast and both had to be complimentary and distinct. Negotiations were taking place with Queen's University Belfast (QUB) in this regard. He pointed out that government had been in consultation with Belfast over the past eight months regarding their proposals however, negotiations with Derry had just started. He continued that both sets of proposals would be evaluated by the government simultaneously.

The Chief Executive said he was encouraged by the amount of progress which had been made in recent weeks. He noted that propositions must be based on innovation. He explained that regional anchors were those which would drive forward proposals from a learning point of view and these were normally City based. He said he could not over emphasise the scale of the Strabane proposals which would transform the area.

The Chief Executive confirmed that all the MPs for the Council area had been invited to attend the event in London and the event in the Guildhall to host the visit by the Lord Mayor of London to the City. A number of MPs had not accepted these invitations.

Councillor Cooper welcomed the confirmation that the A5 and A6 projects could not be delivered as part of a City Deal and refuted comments made in response to his earlier remarks. He expressed serious concerns at the apparent attack on his previous comments in regards to the inclusion of Donegal in the Deal. He assured that the Foyle MP was representative of all.

Alderman Ramsey commended officers on the excellent work carried out to date. He said the proposals contained elements which could not be progressed without the return of the Stormont Executive and expressed concern that the process would ultimately be delayed because of this. He said Donegal would benefit from any Deal as

would other neighbouring Council areas however the funding package would be in respect of Northern Ireland.

Councillor McKeever commended Officers on their hard work and efforts in relation to the Deal. He stated that this had amazing potential for the City and region but required the support of all. He welcomed the fact that sufficient resources had been assigned to progress the Deal.

Councillor M McHugh stated that Council could take responsibility for having developed the whole of the North West Region with Derry as the main centrepiece. He stated that contrary to a previous Member's comments regarding the inclusion of Donegal in the Deal, he felt it was important that Council embrace Donegal which would enhance the entire North West region. He referred to the need to expand on the excellent work carried out to date and enjoy the benefits for the City and the region. In conclusion, he referred to the importance of Donegal particularly in light of any forthcoming Brexit deal and referred to the need to engage the City and region.

Councillor Gardiner confirmed her belief that this was an excellent bid and acknowledged the work carried out to date in progressing the proposals. She stated that any forthcoming monies from the British government would not include Donegal. She expressed concern at the continuance of Sinn Fein to seek to have Donegal included in the bid regardless of the fact that this could sabotage the entire Deal. She acknowledged the benefits for the entire North West region but reiterated that the funding would be in respect of the City and region and would not include Donegal. She referred to the need for unity in going forward.

Alderman Hussey, whilst agreeing that there would be peripheral benefits which were to be welcomed, referred to the need to concentrate on the North West region of Northern Ireland. He also welcomed the fact that the Strategic Outline Cases were being developed by the strategic partners however, he did emphasise that the area of benefit should be the entire Council area.

Councillor Cooper pointed out that the Foyle MP had numerous discussions with the Dublin government as she had with the British government.

In response to a query from Councillor Gallagher, the Chief Executive explained that the process with government was ongoing. He stated

that the initial focus was on innovation and digital projects. He stated that the Strategic Outline Cases would be considered and monitored and it was anticipated that this would be a short process given the scale of the resources involved and recent progress. It was hoped that the Treasury would be satisfied with the projects submitted. However whether or not all of the projects would be successful was a matter for discussion. He stated that the aspirations of the various partners had been included but the outcome of the process would form the basis for the final bid which would be presented to Council for consideration.

In response to a further query from Councillor Gallagher, the Chief Executive advised that if a project was removed from the bid consideration would be given to having it replaced. It would of course have to be replaced with a project of equal merit. He pointed out that this was not a Council bid but involved a wider number of partners, however, Council as a partner, could make proposals in terms of the choice of projects to go forward. He reiterated that the bid was based on the Strategic Growth Plan which was the City's key strength and was recognised by government as such. He stated that bids had been submitted by other Cities which did not focus on major economic benefits. However, as this bid was based on the City's individual requirements the key projects reflected the needs of the area.

In response to a query from Alderman Hussey, the Chief Executive advised that prior to the Chancellor's announcement in July, in an attempt to ensure that Council was as focused as possible, a meeting had taken place with David May and a number of government departments. He stated that the Department for Communities had shown an unprecedented level of support as had NI Civil Service officials. How this would translate in terms of funding from government remained to be seen however the bid had the backing, in principle, from the key government departments.

Subsequently the Committee

**Recommended**      **that Council continues to support and endorse the progress made to date in the development of a City Deal and the Vision and Outline Bid Proposal, and that Officers continue to press forward to ensure a formal announcement from the UK government is made immediately in respect to a City Deal for the Derry-Londonderry City Region.**

**The meeting terminated at Time Not Specified**