

CORPORATE POLICY GROUP

Minutes of the meeting held at 9.00 am on Wednesday 8th September 2021 in Council Chamber and by MS Teams

In attendance:

Present attendees = (P), Remote Attendees = (R)

- Members:** Cathaoirleach - Cllr. Pío Smith (P)
Cllr. Joanna Byrne (P)
Cllr. Liam Reilly (R)
Cllr. Emma Coffey (P)
Cllr. Maria Doyle (P)
- Apologies:** Cllr. Jim Tenanty
- Officials:** Joan Martin, Chief Executive (P)
Joe McGuinness, Director of Services (P)
Paddy Donnelly, Director of Services (P)
Frank Pentony, Director of Services (P)
Bernie Woods, Head of Finance (P)
Gráinne Tuomey, Meetings Administrator (P)

1. Minutes of 7th July 2021

Proposed by Cllr Liam Reilly
Seconded by Cllr Joanna Byrne

2. Matters arising

Members were advised that a decision had to be made on the Mother & Baby homes report as this decision was still outstanding. It was agreed to publish the report in its entirety but due to the large agenda for the September meeting to defer the discussion on it until the October Council Meeting.

3. Meeting Formats in COVID Environment

Members were reminded that the Council Meeting was reverting back to St. Gerards Hall and would therefore be limited to HSE timeframes. The format of future meetings was discussed with different Members expressing differing preferences for attendance. Ongoing national discussions around the Moorhead report, and the new payment structure for Councillors were discussed and how that might affect remote attendance. Cllr Byrne advised that she is on a cross party committee with Minister Burke examining this. Etiquette of remote attendance was also discussed and the difference by some in how they approach this versus an in person meeting. It was agreed to wait on more detail nationally.

4. Council Meeting Agenda

Members were given a briefing on all items in the Council Agenda including:

- Allocations, Motions and Questions

- CE Report – A discussion took place around the length of time being spent on the CE Report agenda item, and on Municipal District matters being raised at Council meeting. The Cathaoirleach advised that items would have to be prioritised and MD matters should be cut.
- Casual Vacancy – Members were advised around Standing Order no. 23 which states: *“Where the person who caused the casual vacancy was not, at the time the casual vacancy occurred, a member of a registered political party, the members shall, in filling the casual vacancy, have due regard to the wishes of the former member or his or her family members as appropriate”*

5. Development Plan Process

It was suggested that Members commence consideration of the Chief Executive Report on submissions on Material Amendments at the September meeting and then adjourn until a couple of days later.

The Chief Executive advised where the OPR stated that items were required that she had agreed with this in her report. Members were told that they had until the 3rd October to adopt and it was felt that this could be gone through quite quickly. The Executive noting an influx on planning applications prior to adoption of the plan cautioned Members that delaying the adoption of the County Development Plan would cause a delay to the commencement of studies required to be done for any Local Area Plan, and would also delay the LAPs. The legislation around adoption of the plan would be looked at and a briefing would issue to Members. Members were reminded that in law ‘Members shall have regard to the advice of the Chief Executive’.

6. Dundalk and Ardee Flood Relief Consultation Proposal

Members were advised of updates being given by staff to Dundalk and Ardee members, the progress being made was described as encouraging.

7. Approval of €5 million Overdraft Facility for 2022

Bernie Woods, Head of Finance, briefed Members on this item.

8. Webcasting - Issues Paper

Joe McGuinness, Director of Services, presented a comprehensive report for consideration by Members on the issues with webcasting. The pros and cons of installing a facility to allow webcasting, were examined, and the current status around public attendance.

9. Members Communication Plan

A lively discussion took place around this item with some Members expressing dissatisfaction on different responses issuing to Councillors. This was mainly refuted by Executive, however it was suggested that staff, resources and ability to tackle items can change over a period of time which could influence responses issued. Due to the large number of items being raised on a daily basis it would be difficult to check if each query raised had been previously raised elsewhere, but it was suggested that some sample sugar cases would be examined from start to finish to see how communications could be improved.

Members were advised a new smart phone communication app was being purchased to improve communications and advise of items of interest in a timely fashion. This would be brought to Members when fully tested and operational.

10 Amenity Grant Scheme 2021 - Late Applications

Paddy Donnelly, Director of Service advised of late applications how these were being looked at.

11 SPC Work Programmes

An issue of non attendance by non-Elected SPC Members was raised, and it was suggested that standing orders on SPCs were examined to see if this was referred to.

12 Any other business

There being no other business, the meeting concluded.

The Minutes were confirmed at a meeting of the Corporate Policy Group held on:

Date: _____

Cathaoirleach: _____

Meetings Administrator: _____