

# **Minutes of Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum**

## **Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> June 2025**

### **Attendance**

Members:

Councillor Michael Long  
Councillor Sarah Bunting  
Councillor Séamas de Faoite  
Councillor Brian Smith  
Councillor Ryan Murphy

### **Apologies:**

Councillor Natasha Brennan  
Alderman Sonia Copeland  
Councillor Ciaran Beattie

### **Officers:**

Sharon McNicholl, Deputy Chief Executive/Strategic Director of Corporate Services  
Nora Largey, City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services  
Trevor Wallace, Director of Finance  
Sinead Grimes, Director of Property & Projects  
David Sales, Strategic Director of City & Neighbourhood Services  
Jim Girvan, Director of Neighbourhood Services  
Lesley-Ann O'Donnell, Senior Manager - Culture and Tourism  
Geoff Dickson, Strategic Planning & Policy Manager (secretariat)

## **1. Finance Update**

The Director of Finance updated Members on the current financial position of the Council. Members noted the update and that further discussions will be necessary at Committee to agree further expenditure decisions.

The Director of Finance also updated Members on the options for managing discretionary payment requests in the future and agreed that a report would be brought to Committee in August for consideration.

## **2. Community Support Plan**

The Director of Neighbourhood Services presented the work undertaken to develop the Community Support Plan and the options for taking forward. During discussions questions were raised about how best to determine the optimum level of funding going forward. It was agreed that the Community Support Plan would be brought to SP&R Committee in June.

### **3. Fleadh Cheoil**

The Senior Manager, Culture & Tourism updated Members on the preparations to date for hosting Fleadh Cheoil in 2026. Members noted the intent to bring the full Outline Business Case to Committee in August. Following a query from a Member, the Senior Manager, Culture & Tourism informed Members that work is currently underway regarding the animation of the vacant units on Royal Avenue during Fleadh Cheoil and agreed to arrange for an update on this to be brought to Members.

### **4. Leisure Update**

The Director of Property & Projects informed Members that a paper will be brought to Members on the proposed next steps for leisure transformation, including looking at the centres not taken forward to date during the Leisure Transformation Programme. The outstanding completion of Girdwood was raised as a priority that needs completed in advance of any further phases of leisure transformation commencing. The Director of Property & Projects agreed to go back to DfC and provide a further update to Members.

The Forum noted the intent to involve Members in the process through party group briefings and Area Working Groups. When centre catchment areas straddled two areas, such as the Ozone Complex straddling south and east AWG constituencies, the Director of Property & Projects agreed to consider joint engagement sessions.

### **5. Update on the new Crematorium Development**

The Director of Property & Projects provided the background to the consideration of a new Belfast crematorium and the changing context since the original decision. Members noted that a report be brought to SP&R Committee seeking a workshop in August to work through the options in detail before progressing.

### **6. Planning Update**

The City Solicitor updated the Forum on the live planning applications that had been considered at Planning Committee. In relation to queries raised the City Solicitor and Director of Property & Projects agreed to follow up and provide updates.

## **7. Request to Attend**

Members agreed to the attendance of John McDonald and Ed McGinley of GRAHAM at a future meeting in relation to Housing Led Regeneration. It was also noted that Queen's University would be attending the September meeting.

## **8. AOB**

### **Event in Victoria Park - Legacy Network**

PGLCF noted that the event should be granted under delegated authority, following consultation with the Chair of SP&R Committee in order for the event to be undertaken on 1<sup>st</sup> July.

### **Request for use of Woodvale Park**

Members noted the update and that the Strategic Director will grant use of Woodvale Park under his delegated authority.

### **Lord Mayor's Car**

The Director of Property & Projects informed the Forum of the intent to bring a proposal to SP&R Committee regarding the lease of the Lord Mayors Car.

### **Dual Language Signage at Olympia Leisure Centre**

The Director of Property & Projects outlined the timelines for dual language signage at Olympia Leisure Centre and Forth Meadow Community Greenway. Members noted that it will be brought to SP&R Committee in June.

### **Lower Oldpark Community Association - Summer Community Diversionary fund**

The Strategic Director of City & Neighbourhood Services updated the Forum on the Summer Community Diversionary Fund for the Lower Oldpark Community Association and that a report will be brought to SP&R Committee.

### **Asbestos**

The Strategic Director of City & Neighbourhood Services updated the Forum regarding the asbestos reported in south Belfast.

### **Belfast Vital**

The City Solicitor updated the Forum regarding the legal opinion being sought. The Director of Property & Projects informed the Members that the access issue in respect of the Boucher Road Playing Fields, previously highlighted, had been resolved.

### **Paisley Park**

The Director of Property & Projects informed Members of ongoing discussions regarding the potential transfer of the asset to the Council. Members emphasised the importance that any transfer of asset must be in line with the agreed policy of the transfer of assets.

### **Bloomberg Philanthropy**

The Strategic Director of Corporate Services updated Members on this issue and said that a report would be brought to the next SP&R meeting.

### **Illuminate requests**

The City Solicitor outlined for Members a number of illuminate requests received. Members noted the following requests would be agreed under the City Solicitor's delegated authority.

- **World Refugee Day** – 20<sup>th</sup> June
- **Greek National Day** – 25<sup>th</sup> March 2026

### **GLL**

Following a request from a Member, the Strategic Director of City & Neighbourhood Services updated the Forum regarding potential industrial action at GLL sites.