

# People and Communities Committee

Tuesday, 11th June, 2024

## MEETING OF THE PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

- Members present: Councillor Verner (Chairperson);  
Councillors Abernethy, Bell, Bower, R. Brooks,  
Bunting, Canavan, M. Donnelly, R-M Donnelly,  
Flynn, Garrett, Magee, Maghie, Maskey, McKeown,  
I. McLaughlin and Ó Néill.
- In attendance: Mr. D. Sales, Strategic Director City Operations;  
Mrs. S. Toland, Director of City Services;  
Mr. S. Leonard, Director OSSS and Resources and Fleet;  
Mr. J. Girvan, Director of Neighbourhood Services;  
Ms. K. Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control;  
and  
Mr. J. Hanna, Democratic Services and Governance Manager.
- Also attended: Councillors T. Brooks and Ferguson.

### **Apologies**

Apologies were reported from Councillors Black, Cobain and Doherty.

### **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of 2nd May were taken as read and signed as correct.

It was reported that the minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 3rd June.

### **Declarations of Interest**

Councillors Canavan and M. Donnelly declared an interest in respect of item 5(e) Social Supermarkets - response from the Department for Communities (DfC) in that they worked and/or were associated with organisations which were in receipt of funding. However, as the item did not become the subject of debate, they were not required to leave the meeting.

### **Presentation**

#### **Lagan Valley Regional Park**

The Committee noted the details of a presentation by Dr Andy Bridge, Manager, Lagan Valley Regional Park, during which he raised a number of issues caused by dog owners and/or dogs at the Giant's Ring historical site and monument. He also made comment in relation to the access difficulties and damage to the trail.

The Chairperson thanked him for attending and he left the meeting.

### **Restricted Items**

**The information contained in the reports associated with the following three items is restricted in accordance with Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.**

Resolved – That the Committee agrees to exclude the members of the press and public from the meeting during discussion of the following three items as, due to the nature of the items, there would be a disclosure of exempt information as described in Section 42(4) and Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

The Members were advised that content of ‘restricted’ reports and any discussion which takes place during closed session must be treated as ‘confidential information’ and no such information should be disclosed to the public as per Paragraph 4.15 of the Code of Conduct.

### **Leisure Centre Reinvestment and Improvement Projects Update**

The Committee noted a report which provided an update on reinvestment and facility improvement projects delivered during 2022 and 2023, which had been delivered within the leisure management contract arrangement.

Following a query by a Member in relation to the Whiterock Leisure Centre, the Director of Neighbourhood Services advised that he would look at the matter and speak to the Member directly.

### **Large Promoter request for use of Boucher Road Playing Fields**

The Committee was advised that the City and Neighbourhood Services Department had received a request from a promoter to use the Boucher Road playing fields for a minimum of 1 show and a maximum of 6 shows during a 4-week period beginning mid-August until mid-September in 2025, 2026 and 2027.

The Committee granted authority to the applicant to hold up to 6 concerts at Boucher Road Playing Fields during a 4-week period between mid-August and mid-September in 2025, 2026 and 2027 and delegated authority to the Director of Neighbourhood Services to ensure the following:

Negotiate satisfactory terms and conditions of use via an appropriate legal agreement prepared by the City Solicitor, including managing final booking confirmation dates and flexibility around ‘set up’ and take down’ periods, and booking amendments, subject to:

- The promoter resolving any operational issues to the Council's satisfaction;
- The promoter carrying out appropriate resident and community engagement;

- The promoter meeting all the statutory requirements of the Planning and Building Control Service including the terms and conditions of the Park's Entertainment Licence
- A review clause, which allows for consideration of any issues during previous events.

The Committee noted:

- that events that sought multiple year approval would be subject to annual review and delegated to the Director of Neighbourhood Services authority, under the scheme of delegation, approval to remove the permission for subsequent years based on officer recommendation if necessary;
- the fee for the use of Boucher Road playing is detailed in the departmental pricing schedule and is subject to change as part of the annual pricing review; and
- that the above recommendations were taken as a pre-policy position in advance of the Council agreeing a more structured framework and policy for 'Events', which is currently being taken forward in conjunction with the Council's Commercial team.

### **Blanchflower Pitch Usage**

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 12th March 2024, it had decided to move forward with 'Option 3' which was to ask officers to devise a 'fair and equitable' allocation of pitch bookings amongst local community clubs and Glentoran FC for the 3G pitch at Blanchflower Stadium. This decision was again reinforced at the 2nd May meeting and ratified at the Council meeting on 1st June.

Accordingly, the Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report which proposed an allocation model for members consideration, following the completion of an information gathering exercise with all the clubs which had expressed an interest in obtaining access to the pitch.

With the permission of the Chairperson, Councillor Ferguson addressed the Committee and he submitted minor amendments to the allocation model which he asked the Committee to accept.

The Committee approved the allocation model, subject to the amendment submitted by the Member, and agreed that officers would be in contact with clubs to offer those slots, with effect from 1st July 2024.

The Committee also granted delegated authority to the Strategic Director to re-allocate or rearrange slots in the event of clubs not wishing to progress with the bookings proposed at Committee.

### **Matters referred back from the Council/Motions**

#### **Pavement Parking**

The Committee was reminded that Councillor Tara Brooks had proposed a Notice of Motion on Pavement Parking at the Council meeting in October 2023, as follows:

*'That this Council notes that inconsiderate pavement parking affects everyone in Belfast, but disproportionately children, people with visual impairments, mobility aid users, neurodiverse people and people with prams or pushchairs; and therefore it is essential that the Council plays its full role in reinforcing the message that pavements are for people and it is never acceptable to park in a manner which forces people off a footway and into the road. This Council acknowledges the challenges in solving this issue but resolves to work towards stopping vehicles from blocking pavements through inconsiderate or dangerous parking, including by undertaking a public information campaign about the negative impacts of pavement parking in its forthcoming communications'.*

During discussion, Members made the point that, while they were in support of the context of the motion, they would not be supportive of the Council resourcing the functions for which other organisations had responsibility and enforcement powers.

Accordingly, the Committee agreed that officers consider the request set out in the motion in conjunction with Corporate Communications, the PSNI and the Department of Infrastructure, both of which had responsibilities regarding enforcement, and identify any costs and resources required and that a report be brought back to the Committee.

### **Committee/Strategic Issues**

#### **Consultation response – Rethinking our Resources**

The Committee considered the following report:

##### **“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**

**The purpose of this report is to present to Members the draft Belfast City Council response to the DAERA public consultation on ‘Rethinking Our Resources: Measures for Climate Action and a Circular Economy in NI’**

## 2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are requested to review and agree the draft Belfast City Council response to the recently published DAERA public consultation on 'Rethinking Our Resources: Measures for Climate Action and a Circular Economy in NI'.
- 2.2 Members are asked to note the new closing date of the consultation, of 27 June 2024, at 17:00 and to acknowledge that the BCC draft response, if approved by Committee, will not be ratified by full Council until after the closing date and that this will be highlighted on our response notification to DAERA.

## 3.0 Main report

- 3.1 Members will recall, from the Committee meeting on 9th April 2024, that The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) recently published a consultation titled 'Rethinking Our Resources: Measures for Climate Action and a Circular Economy in NI' seeking views of key stakeholders. A link to the Consultation can be found here [Rethinking Our Resources: Measures for Climate Action and a Circular Economy in NI Consultation | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs \(daera-ni.gov.uk\)](https://daera-ni.gov.uk/consultation)

At that meeting, members:

- noted the contents of the consultation document,
  - agreed a workshop to formulate a Belfast City Council response on the key items within the consultation,
  - agreed to support a request via the Council Waste Forum for a time extension, in order to consider a full and proper response to the consultation.
- 3.2 Following the Committee meeting of 9th April 2024, a member's workshop was arranged and delivered by staff from Resources and Fleet, on Thursday 18th April. The workshop was designed to gain consensus with members on the consultation response and in particular on identified key topics.

The members workshop set the legislative backdrop to the consultation and highlighted that the main purpose of the consultation is to work towards meeting legal requirements and the statutory targets contained within the Climate Change Act (NI) 2022 and the Waste and Contaminated Land Order (NI) 1997.

Subsequent meetings have taken place with members unable to attend the workshop on the 9th April.

**Members Workshop 18th April 2024**

3.3 At the workshop, six key themes arising from the consultation proposals were highlighted and presented to members for discussion and recommendations agreed. These were:

1. Restriction of Household Residual Waste Capacity
2. Dry Recyclables and Food Waste
3. The Concept of 'QualiTEE'
4. Non-Household Municipal Waste (NHM)
5. Household Recycling Centres and Commercial Waste
6. Enforcement Measures

The key proposals and findings for each theme are as follows:

1. **Restriction of Household Residual Waste Capacity**

3.4 **To restrict the residual waste capacity for households to a maximum of 90 litres per week, delivered either via a 180-litre bin collected fortnightly or a 240-litre bin collected every 3 weeks.**

This proposal would have the potential to:

- move materials up the waste hierarchy, especially diverting from residual bin to recycling, resulting in better environmental and economic outcomes.
- make improvements to recycling rate and contributes to targets.
- deliver efficiency savings given comparative costs of recycling treatment versus residual treatment.

However, it could also lead to possible displacement of residual waste to recycling centres. Also, its success relies upon adoption of behavioural change.

The recommended responses under this theme agree with the proposal. Since 2014, Council policy has been that replacement residual bins are 180-litres capacity (Public Consultation on Waste Framework 2017/18, demonstrated a clear favour in terms of restricted bin capacity rather than reduced frequency of collection)

It is highlighted in the draft response is that the Council's exception policy should be applied – i.e. assessment carried out on household basis; 6 or more people in a household and medical waste which results in more residual waste.

It is also highlighted that the proposed implementation time frame of 2 years would be challenging and this initiative, like many others within the consultation document, would require central government financial support (containers, delivery, communications).

## 2. Dry Recyclables and Food Waste

### 3.5 Provide a consistent range of materials collected from every household and apartment in Northern Ireland.

This would ensure that a common set of materials would be collected across all households and all Councils. This would avoid confusion and lead to improved consistency and quality of materials.

However, it is worth noting that approx 70,000 households are currently without a glass collection in Belfast and providing glass collection to additional households within a two-year period could prove challenging. Whilst we would be in support of the recommendation of a core set of recycling materials, the draft response highlights that the implementation period of 2 years would be challenging and would require central government financial support (containers, delivery, communications).

### 3.6 Additional materials to be added to the core set over time, with flexible plastic packaging to be collected from households by the end of the financial year 2026/27.

This proposal would increase the range of materials, improving tonnage and reducing waste in black bins and reduce confusion over plastics and contamination. However, there would be a need for additional resources and containers depending on the degree of separation required. It could also be problematic at properties with communal collections where space is a limiting factor.

The draft response recommends that the proposal should be accepted in principle, but the most suitable method of collection of flexible plastics should be informed by best practice/pilots such as the Flex-collect pilot in GB which will report its findings in Spring 2025.

Also, the list of materials should be kept under active review, apply to all households and other items e.g. batteries and small electrical appliances could be included in the future, subject to inclusion in an Extended Producer Responsibility Scheme (EPR) which would result in the manufacturers of these items paying for the collection, treatment and disposal of these items collected from the kerbside. The default position for collection of dry recyclables from households is in four separate streams:

- (i) fibres (paper/card),
- (ii) plastics,
- (iii) metals,
- (iv) glass separately from each other in the dry recycling collection within 2 years.

It is noted that under this proposal, increased segregation at source could lead to better quality and a significant reduction in contamination delivering increased recycling rates.

However, within our current kerbside recycling schemes in Belfast, it has been demonstrated that plastics and metals can be collected comingled without any detriment to quality.

Significant financial and resource support from central government and external sources as EPR would be required to deliver the service changes associated with these proposals if implemented.

The Council draft response disagrees with this proposal as plastics and metals can be collected co-mingled without degradation of quality and in addition the two-year timeframe would be extremely challenging to deliver the level of service change required as well as the requirement to secure funding resources for same.

**3.8 Quality of recyclate for reprocessing is important and needs to be improved through changes to collections and clear measures should be set to describe quality. 4 options presented to be ranked.**

This would ensure that more secondary materials are collected, of better quality and supporting local processing, jobs and a more circular economy. It would also reduce confusion over plastics and contamination.

The segregated, kerbside sort scheme provides quality material but requires additional crews, containers and vehicle resources, generally attracting additional costs. This also requires behavioural change/buy-in to be successful and communications are vital.

The following is the proposed ranking order:

- 1) Option A – ‘three stream’ (as per 4,700 homes in Castle DEA)
  - Glass
  - Paper/Card
  - Metals and plastics
- 2) Option C – ‘two stream: glass out’ (as per 22,000 households in outer city on blue bin scheme with separate box for glass collection)



- Glass
  - Comingled paper, card, metals and plastics
- 3) Option B – ‘two stream: fibres out’
- Paper/Card
  - Comingled metals, plastics and glass
- 4) Option D – ‘fully co-mingled’
- Comingled glass, paper, card, metals and plastics

The draft response also notes that there should be an exemption from the regulations in order to mix plastics and metals.

**3.9 Changes to bring about weekly food waste collections to all houses and apartments Provision of free caddy liners and mechanisms used in terms of liner provision.**

This proposal could lead to the diversion of food waste from black bins. Also, increased frequency of collection tends to deliver higher capture rates. DAERA assert that separation of food and garden waste could save money in the future depending on processing i.e. changing food waste from In-Vessel Composting (IVC) to Anaerobic Digestion (AD) and having separate seasonal collection arrangements for the garden waste and treated by windrow composting at a lower cost than both in-vessel composting and anaerobic digestion. Free of charge provision of caddy liners would ensure no barriers to participating. However, there would be significant resources and money involved to move all households, including apartments, to weekly food waste collections.

The draft response agrees in principle with this proposal as WRAP studies indicate higher capture rates through weekly food waste collections. However, any time frame for implementation must take account of existing contractual arrangements which councils have in place, and which would likely delay full scale roll-out until post 2030.

The Council’s draft response agrees that caddy liners should be provided free of charge with the mechanism of provision left to each individual council to determine.

Recommended rank order of collection methods for the collection of food waste would be.

1. A separate weekly collection of food waste with additional arrangements for garden waste
2. A fortnightly mixed food and garden waste collection.

3. A weekly mixed food and garden waste collection.
4. A separate fortnightly collection of food waste with additional arrangements for garden waste.

3.10

3. The Concept of 'QualiTEE'

*Existing legislation asserts that to achieve the high-quality recycling necessary for a Circular Economy and to ensure we can reprocess as much as possible, the core recyclable waste streams must be collected separately from each other. The exceptions to this default position are where separate collection is not Technically feasible, would entail disproportionate Economic costs, or would not deliver the best Environmental outcome.*

DAERA note that amendments to the Waste and Contaminated Land Order (WCLO) set out that any exceptions to the default separate collection position must produce recyclables of a comparable Quality. This is unique to Northern Ireland (NI). This presents an opportunity for NI to set a high standard for the UK in terms of recycling and reprocessing as well as leading the way in transitioning to a Circular Economy.

However, increased segregation generally equates to more cost (e.g., separate glass or paper/card collections). It generally results in increased collection containers at households which may prove problematical for smaller households. If implemented in full, this scenario would eventually lead to the cessation of the blue bin system as a collection method as the Council would migrate to a multi-stream collection scheme. There is a proposed exemption for separate collections of metals and plastics and Councils will be required to provide the regulator with written assessments seeking exemptions to separate collection on the grounds of technical, environmental or economic factors.

Within the Council's draft response, it is noted that the Concept of QualiTEE is new to Councils. It was not discussed in depth at Council / DAERA workshops prior to the consultation being launched and Councils therefore need more engagement on the detail to fully understand its implications.

Within the proposals Councils would have the ability to gain exemptions on collection methods under one of the four criteria. As currently understood, the QualiTEE principle appears to be quite loose and an assessment could be readily prepared seeking an exemption under one of the grounds, thus undermining one of the key aims of the policy i.e. improved quality and supporting the local circular economy. Therefore, more consultation on this issue in particular is required with Councils.

Finally, there are also concerns that the QualiTEE principle will be used as a measurement for the packaging Extended Producer Responsibility (pEPR) payments. However, as the QualiTEE principle is 'unique' to NI there are uncertainties and concerns as to how this will be applied when NI Council performance is benchmarked against GB counterparts when it comes to the EPR payments scheme. The Council's draft response seeks to draw this concern to the attention of the regulator.

3.11

#### 4. Non-Household Municipal Waste (NHM)

The main proposals for Non-Household Municipal Waste covers Waste that is not generated by households but is similar in composition to waste generated by households. It covers waste generated by businesses and industry (including Belfast City Council) but there are exemptions. Many of the themes mirror those of household collections and include:

##### *Proposals for segregation as per household collections*

- Segregation of residual and dry recyclables
- Collection of Flexible plastic
- Food waste – revisions to Food Waste Regulations 2015

##### *Anaerobic Digestion to be the preferred treatment method for separately collected NHW Food Waste*

##### *Proposals to review and investigate options to support NHW sector (incl. Waste Zoning)*

The response is generally in favour of the proposals as they would ensure consistency between what people recycle at home, work and school etc. There is a strong potential to increase both the quality and quantity of recycling services if there were stronger controls on Non-Household Municipal Waste. In addition, the proposals support the core principles around the Circular Economy. Other upcoming legislation around Digital Waste Tracking will include NHM in data reporting and align the reporting of waste by businesses to the same standards of household waste reporting.

It is recognised that there may be barriers for businesses, e.g., timelines, storage, practical solutions, operational issues, contractual issues, costs, communications, staff training, contamination and carbon impact.

The proposals could have implications for Belfast City Council as a commercial waste collector, Written assessments would

be required regarding the management of waste generated by MHM. There could be operational constraints (containers, vehicles, contracts, resources etc.). Notably there may be changes to charging mechanisms as Belfast City Council currently charge by volume and this may have to change to charging by weight. This might affect both commercial kerbside collections and any commercial waste presented at Household or Commercial recycling centres, subject to the proposals being implemented.

Although the response is generally in favour of many of the proposals it also highlights concerns for the Council both as a producer and carrier of Non-Household Municipal Waste, the timeframes envisaged for change, implied costs for infrastructure and the need for much greater NHM sector engagements.

In some areas such as waste zoning and exception arrangements, the response states that the proposals require more detail.

### 3.12

#### 5. Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC) and Commercial Waste

*To establish commercial waste, bring sites and/or to increase access to HWRCs for businesses, public bodies and other organisations to encourage more recycling and better waste management.*

This proposal would be of benefit for smaller organisations without formal waste collection arrangements or companies with limited storage space to demonstrate environmental credentials.

The draft Council response disagrees with this proposal as it stands in relation to the current HWRC sites and infrastructure due to the current capacity and location of the sites. It would be possible to agree on separate commercial waste sites as measurement and charging on these sites could be controlled, but any additional sites must be properly funded. Given the current legislation, shared sites remain open to abuse by commercial operators declaring that the waste is household waste and therefore non-chargeable. Legislative change is required so that the Council can determine which waste arriving at a HWRC is commercial and therefore chargeable.

It is unclear at this stage whether additional commercial waste will necessarily increase recycling rates at sites as commercial operators could dispose of residual as well as recycling waste. In the absence of legislative change, tailored administration solutions would be required (fair use

policy/tonnage restrictions, permit systems, booking systems) It is clear that the proposals, if adopted, could significantly increase costs to Council without proper charging mechanisms. It is clear that this NHM Waste will inevitably need to be measured and tracked.

3.13

6. Enforcement Measures

*Through collaboration with Councils, we will set out proportionate and robust guidelines for compliance and enforcement that enable Councils to enhance their waste and recycling services (Article 21 - Waste and Contaminated Land Order)*

*Amendments will be made to Article 5 of the Waste and Contaminated Land Order 1997 to ensure compliance with the post-consultation requirements to segregate a core set of dry recyclables and food waste by obligated businesses and the wider NHM sector.*

The Council's response agrees in principle with the proposals. Council invests considerable resources in encouraging residents to do the right thing and recycle correctly. However, there are limited options in terms of enforcement when repeated non-compliance is encountered.

Domestic Fixed penalty notice amount of £200 was thought to have been acceptable but should be reduced if paid sooner. Likewise, a Commercial Fixed Penalty Notice amount of £700 was seen as acceptable but reduced if paid sooner. Taking members comments on board the response will emphasise that FPNs should be a measure of last resort. To ensure consistency it is recommended that DAERA introduce guidance that will support enforcing authorities to meet their statutory obligations. It is anticipated that should these enforcement actions be the responsibility of Councils; additional resources will be required to meet these obligations.

DAERA recognise that there is a responsibility on the NHM waste sector to step up and play their part and not leave the heavy lifting to residents only. The environmental targets will not be achieved without the full participation of the NHM waste sector.

3.14 Regional responses

In addition to the BCC response, Council Officers have attended meetings organized by arc21 and NILGA/Council Waste Forum in May 2024 to inform coordinated responses by those organisations. Because of the differing

approaches to collections and the management of waste by the eleven separate councils the proposed responses are generic, and some questions / proposals will not be responded to as there was no consensus from the participant councils. This proposed response sets out the Belfast position in respect of this consultation.

**3.15 Financial and Resource Implications**

The outcome of the final consultation may result in changes to how the Council will collect and manage its waste both from a household and non-household waste perspective. As such there will be financial implications both in terms of capital and revenue. The response highlights these issues and requests that this cost of change is fully supported by DAERA and other external sources such as EPR.

**3.16 Equality or Good Relations Implications/  
Rural Needs Assessment**

None.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

**XL Bully legislation - response from DAERA**

The Committee was reminded that, at the People and Communities meeting held on 9th April, 2024, it was agreed to write to the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to enquire as to what impact the new legislation in respect of XL Bully Type dogs would have on local councils and animal welfare charities, and what resources would be allocated to deal with those impacts.

The Committee was informed that a response has been received from the Director of Animal Health and Welfare Policy Division on behalf of the Minister.

In his response he advised that Department officials were continuing to engage with the Northern Ireland Dog Advisory Group (NIDAG) on the implementation of the policy, this included ascertaining what additional costs would be incurred for councils as a result of the new restrictions. This work was currently ongoing and, in the weeks ahead as the exemption scheme was finalised, consideration would be given as to what financial assistance the Department could provide.

He assured the Members that the Minister was acutely aware of the impacts on councils and had publicly expressed his desire to work with councils to support them, where possible, within the Departmental budget. He was conscious that there might be some organisations within the animal welfare charity sector that could be impacted because of the restrictions, however, he noted the Department had no legislative powers to intervene or provide financial assistance. Historically, the Department had not funded any animal welfare charities directly in the past, nor did it have any budget to do so in the future.

Finally, the correspondence stated that the Department for Communities remained responsible for policy and strategy relating to the voluntary and community sector and provided advice to charities on sustainability and does offer targeted funding initiatives, which are open to qualifying organisations.

The Committee noted the response.

### **Update on XL Bully safeguarding measures**

The Director of City Services submitted for the Committee's consideration the following report:

#### **“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**

**1.1 To provide a further update to Members about the new safeguarding measures for XL Bully breed type dogs in NI and in particular the amended timeline for introduction and additional details regarding finance and resource implications.**

#### **2.0 Recommendation**

**2.1 The Committee is asked to note the report.**

#### **3.0 Main Report**

##### **3.1 Timeline**

**Members will be aware that on 5th March 2024 DAERA Minister Andrew Muir announced his intention to introduce new safety measures for XL Bully breed type dogs in Northern Ireland as DAERA believe it is the most appropriate way to protect public safety.**

**3.2 The proposed legislative timeline is outlined in Appendix 1 and includes:**

- 1st Stage – May 2024: Subordinate Legislation; The Dangerous Dogs (Designated Type) (Northern Ireland) Order 2024; This was approved by the Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee on 23rd May 2024, and will be put forward for consideration at the next scheduled Executive Committee meeting on 6th June 2024. Subject to its approval, the intention is to make the legislation on 7th June 2024, to come in to operation on 28th June 2024.**
- 2nd Stage – July 2024: The Dangerous Dogs (Compensation and Exemption Schemes) (Northern Ireland) Order 2024.**
- From December 2024 it will be illegal to own an XL Bully dog without an exemption certificate.**

3.3 Although the proposed legislation mirrors current legislation in the rest of the UK, the application process in Northern Ireland will differ significantly from that in the rest of the UK as it will be managed by local councils. DAERA is also currently reviewing sections relating to the transfer of ownership and the revocation of exemption certificates.

3.4 When the legislation comes into effect in Northern Ireland, it will be illegal to breed, sell, gift, exchange, abandon an XL Bully type dog, or permit it to stray. DAERA is liaising with a number of interested groups including The Dog Control Coalition and Veterinary Northern Ireland (Vet NI) on the new safeguarding measures for XL Bully breed type dogs.

3.5 Judicial Review

A dog owner and the campaign group 'Don't Ban Me, Licence Me' are taking legal action against the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and were given permission to take an appeal to the High Court against the UK-wide ban on the XL Bully breed.

3.6 Guidance

DAERA will develop guidance and practical support to allow owners to understand the impending legislative changes, including how to identify an XL Bully breed type dog using the current Defra Conformation Standard developed by the UK Government.

3.7 It remains the case that owners are responsible for controlling their dog, both at home and in public. DAERA have published advice and guidance on 'responsible dog ownership' and 'sharing your house with a dog' and it is intended that this information will also be included in upcoming messaging on XL Bully type dogs.

3.8 Owners will be required to self-assess their dog using the XL Bully breed conformation standard and where the dog meets a substantial number of the characteristics outlined, it will be considered an XL Bully breed type.

3.9 Guidance is also available for enforcement officers applying the XL Bully breed type conformation standard.

3.10 Self-Certification/Exemption Scheme

Owners of XL Bully type dogs will be required to self-assess their dog using the conformation standard developed by Defra. An application may be made to local councils for an Exemption Certificate within a specific timeframe. After this



period, it will be illegal to own an XL Bully type dog in Northern Ireland.

3.11 Details of the exemption scheme are yet to be finalised; however, it is anticipated that the application window for exemption certificates will be open from mid-summer until the end of December 2024, providing almost five months for applications to be submitted.

3.12 If an owner believes their dog to be an XL Bully type dog, they should start to prepare for the safeguarding measures being introduced which will broadly mirror those already in place in the rest of the UK.

3.13 Compensation Scheme

DEARA also propose to introduce 'The Dangerous Dogs (Compensation and Exemption Schemes) (Northern Ireland) Order 2024. This will mean a compensation scheme will be available should the owner of an XL Bully breed type dog not wish to adhere to the exemption measures and no longer wishes to keep their dog. Dog owners may voluntarily surrender their XL Bully type dogs for euthanasia, and receive financial compensation of £100, plus £100 towards Vets costs.

3.14 Valid compensation claims will be processed fully by DAERA and the closing date for all claims is to be confirmed.

3.15 Communications/Awareness campaign

DAERA, in conjunction with local councils, will ensure that communications are issued in advance of the restrictions coming into effect, including details of the steps required to comply and enable the XL Bully dog owners to prepare for the changes. The main priority is to ensure that as many dogs are exempted as possible, within the specified cut off time, to avoid the scenario of having to exempt dogs via the Court process. We will liaise with colleagues in Communications, Marketing & External Affairs.

3.16 Finance and Resource Implications

The previous Committee Report dated 2nd May 2024 provided details of the potential impact of this new legislation on our Dog Wardens, Animal Welfare Officers, Digital Services, Business Support and Finance staff, Legal Services, Kenneling and External Affairs, Communications and Marketing.

3.17 It is recognised that the implementation of the pending legislative controls for XL Bully breed type dogs will be at an

annual net cost to Councils going forward. Councils are liaising with DEARA through SOLACE NI and the Northern Ireland Dog Advisory Group (NIDAG) regarding the most cost effective way of delivering this service and future funding requirements for Councils to undertake these additional responsibilities.

3.18 DAERA is liaising with the Department of Finance (DoF) on these financial impacts which include: Administration of self-certification exemption process; Upgrade/development of existing IT systems; Bespoke training of dog control (and animal welfare staff) across councils; Kenneling costs; and Legal expenses associated with enforcement activities.

3.19 Equality or Good Relations Implications/  
Rural Needs Assessment

None.”

The Committee noted the contents of the report.

#### Dilapidated Buildings - responses From DfC, DoF and DAERA

The Director of Planning and Building Control reminded the Members that, at the People and Communities Committee meeting on the 9 April 2024, it was agreed to write to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) urgently seeking the Minister to bring forward a Dilapidation Bill.

In addition, the Committee had agreed to write to the Department for Communities (DfC) and the Department of Finance (DoF) seeking the allocation of a package of funding to assist councils to more effectively tackle the problems associated with Dilapidation.

Accordingly, letters from the Committee were issued to all three recipients on 17th May 2024.

She reported that DAERA had responded on the 21st May 2024 recognising that the existing legislation used by councils in respect of dilapidation was dated and geographically fragmented. The response sets out that a draft bill had been prepared which aimed to consolidate and enhance existing legislation and improve the cost recovery ability of councils. Subject to the agreement of the Executive, the Minister was intending to introduce the Bill to the Assembly after the summer recess this year. It was anticipated that the Bill would provide councils with a modern and fit-for-purpose regime, including clear powers to tackle dilapidated and dangerous buildings and neglected sites.

DfC had responded on the 31st May 2024 setting out that the Department did not currently have any funding programme which would assist councils to be more effective in tackling the problems associated with dilapidation. Whilst the Department had previously operated the Urban Development Grant Scheme, it was not currently open for applications.

Further, the response sets out that the Executive had an agreed 2024/25 budget, and the Minister would be allocating this funding against existing commitments and Ministerial priorities.

Finally, the DoF had responded on the 29th May 2024 setting out that the issue of dilapidated buildings was an area where the Minister had specific interest as the Minister responsible for rating matters. The response sets out that bringing dilapidated buildings back into use can play a key role in growing the overall taxbase and can have a restraining effect on the overall poundage levels within the system.

The response sets out the rating system for dilapidated buildings that are still usable and those that are truly derelict. Further, the response sets out that the Back in Business scheme had been restored at the Assembly which would incentivise the use of long-term vacant retail space.

The response stated that, whilst there is a 50% rating liability on properties that are dilapidated but still usable as a unit, there is no such approach for those properties that are truly derelict as they are removed from the rating system entirely. The Minister is of the opinion that refurbishment of such property is probably a matter better addressed through carefully thought-out proposals for capital spend directed at regeneration, and that any business case brought forward at Executive level to advance proposals of this nature would be considered.

The Committee noted the contents of the responses received from the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, Department for Communities and Department of Finance as well as ongoing work within the Council which would be reported to a future meeting of the Committee.

### **Social Supermarkets - response from The Department for Communities (DfC)**

The Committee was reminded that in April this year it had considered a report which had provided an update on the outcome of an open call for applications to the Social Supermarket Fund. The report advised members that a full Letter of Offer had not been received by the Department for Communities (DfC) and that the level of budget required to support all recommended applications exceeded the available budget.

The Members had asked that the issue be referred to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee and that communication be issued to the DfC. A letter was issued and a response had been received by the Council.

The Members were also advised that Strategic Policy and Resources Committee recommended the issue of 25% of funding to 21 organisations which were recommended for funding from the Social Supermarket Fund. That Committee had also granted delegated authority for the Director of Neighbourhood Services to issue funding up to 70% of the total recommended amount to all 21 organizations when the full Letter of Offer was received from DfC. Those groups had now received communication from the Council advising of their award.

The correspondence from DfC notes that the departmental budget for 2024/25 had not yet been agreed, but that 25% funding based on 2023/24 allocations had been issued to councils. The letter also noted that many councils had communicated a need for further funding for this area of work and that the outcome of the financial exercise would be communicated as soon as possible to enable financial planning for 2024/25.

Noted.

### **Belfast Hills Partnership - Request for Funding**

The Committee was advised that, since its inception in 2005, Belfast City Council had been a key partner within the Belfast Hills Partnership (BHP). The April 2011 meeting of the former Parks and Leisure Committee had approved an annual funding allocation to the Belfast Hills Partnership of £36,900, which had since been included in revenue budgets.

This funding had enabled the organisation to grow and develop from a small team of three individuals to today's team which consists of 6 full time members of staff and 9 part time staff bodies which allows the partnership to deliver a wide range of programmes within the Belfast City Council area which included:

- Habitat and species surveys and improvements
- Environment education for young people
- Volunteering opportunities
- Addressing anti-social behaviour including fly tipping and wildfires
- Tree propagation and planting
- Community support and engagement
- Information provision
- Health walks

BHP have highlighted consistent rising costs, which they have tried to absorb internally by seeking to cut costs where possible – however, they are now in a position of seeking support from funding partners to continue delivering their services. Whilst NIEA have confirmed that they would increase their funding to BHP by 37%, the Partnership was approaching their Council partners to seek additional funding.

It was reported that Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council and Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council had confirmed that they had agreed an increase of 30% on current funding. It should be noted that each council provides funding in proportion to the land area owned by each Council within the Belfast Hill's Area and this arrangement would continue with these latest funding revisions.

Belfast Hill Partnership currently received £36,900 from Belfast City Council and had requested an increase of 30% (£11,070) to £47,970.

The Committee noted the request for additional funding from the Belfast Hills Partnership and agreed that the request be considered by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, given the associated financial impacts, as part of the process to allocate from year end underspends.

### **Stadia Community Benefits Initiative**

The Operational Director, City and Neighbourhood Services, submitted the following report:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**

**1.1 To advise Committee of progress with the Stadia Community Benefits Initiative (SCBI) for 2023/2024 .**

**2.0 Recommendations**

**2.1 The Members of the Committee are asked to note progress to date**

**3.0 Main report**

**3.1 The Council has been undertaking the Leisure Transformation Programme to renew its Leisure facilities across the City. This Programme has been influenced by the Partnership opportunities presented by the NI Executive Stadia Programme.**

**3.2 The Council, Department for Communities (DfC) and the Irish Football Association (IFA) have recognised the opportunities presented by the Stadia Programme, have committed to work together to maximise these benefits, and have agreed to establish a Stadium Community Benefits Initiative as part of the Belfast Community Benefits Initiative (‘the Project’) to implement and deliver agreed objectives including promoting equality, tackling poverty, and tackling social exclusion within the Belfast area.**

**3.3 In March 2016 the Council, DfC and IFA signed an agreement which sets out their respective commitments to the project. As other major stadia are developed in Belfast it is anticipated that other sports governing bodies shall become parties to the agreement. At its April 2018 meeting People and Communities committee agreed that Council would work with the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) within the Stadia Community Benefits Initiative and recognised their significant planned investment in Gaelic Games in the city to support their Gaelfast strategy. GAA activities became fully incorporated into the action plan at the start of financial year 2019-2020, with Gaelfast staff imbedded into the governance structure at the Delivery Board and the Policy and Performance Group.**

**3.4 The agreement is for a period of ten years with financial commitment from Council and IFA in place to the end of March 2026. Delivery is managed through monthly meetings**

of the Delivery Board, which reports quarterly to the Policy and Performance Board. Financial and performance reports will be presented to Council and other partners' Boards as necessary.

**3.5** The Policy & Performance Group is responsible for agreeing the Benefits Realisation Plan and associated annual targets. Work was undertaken to ensure the end benefits/outcomes are aligned to partners' strategies. To measure the progress of this the Council and the IFA have developed a range of indicators/intermediate benefits which are monitored through programme delivery:

- a. Number of coaching sessions provided
- b. Number of coaches engaged in delivering coaching
- c. Number of sessions improving club governance
- d. Number of volunteering opportunities
- e. Participation opportunities for under 16s
- f. Female participation rates
- g. Number of people completing skills development programme
- h. Number of sessions for under-represented groups
- i. Number of sessions for school and youth groups
- j. Community group usage of stadia
- k. Number of clubs attaining club-mark
- l. Educational opportunities
- m. o. Number of programmes targeting ASB
- n. q. Improved collaborative working
- o. r. Number of disabled participants
- p. s. Number of older people participating

The policy and performance group held their meeting on Thursday 9 May 2024 to review performance for 2023/24 and to be updated in terms of the programme for 2024/25

**3.6** Following the completion of a baseline assessment in early 2017, workplans are developed each year. The Action Plan for 2024-2025 has been produced by the partners and includes a mixture of sports specific programmes with both National Governing Bodies and collaborative initiatives delivered jointly by both the sporting organisations.

**3.7** Performance

Delivery during 2023/2024 has now been completed and details of the IFA and GAA specific activities are included at appendix (i) and appendix (ii)

The programmes and performance indicators for 2024/2025 have been agreed by the Policy and Performance Group.

### **3.8 Financial Implications**

In accordance with the Council's obligations under its DfC Funding Agreement for the Olympia Regeneration Project, the Council has committed a sum of £100,000 per annum for a minimum of ten years, so that a minimum of £1,000,000 is contributed in total to the Project.

In relation to 2023/24 partners reported a full spend in line with programmes delivered.

The budget spend for 2024/2025 has also been approved by the Policy and Performance Group.

### **3.8 Equality Impact/Rural Needs Assessment**

There are no additional impacts related to this report.”

The Committee noted the progress to date.

### **Food Service Delivery Plan**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

#### **“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**

1.1 The Food Standards Agency, in their monitoring and oversight role, require all NI District Councils to prepare an annual Food Service Delivery Plan which sets out the Council's key functions and planned activities for delivery of food hygiene, food standards and other food safety related responsibilities.

1.2 This report presents Belfast City Council's draft Food Service Delivery Plan for the 2024/25 year and seeks Committee approval of the draft plan so that it can be submitted to the Food Standards Agency for review.

#### **2.0 Recommendations**

2.1 The Committee is requested to approve the draft Belfast City Council Food Service Delivery Plan 2024-2025

#### **3.0 Main report**

3.1 The Council's Food Safety Unit works with local businesses to build compliance with Food Law and to ensure that food produced and sold in Belfast is safe and can be trusted. This not only protects the consumer and public health, but also protects and enhances the reputation of the City, our

local businesses and their competitiveness, thereby supporting economic growth.

- 3.2 Food related illness costs the local economy, individual businesses and the consumer- people may suffer from food poisoning and food related illness, potentially resulting in hospital admissions for some patients, and costing the Belfast economy through work related absences and consumer claims.
- 3.3 To protect consumers, the Council is required to implement a programme of planned food hygiene and food standards inspections for food businesses across the city. These inspections are programmed based on food safety risks presented by the businesses. Food sampling programmes are also delivered throughout the year, and the Council responds to and investigates food complaints as well as cases of food borne illness.
- 3.4 The Food Hygiene Rating Act (NI) 2016 requires businesses to display their food hygiene rating, improving the opportunities for consumers to make informed choices and encouraging improved compliance. Currently at least 84% of food businesses are rated as 3, 4 or 5 (broadly compliant or better). See Appendix 2 for ratings breakdown.
- 3.5 Work to ensure allergen requirements placed on food business are being adhered to, forms an important element of the Food Safety service, and aims to protect consumers who have food allergies from harm. It is estimated that around 2 million people living in the UK have a food allergy. Following a number of high profile cases resulting in fatalities, new legislation has been introduced since 2021 regarding the adequacy of labelling requirements for food that is prepacked for direct sale (PPDS) i.e., food that has been packed on the same premises from which it is being sold. Our officers monitor compliance and offer support to businesses during their inspections.
- 3.6 The Council's imported food control function continues to facilitate trade while ensuring food safety and public health is protected by undertaking official controls at Belfast Port. From the 1st October 2023 the Windsor Framework introduced the Northern Ireland Retail Movement Scheme (NIRMS 'green lane' scheme) to facilitate qualifying traders to move retail goods from GB to NI. Whilst DAERA oversee the NIRM arrangements, both DAERA and local Councils undertake official controls on other food products arriving at NI ports that are destined for, or at risk of entering the EU (red lane). For Belfast City Council this includes controls on fish products, high risk food not of animal origin, plastic kitchenware from China and Hong Kong, and organic products. Work to finalise processes, infrastructure and a



longer-term sustainable resourcing model for these services will continue to require input from the Port Health service in the 2024/25 year. The Port Health service continues to work closely with the Food Standards Agency, DAERA, DEFRA, other government departments, local businesses and other stakeholders to ensure adequate arrangements are in place to facilitate trade and protect consumers.

**3.7 Key Issues - Food Service Delivery Plan**

Each year, the Council produces a Food Service Delivery Plan which sets out the activities, techniques and approaches to be taken during the year to support businesses in ensuring food safety, food standards and to promote informed healthy choices. The Plan provides the basis on which the Council's regulatory activities are monitored and audited by the Food Standards Agency, and it is a requirement that it is presented to the Council for approval.

**3.8** The Food Standards Agency (FSA) has a key role in overseeing local authority regulatory activities to ensure that official controls are delivered. Powers to enable the FSA to monitor and audit local authorities are contained in the Food Standards Act 1999. A detailed Framework Agreement on local food law enforcement has been produced by the Agency, in conjunction with local authority representative bodies, to provide guidance on how regulatory service plans should be structured and what they should contain. The Belfast City Council Food Service Delivery Plan for 2024/25 has been drafted in line with the framework requirements..

**3.9** The Framework Agreement described above requires that Food Service Delivery Plans should be submitted to the relevant Member forum, in this case the People and Communities Committee, for approval. This is to ensure local transparency and accountability.

**3.10** A summary of the key work activities completed in the last year and profiling the work of the unit is included for information in Appendix 1. A summary of current food hygiene ratings is included in Appendix 2. The Food Service Delivery Plan for 2024/2025 is included in Appendix 3.

**3.11** Members should note that during the Covid pandemic (between 2020 and 2022), food hygiene and food standards inspection programmes were significantly impacted, as visits were paused due to business closures during periods of lock down, and subsequent restrictions on social distancing etc. The FSA worked with Local Authorities across England, Wales and Northern Ireland during 2022/23 to develop recovery plans for food safety services, setting priorities for

service recovery at that time. Belfast City Council's Food Safety team successfully achieved the key milestones and objectives for 2022/23 and 2023/24 which were designed to focus interventions on the highest risk businesses, bringing these back into the routine inspection programme. In 2023/24, significant progress was made towards returning to normal inspection frequencies for the vast majority of businesses across the range of high, moderate and low risk categories.

- 3.12 The FSA recovery plan approach ceased on 31st March 2023. This change has renewed the expectation for Local Authorities to return businesses to their normal inspection frequencies, as laid out in the Food Law Code of Practice. The FSA have however acknowledged that a backlog of inspections still remains among many Local Authorities and have advised that a pragmatic and risk-based approach should continue to be adopted where this is needed. Belfast City Council's Food Service Delivery Plan for 2024/25 reflects this approach and the inspection programme prepared by the Council's Food Safety team aims to return the vast majority of businesses to normal inspection frequencies. For some businesses in the very lowest risk category the service will also utilise alternative enforcement strategies to ensure these businesses continue to address food safety issues, while ensuring business risk profiles are up to date.
- 3.13 FSA will be continuing its work in 2024/25 to modernise the delivery models for Food Standards and Food Hygiene regulatory inspection programmes, to ensure inspections and resources are better targeted based on risk, while reducing burdens for businesses and Competent Authorities where possible. A new Food Standards Delivery Model is to be introduced this year. For food hygiene, FSA have indicated that following feedback from a pre-consultation exercise in 2023, implementation of changes to the Food Hygiene delivery model has been postponed until the Food Standards delivery model is introduced later this year. Councils will be further consulted on proposed changes to the Food Hygiene delivery model as the models evolve.
- 3.14 **Financial and Resource Implications**

The Food Standards Agency provides some grant funding to help support these services on an annual basis to all District Councils in NI. This funding is allocated based on population size of each District as well as the profile of food businesses located within each area. In 2024/25 the funding allocated to Belfast City Council remained relatively consistent at just under £300,000 (£298,481)

The remaining resources required for this core service are included within the City and Neighbourhood Services existing budgets and no additional resources are anticipated.

**3.15 Equality or Good Relations Implications/  
Rural Needs Assessments**

None.”

The Committee approved the draft Belfast City Council Food Service Delivery Plan 2024-2025.

**Epizootic disease – Memorandum  
of Understanding with DAERA**

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on revisions to the open-ended Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with DAERA in relation to Epizootic Disease and available Council resources as outlined in Appendix A to the report. The MoU had originally been approved at the People and Communities Committee in June 2017.

The Committee:

1. noted the revisions within the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU);
2. noted the updated resources in Appendix A to the report;
3. agreed to continue with the open-ended MoU;
4. agreed that the Operational Director, City and Neighbourhood Services signs the agreement; and
5. noted that DAERA had delivered Epizootic training which officers had attended on 22nd May.

**Update and Minutes of Reference Group on Older People**

The Committee noted the report and approved and adopted the minutes from the Reference Group on Older People meeting held on 19th March 2024.

**Belfast City Youth Council - Joint Workshop**

The Committee noted the contents of a report which provided Members with an update on the recent workshop of the People and Communities Committee and the Belfast City Youth Council which was held on 21st May 2024.

**Summer Schemes for Children with Additional Needs**

The Committee was reminded that a report proposing enhanced summer scheme provision was brought to the February 2024 meeting of the People and Communities Committee and an amount of £80,000 was agreed to support provision across each of the four areas of the city with decisions to be approved through the Area Based Working Groups. The funding was subsequently approved by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 22nd March.

Officers had attended the February/March Area Based Working Groups to discuss any potential models suggested by elected members and to engage around local organisations which might be in a position to enhance provision over the summer period. Officers then engaged with the sector and presented recommendations to the May/June Area Based Working Groups.

The table below represents the approved providers recommended by the North, West and South Area Working Groups. Approval from the East Belfast Area Working was not received for those Groups due to not having a quorum at that stage of the meeting.

Accordingly, the Committee was requested to approve the following recommendations of the North, West and South Area Working Groups and the preferred option for the East:

<b>Area, Date of meeting</b>	<b>Provider</b>	<b>Amount</b>
South, 20 May 2024	Sólás	£12,480
South, 20 May 2024	Belvoir ASD Support Group	£7,520
North, 28 May 2024	174 Trust	£6,725
North, 28 May 2024	Cedar Lodge School	£13,771
West, 5 June 2024	Kids Together	£9,100
West, 5 June 2024	St. Gerard's School	£8,100
West, 5 June 2024	Snowflakes	£2,800
East, 6 June 2024	Ledley Hall Trust	£8,538
East, 6 June 2024	Mencap	£10,000
		<b>£78,584</b>

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

### **Operational Issues**

#### **Requests for Events in Parks**

The Committee considered the following report:

#### **“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**

**1.1 The Committee is asked to note that Council has received several requests from event organisers to host events across several city park locations in 2024 and these include.**

- **Belfast Rathayatra 2024 (Festival of Chariots) – Crescent Park**
- **Climate Craic 2024 – Ormeau Park**
- **Belfast No 6 Royal Black District Chapter Parade – Woodvale Park**

**2.0 Recommendation**

**2.1 The Committee is asked to grant authority to the applicants for the proposed events on the dates noted; subject to the completion of the appropriate event management plans and satisfactory terms being agreed by the Director of City & Neighbourhood Services and on the condition that the Event Organisers:**

- i. resolves all operational issues to the Council's satisfaction;**
- ii. meets all statutory requirements including Public Liability Insurance cover, Health and Safety, and licensing responsibilities; and**
- iii. shall consult with adjoining public bodies and local communities as necessary.**

Please note that the above recommendations are taken as a pre-policy position in advance of the Council agreeing a more structured framework and policy for 'Events', which is currently being taken forward in conjunction with the Councils Commercial team.

**3.0 Main Report**

**Key Issues**

**3.1 If agreed, the event organiser or promoters will be required in advance of the event to submit an event management plan for approval by the Council and all relevant statutory bodies. This will include an assessment of how the event will impact upon the surrounding area and measures to mitigate these impacts.**

**3.2 Iskcon Belfast Charity (Hare Krishna Temple) - Belfast Rathayatra 2024 (Festival of Chariots) – Crescent Park – Saturday 3 August 2024**

Iskcon Belfast Charity (Hare Krishna Temple) have requested the use of Crescent Park for their Belfast Rathayatra 2024 event. ISKCON Belfast promotes spiritual and cultural activities in Belfast and surrounding areas. They hold worship services, spiritual discourses, meditation sessions, and educational programs on Vedic wisdom. The charity also organises festivals, cultural events, and community service initiatives to foster spiritual growth, inner peace, and social harmony. They have requested permission to be allowed to carry out charity collections. They are a registered charity with their number being NI 102942

3.3 Key dates for the event are: Main Event – Saturday 03rd August 12.30pm to 6pm

3.4 The event is The Ratha Yatra, or Festival of Chariots, is a grand Hindu festival celebrated worldwide. It involves the procession of large, elaborately decorated chariots carrying deities, particularly Lord Jagannath (an incarnation of Lord Krishna), along the streets. It's celebrated with great enthusiasm and devotion, attracting millions of devotees in the UK & Ireland. The event organiser requests permission for the event to pass through Crecent Gardens as part of the event.

**Climate Craic CIC - Climate Craic Festival 2024 – Ormeau Park – Saturday 14 September 2024**

3.5 Council have received a request from Climate Craic CIC to host their annual Climate Craic Festival at Ormeau Park on Saturday 14 September 2024. The group have requested permission to be allowed to carry out collections on the day of the event to help fund next year's festival along with other community initiatives.

3.6 They are a nonprofit community incorporated company. They are a registered charity with their Charity Number being NI687640.

3.7 The purpose of the festival is to promote and raise awareness around the climate and how the community can help improve this. The event will have creative acts, performers, market & food stalls along with musicians to create a fun and enjoyable atmosphere. There is no cost to attend the event.

3.8 **Key Dates for the event are:**

Set Up – Saturday 14 September – 9am

Main Event – Saturday 14 September – 1pm to 6pm

De-Rig – Saturday 14 September - 10pm

3.9 **Belfast No 6 Royal Black District Chapter – Woodvale Parade – Woodvale Park – Sunday 25 August 2024**

Council has received a request form Belfast No 6 Royal Black District Chapter for a section of their parade on Sunday 25 August 2024 to pass through Woodvale Park and lay two poppy wreaths at the war memorial in the park.

- 3.10 The proposed route for the event is as follows:
- 3.11 At 2.15pm the City of Belfast Grand Black Chapter will depart from West Belfast Orange Hall, Shankill Road. The parade will consist of 7 Districts + 4 bands, approximately 250 participants.
- 3.12 At approximately 2.20pm the will parade enter Woodvale Park at the Woodvale Road entrance and proceed up through the park, pausing to lay 2 poppy wreaths at the war memorial. The parage will exit the park on to the Ballygomartin Road by 2.40pm.
- 3.13 The group have confirmed that the return route of the parade will not be passing through Woodvale Park and that the PSNI have been informed along with an 11/1 parade notification being submitted.
- 3.14 **Financial and Resource Implications**
- There are no known financial or resource implications with this request.
- 3.15 **Equality or Good Relations Implications/  
Rural Needs Assessment**
- There are no known implications with this request.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

#### **Request to use Dundonald Cemetery for Somme Commemoration**

The Committee approved the use of Dundonald Cemetery to facilitate the event, subject to the event organisers adhering to operational requirements of the Council.

#### **Tree Establishment report and 'Tree Cities of the World' Accreditation**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

##### **“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members regarding the progress on several key actions associated with the Belfast Tree Strategy since its launch on 5 October 2023.

**2.0 Recommendations**

**2.1** Members are requested to note the progress on several key actions with the Belfast Tree Strategy.

**2.2** Members are also asked to agree to the publication of the Tree Establishment report and to note the council's achievement on obtaining Tree Cities of the World accreditation.

**3.0 Main report**

**Key Issues**

**3.1** The Belfast Tree Strategy was produced with the aim of managing and improving the city's tree-scape over the next ten years, focussing on protecting, enhancing, and expanding the Council's woodlands, hedges, and trees, connecting people to nature, and ensuring that they continue to be a major asset to everyone who lives in, works in, and visits Belfast city.

**3.2** The Belfast Tree Strategy objectives are to deliver 37 key actions over the next decade with an independent review of the strategy occurring in December 2024, and thereafter, once every three years until 2033. The 37 key actions have been broken down into three main categories:

- Trees and Urban Forest Structure
- Community framework
- Sustainable Resource Management Approach (See appendix 1)

Since the launch of the Tree Strategy on 5 October 2023, the Council has achieved several key actions to date:

**3.3** 1. Tree Establishment Planning – The Council has completed a comprehensive tree opportunity mapping exercise. (See Appendix 2.) The Tree Establishment report aims to address several key objectives associated with the Belfast Tree Strategy and which looked at areas such as, existing tree canopy cover, tree equity, species suitability and investigated potential space(s) for new tree planting in both soft and hard landscapes and linking into the Council's One Million Tree initiative.

**3.4** It must be noted however that all the sites highlighted in the report indicate 'potential' tree planting locations but would first require site investigations to establish if trees can actually be planted due to the presence of underground utilities, planning restrictions, or if the landowners have a budget to plant and maintain new trees.



- 3.5 Canopy cover across Belfast averages 18.6%, as measured by Google satellite data. This ranges from 20.8% in urban and suburban areas, to 15.0% in rural areas. The Ward with the highest tree cover in Belfast is Bellevue, with 43.9% tree cover and the lowest is Ardoyne with just 4.6%. The average tree canopy cover for Northern Ireland is 11.8%.
- 3.6 Achieving 30% canopy cover for Belfast is possible by 2050, provided tree planting continues at a consistently high rate by all the key landowners across the city. However, one issue worth highlighting, is that Ash Dieback threatens 11.3% of the overall existing tree population, which could cause the current tree cover to drop significantly.
- 3.7 2. Tree Risk Management – The Council has moved from a five year to a three-year health and condition tree inspection cycle for all semi-mature to fully mature park trees and on behalf of the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) the Council has moved from a five year to a two-year health and condition tree inspection cycle of all the Department for Infrastructures young mature to fully mature street trees.
- In making these changes to the tree inspection cycles, it will ensure that Council identify any potential hazardous trees and take the appropriate action, however it must be noted that there is no such thing as a ‘safe tree’.
- 3.8 3. International Reputation – On 21 March 2024, Belfast City Council received confirmation that our city had achieved ‘Tree Cities of the World status’.
- 3.9 This accreditation has been awarded by the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations to 200 recognised cities in countries such as Australia, Brazil, Canada, France, India, Italy, Spain, United Kingdom, and the United States. This is the first time Belfast city has been included, due mainly to the council’s commitments under the Belfast Tree Strategy.
- 3.10 The Tree Cities of the World accreditation is awarded to cities who have:
- (i) a policy/strategy which governs the management of its trees
  - (ii) it has an updated tree inventory system
  - (iii) It has a dedicated annual budget to manage its trees, and which is linked to a tree management plan, and
  - (iv) A city which celebrates the importance of trees and works closely with its residents in the planting and maintenance of its tree population.

3.11 This accreditation will be applied for on an annual basis, similar to the Green Flag award programme, but on an international platform.

3.12 **Financial and Resource Implications**

Resourcing of staff and additional tree budget will be necessary if the Council is to achieve the 37- Key Actions associated with the Belfast Tree Strategy over the next 10 years and maintain its position on the world stage as a 'Tree City of the World'.

3.13 **Equality or Good Relations Implications/  
Rural Needs Assessment**

None.”

The Committee noted the progress on several key actions with the Belfast Tree Strategy; and agreed to the publication of the Tree Establishment report and to note the council's achievement on obtaining Tree Cities of the World accreditation.

**Unadopted Alleyways Update**

The Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services submitted for the Committee's consideration the following report:

“1.0 **Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**

1.1 Following the P&C Committee workshop on the 26th February 2024, Members requested that a paper summarising the main findings be brought back to a future meeting of the Committee. This paper sets out the main findings from the workshop for Members to consider.

2.0 **Recommendation**

2.1 Members are asked:

- To note the contents of the report and to consider approval for officers to engage with statutory partners regarding the feasibility of a pilot project on unadopted alleyways; and
- To note that a paper will be presented to a future meeting of People and Communities Committee on the feasibility of a pilot programme, including the potential costs for delivery.

3.0 **Main Report**

3.1 Members and key stakeholders attended a workshop on the 26th February 2024 to discuss the issues, challenges, and options for progression to address the maintenance, repair,

and management of issues related to and ongoing with unadopted alleyways across the city.

- 3.2 The workshop was attended by People and Communities Committee members, Belfast City Council officers and representatives from the Department of Infrastructure, Housing Executive, Choice Housing, and Connswater Housing Association. There was no representation from the Department for Communities and the Department of Justice (NI). Apologies were received from DoJ following the meeting and they have indicated a willingness to participate in any future work. DfC have indicated through discussions with elected representatives that they are also willing to participate in any future work.
- 3.3 Following a short presentation from officers and other statutory partners, the Committee Chair opened the floor for discussion from members and stakeholders. The following issues and challenges were identified.

**Key issues and Challenges:**

- General standard of unadopted alleyways includes a significant state of disrepair, poor standard of cleanliness, significant safety issues, poor practices adopted-fly tipping/dumping and health and safety issues including sharps/ vermin.
- Accessibility for residents, transport, front-line council services etc
- Identification and ownership of alleyways. It was recognised that establishing ownership through various approaches would be difficult and would require a collaborative approach to mapping these areas.
- Problems exist with other areas like walkways and would need to be included.
- No accountability/framework in place to enable the hazards encountered to be progressed.
- Health and Safety concerns that restrict progression and have significant impact for residents, staff, transport, and those requiring access.
- Poor engagement with and lack of support to local communities/community groups impacted upon by un-adopted alleyways.
- No funding in place to support interventions required. A request for all agencies to consider the allocation of resources to deal with the risks posed by these areas.
- Risk based approach to interventions will be needed. Safety implications and hazardous conditions will impact upon the viability of local communities to intervene- the space would need to be safe before this approach could be considered.

- Legacy issues pertaining to historic ownership, use and planning and development within these areas.

#### **3.4 Partner Input**

A request for DfI to outline the standard required and to consider a review of its related policy for the adoption of alleyways was requested. The DfI representative committed to providing this detail once investigated within DfI.

The housing associations present - Choice and Connswater, committed to look at available resources and work collaboratively with parties that are able to support in maintaining and progressing issues related to unadopted alleyways that remain an issue, within the association's residencies.

The Northern Ireland Housing Executive representative committed to providing an assist with mapping and identifying unadopted alleyways in conjunction with council, DfI and other parties to ascertain a true picture of boundaries, ownership, and location of unadopted alleyways. This approach may also assist with identifying previous owners and establish an ability to track the ownership of alleyways. The Housing Executive representative also noted that the mapping resource is facilitated through a digital online service and that this could be utilised to support the mapping exercise.

- 3.5** The workshop asked for consideration be given to the formation of a multi-agency working group be established to deliver the following:

Develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with all key stakeholders that will outline current responsibilities in relation to unadopted alleyways, resources available to address the problems and how key stakeholders will work together.

1. To complete a mapping exercise in conjunction with key partners and statutory bodies to ascertain ownership, boundaries and clarify unadopted alleyway locations across the city.
2. Resources permitting a small Pilot scheme is devised to test locations for improvements. Agreed locations to be identified and prioritised through risk ranking. Alleyways posing major/significant safety concerns suggested as first priority.

3. Agreed to liaise and actively communicate with communities and CVS organisations willing to participate in restoring and maintaining alleyways within residential areas and consider how these groups can be supported.
4. All partners to review current budgets to establish what monies can be sourced to deliver improvements.

It was accepted that given the size of the issue significant resource will be required to deliver this work.

### **3.6 Next Steps**

If Members are agreeable, officers will engage partners and will present a report to a future meeting of the People and Communities Committee on the feasibility of a pilot scheme, including the costs associated with delivery. The work to consider all points listed in section 3.5 above.

### **3.7 Financial and Human Resource Implications**

Whilst funds are available to officers to engage with statutory partners regarding the proposed pilot, Members are asked to note that there are currently no funds available for delivery of the pilot, and that any request for funding would need to proceed to Strategic Policy & Resources Committee for consideration.

### **3.8 Equality Impact/Rural Needs Assessment**

None.”

The Committee noted:

- the contents of the report and granted approval for officers to engage with statutory partners regarding the feasibility of a pilot project on unadopted alleyways; and
- that a paper would be presented to a future meeting of People and Communities Committee on the feasibility of a pilot programme, including the potential costs for delivery.

### **Parks Opening Hours Pilot and Forth Meadow Community Greenway Consultation**

The Committee considered the following report:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**

- 1.1 To update Members on a proposed community consultation on the opening hours pilot for Falls, Woodvale and Ormeau Parks, and on the future opening hours of Forth Meadow Greenway.**

**2.0 Recommendations**

- 2.1 Members are asked to note the content of the report.**

**3.0 Main report**

**Background**

- 3.1 Access to open spaces provides multiple benefits to the health and wellbeing of residents and is a vital component of creating sustainable and healthy communities. Belfast City Council has the responsibility of managing, maintaining and keeping these spaces safe for citizens, including managing access through gate locking to negate health and safety risks including ASB.**

- 3.2 As well as our own experience, research has shown that keeping parks open facilitates better use by communities and has the potential to reduce antisocial behaviour - for example with Connswater Community Greenway where the main ‘spine’ is lit and accessible 24/7. However, although some of our open-space sites are accessible at night, for the most part a ‘dawn to dusk’ opening hours pattern is followed with times changing as daylight lengthens or shortens.**

**Committee Background**

- 3.3 Following Notices of Motion relating to the provision of artificial lighting in parks and a request to review the hours that our parks are open to the public, Members will recall that People and Communities Committee agreed to recommendations of a report on Proposed Improvements to Parks and Open Spaces – Opening Hours Pilot at its meeting on 3rd March 2020 which referred to a pilot for 24 hour opening for Ormeau, Falls and Woodvale Parks over the summer months. This report is attached at Appendix 1.**

**Unfortunately the pilot was not delivered due to the COVID pandemic and the associated restrictions which impacted officers’ ability to consult with local groups at that time.**

- 3.4 A further report on Proposed Improvements to Parks and Open Spaces was considered by People and Communities Committee at its meeting 10 November 2020 (report attached**

at Appendix 2). Members noted the substantial financial implications associated with the installation of lighting in all parks, and the lack of funding to support such a request. They also noted the new lighting investment that had occurred at a number of our open spaces in recent years, and agreed that officers would recommence work on the Opening Hours Pilot.

#### Current Status

- 3.5 Since 2020, lighting has been added along the main spines of a number of new and existing open spaces including Páirc Nua Chollan, Lower Shankill Park and Marrowbone Millennium Park. Along with Forth Meadow Greenway and the Connswater Greenway, the Council now provide over 22km of lit pathways. Further lighting improvements are planned as part of the redevelopment Ballysillan Playing Fields through the Urban Villages Programme.
- 3.6 One of the 'Opening Hour Pilot' sites, Falls Park, has recently benefited from new lighting as part of the 12km Forth Meadow Greenway (FMG) Peace IV funded scheme in north and west Belfast. Now that the final section of the scheme has completed the proposed consultation on FMG opening hours will be an opportunity to consider deviating from the existing 'dawn to dusk' opening hours for each of the park sites along the greenway and the connecting sections. Consultation is required to ensure that the benefits and other impacts on residents and users, are considered at a local level.
- 3.7 ASB in some parks across the city remains a concern with an ongoing Static Park Warden Pilot currently demonstrating some success at Páirc Nua Chollann, Dunville Park and Woodvale Park. Members will be aware of the recent agreement for its expansion into Falls Park to counter ongoing ASB problems on the site.
- 3.8 Given the Forth Meadow Greenway consultation will seek views on the opening times for Falls Park, it is now an opportune time to test the viability of extended opening hour options for the other two pilot sites at Ormeau and Woodvale. This will enable the collation for each of the site's residents, users and partners views, including concerns, and also to take on board learning from any Static Park Warden Pilots, diversionary programmes, and interagency operational interventions at these sites. The pilot approach at Ormeau Park also provides an opportunity to further consider the development of lighting options. This also presents an opportunity for the Council to maximise the potential benefits from DfI's forthcoming delivery of a pedestrian/ cycle bridge over the Lagan River, connecting

the site and local area to the city centre via the Gasworks (2027).

**Next Steps – Consultation Timeframe and Methodology**

- 3.10 It is proposed that a consultation and engagement plan for the Opening Hours Pilot will be developed over the summer and carried out in the autumn in parallel to the consultation and engagement exercise to consider opening hours of FMG (park sites and connections).
- 3.11 It is anticipated that a report detailing the outcome of both consultations will be brought back to People and Communities Committee for Members' consideration before the end of the year.
- 3.12 In line with what was agreed previously by Members for the 'Opening Hour Pilots' in addition to an online survey it is proposed that a series of local Information Sessions will take place to inform users and residents of the pilot proposals for each site with feedback captured on views and concerns of stakeholders. In addition to Members and Council's Legal Services, the PSNI and other partners will be consulted. A similar approach will be taken forward for Forth Meadow Greenway.

3.13 **Financial and Resource Implications**

It is not clear at this stage what the budget implications would be in relation to any future extended opening pilots and changing the opening hours of the Forth Meadow Greenway. It is anticipated this will come at additional cost to the Council. These costs are not currently in revenue or capital estimates.

Following the consultation phase a report will be brought to Members and this will provide further information on this.

3.14 **Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessments**

There are no Equality or Good Relations Implications /Rural Needs Assessments associated with this report."

The Committee noted the content of the report and agreed that consideration be given to adding Belmont Park to the pilot project.

**Request for Dual Language Street Signage**

The Committee agreed to the erection of a second street nameplate in Irish at Wolfhill Avenue South, Legnavea Place, Rosapenna Parade, Somerdale Gardens, Whitewell Crescent, Cliftonville Street, Dungloe Crescent and Somerton Road.



**Request for naming of new street including  
Dual Language Street Names**

The Committee approved the applications for the naming of the following new streets in the city:

Proposed Name	Location	Applicant
Gilchrist Meadows	Off Edenderry Road, BT8	KMBC Ltd
Black Ridge Walk	Off Monagh By Pass, BT11	Apex Housing Association
Black Ridge Green	Off Monagh By Pass, BT11	Apex Housing Association

The Committee noted also that delegated authority had also been given to the City Solicitor to exercise her delegated authority in relation to the approval of the erection of dual language street nameplates for the following applications submitted by the developer:

Proposed English Name	Non- English Name	Location
Black Ridge Walk	Siúlán Dhuibhise	Off Monagh By Pass, BT11
Black Ridge Green	Faiche Dhuibhise	Off Monagh By Pass, BT11

**Issues Raised in Advance by Members**

**Request from Colin Gaels - shipping container at  
Brook Leisure Centre - Councillor M. Donnelly to raise**

At the request of Councillor M. Donnelly, the Committee agreed that officers investigate request from Colin Gaels and look at the possibility of locating a container at the Brook Leisure Centre.

Chairperson