

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

**Minutes of Meeting of the Business and Culture Committee to be held in the Council Chamber, Derry Road, Strabane on Tuesday 5 December 2017 at 4.00pm.**

**Present:- Councillor Logue (Chairperson); Aldermen D Hussey, R Hamilton, Warke, Ramsey; Councillors Fleming, Cooper, McKnight, McGuire, Boyle, Reilly and O'Reilly.**

**In Attendance:- Director of Business and Culture (Mr S Gillespie), Head of Business (Mr K O'Connor), Head of Culture (Ms A McCarter), Museum & Visitors Service Manager (Ms M Edwards), Personal Assistant to Director of Business and Culture (Mrs J Galloway-Doherty) and Committee Services Assistant (Mrs J Short).**

**Non-Member of Committee:- Councillor Gallagher**

### **BC230/17 Notice and Summons of Meeting**

The Director of Business and Culture read the Notice and Summons for the meeting.

### **BC231/17 Member Attendance and Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillor's Cusack and McMahon.

### **BC232/17 Declarations of Members' Interests**

- Councillor Boyle and Alderman Hussey declared an interest with Visit Derry presentation.
- Councillor Cooper declared an interest in Agenda Item: Update on Work of the Education and Skills Delivery Partnership.
- Councillor's O'Reilly, Fleming, Logue and Alderman Ramsey declared an interest in Agenda Item: PEACE IV Local Action Plan Objective 4.1 Small Grants Programme.

### **BC233/17 Presentation: Visit Derry**

The Director of Business and Culture invited the representatives from Visit Derry to provide an update to Members on the progress of the organisation and its inclusion in the Tourism Strategy process over the next 5 years. (A copy of the presentation was previously circulated to Members). He reiterated that Visit Derry is the Council's destination partner. Next month the draft Tourism Strategy will be tabled. This will have a number of actions as part of a detailed plan. These will include very specific actions for the Sperrins.

Mr Wilmont, Chairman of Visit Derry thanked Members for the opportunity to provide an update on the work of Visit Derry and he thanked Council Officials for their role in supporting the organisation.

He reminded Members that Visit Derry was a Membership organisation which partnered between the public and private sectors. The membership was open to any tourism related company or organisation approved by the Executive Team that wished to support the growth of tourism to the region. He added that the Company was established to promote the City of Derry and its surrounding area as a centre for business and leisure, tourism, travel, national and international conferences, exhibitions, festivals and trade fairs.

Mr Wilmont referred to the roles and functions of Visit Derry that included the following:

- Destination Marketing
- Visitor Servicing
- Industry Engagement
- Influence and Advocacy

He assured Members that the organisation would continue to be committed to working in partnership with DCSDC in terms of tourism development throughout the City and wider Council area.

Mr Dunne, General Manager also thanked the Members for the opportunity to provide an update on the performance of Visit Derry over the previous year. He said that 2016 was a record year and there was a 26% increase in overnight visitors in comparison to 2015, and generated approximately £282k into the local economy. He added that to date records show that 2017 would be another record year.

Alderman Warke joined the meeting at this stage.

Mr Dunne referred to Destination Marketing and the tools used to attract visitors to the area through press media bloggers and PR exposure. He added that familiarisation events were also co-ordinated; Trade and consumer shows, Fan Visits by Travel Trade and Media and Trade Leads.

Alderman Ramsey joined the meeting.

Mr Dunne further stated that Visit Derry was a private/public sector partnership and 279 businesses had committed to an annual membership fee in 2016/17. He said that there was a range of providers who benefited from their association with Visit Derry in terms of product development.

He added that a series of network events and product awareness trips are co-ordinated and they work closely with the Universities, the Western Trust Medical Sector and local industries to attract association conferences to the region.

Mr Dunne in conclusion referred to what had to be achieved in going forward:

- Endorsement of the role of Visit Derry following Independent Review
- Increase the investment in tourism
- Strategic Investment in Re-locating VIC
- New Tourism Strategy Endorsement
- Deliver a successful public-private sector partnership for the benefit of the city region

The Chair thanked both representatives for the update on Visit Derry. She said that it was encouraging to note an upward trend in this type of tourism market and in particular the increase in job opportunities for the region. She congratulated the recent achievement by the staff at the Visitors Centre, Foyle Street who came first equal in the Tourism NI Customer Service Audit.

Councillor Cooper thanked the representatives for their presentation. He commented that the tourism sector was one of the key growth areas that Council continued to focus on in terms of servicing visitors and product development across the City and wider District area.

Councillor Reilly also thanked the representatives for a comprehensive presentation that answered any concerns that Members had and it was encouraging to note the increase in visitors returning to the District area. He referred to the inclusion of public art, heritage and historic buildings in terms of visitor attraction. He further referred to opportunities within creative industries and sport that should be developed to encourage visitors to the District.

Councillor Gallagher referred to a previous report in relation to the Visit Derry review where it was stated that Visit Derry would focus on the core product, Derry City and no reference was given to the development of visitor attraction to Strabane Town.

Councillor O'Reilly joined the meeting at this stage.

Alderman Hussey thanked the representatives for providing an informative update. He said that in his opinion Visit Derry worked well, however the expansion of the role was necessary in order to assist tourism beyond the City. He sought clarity in relation to core roles, and anticipated job creation by 2020 and if this was within the city or wider District area. He also referred to niche market development eg. walking, fishing, golf etc that required further development beyond the City. He said that it was important to encourage visitors to stay overnight outside of the City, to increase economic benefit throughout the wider Council area.

The Director of Business and Culture advised Members that the draft Tourism Strategy would address the issue of encouraging visitors outside of the City and Visit Derry was responsible for product development in that regard.

The Head of Culture advised that tourism development including tourism promotion was about creating confidence and stimulating the private sector to invest in product development particularly accommodation of all kinds.

The Head of Business commented that the accommodation market was growing in terms of Bed and Breakfast sector and it was therefore important to build upon the strengths that already existed. He added that in terms of private sector accommodation, confidence was growing and it was important that a positive message was portrayed by Council.

Mr Wilmont in response to Members, reiterated that Visit Derry was committed to working with Council and fully recognised the current service led agreement in terms of the City and would continue to deliver on the agreement and work towards the development of the product across the District and region.

The representatives left the meeting at this stage.

**BC234/17 Chairperson's Business**

The Chair referred to the success of the Christmas Light Switch-On events held recently in Strabane Town and Derry City and congratulated staff involved with the event. She said that she looked forward in anticipation to the upcoming festive activities throughout the City and District.

**BC235/17 Confirmation of the Open Minutes of the Business and Culture Committee held on Friday 10 November 2017**

The Open Minutes of the Business and Culture Committee Meeting held on 10 November 2017 (BC213/17- BC225/17) were agreed and signed by the Chair.

**BC236/17 Matters Arising**

Councillor Hussey referred to Minute Ref: BC220/17 – Tower Museum Accreditation 2017 and requested that Officers investigated the potential of the Stables Museum, Sion Mills working in partnership with the Tower Museum.

**BC237/17 ACNI Resilience Programme**

The Head of Culture presented the above report, details of which had been previously circulated to Members. The purpose of the report was to seek Members approval to proceed with a Cultural Venues Resilience Programme in partnership with the Arts Council of Northern Ireland (ACNI) and Belfast City Council.

Councillor Fleming welcomed the report and commented that the funding would benefit the people of the District. He stated that although it was a pilot project it was hoped that the programme would be expanded to other organisations in the future.

Councillor Reilly also welcomed the report and commented that the programme provided an opportunity to enforce the importance of the arts that offered a unique selling point in terms of cultural history.

Alderman Ramsey concurred with the previous speakers remarks.

The Head of Culture in response to a query from Alderman Hussey, clarified that if the programme was extended to other Cultural organisations within the DCSDC area that the threshold would be reduced accordingly.

The Committee

**Recommended**      **that Council approve in principle the participation of the proposed Resilience Programme subject to the finances becoming available for the coming financial year.**

**BC238/17      Allocation of Culture Department in Year Savings 2017/2018**

The Head of Culture presented the above report, details of which had been previously circulated to Members. The purpose of the report was to outline the in-year savings from the Culture department and to seek Members approval to allocate them to other areas of spend required within the Department. She also indicated that since release of the report there was a further request from the savings as there was a need to replace the emergency lighting at the Alley Theatre in Strabane at an estimated budget of £7,000.

Members welcomed the report and were encouraged to note that as a result of the savings all the successful applicants to the Cultural Venues fund 17/18 would now receive their full allocation of funding.

The Committee

**Recommended**      **that Council approves the re-allocation of potential in year savings from the Culture Department to the projects outlined in the report.**

**BC239/17      Bad Debt from Car Parking Penalty Charge Notices**

The Head of Business presented the above report, details of which had been previously circulated to Members. The purpose of the report was to seek approval to write off an amount of charges incurred through Penalty Charge Notices that the Department for Infrastructure now considers will not be collected. This debt was historical and was not related to the period of ownership since car parks were transferred to Council.

Members welcomed the report. Alderman Ramsey moved, seconded by Councillor McKnight to support the following recommendation.

The Committee

**Recommended**      **that Council approves writing off the amount of £176,703.95 Bad Debt incurred from unpaid PCNs**

**BC240/17      Future Delivery of Off-Street Car Park Enforcement and Penalty Charge Notice Processing**

The Head of Business presented the above report details of which had been previously circulated to Members. The purpose of the report was to seek approval to extend the existing agency agreement with the Department for Infrastructure for the provision of the Off-Street Car Park Enforcement and Penalty Charge Notice processing services for a further period of 3 years from 1 November 2019 until 31 October 2022.

The Committee

**Recommended**      **that Council; i) are asked to note the AECOM has completed its analysis in relation to the future delivery options for Off-Street Car Parking. ii) agree to extending the existing Agency Agreement with the DfI for the provision of the above services for a further period of 3 years from 1 November 2019 until 31 October 2022. iii) note the proposals to utilise the findings of the AECOM analysis to improve the service delivery of the DfI and NSL as well as mitigating the risk of costs associated with successful appeal.**

Councillor Reilly left the meeting.

**BC241/17 Update on the work of the Education and Skills Delivery Partnership**

The Head of Business presented the above report details of which had been previously circulated to Members. The purpose of the report was to update Members on the work of the Transition Education and Skills Group and the progress made on delivering a number of priority education and skills collaborative actions as identified in the Inclusive Strategic Growth Plan: Community Plan.

The Committee

**Recommended that Council notes the update on the work of the Transition Education & Skills Group and progress made on delivering a number of priority education skills collaborative actions with partners as identified in the Inclusive Strategic Growth Plan: Community Plan.**

**BC242/17 War Memorials**

The Director of Business and Culture presented the above report, details of which had been previously circulated to Members. The purpose of the report was to update Members regarding the ownership of the War Memorial in the Diamond and to outline the way forward regarding the treatment of other memorials in the City and District.

Councillor Cooper welcomed the report. He stated that in terms of restoration of other memorials throughout the District area that the working group discuss the various options in that regard and explore opportunities to avail of match funding.

Alderman Warke welcomed the report and said that it was important that the war memorial was restored to original condition.

Councillor Hussey also welcomed the report. He referred to the impending Centenary War events to be held in 2018, and requested that all of the war memorials throughout the District are restored to their former condition and in particular the War Memorial at Sion Mills.



Councillor Gallagher stated that it was important the Council established ownership of the war memorials in going forward.

The Chair advised that whilst ownership of the war memorials had still to be established, as stated by the legal team, Council have the powers to maintain and upkeep the memorials and the Decade of Centenaries Working Group would discuss a way forward in that regard.

The Committee

**Recommended that Council notes for information the report on War Memorials.**

**BC243/17 Business Boost Update**

The Head of Business presented the above report, details of which had been previously circulated to Members. The purpose of the report was to provide Members with a progress update on Business Boost.

The Committee

**Recommended that Council notes the contents of the update report on Business Boost.**

**BC244/17 Enterprise Week 2018 Update**

The Head of Business presented the above report, details of which had been previously circulated to Members. The purpose of the report was to provide Members with a progress update on Enterprise Week 2018.

The Committee

**Recommended that Council notes the progress update on Enterprise Week 2018.**

**BC245/17 Update on Year 3 Q2 Kickstart to Work Project funded by European Social Fund**

The Head of Business presented the above report, details of which had been previously circulated to Members. The purpose of the report was to provide Members with a year 3, Q2 report (1 July 2017 – 30 September 2017) on the Kickstart to Work Project.

Councillor Cooper commented that whilst he welcomed the report he had concerns in relation to the barriers imposed for clients to progress to level 2 and therefore a more bespoke approach was required to ensure that people had the opportunity to progress if they so wished.

The Head of Business clarified for Councillor Hussey that the programme of events had not been finalised as yet and he confirmed that events will be held in Strabane Town.

The Committee

**Recommended that Council notes the update report on Year 3 Q2 Kickstart to Work Project funded by European Social Fund.**

Alderman Warke left the meeting.

**BC246/17 Launch of £10k Business Start-Up Challenge 2018**

The Head of Business presented the above report, details of which had been previously circulated to Members. The purpose of the report was to provide Members with a progress update on the launch of the £10k Business Start Up Challenge 2018.

Councillor McKnight welcomed the report and said that it was a fantastic opportunity to develop entrepreneurship that will benefit the local economy.

Councillor's Boyle and O'Reilly left the meeting.

**The meeting ended at 6.30pm.**

**The Meeting went into Confidential Business**