

Public Document Pack

**Democratic Services Section
Legal and Civic Services Department
Belfast City Council
City Hall
Belfast
BT1 5GS**

MEETING OF STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Dear Alderman/Councillor,

I enclose a copies of the report for the following items to be considered at the meeting to be held at 9.30 am on Friday, 13th December, 2024.

Yours faithfully,

John Walsh

Chief Executive

AGENDA:

3. Matters referred back from Council/Motions

- (c) Notice of Motion – Addressing Educational Inequalities in Belfast (Pages 1 - 4)
- (d) Notice of Motion – Armed Forces Covenant (Pages 5 - 8)

4. Belfast Agenda/Strategic Issues

8. Operational Issues

- (d) Minutes of City Hall/City Hall Grounds Installations Working Group 12th December (Pages 9 - 12)
- (f) Minutes of the Meeting of the Disability Working Group 11.12.24 (Pages 13 - 18)

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Subject:	Notice of Motion – Addressing Educational Inequalities in Belfast
Date:	13 th December, 2024
Reporting Officer:	Nora Largey, City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services
Contact Officer:	Jim Hanna, Democratic Services and Governance Manager

Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted? Yes No

Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.

Insert number

1. Information relating to any individual
2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)
4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter
5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained
6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction
7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime

If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in? Yes No

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
	To bring to Members' attention a motion in relation to Addressing Educational Inequalities in Belfast, which the Standards and Business Committee considered at its meeting on 21 st November.
2.0	Recommendation
	<p>Members are asked to note that in accordance with Standing Order 13(i) that Notices of Motion which commit the Council to expenditure must be referred to the appropriate committee for consideration and report.</p> <p>At this time Members are only asked to note that the Notice of Motion has been received and that, if agreed, a subsequent report will be brought to Committee outlining a detailed consideration of the Notice of Motion and the potential costs implications.</p>
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>The Standards and Business Committee, at its meeting on 21st November, considered the following motion which had been received for submission to the Council on 2nd December:</p> <p><u>Addressing Educational Inequalities in Belfast</u></p> <p>“In light of the DENI ‘RAISE’ programme in response to the ‘Fair Start’ report, the Council resolves to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support the RAISE programme and align it with the Belfast Agenda. 2. Establish a cross-party committee to monitor progress and ensure community engagement. 3. Commit to continuous improvement in addressing educational inequalities, including writing to the Education Minister to seek confirmation that his department will proactively respond to feedback about the targeting of the programme and ensure it reaches the communities most in need. <p>This motion aims to ensure coordinated, effective, and inclusive efforts to reduce educational inequalities in Belfast.”</p> <p>Proposer: Councillor David Bell Secunder: Councillor Long</p>
3.2	The motion calls upon the Council to undertake a number of actions to address education inequalities.

	<p>The Committee may be aware that the Belfast Strategic Partnership (BSP) was previously a partnership between Belfast City Council, the PHA and Belfast Trust. It has been superseded by the establishment of the Community Planning Partnership.</p> <p>One of the working groups of the BSP was the Lifelong Learning Group. They had established a Lifelong Learning Charter and undertook a range of community-based learning activities – including the Festival of Learning. While the BSP no longer exists, that Lifelong Learning Group continues to meet – and the main focus of their activities remains the annual festival of learning, scheduled to take place in April next year. This is usually a week-long programme of events to promote learning opportunities across the board. It does not have a specific focus on any type of learning or any target group. Membership of the group involves Belfast City Council, UU, QUB, Forum for Adult Learning, BMC and a number of community-based learning partners. The work on the Learning City group is coordinated through our Community Planning team which bring updates to Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on the work. The Motion will therefore be referred to this Committee.</p> <p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>3.3 None at this stage as there is no commitment to proceed with the Notice of Motion. Details of any financial and resource implications will be reported at a subsequent meeting.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>3.4 This motion, if agreed, may have potential equality, good relations and rural needs implications and should be subject to our normal screening process as appropriate.</p>
4.0	Documents Attached
	None

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Subject:	Notice of Motion – Armed Forces Covenant
Date:	13 th December, 2024
Reporting Officer:	Nora Largey, City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services
Contact Officer:	Jim Hanna, Democratic Services and Governance Manager

Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted? Yes No

Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.

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7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime

If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in? Yes No

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
	To bring to Members' attention a motion in relation to the Armed Forces Covenant, which the Standards and Business Committee considered at its meeting on 21 st November.
2.0	Recommendation
	Members are asked to note that in accordance with Standing Order 13(i) that Notices of Motion which commit the Council to expenditure must be referred to the appropriate committee for consideration and report. At this time Members are only asked to note that the Notice of Motion has been received and that, if agreed, a subsequent report will be brought to Committee outlining a detailed consideration of the Notice of Motion and the potential costs implications.
3.0	Main Report
	<u>Key Issues</u>
3.1	The Standards and Business Committee, at its meeting on 21st November, considered the following motion which had been received for submission to the Council on 2 nd December: <u>Armed Forces Covenant</u> "That this Council recognises the unique skills that are held by Armed Forces service leavers; recognises that many veterans can face disadvantages compared to the general population, arising from military life, when accessing services and as such, this Council commits to signing up to the Armed Forces Covenant immediately." Proposer: Alderman James Lawlor Seconder: Alderman Dean McCullough
3.2	The motion calls upon the Council to sign to the Armed Forces Covenant. The Strategic Policy and Resources Committee is responsible for policy and HR matters and the motion has to been referred to this Committee in the first instance in order for officers to ascertain what is involved and to ascertain what, if any, the Council's commitments would be in signing the Armed Forces Covenant if the Committee is minded to agree to the motion. <u>Financial and Resource Implications</u>
3.3	None at this stage as there is no commitment to proceed with the Notice of Motion. Details of any financial and resource implications will be reported at a subsequent meeting. <u>Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment</u>
3.4	This motion, if agreed, may have potential equality, good relations and rural needs implications and should be subject to our normal screening process as appropriate.

4.0	Documents Attached
	None

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City Hall/City Hall Grounds Installations Working Group

Thursday, 12th December, 2024

THE CITY HALL/CITY HALL GROUNDS INSTALLATIONS WORKING GROUP MINUTES

HELD IN THE LAVERY ROOM AND
REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor Flynn (Chairperson);
The Lord Mayor, Councillor Murray;
Alderman Rodgers; and
Councillor de Faoite.

In attendance: Ms. K. Mullen, Client Manager; and
Mr. C. Mealey, Committee Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies were reported on behalf of Alderman Lawlor.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest recorded.

Installation of LGBT Stained-Glass Window in City Hall

The Client Manager provided the Working Group with an update in respect of the design and concept for a new LGBT stained-glass window in Belfast City Hall.

The Working Group were presented with an updated draft sketch of the stained-glass window.

The Client Manager informed the Working Group that the amendments made by the design team sought to reflect the feedback received at a recent workshop that was held with Members, the design team, and stakeholders, to consider the design and concept.

She advised the Members that the updated draft sketch would be further refined and that additional details would be added. She further advised that a final sketch would be submitted to the Working Group in January, 2025.

During discussion, Members of the Working Group stated that they were content with the overall design and concept of the stained-glass window, however, suggested several minor amendments to the design.

After discussion, the Working Group agreed, that subject to minor amendments and refinements, to approve the design and concept of the new LGBT stained-glass window.

Chairperson

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6
of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

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Disability Working Group

Wednesday, 11th December, 2024

DISABILITY WORKING GROUP HELD IN PERSON AND REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor Brooks (Chairperson); and
Councillors Abernethy, Brennan, Doherty and Smyth.

In attendance: Mr. R. Connelly, Policy, Research and Compliance Officer;
Ms. S. McNeill, Policy, Research and Compliance Officer;
and
Mrs. S. Steele, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

No apologies were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 14th October, 2024 were taken as read and signed as correct.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were recorded.

Draft Changing Places Toilet Policy

Mr. Connelly, Policy, Research and Compliance Officer, advised the Members that the final draft Changing Places Toilet Policy had been reviewed by the Changing Places Toilet (CPT) Working Group on 29th August 2024 and by the Corporate Management Team (CMT) on 29th September 2024. He reminded the Members that a public consultation had been undertaken between 29th January and 22nd April 2024. 90 people had responded to the consultation, with the following findings:

- 75.4% of the respondents agreed with the draft Changing Places Toilet Policy, with a smaller percentage (17.9%) disagreeing;
- 66% of the respondents used the Parks at least once week;
- 39.7% of the respondents have a disability; and
- 57.5% of the respondents were carers/dependents.

In addition, two written responses had been received. The written responses had advised that the wording of the draft policy was not acceptable, for example, it stated that 'the Council should be committed', and not to strive to do and that there should be a required inclusion of CPT facilities at large events. It also stated that there should also be a commitment to a rolling programme of addressing the CPT deficit and toilet needs

identified. The officer detailed that, as a direct result of the feedback, amendments had been made to the final draft Policy, advising that the final draft Policy now stated that ‘the Council will commit to’, instead of ‘the Council ‘will strive to’ provide as required a Changing Places facility in every large building.

The Members were also advised that the Council would make it a commitment for large events being organised by external organisers/promoters to provide CPT facilities. The Council would also make an effort to include Changing Places facilities or to make toilet provision more accessible when extending or extensively refurbishing an existing Council-owned building when it was reasonable to do so.

The Members noted that the Council had received several recent requests in relation to improving physical access within Council toilets, including requests from several campaigns in relation to Stoma Friendly toilets and also correspondence from the Crohn’s and Colitis UK campaign “Not Every Disability Is Visible”. These campaigns had each requested the introduction of disposable facilities with accompanying signage/posters promoting the various causes.

The officer detailed that it was proposed that, in response to such requests, officers would advise that one of the first steps in the implementation of the CPT policy would be an audit of all accessible toilet provision across the Council estate. The purpose of this review would be to help identify any gaps and to quantify the level of resources which would be required to upgrade toilets and increase accessibility where feasible to do so.

The Working Group noted the update provided.

Update on Disability Actions – Delivering an Accessible City for All

The Working Group considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

The purpose of this report is to provide Members with preliminary work that has been carried out to develop a strategic roadmap for delivering an accessible city for all by 2035.

3.0 Main report

3.1 Background

3.1 Councillor Ross McMullan raised a Notice of Motion at Strategic Policy and Resources in June 2020. The full Notice of Motion is set out in the appendix attached to the report.

Objective 5 in the Notice of Motion highlighted the need to develop a strategic roadmap for delivering an accessible city for all by 2035 that leaves no one behind that provides a common strategic vision of disability access and inclusion across all its strategies and plans and outlines how we will get there.

Members will note that some aspect of the Notice of Motion from Councillor McMullan has progressed in that Disability Working Group has been established and as part of that the Council's Disability Advisory Panel will be invited to attend the Working Group periodically to provide a forum for councillors, our Disability Advisory Panel, council officers as well as other relevant stakeholders and experts from time-to-time, to discuss and progress actions on Belfast City Council's commitment to becoming an accessible city for all by 2035.

Councillor Ruth Brooks, the City Solicitor and the Language Officer have all been appointed as disability champions to create a focal point for elected members and council staff to improve access and inclusion in the delivery of Council services and have a key role in strategic policy making to deliver a common vision of disability inclusion.

Parts 4 and 5 of the Notice of Motion committed the Council to undertake an independent consultation report on models of best practice of accessibility and inclusion and developing a strategic roadmap for delivering an accessible city for all by 2035 that leaves no one behind and that provides a common strategic vision of disability access and inclusion across all its strategies and plans.

4.0 Preliminary work carried out

- 4.1 Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended by the Disability Discrimination (NI) Order 2006), outlines duties to promote positive attitudes toward disabled people and encourage participation by disabled people in public level. Pursuant to those commitments, as well as commitments within the Language Strategy, the Council adopted a Disability Action Plan for the period 2022-2025 in April 2022. A copy of the current Action Plan can be found at the following link:

<https://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/Documents/Disability-Action-Plan-2022-2025>

As the Plan is due to expire next year, officers have begun preliminary work on a new Action Plan which will go beyond compliance with our statutory obligations and will focus on how the Council can drive a common strategic vision of disability access and inclusion across all its strategies and plans.

In parallel to that work, officers intend to appoint an external consultant early in the New Year to carry out an Accessibility Audit across the Council which will, amongst other things, help to inform the new draft Action Plan.

Stakeholder engagement will also be key to delivering the ambition of having an accessible city for all by 2035.

As part of that preliminary engagement, the Council had an engagement stall facilitated by the Equality and Diversity Unit with the support of an external facilitator at the International Day for People with Disabilities event at City Hall on 3rd December 2024.

Engagement exercises were conducted to capture the current issues faced by people with disabilities. Information was captured in different formats e.g. audio recordings via a recording booth and writing on post stickers. Themes explored were:

- what is going well in Belfast?
- what could be better in Belfast?
- what does a vision of an accessible city look like?

The outcome of the engagement was a success with a lot of constructive feedback from individuals with a disability and disability stakeholders contributed to the engagement at the event.

Elected members will also be aware of the Council's ABLE network, which Membership of the ABLE network is open to all council staff who consider themselves to have a disability; as well as carers, allies or supporters of people with disabilities.

The network aims to work on the following themes:

- Awareness of disability /able to work
- Benefits of the network in raising the profile of disability, providing guidance and support to staff and managers
- Listen and share experiences
- Encourage people to disclose if they have a disability

The ABLE Network and Disability Advisory Panel will also be key stakeholders and representatives of both groups will be invited to attend a future meeting of the Working Group to inform the Action Plan at the earliest point.

An update report on the Accessibility Audit and the emerging Action Plan will be presented to the next meeting of the Group.

5.0 Financial and Resource Implications

The actions set out in this paper can be met through existing budgets and resources.”

A Member referred to the success of the recent International Day for People with Disabilities event at the City Hall on 3rd December 2024 and commended all those involved in the event.

The Chairperson welcomed the update and work undertaken. She referred to correspondence that she had recently received advising that Ulster Rugby had a 'temporary sensory room' which they were keen to share with other Sports Clubs throughout the city and she encouraged the Members to promote this amongst their local communities and organisations.

Noted.

Chairperson

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