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BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

SUMMONS TO ATTEND THE MONTHLY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

TO: THE LORD MAYOR, ALDERMEN AND THE COUNCILLORS OF BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

Notice is hereby given that the monthly meeting of the Council will be held in the Council Chamber, City Hall, Belfast and remotely via Microsoft Teams on Tuesday, 1st October, 2024 at 6.00 pm, for the transaction of the following business:

1. Summons
2. Apologies
3. Declarations of Interest
4. Minutes of the Council (Pages 1 - 8)
5. Official Announcements
6. Change of Position of Responsibility
7. Minutes of Strategic Policy and Resources Committee (Pages 9 - 42)
8. Minutes of People and Communities Committee (Pages 43 - 84)
9. Minutes of City Growth and Regeneration Committee (Pages 85 - 116)
10. Minutes of Planning Committee (Pages 117 - 126)
11. Minutes of Climate and City Resilience Committee (Pages 127 - 134)
12. Minutes of Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee (Pages 135 - 138)

The Members of Belfast City Council are hereby summoned to attend.

John Walsh

Chief Executive

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Council

MEETING OF BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

Held in the Council Chamber, City Hall
on Monday, 2nd September, 2024 at 6.00 p.m., pursuant to notice.

Members present: The Lord Mayor, Councillor Murray (Chairperson);
The High Sheriff of Belfast, Councillor S. Douglas;
Aldermen Copeland, Lawlor, McCoubrey,
McCullough and Rodgers;
Councillors Abernethy, Anglin, Beattie, Black, Bower,
Bradley, Brennan, R. Brooks, T. Brooks, Bunting,
Carson, Cobain, Collins, de Faoite, Doherty,
M. Donnelly, P. Donnelly, R. M. Donnelly,
Doran, Duffy, Ferguson, Flynn, Garrett, Groogan,
Harvey, Kelly, Lyons, Magee, Maghie, Maskey,
F. McAteer, McCabe, McCann,
McDonough-Brown, McDowell, McKay, McKeown,
I. McLaughlin, R. McLaughlin, Murphy,
Nelson, Nic Bhrainair, O'Neill, Smyth,
Verner and Walsh.

Summons

The Chief Executive submitted the summons convening the meeting.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting were reported from the Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor McCormick) and Councillors Bell, Canavan, D. Douglas and White.

Declarations of Interest

Councillors Beattie, Black, Bradley, Brennan, Carson, M. Donnelly, Nelson, Smyth and Walsh declared an interest in relation to the item "Discretionary Payments" within the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee minutes, in that their employer was an applicant for the grant.

Councillors Beattie, Black, Brennan, Carson, M. Donnelly, Groogan, McCabe, R. McLaughlin and Smyth declared an interest in relation to the item "Community Support Programme 2024/25" within the People and Communities Committee minutes, in that their employer had applied for funding through the programme.

Councillor Walsh declared an interest in relation to the item "Requests for use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality" within the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee minutes, in that the organisation he worked for had made a request.

Councillor McKeown declared an interest in relation to the item "Wider University and Lower Ormeau Intervention Programme" within the Strategic Policy and Resources

**Meeting of Council,
Monday, 2nd September, 2024**

Committee in that his employer was a co-funder of the Intervention Manager post and he left the meeting whilst the matter was being discussed.

Minutes of the Council

Moved by the Lord Mayor (Councillor Murray),
Seconded by Alderman McCullough,

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the monthly and annual meetings of the Council of 1st July and 5th August, be taken as read and signed as correct.

Official Announcements

The Lord Mayor (Councillor Murray) and Councillor de Faoite expressed their sorrow on the recent death of former staff member, Brendan (Brendy) McKeown and offered condolences to his family and friends.

The Lord Mayor (Councillor Murray) and several Councillors paid tribute to former Councillor Geraldine McAteer who had recently stepped down from the Council and welcomed Councillor Brennan.

Councillor Maghie and Councillor Ferguson congratulated local Olympians on their success at the 2024 Paris Olympics.

A number of Members offered well wishes to former Alderman Tommy Sandford and his grandson, both of whom had recently been released from hospital.

Councillor I. McLaughlin offered his condolences to the family of Mr. Jackie Hewitt MBE, following his recent death.

Request to address the Council

The Chief Executive informed the Council that a request had been received from Mr. D. Boyle to address the Council with regard to the item 'HMO Review of Licence Scheme charges', under the Licensing Committee minutes.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor Smyth,
Seconded by Councillor de Faoite,

“That the request from Mr. D. Boyle to address the Council be refused.”

On a vote by show of hands, forty-six Members voted for the proposal and none against and it was declared carried.

**Meeting of Council,
Monday, 2nd September, 2024**

**Change of Membership on Committees/
Outside Bodies/Position of Responsibility**

The Chief Executive reported that notification had been received from the Democratic Unionist Party that it wished to replace Councillor Verner with Councillor R. Brooks as the Chairperson on the People and Communities Committee.

The Chief Executive reported that notification had been received from Sinn Fein of the following changes:

Change of Membership on Outside Bodies

- Councillor Brennan to replace former Councillor McAteer on the Lagan Valley Regional Park Advisory Committee;
- Councillor Brennan to replace former Councillor McAteer on the South Belfast District Policing and Community Safety Partnership; and
- Councillor Brennan to replace former Councillor McAteer on the Forward South Partnership Board.

Change of Committee Membership

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

- Councillor Brennan to replace Councillor M. Donnelly

City Growth and Regeneration Committee

- Councillor O'Neill to replace Councillor Walsh,

People and Communities Committee

- Councillor Bradley to replace Councillor O'Neill

Licensing Committee

- Councillor M. Donnelly to replace Councillor McCabe

Climate and City Resilience Committee

- Councillor Walsh to replace Councillor McCabe as Deputy Chairperson;
- Councillor P. Donnelly to replace Councillor McCabe; and
- Councillor Magee to replace Councillor Bradley.

**Meeting of Council,
Monday, 2nd September, 2024**

Standards and Business Committee

- Councillor Nic Bhranair to replace Councillor M. Donnelly; and
- Councillor Carson to replace Councillor Brennan.

The Council noted the changes.

Minutes of Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Moved by Councillor Murphy,
Seconded by Councillor Ferguson,

That the minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 8th and 9th July, and 16th and 23rd August, 2024, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

Hardship Programme

Amendment

Moved by Councillor Collins,
Seconded by Councillor de Faoite, and

Resolved – “That the decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 23rd August, under the heading “Hardship Programme” be taken back to the Committee for further consideration.”

Wider University and Lower Ormeau Intervention Programme

At the request of Councillor McDonough-Brown, the Council agreed that, should the contributions being requested from the other partners in the Inter-Agency Group for the continued funding of the post of Intervention Manger not be forthcoming, the Chief Executive would undertake to return the matter to the Committee for further consideration.

Adoption of Minutes

Subject to the foregoing amendments, the minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 8th and 9th July, and 16th and 23rd August, 2024 were thereupon approved and adopted.

**Meeting of Council,
Monday, 2nd September, 2024**

Minutes of People and Communities Committee

Moved by Councillor R. Brooks;
Seconded by Councillor M. Donnelly, and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the People and Communities Committee of 6th August, be approved and adopted.

Minutes of City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Moved by Councillor Nelson,
Seconded by Councillor Duffy,

That the minutes of the proceedings of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 7th and 28th August, be approved and adopted.

Belfast City and Region Place Partnership Update

Amendment 1

Moved by Councillor Groogan,
Seconded by Councillor Smyth,

“That the decision of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 7th August, to approve attendance by senior officers at MIPIM 2025 as part of the BCRPP 2024/25 programme be rescinded and the associated funding be returned to the Committee.”

On a recorded vote, eight Members voted for the amendment and forty-six against and it was declared lost.

For (8)	Against (46)
Councillors Collins, de Faoite, Doherty, Flynn, Groogan, Lyons, McKeown and Smyth.	The Lord Mayor (Councillor Murray); The High Sheriff (Councillor S. Douglas); Aldermen Copeland, Lawlor, McCoubrey, McCullough and Rodgers; and Councillors Abernethy, Anglin, Beattie, Blac, Bower, Bradley, Brennan, R. Brooks, T. Brooks, Bunting, Carson, Cobain, M. Donnelly, P. Donnelly, R. M. Donnelly, Doran, Duffy, Ferguson, Garrett, Hanvey, Kelly, Long, Magee, Maghie, Maskey, McAteer, McCabe, McCann, McDonough Brown, McDowell, McKay, I. McLaughlin, R. McLaughlin, Murphy, Nelson, Nic Bhranair, O'Neill, Verner and Walsh.

**Meeting of Council,
Monday, 2nd September, 2024**

Amendment 2

Moved by Councillor Lyons,
Seconded by Councillor de Faoite, and

Resolved - That the decision to approve attendance by senior officers at MIPIM 2025 as part of the BCRPP 2024/2025 programme, noting that the BCRPP presence at MIPIM will be funded from the wider public-private sector BCRPP programme budget, be taken back to the Committee for further consideration.

Adoption of Minutes

Subject to the forgoing amendment, the minutes of the proceedings of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 7th and 28th August, 2024, were approved and adopted.

Minutes of Licensing Committee

Moved by Alderman Rodgers,
Seconded by Councillor Smyth, and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Licensing Committee of 21st August, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

Minutes of Planning Committee

Moved by Councillor Carson,
Seconded by Councillor Garrett, and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Planning Committee of 27th June and 13th August, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

Minutes of Climate and City Resilience Committee

Moved by Councillor R. M. Donnelly,
Seconded by Councillor Walsh, and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Climate and City Resilience Committee of 8th August, be approved and adopted.

Lord Mayor
Chairperson

Council

SPECIAL MEETING OF BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

Held in the City Hall on Wednesday, 18th September, 2024
at 5.00 p.m., pursuant to notice.

Members present: The Lord Mayor, Councillor Murray (Chairperson);
the Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor McCormick);
The High Sheriff of Belfast (Councillor S. Douglas);
Aldermen Lawlor, McCoubrey, McCullough and Rodgers;
Councillors Abernethy, Beattie, Bell, Black, Bower,
Bradley, Brennan, R. Brooks, T. Brooks, Bunting,
Carson, de Faoite, Doherty, M. Donnelly, P. Donnelly,
Doran, D. Douglas, Duffy, Ferguson, Flynn,
Garrett, Groogan, Kelly, Lyons, Magee, Maghie,
Maskey, F. McAteer, McCann, McDowell,
McKay, McKeown, I. McLaughlin, R. McLaughlin,
Murphy, Nelson, O'Neill, Smyth, Verner and Walsh.

Summons

The Chief Executive submitted the summons convening the meeting.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported for Alderman Copeland and Councillors Anglin, Canavan, R-M Donnelly, Long, McCabe, McDonough-Brown and Whyte.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Motions

Pause in funding to City Deals

In accordance with the notice on the agenda, Councillor de Faoite proposed:

“This Council condemns the pause in funding by the British Government to City Deals and calls for its immediate and full reinstatement.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor Doherty.

The proposer advised the Council that he wished to amend the wording of the proposal to allow for the addition, after the word “and”, with “the way in which this pause was announced on a Friday afternoon and welcomes the announcement that the Belfast City Deal will move forward at pace with the full support of all partners.”

The amended motion would read as follows:

**Special Meeting of Council,
Thursday, 18th September, 2024**

“This Council condemns the pause in funding by the British Government to City Deals and the way in which this pause was announced on a Friday afternoon and welcomes the announcement that the Belfast City Deal will move forward at pace with the full support of all partners.”

The Council agreed to consider the motion in its amended form.

After discussion, the motion, as amended, was put to the Council and passed.

Commitment to Casement Park

In accordance with the notice on the agenda, Councillor Beattie proposed:

“This Council expresses deep disappointment that the British Government has failed to honour its commitment regarding the Euro 2028 bid for Belfast, particularly the investment in Casement Park, a catalyst project for economic regeneration in West Belfast.

The involvement of Belfast in the Euro 2028 bid presented us with a once in a generation opportunity to showcase the very best of Belfast to an international audience with the economic benefits being felt across a range of industries in the city and beyond.

Casement Park must now be delivered regardless of the outcome of the Euro 2028 bid, as it still represents a vital investment in the city’s infrastructure and community.

Belfast City Council will therefore write to Hilary Benn, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, and Prime Minister Keir Starmer, to urge the British Government to fulfil its previous commitment to Casement Park.

And will further write to Taoiseach Simon Harris along with the relevant Executive Ministers at the NI Assembly requesting that all parties involved come together to fulfil that same commitment to delivering Casement Park.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor Doherty.

On a vote by a show of hands, thirty-one Members voted for the motion and fourteen against and it was declared carried.

Lord Mayor
Chairperson

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 20th September, 2024

MEETING OF THE STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Murphy (Chairperson); and
Alderman McCoubrey;
Councillors Beattie, Black, Brennan, Bunting, Cobain,
de Faoite, R-M. Donnelly, Duffy, Ferguson, Garrett,
Groogan, Long, Maghie, McDonough-Brown, I. McLaughlin,
R. McLaughlin, Nelson and Whyte.

In attendance: Mr. J. Walsh, Chief Executive;
Ms. S. McNicholl, Deputy Chief Executive/Director
of Corporate Services;
Ms. N. Largey, City Solicitor/Director of Legal and
Civic Services;
Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Property and Projects;
Ms. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and
Development;
Mr. D Martin, Strategic Director of Place and Economy;
Mr. J. Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy;
Mr. T. Wallace, Director of Finance;
Ms. C. Sheridan, Director of Human Resources; and
Mr. J. Hanna, Democratic Services and Governance
Manager.

Apologies

No apologies were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 16th and 23rd August were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council, at its meeting on 2nd September, subject to the omission of those matters in respect of which the Council had delegated its powers to the Committee.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor McDonough-Brown declared an interest in item 2c - Update on Hardship Programme in that his partner worked for Save the Children which was in receipt of funding.

Councillor Groogan declared an interest in item 2c - Update on Hardship Programme in that her employer was in receipt of funding.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 20th September, 2024**

Councillor Brennan declared an interest in item 2c - Update on Hardship Programme declared an interest in item 2c - Update on Hardship Programme in that her employer was in receipt of funding.

Councillor RM Donnelly declared an interest in item 6b – Shared City Partnership in that her employer was being invited into the next meeting.

Restricted Items

The information contained in the reports associated with the following five 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 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 also reminded that the content of ‘restricted’ reports and any discussion which took place during closed session must be treated as ‘confidential information’ and that no such information should be disclosed to the public as per Paragraph 4.15 of the Code of Conduct.

**Revenue Estimates 2025/26 and
Medium-Term Financial Planning**

The Director of Finance submitted for the Committee’s consideration a report which provided an assessment of the key issues which would influence the rate setting process for 2025/26 and the development of the Council’s Medium Term Financial Plan for 2025/26 - 2028/29.

The Committee noted the challenges to be taken into consideration as part of the annual and medium-term rate setting and that a further report on progress would be brought to the Committee in October.

Targeted Acquisition

The Director of City Regeneration and Development submitted a report which sought approval for the targeted acquisition of a strategic property in Belfast city centre and provided Members with background to a potential Placemaking Pilot in the wider area.

The Committee:

- I. agreed that the conditional without prejudice offer made to acquire the property referenced in the report be progressed on the basis as outlined in the report and, subject to Council ratification and to the offer being accepted by the vendor, to acquire the property on terms to be agreed by the City Solicitor and the Director of City Regeneration and Development;

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 20th September, 2024**

and noted that completion of the acquisition would be subject to title/legal due diligence; and

- II. noted the update on the potential Placemaking Pilot, with further detail to be brought back to the City Growth and Regeneration and Strategic Policy and Resources Committee(s) in due course.

Update on Hardship Programme 2024/25

The Committee considered a report which provided an update to Members on the current position regarding the development of a 2024-25 Hardship Programme to support those vulnerable people impacted by the cost-of-living crisis across the city.

The Committee:

- i. noted the current budget position (£100,773) in relation to the development and delivery of a hardship programme in 2024/25;
- ii. noted that if any further funding was secured that options would be brought back to the Members' Cost-of-Living Working Group and the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee;
- iii. agreed that the matter would be raised in the meetings between Party Groups and the Director of Finance to explore what further funding might be available;
- iv. noted that an All-Party delegation was scheduled to meet with the Minister for Communities and that funding for hardship would be discussed;
- v. noted the planned stakeholder support networking event to be held in City Hall on Tuesday 29 October 2024 and that invites would be issued to Party Group Leaders and the Members' Cost-of-Living Working Group; and
- vi. that a letter be forwarded to the Minister for Communities requesting that further funding be made available.

Assets Management

The Committee:

- i) Cromac Street Car Park – Licence renewal**
 - approved the renewal of a Licence agreement from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) to the Council in relation to the Council operated off-street Car Park at Cromac Street.
- ii) Ormeau Park – Land Reinstatement**
 - noted the reinstatement of lands at Ormeau Park following completion of works associated with the Flood Alleviation Project.

iii) North Foreshore Film Studios – Phase 2a Lease Boundary Adjustments

- approved adjustments to the site to be demised to Belfast Harbour Commissioners for Phase 2A of their Film Studio extension at the North Foreshore.

Belfast Bikes Scheme - Operating Model and Revenue Structure

The Committee approved the new operating model and revenue structure for the Belfast Bikes Scheme.

Belfast Agenda/Strategic Issues

Safe Leave Consultation

The Director of Human Resources submitted for the Committee's consideration the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1 To present a draft Council response to the Department for the Economy's consultation document on the provision of Safe Leave.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- Review and agree the Council's response to the Department for the Economy's consultation document on the provision of Safe Leave. The response will be submitted subject to ratification at the October Council meeting.

3.0 Main report

- 3.1 Domestic abuse is a traumatic and horrendous experience for those subjected to it. It occurs amongst people of all genders, ethnicities, sexualities, ages, disabilities, immigration status, religions or beliefs, and socio-economic backgrounds.

- 3.2 Employers are increasingly recognising the importance of supporting employees who are experiencing domestic abuse and members will be aware that the Council has had in place for some years a policy to provide support for employees who are affected by domestic violence. The policy encourages managers and supervisors to provide a sympathetic response to requests for special paid or unpaid leave; flexible working and other work-life balance arrangements as a result of

domestic violence and abuse for example flexibility in working hours or time off when required to enable the employee to seek protection, go to court, look for new housing, enter counselling, arrange childcare etc.

- 3.3 Having access to safe leave can give employees the chance to seek support and space to deal with issues related to domestic abuse. Having access to paid leave means that employees are not at a financial detriment when they need to be away from work for this purpose.

Key Issues

- 3.4 The Assembly passed the Domestic Abuse (Safe Leave) Act (NI) in 2022 although this has not yet been implemented. This progressive legislation will give employees and workers who are the victims of domestic abuse up to 10 days paid safe leave for the purpose of dealing with issues related to that abuse.
- 3.5 The Domestic Abuse Safe Leave consultation was launched by the Department for the Economy in July 2024 and seeks to inform the public about the department's intention to introduce regulations, under and in accordance with provisions of the Domestic Abuse (Safe Leave) Act (NI) 2022, to entitle employees and workers, who are victims of domestic abuse, up to 10 days paid safe leave in each leave year for the purpose of dealing with issues related to that abuse.
- 3.6 Many aspects of the safe leave framework have already been determined by the Act. Both employees and workers are entitled to safe leave. They will be able to access the right from their first day of employment. The cost of the paid leave is met by the employer. These are important cornerstones of the framework. There are, however, still some practical and implementation measures that the Department must determine. The consultation invites views on some specific aspects of the regulations so that we can implement the provisions of the Act in a way that provides support for all users of this important new legislation. It is open for responses from 5 July 2024 for a 12 week period.
- 3.7 The draft response to the consultation is attached at Appendix 1. In particular, Members are asked to note the following in the proposed response to the consultation:
- that the right to safe leave should arise following a single incident of domestic abuse

- that the definition of leave year for the purposes of safe leave should align with the existing definition of leave year for annual leave purposes, set out in the Working Time Regulations (NI) 2016, i.e., maps our current leave year
- that employers have the option of seeking notification of the purpose of safe leave (e.g. obtaining legal advice, finding alternative accommodation etc) as part of any notice procedures
- that safe leave should be able to be taken in periods shorter than one day
- that employees should receive their full pay when on a period of safe leave and reflect 'normal pay'

Financial and Resource Implications

Financial

- 3.8 Any additional costs associated with safe paid leave will be met from departmental staffing budgets. Given that the entitlement is for 10 days per annum there will be no backfill requirement.

Human Resources

- 3.9 There are no staffing implications to this consultation. However once introduced there will be a requirement to review the Domestic Violence & Abuse Policy, including consultation with trade unions and there will also be system configuration implications to calculate 'normal pay'.

Equality, Good Relations and Rural Needs Implications

- 3.10 The Department for Economy has undertaken draft equality and rural needs screening and has been screened out. Currently we do not anticipate the policy to result in any adverse impacts on any of the Section 75 groups or for those who live rurally. The Council will be required to undertake Equality and Rural Needs screening whilst carrying out any review of our own policy."

The Committee agreed the Council's response to the Department for the Economy's consultation document on the provision of Safe Leave [here](#), subject to the amendment of part 7 to clarify that, whilst the Council would prefer guidance, it does not wish to put in additional barriers to requests for safe leave. The Committee noted that the response would be submitted subject to ratification at the October Council meeting.

Good Jobs Bill Consultation Committee Report

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 To present a draft Council response to the Department for the Economy’s consultation document on the ‘Good Jobs’ Employment Rights Bill.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- Review and agree the Council’s response to the Department for the Economy’s consultation document on the ‘Good Jobs’ Employment Rights Bill. The response will be submitted subject to ratification at the October Council meeting.**

3.0 Main report

3.1 In July 2024, Economy Minister Conor Murphy, released the Good Jobs Employment Rights Bill consultation.

3.2 The consultation is open for responses from 1 July to 30 September 2024.

3.3 The aim of the consultation is to gain an insight into the opinions of the public, stakeholders and other parties involved in various employment rights with a view to enhancing the Employment Law framework in Northern Ireland to ensure it is fit for purpose.

3.4 Key objectives of the Good Jobs Employment Rights Bill consultation include replacing zero-hour contracts with a more flexible option and protecting workers’ rights and removing unfair barriers for trade unions, specifically in low-paying sectors. In addition, the consultation will gather views on a broader range of potential employment law enhancements to boost terms of employment, voice, and representation, pay and benefits, and a healthy work-life balance.

3.5 The consultation seeks views on four aspects of a Good Job, as defined by the Carnegie Trust, namely: Terms of Employment; Pay and Benefits; Voice and Representation; and Work-life Balance. Appendix 1 sets out a brief outline of the topics under consideration.

- 3.6 The consultation responses will be summarised and placed on the Department for the Economy website. This will include a list of organisations that responded but will not include personal data.
- 3.7 In formulating the Council's response to the consultation document, the views of each council department, Legal Services, and Audit Governance and Risk Services have been sought.

There are a number of sections contained in the consultation document that do not apply to the Council as an employer. Where this is the case, the following sections have not been completed.

- Understanding Employment Status and addressing bogus self employment
 - Employment Agency Inspectorate Information Sharing - Call for Information
 - EAI Enforcement Powers: Labour Market Enforcement Undertakings & Labour Market Enforcement Orders
 - Pay and Benefits
 - Working Time Regulations: Record Keeping Requirements – Call for information
 - Working Time Regulations: Right to Disconnect – Call for information
 - Collective Bargaining: Recognition – Call for Information
 - Information and Consultation Definitions – Call for Information
 - Information and Consultation Thresholds – Call for Information
- 3.8 In addition, the Committee will note that the Council offers favourable terms and conditions of employment and policies and procedures which make it an employer of choice, and which exceed current statutory requirements. That being the case, it should be noted that the consultation document sets out a number of proposals that the Council already applies, for example, neonatal leave, flexible working etc. These arrangements have been subject to consultation with our trade unions in accordance with the Industrial Relations Framework.
- 3.9 The commitment to good jobs and good work is central to the Belfast Agenda's ambition to drive inclusive growth and tackle anti-poverty. Therefore, an overarching civic response is also

attached for submission to the Department along with the detailed Council's response as an employer.

- 3.10 While broadly supporting the four main themes in the drive to create 'good jobs', the covering response recognises the diversity of the business base in Belfast, where 87% of businesses employ fewer than 50 employees and the persistent challenges the local (and regional) economy faces in terms of high levels of economic inactivity, low unemployment and low productivity which make it a challenging economic environment.
- 3.11 As a result, it focuses on the standards and ambition for the city, highlighting some of the initiatives that can support good jobs and create a framework for more inclusive practices across the city, such as the Belfast Business Promise, as well as the role of anchors and the public sector in enacting social value procurement. This also recommends the need for consideration to be given to encouraging the adoption of the Real Living Wage and support to create inclusive pathways to employment.
- 3.12 Council Officers have also made their external networks aware of the consultation period on the Good Jobs Employment Bill.

Financial & Resource Implications

- 3.13 None

Equality, Good Relations and Rural Needs Implications

- 3.14 The Department for Economy has undertaken draft equality and rural needs screening and has been screened out. Currently we do not anticipate the policy to result in any adverse impacts on any of the Section 75 groups or for those who live rurally. The Council will be required to undertake Equality & Rural Needs screening whilst carrying out any review of our own policy."

The Committee agreed the Council's response to the Department for the Economy's consultation document on the 'Good Jobs' Employment Rights Bill [here](#), subject to the amendment of the response to provide that the Council is opposed to the use of zero hours contracts.

Planning Update

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 27th August 2024, it had received an update on Planning Performance. At that meeting and previously, the Committee had sought a regular update on Major applications and applications that had

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 20th September, 2024**

been determined by the Planning Committee, especially those where a Decision Notice had yet to be issued.

As set out in the previous report, all Major applications must be determined by the Planning Committee. The Key Performance Indicator (given in weeks) is calculated from when an application is considered to be valid to when the Decision Notice (“Green Form”) is issued. That means that any delays either pre- or post- committee would impact on the KPI. The target for determining a Major application was 30 weeks.

Appendix 1 to the report [here](#) sets out the Major applications that were currently with the Council to determine. Details are given on the location, proposal, the validation date and target date for determination (using the 30-week target set out in the Key Performance Indicator) as well as a status update.

In addition, Appendix 2 [here](#) sets out the applications that had been determined by the Committee since February 2022 which are yet to be issues. For completeness, information was also given on those applications determined by Committee which had had their Decision Notice issued. Details are given on the time taken (in weeks) to bring the applications before Committee and where decisions are yet to be issued, information was given relating to the main reason for the delay.

Reports on Major applications and applications determined by the Planning Committee would be brought to each Planning Committee meeting for information. It was proposed that the same reports would also be brought on a quarterly basis to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee. Should members have any questions on Major planning applications in the intervening period, they are able to contact the Director of Planning and Building Control.

The Committee:

1. Noted the report; and
2. Agreed that reports would be brought before the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on a quarterly basis.

Common Purpose – NI Legacy Programme Sponsorship

The Committee was reminded that Common Purpose was a non-for-profit leadership development organisation which supported people and communities from all backgrounds, beliefs and experiences. In recent years (October 2021 and January 2024) the Council had worked with Common Purpose and provided funding to support the delivery of their NI Legacy Programme in Belfast, alongside a range of other organisations, including Allstate Northern Ireland, Belfast Charitable Society, Belfast Met, Halifax Foundation for Northern Ireland and Power NI.

The most recent NI Legacy Programme which was delivered in January 2024 attracted 77 participants aged 18-25 from across Northern Ireland. The two-day programme encouraged young people to think bigger, get new perspectives, be challenged to think differently to shape the future of Northern Ireland. The Council hosted

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 20th September, 2024**

day 2 of the programme at the City Hall and also directly supported the delivery of the programme with The Rt. Hon. Lord Mayor of Belfast, Councillor Ryan Murphy, delivering a keynote speech and facilitating a Q&A session with participants. Other activity included immersion visits with local organisations, including Another World Belfast, Translink and NOW Group to name a few. Café conversations were also facilitated by senior leaders across the city and the participants were challenged to deliver presentations to a panel of experts which enabled young people to reflect on their key priorities for change in Northern Ireland.

The programme delivered considerable impact for those involved with the majority of participants reflecting positive change as summarised below:

- 92% have greater confidence in their role as a leader
- 96% feel better prepared to work with people who are different from them
- 89% feel better able to make a positive impact
- 96% will be more open to diverse perspectives
- 86% feel more willing and able to impact their city's future

Common Purpose produced a video which summarises the 2024 NI Legacy Programme [here](#).

The Director of City and Organisational Strategy advised the Committee that, following the success of the previous two programmes in 2021 and 2024, Common Purpose planned to bring forward a further programme to deliver in Belfast in January 2025. The new programme would engage new participants aged 18-25 with a renewed focus on engaging young people within inclusive growth cohorts across the city.

He reported that Common Purpose had approached the Council and other partners across the city to seek sponsorship of £10,000 to support the delivery of the programme. Funding would help to support the organisation to offer the programme free of charge to young people across the city and engage up to 100 participants. This would help also to remove barriers to participation and ensure that all those who wish to participate can do so.

The programme would bring together a diverse group of young people: some in employment, some not; some studying, some volunteering whilst some would be passionate activists and others would be finding their own causes. It would focus on supporting the human capital, social capital and civic capital for those involved:

- Human capital - individual learning outcomes for participants as they grow and develop their cultural intelligence.
- Social capital - creating valuable connections between peers and generations across the city.
- Civic capital – identifying the tangible actions and outcomes to support young people to make a difference in their local areas.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 20th September, 2024**

As a potential sponsor, the Council would have the opportunity to:

- Secure 20 places for our younger members of staff and/or young people from across the city to enable them to benefit from the learning, impact, inclusion, and networks that the programme provides. We would intend to liaise with community partners and members to raise awareness of this opportunity.
- Engage and speak on the programme and to listen to and gain new perspectives from, the diverse eyes of the young leaders.
- Include our branding on all marketing materials and related social media posts to further raise the profile of Council with young people.

A further update will be provided to members upon Common Purpose securing the required funding to deliver the programme.

The Committee approved the request for funding received to sponsor the delivery of the Common Purpose NI Legacy Programme (2025) to a value of £10,000.

The Committee agreed also that a report be submitted to a future meeting on the impact of previous years' programmes.

Eurocities Culture Forum 2024

The Strategic Director of Place and Economy submitted for the Committee's consideration the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 Eurocities Culture Forum is taking place in Belfast 24-28 September 2024. We are expecting around 120 participants. The programme will be centred around showcasing our cultural strategy, local cultural sector and projects such as 2 Royal Avenue, Vacant to Vibrant, Hub-In, Belfast Stories and the Belfast 2024 programme. We are working with ten partner cities to include their case studies in the programme.

1.2 The four day programme will include one official dinner, and one welcome reception, both of which exceed the limits for small scale hospitality due to the number of delegates, and therefore require committee approval.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- **Approve hospitality spend above small scale hospitality threshold: Welcome Reception £1,200 and Official Dinner £3,848.**

3.0 Main Report

Context

- 3.1** At City Growth & Regeneration Committee meeting on 9 August 2023 Members were given an update on key Eurocities membership activity, including Belfast hosting Eurocities Culture Forum in September 2024.
- 3.2** At City Growth & Regeneration Committee on 8 May 2024 members were presented with a further update on the Eurocities Culture Forum 24-28 September 2024 including an outline of the programme.
- 3.3** Being chosen to host the event recognises the value of Belfast as a cultural capital and presents an opportunity to position and promote the city during Belfast 2024. This presents a great opportunity to shine a light on the city and on the rich cultural and artistic talent, and responds to *A City Imagining* cultural strategy and Belfast Agenda ambitions to showcase our city to the world.
- 3.4** For Eurocities Culture Forum 2024, 120 delegates are now registered from over 70 cities across Europe and the UK.

Proposal

Welcome Reception

- 3.5** Cost to host the welcome reception at 2 Royal Avenue on Wednesday 25 September is using Yallaa (a community interest company based at 2 Royal Avenue) is estimated at £1,200. High Sheriff will undertake civic dignitary role to welcome the delegates to Belfast.

Official Dinner

- 3.6** Cost to host the official dinner at The Academy training restaurant (part of Ulster University) is at an agreed rate of £35 per head for set menu designed by UU students, (total estimated cost £3,848).

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.7** Approval is requested for hospitality for the events noted above, taking place during Eurocities Culture Forum. Costs to deliver the overall Forum event are within existing budgets.

Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

3.8 There are no equality or good relations implications.”

After discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor Long,
Seconded by Councillor de Faoite,

That the Committee agrees to adopt the recommendation as set out in paragraph 2.1 of the report.

On a vote, twelve Members voted for the proposal and none against, with eight no votes, and it was declared carried.

Shared Prosperity Fund

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on a funding opportunity through the UK Government’s Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) and to get agreement on a number of priority activities for inclusion in the funding application.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- **Note the proposal by UK Government to make an allocation of £9.85million to councils under the Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF), for spend to take place by 31 March 2025**
- **Note that there will be a ring-fenced allocation of £1,787,615 for Belfast City Council**
- **Agree the indicative list of priority activities for inclusion in the funding application.**

3.0 Main report

3.1 In 2022, the UK Government’s DLUHC (Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities) confirmed that Shared Prosperity Fund resources of around £127million would be available in Northern Ireland over the financial years 2022/23; 2023/24 and 2024/25). The funding was structured around three priority areas, namely:

- Supporting Local Business – funding stream under which the Northern Ireland Enterprise Support Service “Go Succeed” is funded – (£17million budget) as well as targeted support for key growth sectors and female enterprise to be led by Invest NI
- People and Skills – funding allocated via an open call for projects, with 18 projects receiving funding totalling £58million as well as additional funding for numeracy skills (“Multiply”) of around £6million to be distributed through the Labour Market Partnerships
- Communities and Place – initial funding of £1million allocated to 11 councils for expenditure by March 2023.

3.2 At the April meeting of the Northern Ireland SPF Partnership Group (the overall steering group for the SPF funding), DLUHC advised that they were considering plans for the allocation of remaining funding of £9.85million and sought views on a number of options. Their preferred option was to allocate all resources to councils under the “Communities and Place” theme via a ring-fenced call for projects.

3.3 Following that meeting, DLUHC officials presented this advice to Ministers. However given the election announcement at the end of May, this proposal was not signed off for some time. On 23 August 2024, all councils received correspondence confirming the UK Government’s intention to proceed with the ring-fenced call for funding, open to the 11 local authorities.

3.4 Subsequently, information on the proposed approach, timelines and level of funding available under the fund have been shared. Funding has been allocated on a per capita basis. For Belfast, this means that there is a budget of £1,787,615. SPF runs until end March 2025 so all expenditure must be incurred by this point. However the SPF management team have advised that they will accept eligible expenditure from 1 April 2024 – meaning that we can use this funding for activities that are already under way (and therefore use council resources on other schemes). Eligible activities can include:

- Funding for improvements to town centres and high streets, including improved accessibility for those with disabilities
- Funding for new, or improvements to existing, community and neighbourhood infrastructure projects
- Creation of and improvements to local green spaces and community gardens
- Enhanced support for existing cultural, historic and heritage organisations that make up the local cultural

heritage offer/support for local arts, cultural heritage and creative activities

- Support for active travel measures
- Funding for development and promotion of wider campaigns which encourage people to visit and explore the local area.

3.5 Following the formal confirmation of the fund, officers have been working to identify relevant projects for inclusion as part of the Belfast City Council application. We have undertaken a review of programmes and engaged with teams across the council to identify projects that can meet the eligibility criteria. Following a preliminary round of engagement, we have worked at speed through a long list to a short list of projects that:

- Might allow us to free up resources for other activity
- Are under way and will comfortably meet spend timeframes
- Have not yet started but have approvals/routes to market that will ensure spend by end March 2025
- Enable us to bring forward work that had been identified as priority but did not have dedicated resources assigned.

3.6 As a result of this exercise, the following projects are being proposed for submission:

Project	Indicative budget
Pitch improvements work	£460,000
Playgrounds improvement work	£660,000
Vacant to Vibrant scheme	£200,000
Feasibility studies for key city centre sites and assets	£200,000
Programme of animation, lighting enhancements and marketing linked to key city events (e.g. Halloween, Christmas)	£260,000

3.7 Given the late confirmation of funding, the SPF team has requested that councils submit funding applications by 19 September and have confirmed their intention to proceed with project assessments by early October, with funding to follow shortly afterwards. They are aware that some councils may require formal endorsement of their final funding application so they are prepared to work with councils in the knowledge that funding packages are in principle only until there is appropriate council sign-off.

- 3.8 While SPF funding is only guaranteed until 31 March 2025, it is understood that the UK Government is currently working on options for what happens next, following this date. One option under discussion is an extension of activity for one year i.e. from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026. This would allow for some development work by the new government to consider what an appropriate replacement to Levelling Up might look like. If this was the case, it may mean that a further allocation of funding might be made available for eligible activity in 2025/26 financial year – although this is not currently guaranteed.

Financial & Resource Implications

- 3.9 A financial allocation of £1,787,615 will be provided to Belfast City Council to undertake an agreed programme of work. This can be managed within existing staff resources.

Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment

- 3.10 All proposed activities will be or have been equality screened.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Corporate Performance Improvement Update

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide members with an update on the work undertaken in regard to Corporate Performance Improvement and to present the draft Performance Improvement Self-Assessment 2023-24 for Committee approval and publication.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- i. approve the draft Performance Improvement Self-Assessment 2023-24 (Appendix 1) and;
- ii. authorise its publication on the council’s website by the statutory deadline of 30 September 2024, subject to formal ratification by the full council on the 1 October 2024.

3.0 Main report

3.1 Background

Part 12 of the Local Government (NI) Act requires councils to agree improvement objectives on an annual basis and publish these in the form of a Performance Improvement Plan, to be published by 30 June. The Act also requires that progress is regularly monitored against the improvement objectives and reported in an annual Self-Assessment of performance, to be published by 30 September.

In 2021-22, the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) recommended that we should consider ways to ensure that 'Self-Assessment reports' provide a comprehensive and useful overview of how the council has performed across its wider corporate activities'.

3.2 Performance Improvement Self-Assessment 2023-24

Committee will note that Appendix 1 fulfils both requirements above providing a holistic review of performance and assessing the council's performance against five agreed performance improvement objectives. A series of improvement milestones and indicators had been set out against each objective to enable success to be measured. A summary of the assessment is set out below.

- All 5 improvement objectives have been achieved.
- Milestones – all 66 milestones have either been achieved (85%) or partially achieved (15%).
- In total there are 28 performance indicators – 8 statutory and 20 self-imposed indicators.
- Of the 28 performance indicators:
 - 75% (21) of performance indicators were on target or exceeded target (within 1% or better);
 - 7% (2) were slightly adrift of target (between 1% and 5%) and these are:
 - Number of adult and junior leisure centre monthly prepaid memberships (including swim school); and
 - Amount (tonnage) of council collected municipal waste arisings (reduce).
 - 18% (5) were adrift of target (5% or more) and these are:

- Percentage of corporate complaints resolved within timeframe;
 - Number of participants or businesses supported;
 - One Million Trees Programme - number of trees planted per annum;
 - Average (weeks) processing time for major planning applications; and
 - Average (weeks) processing time for local planning applications.
- Of the 28 performance indicators:
 - 57% (16) showed a positive change from previous years.
 - 25% (7) showed no significant change or maintained a similar level of performance as previous years, and these are:
 - Number of parks and green spaces with green flag accreditation;
 - Number of jobs promoted through the 'Go For It' programme [statutory performance indicator];
 - Number of participants or businesses supported;
 - Carbon disclosure project (CDP) score;
 - Northern Ireland environmental benchmarking survey rating;
 - % of household waste collected that is sent for recycling (or prepared for re-use) (increase); and
 - Number of small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) and companies directly engaged in the Smart District programme.
 - 18% (5) showed a negative change from previous years and these are:
 - Percentage of corporate complaints resolved within timeframe;
 - One Million Trees Programme - number of trees planted per annum;
 - Amount (tonnage) of council collected municipal waste arisings;
 - Average (weeks) processing time for major planning applications; and
 - Average (weeks) processing time for local planning applications.

A rationale has been provided within Appendix 1 where targets have not been met or there has been limited or no improvement. Key factors impacting on the delivery of targets include regional issues and delays, council resource constraints as well as dependency on external factors including market forces and regulatory changes. Where targets have not been achieved or there has been no improvement, where relevant these have been carried forward to the 2024-25 Performance Improvement Plan.

Members will note that the draft Performance Improvement Self-Assessment report 2023-24 attached at Appendix 1 had been considered and endorsed by the Audit and Assurance Panel on 16 September 2024. If the Committee agrees, the intention would be to publish the Self-Assessment on the council website by the statutory deadline of 30 September 2024 albeit subject to formal ratification by the full council on the 1 October 2024.

3.3 Performance Improvement Plan 2024-25

At the June committee, members were presented with a draft Performance Improvement Plan. Following this meeting, the Improvement Plan 2024-25 was:

- formally approved by the full council;
- submitted to the NIAO;
- published on our website prior to the end of June in accordance with Part 12 of the Local Government Act; and
- circulated internally to all responsible and updating officers in July 2024.

Committee will note that following approval of the Corporate Delivery Plan (2024-25) at Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 23 August 2024 the target for the % of invoices paid within 30 calendar days has been revised from 95% to 90%. The published web version of the [2024-25 Performance Improvement Plan](#) will be updated accordingly following full council approval.

The first update on progress against the 2024-25 Performance Improvement Objectives will be presented to the Committee in December 2024.

3.4 Financial and Resource Implications

None

3.5 Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment

There are no equality or good relations implications associated with this report.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Physical Programme and Asset Management

Physical Programme Update

The Committee noted that this item had been withdrawn from the agenda.

Update on Area Working Groups

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meetings of North Area Working Group of 27th August, South Area Working Group of 19th August, Area Working Group of 29th August and East Area Working Group of 5th September 2024; and agreed to the recommendation of the East AWG that the Container Storage Facility (ELIF31), previously agreed for the use of Glentoran Youth Football Club, be reprofiled and allocated for use by Dundela Football Club.

Finance, Procurement and Performance

Belfast City Council Statement of Accounts 2023/24

The Director of Finance submitted for the Committee’s consideration the undernoted report:

Insert item 5a

The Committee:

- i. approved the Council’s Statement of Accounts and incorporated Annual Governance Statement for the year ended 31 March 2024; and
- ii. agreed that this paper should not be subject to call-in because it would be in breach of a statutory duty given that the statement of accounts must be published by 30th September 2024.

Contracts

The Committee:

- Approved the public advertisement of tenders as per Standing Order 37a detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 1);

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 20th September, 2024**

- Approved the modification of the contract as per Standing Order 37a detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 2); and
- Noted the award of retrospective STAs in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions as detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 3):

Table 1: Competitive Tenders

Title of Tender	Proposed Contract Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Short description of goods / services
Bulk LPG – Duncrue Estate	Up to 2 years	£160,000	S Grimes	Due to declining and variable nature of landfill gas generation and abstraction across the Dargan Industrial Estate, refilling of the bulk LPG tank will be on an as, and when required basis.
Folder inserter to support high volume enveloping service for NIHE	Up to 2 years	£110,000	S McNicholl	A new folder inserter is required to continue to provide SLA (Service Level Agreement) mandated high volume enveloping service for NIHE. The NIHE SLA supports over £2 million of income annually for Digital Services. The impact of not providing this service is that we will be in breach of our SLA agreement with NIHE.
Framework for advertising in local newspapers.	Up to 4 years	£800,000	E McConville	Call off framework to support the placement of advertisements in local newspapers in line with Statutory and Standing Order obligations i.e. tenders, recruitment and public notices.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 20th September, 2024**

Commvault support	Up to 3 years	£60,000	P Gribben	Support contract for Commvault backup products that protects data on the Council's server infrastructure
Telephone service provision - Calls / Lines / Broadband (T2484)	Up to 24 months	£284,687	S McNicholl	Contract to provide telephony services – calls, lines & broadband Originally approved by SP&R Nov 2023 for 12 months but should have been for 24 months.
Resilient internet provision, DNS services, Domain registration and renewal	Up to 5 years	£160,000	S McNicholl	To maintain our internet connection to allow access to websites and for the provision of our hosted webservices

Table 2: Modification to Contract

Title of Contract	Original Contract Duration	Modification required	SRO	Description	Supplier
Bobbin Café Franchise	Up to 36 months	A further 6 months (Income based contract)	N Largey	The replacement tender (T2479) is currently being evaluated but additional time is required to complete the evaluation process including negotiations. An extension of up to 6 months is requested to facilitate the evaluation and award process but the full period may not be required if the replacement tender (T2479) can be awarded sooner.	Now Group

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 20th September, 2024**

Table 3: Retrospective Single Tender Actions

Title of Contract	Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Description	Supplier
Project Management System used within Digital Services	Up to 2 years	£36,000	P Gribben	The current system delivers functionality which is required by Digital Services for management of all projects. No other suitable supplier is available. This STA is to ensure continuity of service and is for 1 year with option for an additional year.	Concerto

Falls Park Cyclocross Event – Request for Funding

The Committee was advised that a request for funding for a cyclocross event was considered at the meeting of the People and Communities Committee on 10th September.

Given that this was a request for financial support and no budget was available, that Committee had agreed to refer this matter to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for its consideration.

The Committee was advised that the request for funding of up to £8,795 for the Falls Park – which would be held on 5th and 6th October - was not included in any revenue budgets and there was no allocation in the People and Communities budget to support ad hoc requests.

Accordingly, the Committee was asked to consider the request.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 20th September, 2024**

In response to a question, the Director of Finance advised the Committee that, if it were minded to support the request, funding could be made available from the current year's underspend.

After discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor R. McLaughlin,
Seconded by Councillor Black,

That the Committee agrees to accede to the request for funding with a caveat that funding would not be made available by this means in the future but that the organisation would have to make application to the appropriate Council grants schemes which provided funding for such events.

On a vote, fifteen Members voted for the proposal and five against and it was declared carried.

Equality and Good Relations

Dual Language Signage at Olympia Leisure Centre

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of report or summary of main issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise Committee of the outcome of the consultation on the draft Equality Impact Assessment carried out in relation to the erection of bilingual Irish/English signage at Olympia Leisure Centre.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- **Note the contents of this report;**
- **Note the contents of the Consultation Report at Appendix 1;**
- **Note and approve the contents and findings of the Equality Impact Assessment Draft Final Decision Report at Appendix 2;**
- **Determine whether it wishes to proceed with the erection of bilingual signage at Olympia Leisure Centre.**

3.0 Main report

3.1 Background

Belfast City Council carried out a consultation into the proposed erection of bilingual or multilingual external naming

and internal directional signage at its four city wide leisure centres (Andersonstown, Olympia, Lisnasharragh and Templemore) in 2019 / 2020.

On 24th January, 2020 [Agenda for Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on Friday, 24th January, 2020, 9.30 am - Belfast City Council \(www.internalminutes\)](#) the Council's Strategic Planning and Resources Committee agreed to erect bilingual external naming and internal directional signage in Andersonstown Leisure Centre.

- 3.2 At a subsequent meeting on 24 September 2021, [Agenda for Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on Friday, 24th September, 2021, 9.30 am - Belfast City Council \(www.internalminutes\)](#) the Committee considered agenda item 2(f) 'consultation on signage – Andersonstown, Lisnasharragh, Olympia and Templemore Leisure Centres – Options Paper.' Committee agreed to the erection of bilingual signage at Olympia Leisure Centre but did not take any decision on the erection of bilingual signage at Lisnasharragh or Templemore leisure centres, instead agreeing for a report on linguistic accessibility at those centres to be presented to Committee in the future.

The decision with respect to Olympia was subsequently called in and a barrister's opinion was obtained on 8 December 2021, which found merit in respect of Ground 41(1) (b) of the Local Government Act (2014) – that 'the decision would disproportionately affect adversely any section of the inhabitants of the district'.

Committee will be aware that this opinion was given in the absence of an Equality Impact Assessment.

- 3.3 Following receipt of the barristers opinion, the 'called in' decision of the Committee of 24 September 2021 to erect bilingual signage at Olympia was placed on the agenda of the next available Council meeting on 10 Jan 2022, in accordance with standing orders, where the taking of any such decision would have required the support of a qualified majority vote of 80% of the Members present and voting. At the Council meeting, Members took a decision to refer the matter back to the Committee and the original decision to erect the signage did not proceed to a vote.

Committee agreed at its meeting on 21 January 2022 to proceed with an Equality Impact Assessment on the erection of bilingual external naming and internal directional signage at Olympia Leisure Centre.

3.4 Key Issues

A consultation on the Draft Equality Impact Assessment was launched on 12 June 2023 and ran for 14 weeks until 17 September 2023. The public were encouraged to respond online through the Council's consultation platform and there was an opportunity to submit written information to the consultation. There were also a number of online and in-person public meetings.

3.5 The consultation report gives an analysis of the statistical responses for each question and an analysis of some of the key themes in the commentary under each question. The consultation responses showed a strength of feeling both for and against the erection of bilingual signage.

3.6 Much of the commentary opposing the erection of bilingual signage is based on the concept that it will cause alienation and damage community relations. Commentary in favour of the erection of the bilingual signage states that this is in line with the concept of rights and inclusivity, and is in keeping with international guidance on minority language issues.

3.7 Committee will be aware of developments in the Council's approach to language since the EQIA on the proposal to erect bilingual signage at Olympia was conducted. In May 2024 Council approved a Language Strategy Action Plan that sets out how the Council will deliver its commitments under the five strands of the Language Strategy (those five strands being Irish, Ulster-Scots, new communities, sign language and disability communications).

Committee will further be aware that the Council is currently conducting a consultation on a draft Irish Language Policy, which itself is the subject of an EQIA. The draft policy, among other things, commits the Council to adopting a dual language approach to signage in all its facilities and will, as part of a rolling programme, prioritise the erection of such signage through a categorisation approach.

3.8 Committee will be aware that the original Committee decision of September 2021 to erect bilingual signage at Olympia Leisure Centre did not proceed. The matter was referred by Council back to the Committee who decided to conduct an Equality Impact Assessment into the matter. Committee are now being asked to make a new decision on signage at Olympia, based on all of the information available, including the findings of the EQIA.

Financial & Resource Implications

- 3.9 None. The cost of the signage will be met out of existing budgets.

Equality, good relations or rural needs implications

- 3.10 Committee will be aware of the Council's two statutory duties under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (the 'Act'). Section 75(1) states that the Council must have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between nine different groups: persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, marital status or sexual orientation; between men and women generally; between persons with a disability and persons without; and between persons with dependants and persons without. Section 75(2) states that the Council must have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.
- 3.11 Schedule 9 Paragraph 4(2)(a) of the Act requires the Council to have a scheme that states the Council's arrangements for assessing compliance with its duties (with regard to both equality and good relations) under Section 75 of the Act.

The Council's Equality Scheme currently provides that the Council uses Equality Impact Assessments for this purpose.

Recent legal advice obtained by the Council in an opinion dated June 27, 2024 advised that the key legislative requirement for the Good Relations Duty requires the Council to have a scheme which states the Council's arrangements for assessing its compliance with the Good Relations Duty and for consulting on matters to which the Good Relations Duty is likely to be relevant (including details of the persons to be consulted).

Section 75 does not require the use of Equality Impact Assessments in relation to the Good Relations Duty, nor does the Equality Commission, although it does make a recommendation to that effect.

It is open to the Council to adopt different arrangements, not involving the use of an EQIA, for assessing compliance with the Good Relations Duty. However that would require an amendment to the Council's current Equality Scheme.

- 3.12 Committee will note that Section 75 of the Act requires the Council to carry out a review of its Equality Scheme every five years and make any relevant updates to a revised Equality Scheme. Therefore the Scheme is due for revision next year.
- 3.13 Section 4 of the Draft Final Decision Report provides an analysis of potential impacts on both equality of opportunity and good relations.

Committee will note that the primary function of an EQIA is to determine the extent of differential impact of a policy upon nine groups listed in Section 75(1) of the Act and in turn whether that impact is adverse, that is, whether it has a negative impact on one or more of the nine equality categories. If it is decided that the policy has an adverse impact, the public authority must consider measures which might mitigate the adverse impact, and alternative policies which might better achieve the promotion of equality of opportunity.

The Draft Final Decision Report states with regard to equality of opportunity that prior to consultation, it was suggested that the proposal for bilingual signage may give rise to a potential adverse impact for those from a Protestant / Unionist / Loyalist ('PUL') background and that signage may discourage access or use of Olympia by those groups. The consultation confirmed that this perception did exist within PUL communities i.e. the proposal did have potential to alienate users from these communities, making it less likely that they would use the centre. However, the report further states 'At the same time it was also suggested during the consultation that the absence of bilingual signage may have an adverse impact on those from the Irish language community.'

The report notes that a very small number of respondents with a disability did indicate that multilingual signage may have the potential to cause confusion given the nature of their disability (e.g. dyslexia, learning difficulties).

With regard to Good Relations, the report states that 'The evidence that is available to date, and including the previous round of public consultation in 2019/20 along with the current consultation, does indicate that the proposal for bilingual naming and signage has the potential to have an adverse impact on good relations on grounds of religious belief, political opinion, and also perhaps national identity.' The report concludes that 'evidence available prior to consultation suggested that the proposal may have the potential for adverse impact and the consultation has

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 20th September, 2024**

confirmed that, within certain communities, this impact is perceived to be real and to be significant.’

These findings are discussed in more detail in Section 4 of the Draft Final Decision Report attached to this report at Appendix 2.”

After discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor Beattie,
Seconded by Councillor R-M Donnelly,

That the Committee agrees to proceed with the erection of dual language signage, that is English and Irish, at the Olympia Leisure Centre.

On a vote, fifteen Members voted for the proposal and five against and it was declared carried.

Accordingly, the Committee:

- noted the contents of the report;
- noted the contents of the Consultation Report at Appendix 1;
- noted and approved the contents and findings of the Equality Impact Assessment Draft Final Decision Report at Appendix 2;
- Agreed to proceed with the erection of dual language signage, that is English and Irish, at the Olympia Leisure Centre.

**Minutes of the Meeting of the
Shared City Partnership 9 September**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes and recommendations from the Shared City Partnership Meeting held on 9th September 2024, including:

Presentation from Cross Departmental Working Group

- To note the contents of the verbal presentation detailed in the minutes.

Education Authority on School Safety and anti-racist Bullying Prevention

- To note the contents of the verbal presentation detailed in the minutes.

Shared City Partnership Workshop and Executive Office MOU re: Refugee Integration.

The Shared City Partnership recommended to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it:

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 20th September, 2024**

- notes the contents of the report; and
- agrees the Memorandum of Understanding in respect of Refugee Integration Funding and the approach detailed in the report and grants the Director of City and Neighbourhood Services delegated authority to progress this support initiative.

PEACE IV – Secretariat Update

- The Partnership recommends to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it notes the contents of the report.

PEACEPLUS Local Community Action Plan – Update

- The Partnership recommends to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it notes the contents of the report

**Equality and Diversity: Annual Report to the
Equality Commission for Northern Ireland 2023-24**

The Committee was advised that the Council was required, under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, to provide the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland with an annual report on the progress of the implementation of its Equality Scheme, as well as an update on the delivery of its Disability Action Plan.

Accordingly, the Interim City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services submitted for the Committee's approval the annual report for 2023/24.

The Committee approved the annual report and noted that it would be submitted to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland following Council ratification.

Operational Issues

Minutes of Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Party Group Leaders' Consultative Forum of 12th September.

**Minutes of the Meeting of the
Audit and Risk Panel - 16 September**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Risk Panel of 16th September.

**Requests for use of the City Hall
and the Provision of Hospitality**

The Committee approved the recommendations as set out below:

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 20th September, 2024**

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED
2025 Events					
Voice of Young People in Care (VOYPIC)	21 February 2025	10th Annual Care Day: Care Day Awards – Celebration event to honour children in care. Numbers attending – 200 - 300	C	Current rate free as charity	Yes, Soft Drink reception as significant anniversary
Indian Women Association Belfast	2 March 2025	International Women’s Day Celebrations - Through a cultural arts program showcasing dance and music, group Discussions and speeches. Numbers attending – 100	D	Room hire £175 <i>(community group not charity)</i>	Yes, Tea and Coffee Reception as community group
Suicide and Awareness Support Group (Falls Road)	14 June 2025	Suicide Awareness & Support Group 25th Anniversary - Moving Minds Together – recognise the work and thank the families who set up this organisation; the first in NI to offer support to bereaved families. Numbers attending – 250	C	Current rate free as charity	Yes, Soft Drink reception as significant anniversary

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 20th September, 2024**

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED
Remembering Srebrenica NI	25 June 2025	Srebrenica 30th anniversary Northern Ireland commemoration event with reflection, film and reception. Numbers attending – 100	C	Current rate free as charity	Yes, Soft Drink reception as significant anniversary
Belfast Pride	18 July 2025	Belfast Pride Launch and Pride Awards – LGBT Community awards ceremony. Drinks reception followed by Awards presentation. Numbers attending – 300 - 350	D	Current rate free as charity	Yes Reception as charity

Minutes of the Meeting of the Cost-of-Living Working Group

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Cost-of-Living Working Group of 11th September.

Issues Raised in Advance by Members

Sunday Trading - Pilot Scheme - Councillor Nelson to raise

In accordance with notice on the agenda, Councillor Nelson proposed:

That a report be submitted to a future meeting outlining how the Council could plan and deliver a pilot Sunday trading scheme that provides earlier Sunday trading hours for a period of six weeks. That the pilot scheme be accompanied by a public awareness campaign and aligned to family friendly town centre animation.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 20th September, 2024**

The proposal was seconded by Councillor Long.

At the request of Councillor de Faoite, the proposed and seconder agreed to the inclusion of the following:

That the Council examine how it can emulate projects like Open Botanic in other parts of the city through the Car Free Sunday's model.

On a vote, nineteen Members vote for the proposal and one against and it was declared carried.

Chairperson

People and Communities Committee

Tuesday, 3rd September, 2024

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Brooks (Chairperson);
Councillors Abernethy, Black, Bower,
Bunting, Doherty, M. Donnelly, R-M Donnelly,
Flynn, Garrett, Magee, Maghie, McKeown and Verner.

In attendance: Mr. D. Bone, City Services Manager;
Ms. P. Conway, Development Manager; and
Mrs. S. Steele, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies were recorded from Councillors Bradley, Bell, Cobain, Canavan, Maskey and I. McLaughlin.

Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were reported.

Housing Supply and Demand

It was agreed that Party Groups would contact Mr. L. Gunn, Regional Manager, directly should they wish to arrange meetings with their Party and the NIHE to discuss housing need and demand with the Belfast Housing Solutions Team

Housing Investment Plan 2024 Annual Update

The Committee was informed that the following representatives of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) were in attendance to provide the annual update on the Housing Investment Plan for Belfast 2023-2026:

Grainia Long (Chief Executive)
Liam Gunn (Regional Manager)
John Gillespie (Belfast Programme Manager)

Joining remotely:

Andy Kennedy (Asset Management)
Fiona McGrath (Head of Belfast Place Shaping)
Paul McCombe (Area Manager)
Theresa Maguire (Housing Manager)
Anthony McKenna (Housing Manager)
Patricia Rice (Housing Solutions)

**People and Communities Committee,
Tuesday, 3rd September, 2024**

The NIHE Chief Executive commenced by thanking the Members for their commitment to Housing, she emphasised the importance of the Community Planning Partnership and working together towards meeting the outcomes within the Belfast Agenda 2024 - 2028. Ms. Long then provided an overview of the following priorities and initiatives within the context of community planning:

- the NIHE continued to lead the various actions across the theme “Our Place” in the 2024-2028 Action Plan via Housing-led Regeneration;
- work continues with the Housing Led Regeneration Subgroup that had been established to support collaboration to increase housing supply across all tenures; and
- the NIHE was continuing to work with its statutory partners, the Council and DfC to look at public sector sites and give consideration to Place Making approaches.

The Chief Executive then provided a tenure breakdown of the housing across the city. She explained that the Housing Investment Plan (HIP) provided an overview of the housing market in the Belfast City Council area and reflected Community Planning priorities locally. She outlined the tenure breakdown of the 149,210 households in the city with 51% of these homes owner occupied, 23% private rented and 26% social rented. She advised that, relative to other Councils, there was a lower level of owner occupation in Belfast and higher level of private rental, however, that was not unusual for cities.

She then provided an overview of Housing Executive spend across Belfast during 2023/2024. She advised that, of the £347.33m spent, £107.52m related to ‘Investment New Build’, £25.24m had been spent on planned maintenance and improvements, £30.77m on response maintenance, and £23.29m on the Supporting People Programme, which she added was no longer available in the United Kingdom. She also advised that £8.04m had been spent on temporary accommodation with this figure just about meeting the growth and scale of this demand. She also detailed projected spend for 2024/25, including £37.59m allocated to planned maintenance including stock improvements, £31.60m for response maintenance and £23.74 to Supporting People.

The Committee noted that in 2023/24 the NIHE had:

- Managed over 83,000 social homes;
- Allocated almost 5,700 homes;
- Approved 805 disabled facilities grants;
- Invested £83.88 in Planned Maintenance and Stock Improvement;
- Started 1508 new social homes;
- Paid out £470m in Housing Benefit;
- Invested £304.3m in new build social homes;
- Provided over 19,000 housing support places to the most vulnerable through the Supporting People Programme and invested £788.75;
- Sold 355 homes;
- Completed 85.2% of repairs within target; and
- Invested approximately £57.9m in Rural Communities.

**People and Communities Committee,
Tuesday, 3rd September, 2024**

The Members were presented with figures regarding waiting lists, which again unfortunately showed an increase in applications and an increase of those in housing stress. She reported that since the covid pandemic the number of allocations had fallen in recent years, broadening the gap between supply and demand, which was deemed to require urgent intervention. She advised that, as predicted last year, this gap had increased further with many private landlords leaving the sector and she emphasised the need for new builds.

She provided an overview of the New Build/Social Housing Development Programme, as follows:

In 2023/24

- 419 new social homes completed;
- 1,756 new social homes under construction at end of March 2024; and
- Housing Executive pilot build of 6 new homes at been completed at Sunningdale.

Future Housing Requirements

- 8,551 new social housing units would be needed over the next five years; and
- 2023/26 SHDP – 2,084 (gross) new social housing units were programmed.

3 Year SHDP Performance

- 1,729 starts was the SG target for Belfast during the 3-year period;
- 1,222 starts had been achieved against the target; and
- Resulting in 507 fewer starts against the SG Target.

The following points were highlighted as key housing challenges within Belfast:

- 11,368 placements in temporary accommodation. Increased reliance on non-standard accommodation, including hotels and Bed and Breakfasts;
- 12,726 applicants on Waiting List for Belfast City District area at March 2024, with 10,307 (80%) in housing stress;
- Just over 1,647 social housing allocations in 2023/24. An identified need for 8,551 new social units over the next five years;
- Projected 30-year NIHE stock investment requirement of £2,985.8 million;
- Challenges with the delivery of planned and response maintenance including major adaptations; and
- Reduced budget for Affordable Warmth Scheme which supports fuel poverty households in the private sector.

**People and Communities Committee,
Tuesday, 3rd September, 2024**

She detailed the Key Housing Opportunities, as follows:

- Across Northern Ireland, the NIHE had recently completed a programme of 'fabric first' retrofits in 1,400 of its homes, had had commenced a programme of 300 – 400 low carbon heating installations;
- Increased investment in stock, provided positive impacts for local supply chains;
- New Modern Methods of Construction Pilot, a significant opportunity;
- Progress ongoing to enable the NIHE to borrow in order to invest in its stock and add to new supply;
- Supporting local communities through its Community Investment grants;
- New Procurement Legislation in October which should lead to greater agility, efficiency and transparency in procurement; and
- Strategic partnerships on homelessness, e.g. 'Homewards'; system change.

Ms. Long reported on the figures for temporary accommodation costs and those presenting as homeless, in the period 2023/24, with the 11,368 placements provided representing a 151% increase demand from 4,527 placements in 2019/20. She explained that this increase in demand had resulted in significant additional funding pressures with a spend of £34.4m required to meet the statutory duties for temporary accommodation in 2023/24. She emphasised that chronic homelessness was unprecedented within Belfast and advised that it was a critical priority for the NIHE which was working closely with the other various statutory stakeholders, including the Council, to try and address the ongoing issues.

The Members discussed the fragile nature of temporary accommodation and the need to try and ensure that families did not end up in nonstandard accommodation (for example, hotels). The Chief Executive stated that unfortunately, on occasions, there was no alternative but assured the Members that when this happened every other avenue had been explored. She reported that currently there was 242 placements in nonstandard accommodation in the Belfast area, of which 22 placements needed a 3-bed requirement and 16 needed a 4 plus bed requirement. She advised that the NIHE continued to prioritise work with a range of partners to secure additional temporary accommodation provision and also to mitigate the issues for families, including liaison with both the Education and Health Authorities.

Several of the Members spoke positively about the working relationships between the Council and the NIHE staff and specifically commended the work of the Housing Solutions Team advising that the new dedicated email system had worked well.

**People and Communities Committee,
Tuesday, 3rd September, 2024**

During discussion a Member highlighted that demand also existed for smaller units for single people as well as family homes. She also referred to the need to build communal areas for people who did not have access to gardens and to help build communities amongst residents.

The growing housing crisis particularly among young families and single people was also discussed, during which, a Member referred to the need for the evidence required for single fathers who had shared custody of their children to be consistent with that of single mothers. The Regional Manager undertook to raise this specific matter with the Housing Solutions Team.

In response to several other issues which had been raised during discussion, the representatives confirmed:

- that it would forward information on tenancy succession to Elected Members to enable them to share this with their constituents to help explain the process;
- that the cost of requested adaptations to properties was often prohibitive due to the cost of the build works, often coming in more expensive than the value of the property, and therefore not viable;
- that it would investigate further the specific requirements for Occupational Therapist and Architects for requested adaptations;
- that officers would consider and discuss with the NIHE Chief Executive further a suggestion previously put forward to the Housing Executive by Councillor Magee in regard to a joint NIHE, BCC community initiative for improving alleyways and go back to him directly;
- that the NIHE would look at mapping alleyways under its ownership;
- that, in terms of tower blocks, it would liaise directly with Councillor Bunting in regard to when building works should be scheduled to commence on new social housing in these areas;
- that where there was vacant homes it was likely that these were privately owned as the NIHE endeavored to ensure that its homes were turned around within 21 working days, although with contractor challenges this was not always possible;
- that the cavity wall pilot had been delayed until the start of 2025 and officers undertook to forward more details when available;
- that there was still issues with grounds maintenance in some areas, however, a new contractor had been appointed and it was hoped that these

**People and Communities Committee,
Tuesday, 3rd September, 2024**

issues would start to resolve in due course and encouraged the Members to log any areas where they had concerns;

- that they would forward a breakdown of the areas known as 'Inner, Mid and Outer areas' for the Members' information; and
- that officers were aware and shared the concern of the Members regarding the problems with NI Water and it would continue to meet to discuss design led solutions on a case-by-case basis;

The Chairperson thanked the NIHE representatives for attending and the Committee noted the information which had been provided.

Chairperson

People and Communities Committee

Tuesday, 10th September, 2024

MEETING OF THE PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Brooks (Chairperson);
Councillors Abernethy, Bell, Black,
Bunting, Cobain, Doherty, M. Donnelly, R-M Donnelly,
Flynn, Garrett, Magee, Maghie, Maskey, McKeown
McLaughlin and Verner.

In attendance: Mrs. S. Toland, Director of City Services;
Mr. S. Leonard, Director OSSS and Resources and Fleet;
Mr. J. Girvan, Director of Neighbourhood Services; and
Mrs. S. Steele, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies were recorded from Councillors Bower, Bradley and Canavan.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 6th August were taken as read and signed as correct.

It was reported that the minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 2nd September.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor McKeown declared an interest in agenda item 3 (a) Consultation on Policy Proposals underpinning a Public Health Bill for Northern Ireland as he was employee of the Health Service but as there was no discussion on the matter, he did not have to leave the meeting.

Councillor M. Donnelly declared an interest in agenda item 4 (b) Social Supermarkets 2025/26 as he was associated with a group that had previously been awarded funding and he left the meeting whilst the item was being considered.

Restricted

Request for use of Boucher Road Playing Fields – Aiken Promotions

The Director OSSS and Resources and Fleet reported that a request had been received from Aiken Promotions seeking to use the Boucher Road Playing Fields for a minimum of 1 show and a maximum of 6 shows during a 4-week period in either May, June or July, 2026 through to 2030 inclusive. The Promoter had also requested the use of Botanic

**People and Communities Committee,
Tuesday, 10th September, 2024**

Gardens for a minimum of 1 show and a maximum of 9 shows during a 4-week period in either May, June or July, 2026 through to 2030 inclusive.

The Committee noted that, whilst it was recognised that a 5-year commitment with the promotor assisted them in securing headline acts, this represented a sizeable commitment from the Council. Therefore, it was important that any permission given to the promotor permitted the Council to review it and amend it should other priorities arise for any of the proposed sites, for example, improvements to the site under the Council's Capital programme and/or pitch improvement programme.

The Members discussed the request in detail and several of the Members referred to the Pitches Strategy, which was currently pending and stated that they wished, where possible, to see the Boucher Road Playing Fields used for sport, especially in light of the stress that organisations were under on a weekly basis trying to secure a pitch allocation for their relevant sport and he reiterated the need to ensure that flexibility was built into any agreement.

The Director OSSS and Resources and Fleet provided a reassurance that, as with other similar requests, multiple year approval would be subject to annual review and added that the promotor would have to confirm specific dates annually and no later than six months in advance of the proposed event date.

A Member also referred to the engagement process with local residents around the events at Boucher Road and sought clarification as to what was required from the promoters to ensure consistency across the promoters and other Council venues.

Following detailed consideration the Committee:

- granted authority to the applicant to hold up to 9 concerts at Botanic Gardens during a 4-week period in either May, June or July 2026 – 2030 inclusive; and
- agreed that the request for the Boucher Road Playing fields would be considered on a yearly basis, pending the outcome of the pitches strategy.

The Committee further agreed that events seeking multiple year approval would be subject to annual review, with the Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services having the authority, under the scheme of delegation, to remove the permission for subsequent years based on officer recommendation or to reflect corporate priorities for the site, for example, the outcome of the pending Pitches Strategy.

Granted delegated authority to the Director of Neighbourhood Services to 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 promotor resolving any operational issues to the Council's satisfaction;
- The promotor carrying out appropriate resident and community engagement

**People and Communities Committee,
Tuesday, 10th September, 2024**

- 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;
- The promotor confirming specific event dates annually, no later than six months in advance of the proposed event date; and
- A review clause, to allow for consideration of any issues during previous events and any other Council priorities that arise for both sites.

The Committee:

- noted that the fee for the use of Belfast Parks was detailed in the departmental pricing schedule and was 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 was currently being taken forward in conjunction with the Council's Commercial Team.

It was further agreed that an update would be sought from the Council's Commercial Team as to the status of the ongoing review into the framework and policy for Events and also on the progress of the Pitches Strategy Report.

Quarter 1 Finance Update

The Director of City Services summarised the contents of the report which presented a Quarter 1 financial position for the People and Communities Committee, including a forecast of the year end outturn. She explained that the Quarter 1 position for the Committee showed an underspend of £1.4m (-5.4%), with the forecast year end position being an overspend of £73k (0.1%) which was well within the acceptable variance limit.

The Committee was advised that the main reasons for the quarter 1 Committee underspend related to vacant posts and posts under review across a number of services, contract cost reductions, the receipt of additional income and the timing of grants and programmes.

The Committee noted the report and the associated financial reporting pack.

Request for the use of Botanic Gardens for a Christmas Ice Experience

The Committee considered a request that had been received from Jordan Events Ltd. seeking to host a Christmas Spectacular Winter Ice experience in Botanic Gardens from 15th November 2024 to 2nd January 2025 and noted that the proposed event would include the following fixtures:

- Christmas Market Stalls;
- Ice Museum;
- Ice Rink and slide;
- Big Wheel;

**People and Communities Committee,
Tuesday, 10th September, 2024**

- Public bar and food offering; and
- Décor features.

Following a query from a Member, the Director OSSS and Resources and Fleet confirmed that there would be no entry fee for this event, however, some of the fixtures detailed above would be charged for individually. He also confirmed that the park would not close for the event, stating that it would have longer opening hours than it normally would have at that time of year, which would help to animate the space. He added that the organisers had indicated that approximately 10 days either side of the event operating dates would be required for event build and derig, however, there would be no requirement to close the park.

Following a query regarding the illumination of other parks, the Director advised the Members that this issue was being addressed as part of the Capital Programme discussions.

At the request of a Member, the Director undertook to liaise with the event promoter to discuss the possibility of future events taking place in other Council parks.

A Member asked the Director to ensure that due diligence of the applicants was undertaken to ensure the Council was achieving value for money. The Director assured the Members that through due diligence checks would be undertaken and if any issue was highlighted or the Companies were not deemed to meet the required criteria a subsequent report would be submitted to the Committee.

Following a further query, the Director undertook to ascertain which charity the promoter intended to donate to and to liaise with him directly and also noted that any decision regarding the distribution of the Social Fee for Botanic would be considered by the South Area Working Group in due course.

During discussion the Director also advised that the promoters had indicated that they would be keen to engage with residents at an early stage regarding the event to help mitigate for any issues that might arise.

The Committee granted authority to the applicant for the proposed event on the dates noted, subject to due diligence of the applicant, the completion of the appropriate event management plans and satisfactory terms being agreed by the Director of City and Neighbourhood Services and on condition that the Event Organisers:

- resolve all operational issues to the Council's satisfaction;
- meet all the statutory requirements including Public Liability Insurance cover, Health and Safety, and licensing responsibilities;
- negotiate an appropriate fee for the use of the gardens; and
- consult with the adjoining public bodies and local communities as necessary.

The Committee noted that the above recommendations were taken as a pre-policy position, in advance of the Council agreeing a more structured framework and policy for

**People and Communities Committee,
Tuesday, 10th September, 2024**

'Events', which was currently being taken forward in conjunction with the Council's Commercial Team.

**Consultation on the Draft Local Government
Cremation Regulations NI 2024**

The Committee considered a report on a consultation being undertaken by the Department for Communities with Belfast City Council on proposed new cremation regulations.

The Director of City Services provided the Members with an overview of the previous regulations. She reported that the Cremation (Belfast) 1961 Regulations had been copied from the English Cremation Act 1902 to allow the Belfast Corporation to introduce cremation to Northern Ireland. Therefore, the 1961 Regulations only applied to Belfast and due to the passing of time required an update to reflect current practices and the addition of other crematoria.

She added that, in July 2024, the Department for Communities had issued the Council with a consultation document, with a short turnaround, as they were urgently required to legislate for other councils. Upon request, the Council had been granted an extension to the consultation deadline from the department until the 14th October 2024.

The Members were advised that the Department for Communities was clear that, due to the urgency to legislate for other councils, it had copied across the Cremation (England and Wales) Regulations 2008. This 'copy across' was therefore accompanied by some risks and potential unintended consequences for councils and their partner agencies, some of which she drew the Members' attention to.

The Director advised that, overall, Belfast City Council supported the need to replace the Cremation (Belfast) 1961 Regulations with regulations which any local council could adopt. The Council also supported the opportunity to resolve some of the administrative burden on bereaved families and to streamline and simplify the administrative processes. Belfast City Council had a self-interest to fully understand what the opportunities, risks and potential consequences of copying across the England and Wales Regulations 2008 might be and to reflect this in the consultation response. She added that officers would also be concerned that the relevant partners had not been consulted on these regulations, for example, DHSSC, NI Trusts, DOJ, Medical referees, Funeral Directors and that there was no lead in time proposed.

The Members were asked to note and approve the draft response, subject to officers continuing to engage internally with Legal Services on any final comments in relation to the regulations prior to approval at the October meeting of the Council.

The Committee approved the draft consultation response on the Local Government Cremation Regulations NI 2024 at Appendix C of the agenda, subject to any final changes by Legal Services, which, if made, would be e-mailed to the Members of the Committee in advance of the October Council meeting.

The Committee noted that the response outlined concerns that the Council would seek to be addressed by the Department for Communities prior to commencement of the legislation.

Committee/Strategic Issues

**Consultation on Policy Proposals underpinning
a Public Health Bill for Northern Ireland**

The Director of City Services advised the Committee that a public consultation had been launched by Department of Health setting out the proposals which would underpin a new health protection legislative framework for Northern Ireland, and which was based on the recommendations of the Review of the 1967 Act and learning from recent public health emergencies.

She reported that this was the second public consultation on Public Health which sought views on specific policy proposals that would underpin the provisions to be included in the Bill. The first public consultation had been in September 2015 and had asked basic questions about current Public Health law. The outcome of that consultation had enabled a final report to be published by Department of Health in March 2016, which had set out key recommendations for legislative reform and the shaping of future public health protection law in Northern Ireland, leading to the current consultation.

The Director drew the Members' attention to a detailed response to the questions posed in the consultation questionnaire. She reported that the responses had been developed with input from Health and Environmental Services, Good Relations, and the Equality Team as well as Legal Services.

The Committee endorsed the consultation response on Policy Proposals underpinning a Public Health Bill for Northern Ireland available [here](#) and agreed its submission to the Department of Health by the 14th October deadline.

**Council's 2024 Updating and Screening
Assessment for Ambient Air Quality**

(Mr. A. Curran, Environmental Protection Manager, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 The People and Communities Committee will be aware that Belfast City Council is required to manage ambient air quality across the city in accordance with the provisions of Part III of the Environment (Northern Ireland) Order 2002 and current accompanying Local Air Quality Management Technical Guidance (LAQM.(TG22)). LAQM.TG(22) establishes a cycle of annual ambient air quality reporting for Northern Ireland councils, to include that an Updating and Screening Assessment (USA) report be submitted to the Department of Environment, Agriculture and Rural Affairs (DAERA) technical assessors by 30th June 2024. An Updating and**

Screening Assessment is intended to identify any significant changes that may have occurred since the previous round of ambient air quality review and assessment was completed. An extension to the above-mentioned submission date has been obtained from DAERA to allow for the 2024 USA report to be considered by the People and Communities Committee in advance of submission. The USA report has been developed using the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) Northern Ireland Updating and Screening Assessment 2024 Template. A copy of the Belfast City Council 2024 Updating and Screening Assessment (USA) Report is provided as Appendix 1 to this Committee report.

- 1.2 The Committee will be additionally aware that the council has declared four Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA) across the city for exceedances of the nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) objectives, associated principally with road transport emissions. These AQMA therefore encompass arterial road transport routes within the city including, the M1 Motorway / A12 Westlink corridor, Ormeau Road, Upper Newtownards Road and area around Cromac Street, East Bridge Street, Ravenhill Road and the Albertbridge Road. All of these AQMA have been declared for exceedances of the nitrogen dioxide 40 µgm⁻³ annual mean objective, with the M1 Motorway / A12 Westlink corridor AQMA additionally having been declared for exceedances of the nitrogen dioxide 200 µgm⁻³ 1-hour mean objective.
- 1.3 Key conclusions from the 2024 USA report include that there were no exceedances during the 2023 monitoring year of any air quality objectives at locations of relevant public exposure across the city. A further conclusion of the 2024 USA report is that based upon current and historical monitoring data for road transport related nitrogen dioxide, the Ormeau Road and Upper Newtownards Road Air Quality Management Areas should now be revoked.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1

- The People and Communities Committee are requested to note the contents and conclusions of the Belfast City Council 2024 Updating and Screening Assessment report and to agreed that the report be submitted to DAERA's technical assessors for appraisal.
- The Committee is further requested to agree that pending acceptance of the 2024 USA report and the conclusions detailed and also taking account of the recommendation received from DAERA for the BCC 2023 Air Quality Progress Report, Belfast City Council will move to revoke

the Ormeau Road and Upper Newtownards Road Air Quality
Management Areas by order.

3.0 Main Report

- 3.1** The 2024 USA report has considered the results of ambient air quality monitoring undertaken across the city during 2023 for a range of ambient air pollutants as detailed within The Air Quality Strategy for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, with a principal focus on road transport related nitrogen dioxide monitoring.
- 3.2** Belfast City Council undertakes automatic monitoring at roadside locations for nitrogen dioxide within the M1 Motorway / A12 Westlink corridor, Ormeau Road and Upper Newtownards Road AQMA. During 2023, there were no monitored exceedances of the nitrogen dioxide annual or hourly mean objectives recorded at any of our automatic monitoring sites. Moreover, we additionally undertake particulate matter (PM₁₀) monitoring at our Stockmans Lane roadside monitoring site, within the M1 Motorway / A12 Westlink AQMA. No exceedances of the PM₁₀ annual or 24-hour mean objectives were recorded during 2023.
- 3.3** The Belfast Centre Automatic Urban and Rural Network (AURN) site is located at Lombard Street within a pedestrianised area of the city centre and classified as an urban centre site, meaning that it is representative of a continuously built-up urban area, but located such that its pollution levels are not influenced significantly by any single source or street, but rather by the integrated contribution from all sources upwind of the station. Automatic and non-automatic monitoring is undertaken at the Belfast Centre AURN site for carbon monoxide (CO), ozone (O₃), nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), sulphur dioxide (SO₂), particulate matter (PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}) and benzene (C₆H₆). No exceedances of any Air Quality Strategy objectives were recorded during 2023 at the Belfast Centre site.
- 3.4** During 2023, we augmented our automatic roadside monitoring for nitrogen dioxide with a series of 84 passive nitrogen dioxide diffusion tubes, located at 76 predominantly roadside or kerbside monitoring locations across the city. Monitoring results for 2023 indicate that there were exceedances of the 40 µgm⁻³ nitrogen dioxide annual mean objective only at two kerbside monitoring locations; Henry Place (43.0 µgm⁻³), within the existing M1 Motorway / A12 Westlink corridor AQMA, and at the junction of the M3 Motorway off slip with the A12 Westlink and Nelson Street (42.3 µgm⁻³), immediately adjacent to the M1 Motorway / A12 Westlink corridor AQMA. A diffusion tube located at Stockmans

Lane roundabout was within 10% of the objective in 2023, having recorded an annual mean of $36.3 \mu\text{gm}^{-3}$ during 2023.

- 3.5 Annual mean objectives apply only at locations where members of the public may be regularly exposed over a substantial period of the objective, including at building façades of residential properties, schools, hospitals and care homes, etc. Accordingly, when the above-mentioned kerbside monitored nitrogen dioxide annual mean concentrations were distance corrected to the façade of the nearest residential premises, the 2023 nitrogen dioxide annual mean concentrations were reduced to $29.2 \mu\text{gm}^{-3}$ and $29.1 \mu\text{gm}^{-3}$ respectively, both comfortably below the $40 \mu\text{gm}^{-3}$ annual mean objective. This reduction is supported by a second diffusion tube monitoring location at Henry Place, situated at residential apartments in Carlisle Road adjacent to the A12 Westlink, which recorded a nitrogen dioxide annual mean concentration of $26.0 \mu\text{gm}^{-3}$ in 2023. Technical details of all various quality assurance, quality controls and distance corrections applied to our monitoring data are detailed within the USA report.
- 3.6 In addition, and in respect of the nitrogen dioxide $200 \mu\text{gm}^{-3}$ 1-hour mean objective, Defra have advised that where NO_2 1-hour mean monitoring data is not available, as in the case of nitrogen dioxide monitoring by passive diffusion tube, local authorities may rely on the outworkings of a Defra study, which indicates that exceedances of the NO_2 1-hour mean objective are unlikely to occur where the nitrogen dioxide annual mean concentration is below $60 \mu\text{gm}^{-3}$. Accordingly, all annual mean nitrogen dioxide diffusion tube monitoring data would indicate that there were no exceedances of the nitrogen dioxide 1-hour mean objective in 2023.
- 3.7 On the basis of our ambient monitoring data for 2023, it is considered that there is no need to proceed to a detailed assessment for any of the ambient air pollutants under consideration. Moreover, it is additionally considered that there is no need to extend the boundaries of any of our Air Quality Management Areas at this time.
- 3.8 Reflecting upon historical monitoring data and monitoring trends within our AQMAs, it is however noted that the annual mean objective for nitrogen dioxide has now been achieved within our Ormeau Road and Upper Newtownards Road AQMAs over a number of years. Monitoring data for the Upper Newtownards Road AQMA indicates that the annual mean objective for nitrogen dioxide has been achieved at the automatic monitoring site since 2011 and at the diffusion tube monitoring site, at the complex junction of the Upper Newtownards Road, Knock Road and Hawthornden Way since 2017. Moreover, monitoring data within

the Ormeau Road AQMA indicates that the nitrogen dioxide annual mean objective has been achieved at the automatic monitoring site since 2014, and at the diffusion tube monitoring sites since before 2011.

- 3.9 LAQM.TG(22) advises that the revocation of an AQMA should be considered following three consecutive years of compliance with the relevant objective, as evidenced through monitoring. Where NO₂ monitoring is completed using diffusion tubes, to account for the inherent uncertainty associated with the monitoring method, it is recommended that revocation of an AQMA should be considered following three consecutive years of annual mean NO₂ concentrations being lower than 36 µgm⁻³ (i.e. within 10% of the annual mean NO₂ objective). There should not be any declared AQMAs for which compliance with the relevant objective has been achieved for a consecutive five-year period.
- 3.10 In respect of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on revocation, Defra has advised that compliance first achieved in 2020 is unlikely to be representative of long-term trends in pollutant concentrations due to the impact of Covid-19 and associated lock down measures, adding that similarly in 2021, pollutant concentrations continued to be impacted by the change in typical activity that resulted from Covid-19 restrictions. Defra have further advised however that where 2020 and 2021 monitoring years are a continuation of a downward trend and part of many consecutive years of compliance (e.g. where compliance has also been achieved in 2019, prior to Covid-19), the AQMA may be appropriate for revocation.
- 3.11 Moreover, DAERA's technical assessors, in their report concerning the council's 2023 Air Quality Progress report advised that nitrogen dioxide annual mean concentrations have been below the objective for over five years in AQMA Nos. 3 (Upper Newtownards Road) and 4 (Ormeau Road) and that additionally, the council's Detailed Assessment, published in 2023, predicted that there were no exceedances at relevant public exposure locations within the AQMAs for a 2019 base year and for a 2028 forward projection year. The assessors therefore recommended that the Council should liaise with DAERA to consider revoking AQMA Nos. 3 and 4. The assessors additionally recommended that the AQMA No 1 (M1 Motorway / A12 Westlink) should be amended to revoke the designation for the 1-hour mean NO₂ objective as compliance has been achieved for more than five years.
- 3.12 The People and Communities Committee will recall that it considered the outworkings of the Air Quality Detailed Assessment under agenda item 12 at its meeting of 13th June 2023.

<https://minutes3.belfastcity.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=166andMId=11151>

- 3.13 On the basis of the abovementioned technical assessor comments, in compliance with Defra LAQM.TG(22) technical guidance, and in consideration of a further full year of post Covid-19 pandemic ambient monitoring data, confirming continuing compliance with the annual mean objective for nitrogen dioxide within the Upper Newtownards Road and Ormeau Road AQMAs, Belfast City Council will now move to revoke these AQMAs by order in accordance with the provisions of Article 12(4)b of Part III of The Environment (Northern Ireland) Order 2002. As part of the revocation process, Belfast City Council will also give consideration to the continuing need for the M1 Motorway / A12 Westlink Corridor AQMA 1-hour mean declaration.
- 3.14 The revocations will require completion of a detailed assessment for each AQMA, to be informed by atmospheric dispersion modelling confirming compliance with the annual nitrogen dioxide annual mean objective throughout the entirety of the AQMA, as opposed to just those areas of compliance demonstrated by ambient monitoring alone. Reports concerning the revocation of AQMA Nos 3 (Upper Newtownards Road) and 4 (Ormeau Road) will in due course be provided to the People and Communities Committee for consideration.
- 3.15 Members are advised that the council will consider the continuing need for automatic and passive nitrogen dioxide monitoring within the areas of the two revoked AQMAs in consultation with DAERA. Data from our roadside automatic monitoring sites currently forms a component of the nitrogen dioxide annual mean for urban roadside monitoring sites reported within the annual Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) and DAERA Northern Ireland Environmental Statistics Reports. <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/northern-ireland-environmental-statistics-report>
- 3.16 As a further aspect of the Updating and Screening Assessment, Belfast City Council has conducted a review of key road traffic routes and road transport sources across the city for the 2023 year in order to identify any recent significant changes that might affect ambient air quality. The council has confirmed within the 2024 USA report that there are no new or updated road transport sources that have not been considered through previous review and assessment processes. We have also confirmed that the air quality impacts of the new Grand Central Station development have previously been considered as an aspect of the planning process. We have provided similar commentary concerning air quality impacts of Belfast Harbour and George Best Belfast City Airport.

- 3.17 With regard to new significant industrial premises or processes, we have identified 2 new industrial processes within the 2024 USA report but confirmed that respective air quality impacts have been assessed and managed through the planning process.
- 3.18 For commercial and domestic sources, we have confirmed that these sources were considered in detail as a component of the council's 2023 Air Quality Detailed Assessment, adding that there were no further relevant commercial or domestic sources identified during the 2023 year.
- 3.19 By way of conclusion to the 2024 Updating and Screening Assessment report, we have confirmed that there is no need to declare any new Air Quality Management Areas for the city at this time. We have additionally confirmed that on this basis of our historical and current monitoring data, we will move to revoke the Ormeau Road and Upper Newtownards Road Air Quality Management Areas.

Financial and Resource Implications.

- 3.20 There are no financial or resource implications associated with the development of this 2024 Updating and Screening Assessment Report. This report has been developed from within existing staff resources. The Committee is advised however, the revocation orders for the AQMAs are required to be published in the Belfast Gazette and once at least in each of two successive weeks in more than one newspaper circulating within the district to which the revocation order relates. There will be financial costs associated with publication of the revocation orders.

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

- 3.21 There are no equality or good relations implications associated with this Updating and Screening Assessment report. A Rural Needs Assessment is not required."

A Member referred to the Clean Air Strategy and stated that he hoped that it would take account of the World Health Organisation guidelines. He queried if it was necessary to move to revoke the two air quality managements areas at the Ormeau Road and Upper Newtownards Road immediately. The Director of City Services advised that the Members did not have to decide right away, however, should these be revoked, it would enable the resources to be utilised elsewhere in the city. She stated that a report on the appraisers response would be provided at a later stage.

In response to a query regarding the worst affected parts of the city with air pollution caused by transportation, the officer advised that the M1 Motorway Air Quality Management

**People and Communities Committee,
Tuesday, 10th September, 2024**

areas (at Henry Place) was the area in Belfast with consistent higher pollution levels and stated that she was happy to discuss this issue in more detail directly with the Member if required.

The Committee:

- noted the contents and conclusions of the Belfast City Council 2024 Updating and Screening Assessment report and agreed that the report be submitted to DAERA's technical assessors for appraisal; and
- agreed, at this stage, not to move to revoke the Ormeau Road and Upper Newtownards Road Air Quality Management Areas by order and instead to await acceptance of the 2024 USA report and an update on the conclusions and recommendations received from DAERA / DEFRA.

Operational Issues

Waste Management Update

(Mr. J. McConnell, City Services Manager, Resources and Fleet, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update members on the latest waste statistics published by NIEA, to give members an update on the Council's Waste Framework and to update members on some initial results from the restricted access pilots, firstly with the DFI/PSNI pilot and also with the introduction of smaller vehicles in difficult to access streets. It also provides members with an update on Phase 1 of the expansion of the Kerbside Glass Collection arrangements to 22,000 additional households.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 Committee members are requested to note the contents of this report.

3.0 Main Report

Key Issues

Waste Performance and Recycling Rates

3.1 The most recent waste statistics published by the NIEA are the January to March 2024 quarterly statistics. The report is a snapshot of the final quarter of the 23/24 financial year versus the same period the previous year. As a result, it is less informative

than the annual report (due November 2024) but does contain one table (table 18) which provides an overview of performance in relation to the waste Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) over the course of a rolling twelve months.

- 3.2 The overall picture for NI as a region is one of an increasing quantity of waste collected (999,913 tonnes collected, up 3%), a slight increase in the municipal reuse and recycling rate (up 0.9% points to 51.1%) combined with a significant decrease in the landfill disposal rate (down 4% points to 18%).
- 3.3 An examination of the figures for Belfast City Council, indicates the following;
- **Municipal Waste Arisings** - the total tonnage of all types of waste collected by the Council was 160,282 tonnes. This is an increase of approximately 2,500 tonnes (1.5%) on the previous year.
 - **Municipal Waste Recycling Rate** – the percentage of all types of waste collected by the Council which was re-used, recycled or composted, increased by 1.3% to 38.3%.
 - **Household Waste Recycling Rate**– the percentage of household waste only collected by the Council which was re-used, recycled or composted, increased slightly by 0.3% to 41.1%.
 - **Landfill Diversion Rate** – the percentage of all Council waste sent to landfill was 7%, down from 29% in the previous year.
- 3.4 Based on these provisional figures, in 2023/24 the combined tonnages of recyclables collected from the various kerbside schemes (blue bin, brown bin and kerbside box) and recycling centres remained largely unchanged. The main contributors to the uplift in these figures were the increased tonnage of street sweeps processed in 2023/24 and the onboarding of the new arc21, interim residual waste treatment contract.
- 3.5 This residual waste treatment contract involves the haulage and treatment of the non-recyclable waste collected at the Council's Waste Transfer Station from across the city. On arrival at the contractor's Materials Recycling Facility (MRF) the material undergoes a pre-treatment exercise where a proportion of the waste is captured for recycling. The remaining waste is then prepared and baled for onward shipment to European Energy from Waste (EfW) facilities. This contract has delivered a step change in the Council's landfill disposal figures resulting in just 7% of residual waste ending up in landfill.

- 3.6 As noted within this report, and brought to the attention of Members through various consultation responses, there are a number of legislative, strategic and financial drivers which are going to shape future waste management arrangements. The full nature and implications of these policy drivers remain unclear and in the absence of sufficient clarity, radical, systemic change aimed at delivering significant improvements in the recycling rate and environmental outcomes are unlikely.

Waste Framework Update

- 3.7 At the People and Communities Committee meeting of June 2017, Members approved the Waste Framework document. It provides an overview of options on how waste could be managed within the city over the next decade. It was developed to align with the objectives of the Belfast Agenda and Resourceful Belfast (Circular Economy), designing out waste, improving the quantity and quality of recycling and supporting local jobs. These objectives are mirrored in DAERA's recent public consultation exercise; Rethinking Our Resources, Measures for Climate Action and a Circular Economy in NI.

The Waste Framework focuses on four themes (i) Collection Arrangements, (ii) Infrastructure, (iii) Behaviour Change and (iv) Technology. The following sections provide an insight on the work and initiatives currently being undertaken under the four main workstreams.

- 3.8 (i) Collection Arrangements

Inner City Recycling Scheme Update

On 1 August 2024, Bryson Recycling commenced the new contract for the delivery of the kerbside recycling scheme in the inner city. One of the main changes to the contract is that the delivery of the kerbside boxes to householders is outside the scope of the contract and these orders will be serviced by our normal bin delivery contractor.

Officers are working with Bryson Recycling to ensure that the contract delivers according to the terms, conditions and service delivery plan. Bryson Recycling has recently appointed a Customer Liaison Officer to assist with the delivery of this contract and to address customer issues raised by the Council. They are also in the process of installing in-cab technology to assist with communication and resolution of customer issues.

Pre-loved Toys

- 3.9 Following successful campaigns over the last two years, feedback from the main partner on the project, East Belfast Missions, noted that the level of resources required to deliver this project in its current guise far outstrips the current resourcing arrangements and that many charities are now naturally running their own schemes with a preference for monetary donations or new items. This presents a challenging environment both in terms of resourcing and teaming up with charities already involved in alternative schemes. The Service is exploring alternative delivery models for 2024 which may be more partnership based rather than a lead-partner model.

Kerbside Glass

- 3.10 As part of the 2024/25 revenue estimates setting process, Members committed to delivering phase 1 of this scheme which involves an expansion to approximately 22,000 households.

The Council has recently received a Letter of Offer from DAERA regarding financial support for the capital assets of the scheme on a 50/50 basis. Subject to approval at the August 2024 SPandR committee meeting, the project moves to stage 3 committed within the Council's Capital Programme. Following this, the Memorandum of Understanding will be completed and returned to DAERA.

- 3.11 Planning for expansion of the scheme is ongoing and orders for the boxes and vehicles will be placed following the SPandR decision. Given the lead time associated with the boxes, it is envisaged that the project will be rolled-out in Q4 24/25.
- 3.12 One of the key aspects of planning the project is the construction of the collection routes. In mapping out phase 1 of the expansion the Service is considering; existing kerbside glass provision (or otherwise), glass bring bank availability and the views of those residents who transferred to Belfast City Council under Local Government Reform and who then received a different kerbside recycling scheme which no longer included glass collections. Taking these factors into consideration the proposed catchment area for phase 1 is set out in Appendix 1.

- 3.13 **Community Repaint Scheme**

The Service is exploring the potential for a Community RePaint scheme at HWRCs. Not only would this seek to reduce the amount

of paint being treated and disposed of through the sites but it may provide a useful resource to community groups.

- 3.14 In January 2023, Members agreed to the establishment of a Service Level Agreement (SLA) in principle with the Community RePaint scheme. The service has completed phase 1 of this initiative which involved an assessment of the preferred approach and level of demand.

The Service is now progressing this scheme with a procurement exercise for a service provider combined with new containers for the paint (funding provided by the Council's Climate team) with a planned go live date of Q3 2024/25.

(ii) Infrastructure

- 3.15 Recycling Centres and Dargan Road WTS

Following SPandR approval for capital funding, the Service initiated and completed a procurement exercise for a multi-year, container provision contract. An inception meeting has been held with the successful contractor and a prioritisation plan for the skips and compactors for the first year expenditure agreed. The orders are due to be placed in Q2 24/25 and it is anticipated that skips will start to appear on site in Q3 24/25.

- 3.16 Recycling Centres and Pedestrian Access

The pedestrian access gate at Alexandra Park, Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) has been completed and operational as of August 2022.

The service has requested that our colleagues in Property and Projects commission a feasibility study regarding pedestrian access for Palmerston Road and Blackstaff Way HWRC.

- 3.17 Connected Circular Economy - Shared Island Project

The Service has worked with colleagues in the Economic Development Unit and Climate Team along with Dublin City Council (DCC) to deliver a feasibility study into a 'Connected Circular Economy.' This report looks at how the two cities can share knowledge and good practice with the ambition for the development of hubs in Dublin and Belfast to support the growth of the circular economy island-wide.

Colleagues in the Economic Development Unit are liaising with DCC to explore opportunities for funding which would enable the progression of the report's recommendations and take these

forward to develop more detailed business cases for the preferred option(s)

(iii) Behaviour Change

Waste Tourism

- 3.18 The Service has been closely monitoring the waste disposed of at recycling centres and civic amenity sites and in particular the levels of non-recyclable waste. It is noted that all neighbouring councils have various policies and procedures in place such as, proof of residency or an online booking system for site users, to restrict waste at their sites to that of their own rate payers.
- 3.19 Staff at a number of recycling centres report an increase in site users which are not recognised as local and this also includes 'man with a van' type operations. This issue has escalated since the decision by a neighbouring council to implement a booking system for all site users in September 2023.
- 3.20 The Service is analysing the data from the recycling centres and provisional findings would support this anecdotal evidence. This could obviously have a detrimental impact on both the Council's recycling rate and finances. It is the intention of the Service to present a report to the committee in the near future regarding this issue.

(iv) Information Technology

3.2.1 In-Cab Technology

In previous reports to Committee officers outlined the proposal to introduce a modern software system to drive efficiency and deliver the following;

- Hold all safety information on vehicles and routes.
 - incorporate live time information flows to and from the operating centre to crews and vice versa.
 - capture all the functionality of the Report IT App
 - optimise routes as the city grows to ensure operational efficiency.
 - link in with Customer Hub software to deliver customer service.
 - monitor vehicle condition and driver behaviour.
- 3.22 By way of update, a tender for the procurement for the solution was issued by Central Procurement Services. This tender closed on 28th August, 2024 and an evaluation of the technical and financial aspects of the bid will now be carried out to determine the

leading bids. It is then proposed to hold demonstrations of those systems before considering the preferred bidder. Dependant on the preferred bid and the satisfactory contract award, it is still envisaged that the system could begin to be operationalised in Q1 2025/26.

Operational update - Access Issues

i. PSNI/DFI collaboration exercise

- 3.23 Since the update given to members at the August People and Communities Committee meeting, officers have been collating data on the specific streets that have been targeted by the pilot since inception in May.

In addition, a regular review meeting was held on 23rd August with representatives from DFI. The purpose of these meetings are to discuss any issues encountered by any party, to learn from progress to date, and also are used by Council Officers to feed in any concerns for the other parties to consider

Initial findings

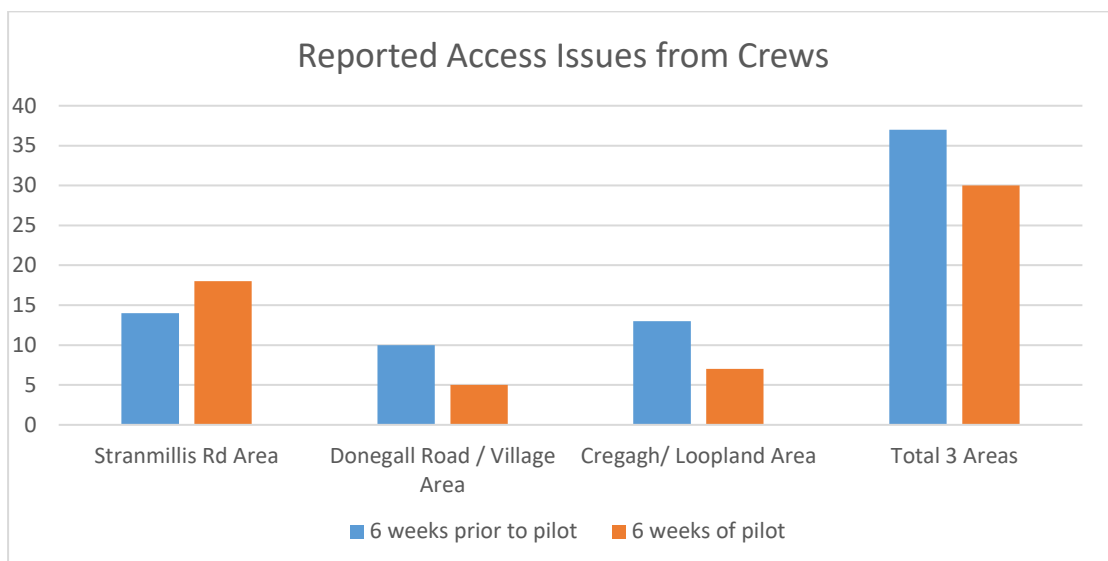
- 3.24 In terms of the data, two internal sources have been used

- information reported back from crews as part of their daily reports via the Report-It App
- information received into the customer hub from residents

Report-It App data

- 3.25 The information reported back from crews via the Report-It App was used for each area to compare the six weeks of collections immediately before the pilot with the six weeks of the pilot. This set of data shows a mixed set of results.
- 3.26 Chart 1 shows that in one area, Stranmillis, the number of access issues increased from 14 to 18 instances of blocked access over a six week period, but there were reductions in both the Donegall Road/Village area, down from 10 instances to 5 and in the Cregagh/Loopland area there was also a reduction, down from 13 to 6. Taking the three areas together there was an overall reduction from 37 instances to 30, a reduction of approximately 19%
- 3.27 It should be emphasised that this data only covers the small period of time since launch of the pilot (3 months out of an 18 month period) , and that results to date should be treated with a degree of caution.

Chart 1

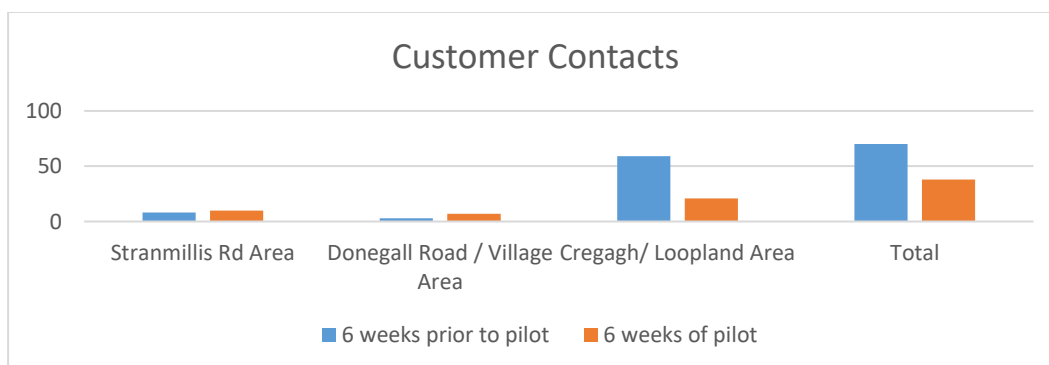


Customer Contact Data

3.27 In relation to the number of customer contacts received through the Customer Hub over a similar 6 week period prior to and during the first phase of the pilot, the like for like figures are detailed in Chart 2.

3.28 For the Stranmillis area there was an increase of customer contacts from 8 to 10. There was also an increase in the Donegall Road / Village Area from 3 to 7. There was however a significant reduction in the Loopland / Cregagh Road area from 59 to 21. Overall, there was a reduction in customer contacts from 70 to 38, or approximately 46%. Again, these are early figures and only cover the first cycle in three areas.

Chart 2



3.29

ii. Introduction of Small Vehicles

As previously reported to Committee Waste Collections started Phase 1 of the introduction on 12th August. At the time of writing of this report the first small vehicle has been deployed on routes for 2 weeks and will have completed just one cycle for those streets chosen.

- 3.30** Initial results are very encouraging, but again these are only based on two weeks of operation. Of the 128 streets serviced by the vehicles on the routes during this period, crews have been able to access these streets on all except for 1 occasion¹, indicating an initial success rate of over 99%.

That said, the Customer Hub has had contact from residents of 7 streets in the first week of operation in relation to collection services. The Waste Collection Team has analysed the vehicle tracking information for those 7 streets and have confirmed that the vehicle has indeed been able to access the street and empty bins there, ruling out access as a cause for any non-collection.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.31** There are no finance and resource implications in this report.

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

- 3.32** There are none in this report.”

Several Members asked that the Committees thanks be recorded to East Belfast Missions for its work in delivering the successful Pre-loved Toys Scheme. Following a query regarding extending the scheme, the Director of OSS and Fleet advised that other delivery options were currently being explored and suggested that officers could also look at exploring the feasibility of expanding the scheme to throughout the year.

A Member welcomed the long overdue expansion of the glass recycling scheme, particularly the inclusion of Ormiston and stated that she wished to see the expansion across other areas of the city.

Following a query, the City Services Manager advised that pedestrianisation of the Palmerton Road HRC was next on the list, however, a date for commencement of the works was yet to be agreed.

¹ Reason given by crew was due to road works in the street

**People and Communities Committee,
Tuesday, 10th September, 2024**

A Member requested that the response times for Bryson missed collections be assessed as it was currently very slow, with an update to be made to committee in due course.

A Member stated that she no longer received the daily missed waste collection report that had previously been circulated to all Elected Members and it was agreed that officers would arrange to have this reinstated.

The Committee noted the update report.

Call for Social Supermarkets 2025/26

(Ms. N. Lane, Neighbourhood Services Manager, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek members approval to operate an open call for grant applications to the Social Supermarket Fund in 25/26 as outlined in the report.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 Members are asked to consider the contents of the report and to grant approval to operate an open call for grant applications to the Social Supermarket Fund in 25/26 as outlined in the report.

3.0 Main Report

Background

3.1 In response to recommendations in the Welfare Reform Mitigations report, the Department for Communities (DfC) has operated a Social Supermarket Pilot programme since October 2017. Funding was made available through the Community Support Programme (CSP) in 20/21 to expand the concept to all council areas.

The aim of a social supermarket is to offer a sustainable response to food insecurity by seeking to help address the root causes of poverty rather than simply provide food. This is achieved by providing, in addition to food support, a referral network for wraparound support. Food supply should ideally come from donations, surplus, or purchased at a discount, however, funding can also be used towards the purchase of food vouchers.

3.2 In the years 21-24, Council worked with identified partners to develop models for delivery. Committee granted approval on

9 November 2023 to operate an open call for grant applications to the Social Supermarket Fund in 2024/25.

- 3.3 Members were advised at this point that because activity is 100% funded by DfC, there was a risk that funding to support successful applications might not be in place from April 24. However, on balance, it was agreed that it was preferable to undertake the application process so that funding could be issued as soon as it became available from the department.
- 3.4 Members agreed that funding of up to £50,000 would be available for each individual project; this in line with other large grant funding programmes. The Social Supermarket Support Fund was opened on 5 December 2023 and received 28 applications totalling £946,619.70 by the closing date of 12 noon on Friday 26 January 2024.
- 3.5 In the absence of a Letter of Offer from DfC to fund this area of work, in April 24 SPandR agreed to provide £122,627 to fund 21 Social Supermarket Projects. This allocation was made from the 24/25 Hardship Programme.
- 3.6 Council received the CSP 2024/25 Letter of Offer from DfC on 3 July 2024. It contained an allocation of £672,650, an increase of £253,906 on the 23/24 allocation. SPandR agreed to make an additional contribution to provide a total budget of £785,744 to support 21 projects.

Key Issues

- 3.7 It is recommended that the 25/26 Social Supermarket fund would operate on the same parameters as in 24/25 for delivery between 1st April 2025 – 31st March 2026. These are;
- Applications would be open to any constituted group delivering eligible projects.
 - Eligible projects will be those that can demonstrate that they provide food/food support to individuals impacted by poverty and provide wraparound support through their own services and/or a referral network
 - Maximum level of award will be £50,000. (This is the maximum level of award that was available in 24/15 and is a reasonable limit given that the level of Social Supermarket funding from DfC in 24/25 was £672,650.)
 - Allocation of funding to projects will be based on a quality score.
- 3.8 Open calls for grant funding are administered through the Council's Central Grants Unit in Place and Economy. In order to

ensure that Funding Agreements can be issued to successful applicants from April 25, approval for successful applicants has to be brought to committee in January/February 25. In order to ensure sufficient time for applications to be made, eligibility checked and assessed, it is recommended that applications open from mid October – end November. Applications would be open to any constituted group delivering eligible projects. CGU support would ensure that applications are administered within a recognised independent process that allows for separation of duties between project delivery and administration staff.

- 3.9 At the time of writing, there is no confirmation of a budget from DfC for the Social Supermarket Fund in 25/26. Social Supermarket funding is delivered through a ringfenced welfare reform mitigations budget which is agreed in principle until March 25, there is no confirmation at present beyond that date. Officers have sought an updated position from DfC but no further information has been provided at this stage. In 23/24 and 24/25 an element of funds was drawn from Belfast City Council Hardship Funding but again, there is no confirmed budget for this in 25/26.
- 3.10 Members should note that in the event that no funding is made available from DfC, Council will be under no obligation to make awards to organisations who have applied, although this would have to be balanced against the work required from applicants to make applications.
- 3.11 Members should also consider that if an open call was not agreed until confirmation of funding levels was received, it would not allow for the practical delivery of activity in 25/26. In 23/24 and 24/25 the funding for social supermarkets was not confirmed by DfC until July. Had an open call process been implemented only on confirmation of funding, support would not have been available to organisations until February.

Members are asked to consider the issues listed above and if content, approve that council operates an open call for applications for the Social Supermarket Fund in 25/26.

4.1 **Financial and Resource Implications**

All human resources required to support the 25/26 approach are currently in place. No funding for 25/26 is yet in place.

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

None identified at present. Equality Screening of the 25/26 grant application process will be completed.”

**People and Communities Committee,
Tuesday, 10th September, 2024**

Several of the Members highlighted the need to see a geographical spread of the funding across the city and emphasised the need to ensure that groups and organisations were made aware of this funding opportunity and encouraged to apply.

At the request of a Member, officers agreed that a report would be submitted to a future meeting providing more detail on the Social Supermarket activity, to date, along with the outcomes and how these had been delivered throughout the city.

The Committee granted approval to operate an open call for grant applications to the Social Supermarket Fund in 2025/26, as outlined in the report.

Request for Nomination to Travellers Sub-Group

(Ms. N. Lane, Neighbourhood Services Manager, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee was asked to consider a request from Northern Ireland Local Government Partnership on Traveller Issues (NILGPTI) seeking the Council to nominate 1 - 3 Elected Members, along with an officer, to the Partnership. They noted that the Partnership met every two months, with each Council hosting the meeting on a rotational basis.

Following a query, the Neighbourhood Services Manager advised that the Traveller Engagement Officer post had been transferred to the Good Relations Unit, as it would be focussing on engagement with ethnic minorities including Irish Travellers.

Several of the Members alluded to the fact that Elected Member nominations had already been made to the NILGPTI, however, they had not received any correspondence regarding meetings of the partnership.

The Committee agreed to defer the report to enable officers to liaise with Democratic Services to confirm if any Elected Members had previously been nominated to the NILGPTI.

**Request from Advice Space for sponsorship
of 60th Anniversary event and conference**

The Director of Neighbourhood Services drew the Members' attention to a request that had been received from Advice Space, formally Citizens Advice. He advised that the organisation planned to host a 60th anniversary conference to celebrate its 60-year Anniversary in offering generalist advice services to the people of Belfast. He reported that the main theme of the conference would be looking at the development of the welfare state since its inception and examining if it was fit for purpose today and for the future. It was expected that over 80 delegates would participate in the event.

The Committee agreed to award £2000.00 to Advice Space to sponsor its 60th anniversary and conference event on Thursday 28th November in the Riddel Hall Stranmillis.

Public Right of Ways at Old Coach Road

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 Under the Article 3 of the Access to the Countryside Order (NI) 1983 all Local Councils have a duty to

...assert, protect and keep open and free from obstruction or encroachment any Public Right of Way.

1.2 Investigation into the Old Coach Road began in 1998. In 2023 complaints were made to the Council regarding the condition of the path. As the path was not an asserted Public Right of Way (PRoW) the Council had no power to take any further action. To ascertain if a PRoW exists the Council opened a neighbourhood enquiry to gather evidence. 118 responses were received, 113 indicated that they believed a PRoW did exist, 1 stated that a PRoW did not exist but did not provide a reason for this.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 Members are asked to assert three Public Rights of Way on foot from:

1. Upper Malone Road to Old Coach Road
2. Old Coach Road to Malone Heights
3. Old Coach Road to Malone Playing Fields

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Key Issues

The Access to the Countryside (Northern Ireland) Order 1983 places a duty on District Councils to ‘assert, protect and keep open and free from obstruction or encroachment any public right of way’.

In 1998 an investigation was begun into the nature of paths which run along remnants of the Old Coach Road. This road carried traffic from Belfast to Dublin but was abandoned when the road was diverted in the 1800s. Remnants of the road continued to be used and subsequently a number of recreational facilities were developed on the land including Malone Playing Fields.

Legal Services have been consulted and have confirmed that the path appears to meet the common law tests for establishment of a

public right of way. The public's right would terminate at the entrance to Malone Playing Fields which meet the criteria of being a place to which the public can legitimately resort. The public's right also extends to other sections of the Old Coach Road namely Malone Heights and a further section from Old Coach Road to Upper Malone Road. It is therefore recommended that the Council assert these Public Rights of Way as required by its duty under the Access to the Countryside Order.

For a Public Right of Way to exist at Common Law there are two essential elements,

- a) Dedication by the owner of the soil
- b) Acceptance of the Right of Way by the public

Dedication by the Landowner can be either express or presumed. The vast majority of cases will turn on presumed dedication by the Landowner, as only very rarely will a Landowner expressly dedicate his lands as a Public Right of Way.

The following evidence shows presumed dedication by the landowner;

- a) Continued use of the path for a number of years.
- b) The routes in question have been used 'as of right' by the general public.
- c) The public's use of the path was open has continued during the past 26 years when the case was first opened and for a continued period previous to that. Prior to this the public's use of the path was such that the landowner knew or should have known about it, did nothing to stop it. Malone Playing Fields have a kissing gate leaving access open at all times.
- d) The use continued for a sufficient period to imply the owner intended to dedicate Public Rights of Way.
- e) The routes connects a number of public places or places to which the public regularly resort
- f) That use has followed a more or less consistent line.

Given the above assessment, members are asked to assert the three noted routes in the vicinity of the Old Coach Road as Public Rights of Way on foot.

3.2 Financial and Resource Implications

There are no known financial implications at this time. However, the Council does have a discretionary power to maintain public rights of way when a landowner cannot be traced.

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

There are no Equality or Good Relations Implications.”

A Member sought clarification from the Director that if the Council agreed to assert the three Public Rights of Way that it could commit to keeping them accessible.

The Committee agreed, in principle, to assert three Public Rights of Way on foot from:

1. Upper Malone Road to Old Coach Road;
2. Old Coach Road to Malone Heights; and
3. Old Coach Road to Malone Playing Fields.

Subject to clarification being sought from Legal Services that the Council could commit to maintaining the surfaces and keeping the right of ways clear and accessible.

Falls Parks Cyclocross Event

Given that this was a request for financial support and no budget was available, the Committee agreed to refer this matter to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for its consideration.

Proposal for Dual Language Street Signage

A Member noted her concern at the 50/50 response rate in one of the streets and outlined the damage that this could do to Good Relations.

The Committee agreed the erection of second street nameplate in Irish at, Lupus Grove, Herbert Street, Ladbrook Drive, Hillman Court, Lagmore Glen, North Parade, Mulberry Park, Brompton Park, Grangeville Drive and Clifondene Crescent.

Naming of New Streets in the City

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

Proposed Name	Location	Applicant
Black Ridge Avenue	Off Monagh By Pass, BT11	Apex Housing Association
Black Ridge Lane	Off Monagh By Pass, BT11	Apex Housing Association
Black Ridge Terrace	Off Monagh By Pass, BT11	Apex Housing Association

Request for the use of Parks for 2024 Events

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The Committee is asked to note that Council has received two requests from event organisers to host events in Botanic Gardens in November 2024 and these include.

- **Red Sky at Night – Household Belfast C.I.C – Tropical Ravine**
- **Sound of Belfast and The Factory Sessions – Factory 61 – Tropical Ravine**
- **Puzzle Lady Filming – Five Down Films Ltd – Friars Bush Cemetery**

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 and 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

3.2 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.

- 3.3 **Red Sky at Night – Household Belfast C.I.C – Tropical Ravine – Monday 28 October 2024 to Monday 4 November 2024**
- 3.4 Belfast City Council has received a request from Household Belfast to host an art exhibition called Red Sky at Night in Botanic Gardens Tropical Ravine. Household work with various communities throughout Belfast to create public artworks that the people in the area can relate to.
- 3.5 The artist that Household will be working alongside is Kanich Khajonsi who wishes to create an immersive arts installation in the Tropical Ravine. This will involve the set up of speakers and various lights and small objects to create an immersive experience for those who are attending the event. This event is co-funded between Belfast City Councils 2024 programme and the British Council.
- 3.6 The event will be free to members of the public to book onto and will have time slots beginning at 4pm with last entry to the exhibition being at 10pm. Members are to be aware this takes place outside of the regular opening hours of the Ravine and Botanic Gardens therefore, staff would need to be available to open and close the park to those attending.
- 3.7 As the event will operate outside of normal opening hours a member of staff will be required to open / close and staff the facility. Any staffing costs incurred by Council will be charged to the event organiser.
- 3.8 **Key Dates for the event are:**
- 3.9 Set Up – Monday 28 October to Thursday 31 October 2024
Event – Friday 1, Saturday 2 and Sunday 3 November 2024 – 4pm to 10pm
De-rig – Monday 4 November 2024 – 4pm
- 3.10 **Sound of Belfast and The Factory Sessions – Factory 61 – Tropical Ravine – Thursday 14 November 2024**
- 3.11 Belfast City Council have received a request from Factory 61 to host their Sound of Belfast and The Factory Sessions in Botanic Gardens Tropical Ravine on Thursday 14 November 2024.
- 3.12 Factory 61 was originally set up in collaboration with South Regional college to create a pathway for students into the music industry. Their mission is to incubate upcoming talent in the local area by offering professional music and audio services while helping artists create a career in music.

- 3.13 The event is a music gig for local up and coming artists and is designed to be a unique experience for those in attendance as it is designed to an intimate experience for a maximum of 120 people. There will be a charge of between £10-15 per ticket for those who wish to attend the event. Ticket sales will be managed by Eventbrite
- 3.14 As the event will operate outside of normal opening hours a member of staff will be required to open / close and staff the facility. Any staffing costs incurred by Council will be charged to the event organiser.
- 3.15 Key Dates for the event are:
Set Up – Thursday 14 November 2024 – 12pm to 5pm
Event – Thursday 14 November 2024 – 6pm to 8.30pm
De-Rig – Thursday 14 November – 9.30pm
- 3.17 Puzzle Lady Filming – Five Down Films Ltd – Friars Bush – Three separate Occasions between 23 September and 17 October 2024
- 3.18 Belfast City Council has received a request from Five Down Films to use Friars Bush Cemetery to film scenes for the upcoming T.V show Puzzle Lady. The event organiser wishes to film between the hours of 2pm and 2am and they have provided us with the following information for what the show is about.
- 3.19 ‘When a strange murder takes place in the sleepy market town of Bakerbury, the local police are baffled by a crossword puzzle left on the body. With their case going nowhere, they turn reluctantly to Cora Felton, a recent arrival in Bakerbury; whose fame as the eponymous Puzzle Lady suggests she can help DCI Hooper and the Bakerbury police solve its first murder case. But the eccentric Cora isn’t who she claims to be: she’s the fraudulent front-woman for her long-suffering niece - Sherry Carter - a puzzle genius who only came to Bakerbury to escape her rock-star turned abuser ex-husband.’
- 3.20 The scenes taking place in Friars Bush are specifically based around the element of a puzzle. There are three murders that occur, and the bodies are left in the cemetery each containing a puzzle. The amateur Sleuth then connects the dots to solve the case. A further scene will include a chase through the cemetery with an imitation gun being used along with undercover police officers.

- 3.21 A member of staff will be on site at all times during the period of filming to open and close the cemetery. They will also be responsible for ensuring that the event organiser is following the necessary health and safety guidelines.

Key Dates for the event are:

- 3.22 The event organiser has requested permission to be able to film on three separate occasions between the 23 September and 17 October 2024. They are responsible for contacting the cemetery manager three days prior to filming to allow a member of staff to be available to facilitate the request.
- 3.23 There will be a fee applied for filming in the cemetery. As per the councils agreed scale of charges this will equate to a cost of £70 per hour which will equate to a total cost of £2520 over the three days filming.
- 3.24 As the event will operate outside of normal opening hours a member of staff will be required to open / close and staff the facility. Any staffing costs incurred by Council will be charged to the event organiser.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.25 None.

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

- 3.26 There are no known implications.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations at paragraph 2.0 of the report.

Alleygating Phase 5 Update

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the Alleygate Phase 5b Programme.

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 Members are asked to note the contents of this report that the Notice of Intention for Phase 5b and additional self-funded streets are advertised as per the legislation.

3.0 Main Report

- 3.1** Members will recall that at its November 2023 meeting the Council's SP&R committee agreed to proceed with the publication of a Gating Order for the installation of gates in those streets where the threshold for responses to the consultation had been 40% and above. Furthermore it agreed to proceed with a further consultation exercise for all remaining streets that had not met the Threshold.
- 3.2** All those streets that were not advertised in Tranche 1 of Phase 5 have been revisited. Residents were canvassed through a postal survey, and this was followed up with a door-to-door consultation. Those streets that still had low returns were visited three times by canvassers and a form or information letter delivered.
- 3.3** All those streets canvassed have now reached the threshold for consultation responses returned as agreed at the November 2023 meeting of the Council's SP&R Committee and can now progress to the Notice of Intention phase.
- 3.4** Councillors should note that within Tranche 2 there were 857 responses received from the 1065 residences canvassed. There were responses from 361 residences citing that they have been the victim of antisocial behaviour and crime. However there have been 33 objections received to the installation of gates.
- 3.5** A sizeable amount of these objections related to post gating issues with waste and bin collections. Some have cited ability issues with opening and closing of gates. Officers will contact those respondents to allay any fears and source solutions to any problems. It is anticipated that this should negate possible objections to the Notice of Intention.
- 3.6** The additional self-funded locations at Coles Alley and Ventry Lane have returned the requisite consultation forms with no objections and citing a high level of crime, drug use and antisocial behaviour.
- 3.7** Members should note that should objections be received during the Notice of Intention phase this may necessitate the Council holding a local inquiry, which, to date, has not been necessary in previous phases.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.8** All associated costs are covered within existing budget estimates.

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

3.9 No Good Relations or Equality issues.”

The Committee noted the report and agreed that the Notice of Intention for Phase 5b and additional self-funded streets be advertised as per the legislation.

**Request for the use of Alexandra Park
for the North Belfast Lantern Parade**

The Committee was advised that a request had been received from New Lodge Arts seeking to host the North Belfast Lantern Parade in Alexandra Park. The event was a project of the Ashton Community Trust that was managed by New Lodge Arts, a voluntary organisation working across communities in North Belfast for over 20 years.

The Members noted that the event was aimed at families, with the following planned events:

- A Lantern Parade making its way from Girdwood Community Hub in Cliftonpark Avenue to Alexandra Park;
- Art Workshops and street performers;
- An outdoor cinema;
- Magical evening event to include outdoor performances;
- Stage entertainment; and
- Fireworks display to close the event.

Following a query from a Member, the Director advised that the Council did not have a policy in relation to fireworks and the potential noise impact to animals, in particular dogs, but provided reassurance that all fireworks displays were licensed in accordance with the relevant statutory requirements.

The Committee granted authority to New Lodge Arts for the use of Alexandra Park on 29th – 30th October, to host the North Belfast Lantern Parade, subject to the completion of the appropriate event management plans and satisfactory terms being agreed by the Director of City and Neighbourhood Services and on the condition that the Event Organisers:

- i. resolve all operational issues to the Council’s satisfaction;
- ii. meet 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.

The Committee noted that the above recommendation was taken as a pre-policy position in advance of the Council agreeing a more structured framework and policy for ‘Events’, which was currently being taken forward in conjunction with the Council’s Commercial team.

Issues Raised in Advance – Chairperson (Councillor R. Brooks)

At the request of the Chairperson (Councillor R. Brooks) and Councillor Flynn, the Committee agreed that an update report would be submitted to a future meeting providing options, along with the feasibility of pilot areas for dog litter bins to be located now that the tender had been completed, to include looking at mixed bin options and benchmarking against what other Councils were doing.

Chairperson

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City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Wednesday, 11th September, 2024

MEETING OF THE CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Nelson (Chairperson);
Alderman Lawlor;
Councillors Black, De Faoite, D. Douglas, Duffy,
Harvey, Lyons, Maskey, F. McAteer,
McDonough-Brown, McDowell, I. McLaughlin,
R. McLaughlin, McKay and O'Neill.

In attendance: Mr. D. Martin, Strategic Director of Place and Economy;
Mrs. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration
and Development;
Mr. J. Greer, Director of Economic Development;
Ms. L. Toland, Senior Manager, Economy;
Ms. L. O'Donnell, Senior Manager, Culture and Tourism;
Ms. L. Leonard, European and International Relations
Manager; and
Ms. E. McGoldrick, Democratic Services and Governance
Coordinator.

Apologies

Apologies were received on behalf of The Deputy Lord Mayor, Councillor McCormick and Councillors Harvey, Kelly and Smyth.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the 7th and 28th August were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 2nd September, subject to the decision under the heading 'Belfast City and Region Place Partnership Update' to approve attendance by senior officers at MIPIM 2025 as part of the BCRPP 2024/2025 programme, noting that the BCRPP presence at MIPIM would be funded from the wider public-private sector BCRPP programme budget, be taken back to the Committee for further consideration.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor de Faoite declared an interest regarding item 6.a) International Relations Activity Update, in that he was a Council appointee on the Lyric Theatre Education Advisory Panel.

Mr. John Greer

The Chairperson informed the Committee that Mr. John Greer, the current Director of Economic Development, would be leaving the Council shortly to take up a post with Department for Communities. The Chairperson, on behalf of the Committee, referred to

the significant contribution that the Director had made to the Council during his time in service and wished him well in his new post.

Matters referred back from Council

Belfast City and Region Place Partnership Update

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting in September, the Council had agreed that the decision under the heading 'Belfast City and Region Place Partnership Update' to approve attendance by senior officers at MIPIM 2025 as part of the BCRPP 2024/2025 programme, noting that the BCRPP presence at MIPIM would be funded from the wider public-private sector BCRPP programme budget, be taken back to the Committee for further consideration.

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The report is in response to a decision by Council on 2 September 'that the decision to approve attendance by senior officers at MIPIM 2025 as part of the Belfast City & Region Place Partnership (BCRPP) 2024/2025 programme, noting that the BCRPP presence at MIPIM will be funded from the wider public-private sector BCRPP programme budget, be taken back to the Committee for further consideration.'

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Committee is asked to approve attendance by senior officers at MIPIM 2025 as part of the BCRPP 2024 / 2025 programme, noting that the BCRPP presence at MIPIM will be funded from the wider public-private sector BCRPP programme budget.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 In considering the recommendation the Committee is asked to consider the appended detailed report as presented to Committee in August 2024 on outcomes from the Belfast City & Region Place Partnership (BCRPP) 2023 / 2024 Programme including attendance at MIPIM as requested at the meeting of the Committee in June 2024.

3.2 In addition, the issue was raised at Council about the importance of considering proposals for attendance at MIPIM in the context of an updated International Relations Framework. A separate report has been provided to the committee updating on International Relations Activity which asks the committee to note the planned review of international opportunities and potential areas of interest aligned to city

priorities and agree to receive a future report to consider how targeted international engagement activity can support and advance our key ambitions. It also advised that this work will be developed alongside a paper for the committee setting out the principles that will underpin an updated international relations framework.

- 3.3 Although no longer current, Members may wish to note the main purpose of the 2017-2021 International Relations Framework was to;

Ensure that Belfast is optimally positioned on the international stage to realise our ambitions, and that our resources and priorities are aligned with the overarching strategic vision for the city and – as a driver of the regional economy.

It focused on three main areas:

- Business – investment and export/trade activity
- Tourism development (both leisure and business)
- Education/Culture development

The Framework was based on the premise that;

Belfast can and should be active internationally, that the Council has a 'value added' role to play, and together with our partners across the city we can compete internationally for the benefit of our citizens.

The framework recognises that our;

international ambitions rely on strong collaboration with a range of partners including the Executive Office, Invest NI, the universities, FE colleges and a range of bodies with shared ambitions to attract investment, tourism, conferences, students and so on.

And that we can;

complement and amplify the work of these partners, rather than compete against them.

- 3.4 It is also worth highlighting that the focus on Business investment and export trade activity and the partnership approach are likely to be key elements of any updated framework with which the BRCP partnership programme, including MIPIM attendance align.

- 3.5** The BCRPP is an important partnership to promote and position the city to compete globally to attract inclusive and sustainable investment to support the realisation of our inclusive growth ambitions as outlined in the Belfast Agenda, which is likely to require investment of £7.5bn - with a significant quantum from private sector funding and institutional investment. By way of context setting, as noted in paragraph 3.6 in the appended report, 24% of Northern Ireland's commercial investment in 2023 came from Institutional investment with the proportion of investment in NI from institutional investors having reduced significantly since the UK's referendum on EU membership in 2016. This private sector investment complements public sector funding, noting that in terms of housing delivery there is requirement for 20% affordable under LDP policy, and highlights the importance of collaborative working across the public and private sector to both attract external investment and delivery of our shared ambition for the city.
- 3.6** As part of the recently refreshed Belfast Agenda, Members will be aware that this included associated Action Plans aligned to each priority area. Under Our Place, Future City Centre and wider city regeneration & investment, we along with our Community Planning Partners have agreed to the strategic intent to 'Promote and position the city to compete globally to attract inclusive and sustainable investment', with the Council as the convening lead. Attendance by senior officers at MIPIM as part of BCRPP is a core component part of this, and, as noted above, complements other work streams that Council undertakes to promote the city internationally through our International Relations Framework. The Belfast Agenda is our overarching strategy, on our ambition for the positive inclusive growth of the city, and from this we have developed aligned policy and strategic priorities and our direct delivery.
- 3.7** As noted to this Committee in June 2024 the BCRPP is delivering a structured programme of work aligned to securing investment and regeneration for Belfast and the wider city region, which includes a presence at key real estate investment conferences including MIPIM. The 'Team Belfast' attendance at MIPIM is an important forum for Belfast to position itself to a global audience and attract the interest of institutional investors, developers, occupiers and funders in the context of bringing forward sustainable development to support the city centre and wider city regeneration and investment. Members will be aware that 'Positioning the City to Compete' is a key programme of work within this Committee's work plan as agreed at a special meeting of CGR Committee in May 2024, with which the BCRPP, including

MIPIM attendance align. In addition, it aligns and supports a joint public-private approach to promoting and positioning the city and city region as a priority location for investment, to underpin the generation, development and infrastructure required to deliver our inclusive growth ambitions – a key action within the Corporate Delivery Plan (2024-25) as agreed by Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in August 2024.

3.8 The appended report on the outcomes from the Belfast City & Region Place Partnership (BCRPP) 2023 / 2024 Programme including attendance at MIPIM highlighted the BCRPP programme objectives to:

- Continue to build collaboration and partnership in the city and wider region.
- Continue to promote and market the Belfast region outside Northern Ireland.
- Increase engagement and advocacy with all key stakeholders, in particular, investors and government.

It noted that outcomes from MIPIM should be viewed in the context of the wider programme objectives, with highlights of the tangible outcomes detailed below:

3.9 Programme objective: Increase engagement and advocacy with all key stakeholders, in particular, investors and government.

Paragraph 4.10 in the appended report highlights that marketing activities during MIPIM have translated into inward visits to the city and subsequent investment into the city's built environment. While there is commercial sensitivity in terms of subsequent investment and delivery following introductions and engagement at MIPIM, a presentation to this Committee on the 2023 Regeneration Tracker in April 2024 noted that there has been an overall positive trajectory of development and regeneration activity in the City Centre since 2015 which has positively contributed to the wider region including economic growth, job creation, access to services and cultural and recreational amenities. Members will note that 133 leads were collected at MIPIM 2024 with interest from a variety of sectors including residential development, leisure / hotel development, green energy and life sciences, a number of follow up meetings having already taken place in Belfast with Council officers and also other BCRPP members, with more planned in the coming months.

3.10 Programme objective: Continue to build collaboration and partnership in the city and wider region.

Members should note that BRCPP members continue to see value in attending MIPIM and continuing the collaborative partnership approach, as noted in paragraph 4.16 of the appended report, and have highlighted the importance of having the Council play a lead civic role in supporting this joint public private sector approach to collectively market the city internationally in the context of delivering our shared ambitions as outlined in the Belfast Agenda.

3.11 Programme objective: Continue to promote and market the Belfast region outside Northern Ireland.

Members should note that other core UK cities in attendance at MIPIM include London, Manchester, Liverpool, Newcastle and Cardiff, with Belfast representatives participating in joint events with these UK cities, UK government and private sector partners. MIPIM 2024 saw the organisation of the inaugural UK Cities Investment Event which Belfast co-hosted with Liverpool and Cardiff alongside The Department for Business and Trade and the British Property Federation, providing an invaluable platform to positively position Belfast as an attractive investment location and build relationships and share learnings with other UK cities, and planning has commenced for 2025 marketing activities. The sub regional approach outlined in the draft Programme for Government further underscores the importance of Belfast promoting itself in a global context to attract international investment.

4.0 Financial and Resource Implications

Approval is sought for attendance of senior officers at MIPIM 2024. Travel costs for Council attendance at MIPIM 2024 to be met from within existing and approved departmental budgets. All other costs related to these events would be met from the 2024 / 2025 BCRPP Partnership programme budget.

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

There are no Equality, Good Relations nor Rural Needs Implications associated with this paper.”

During discussion, the Director of City Regeneration and Development explained further the tangible outputs of the Council’s attendance at MIPIM.

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee,
Wednesday, 11th September, 2024**

Proposal

Moved by Alderman Lawlor,
Seconded by Councillor McDonough-Brown,

Resolved - That the Committee agrees to the recommendation as outlined in the report.

Accordingly, the Committee approved attendance by senior officers at MIPIM 2025 as part of the BCRPP 2024 / 2025 programme, noting that the BCRPP presence at MIPIM would be funded from the wider public-private sector BCRPP programme budget.

Restricted Items

The information contained in the report associated with the following four items was 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 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.

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

Belfast Zoo Quarter 1 Update

The Committee was provided with a quarterly update on performance at the Zoo across the following areas:

- Visitor Services;
- Education Services;
- Animal Collection;
- Marketing and Events, and
- Financial performance.

The Committee noted the Zoo performance update report for the period April to June 2024.

Belfast Bikes Quarter 1 Performance Update

The Committee considered an update on the performance of the Belfast Bikes scheme in Quarter 1 (April 2024 to June 2024) of year 10 of its operation.

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee,
Wednesday, 11th September, 2024**

The Committee:

- Noted the update of the Belfast Bikes performance for year 10, quarter 1 (April to June) financial year; and
- Approved the proposed discounts for corporate memberships.

Financial Reporting – Quarter 1 2024 / 2025

The Committee considered its Quarter 1 financial position which included a summary of the financial indicators and an executive summary.

The Committee noted the report and the associated financial reporting pack.

Markets Quarter 1 Update

The Committee was provided with a quarterly performance and financial update for the period to end June 2024, together with future plans for the coming quarter.

The Committee also considered a request from organisers of a proposed market to take place in the Titanic Exhibition Centre (TEC) in November/December 2024 which sought approval for a market licence to be issued for the event.

During discussion, Members suggested the need to increase the potential of Council parks to hold more markets across the city, together with the expansion of the Christmas market. The Senior Manager, Economy, advised that the markets policy was under review and would consider different models and development.

One Member suggested that further engagement with stall holders and attendees of the Christmas Market would be beneficial in relation to the potential to expand the Market in the future.

After discussion, the Committee:

- Noted the update on city markets – with a focus on St George’s Market;
- Noted the priority actions for the coming quarter and noted that further updates on progress would be brought back to future meetings of the Committee;
- Agreed to approve the issuing of a market licence for the Tedberry Market to be held on 30th November/1st December, 2024 in the Titanic Exhibition Centre; and
- Agreed that engagement with stall holders and attendees of the Christmas Market 2024 be undertaken in relation to the potential to expand the Market in the future.

Regenerating Places and Improving Infrastructure

City Centre Boundaries

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 Following a request by Members to clarify the boundary of the city centre and the rationale for how boundaries are applied for projects, and how this might be looked at going forward, this paper sets out the city centre boundary and proposes a future approach on this issue.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

I. Note the context of the Draft BMAP City Centre Boundary and the update on the rationale for allocating city centre boundaries to specific projects.

3.0 Background

3.1 At the City Growth and Regeneration Committee on 12th June and at the Climate and City Resilience Committee on the 13th June 2024 Members raised queries in relation to the boundary of the city centre and how these are used to delineate project borders. Members had referenced certain examples including the Inner North West, UP2030 and the Business Cluster and Community Grant schemes. The Committee agreed that ‘a future report would be brought to the Committee to outline the rationale around red line boundaries including the city centre boundary and various Programmes and projects and how this might be looked at going forward.’

4.0 Main Report

4.1 The statutory boundary of the city centre is often used as the recognised and defined boundary area given its definition within planning policy in the draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (BMAP). The city centre boundary as defined by draft BMAP remains the most up to date expression of the Department’s spatial planning approach to the Belfast Metropolitan Area and may remain a material consideration where appropriate within a planning context. The city centre

boundary will be reviewed as part of the Local Policies Plan stage of the LDP process.

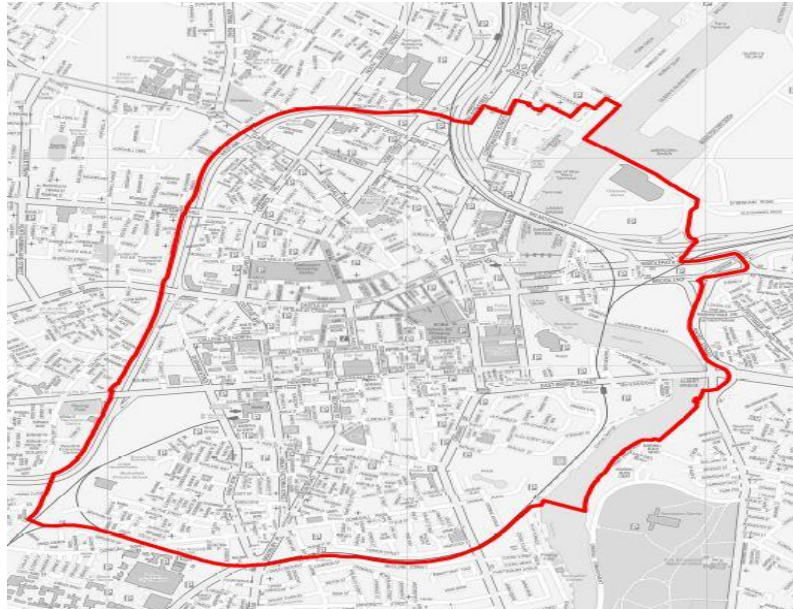


Figure 1 - Draft BMAP City Centre Boundary

4.2 A number of schemes or projects developed within in the city centre have been brought forward based on the eight principles of the Belfast City Centre Regeneration Investment Strategy (BCCRIS) as set out below:

- **Increase the Employment Population;**
- **Increase the Residential Population;**
- **Manage the Retail Offer;**
- **Maximise the Tourism Opportunity;**
- **Create Regional Learning and Innovation Centres;**
- **Create a Green, Walkable, Cyclable Centre;**
- **Connect to the City Around, and**
- **Shared space and social impact**

4.3 As projects are developed to target specific issues or priority areas the parameters of the project, including boundaries, are brought to the CG&R Committee for approval prior to designing and implementing the project. When developing projects aligned to BCCRIS the Draft BMAP city centre boundary is typically used as the starting point for setting the boundary, subject to discussions with Members. Setting boundary areas is often required on projects when addressing specific area-based issues, or when subject to funding constraints.

- 4.4** An exception to the use of the draft BMAP boundary is in relation to the Inner North West Masterplan which was defined by the Special Action Area agreed by Council in 2016 as a part of the Belfast City Centre Regeneration Investment Strategy document where, following consultation with Members the agreed BCCRIS document established the INW boundary as one of five Special Action Actions to be addressed through BCCRIS. With regard to the UP2030 Net Zero District the boundary was selected to encapsulate the highest concentration of typical city infrastructure, including high frequency transport networks, walking & cycling, a mix of commercial and residential areas, to develop a holistic framework that could be adopted for any city area. Following consultation with Members in 2021 the boundary area was increased to include more residential area that surround the city centre.
- 4.5** Recently delivered schemes such as Vacant to Vibrant, Grey to Green and the Active Travel Enablers were brought forward within defined funding allocations and/or timeframes and agreed through the Committee process. In each of these cases, the interventions were developed to address specific city centre issues, such as vacancy, or contained elements within the grant process that were aligned to the BCCRIS Strategy with the draft BMAP city centre definition used to identify the boundary for these projects.
- 4.6** For example, this definition was applied to the Vacant to Vibrant pilot due to the particular issues in the city centre where vacancy is significantly higher than the UK average and with a recognition that the city centre was in need of intervention to preserve it as the economic centre for the region. The initial pilot project for secure cycle facilities was also trialled within the city centre following a Notion of Motion from Members to bring forward secure cycle facilities within the city centre. Funding for both of these schemes was limited in the pilot phases and it was agreed that concentrating the funding within a defined area would create the greatest impact. Following the initial pilot period the secure cycle project received additional funding to deliver a city-wide project, and Officers are currently seeking external funding to deliver a city wide Vacant to Vibrant programme as agreed at the June Meeting of the CG&R Committee.
- 4.7** At the time of the initiation of Vacant to Vibrant and with the secure cycle parking projects there were a number of complementary projects and programmes under delivery that supported communities and businesses outside the city

centre including the Vibrant Business Destinations Programme (in partnership with DfC) and community-focused funding streams such as the Business and Community Cluster Grants and city-wide covered cycle schemes. Members will also be aware that the Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund was developed in line with the Area Working Group boundaries and other area-based funding streams, such as the Social Investment Fund, Urban Villages and the Local Investment Fund are delivered within an agreed geographical boundary and are reported to the appropriate Area Working Groups.

4.8 Where funding is defined or limited, it is often necessary to define the parameters and area of funding to ensure maximisation of the impact of benefits within a defined programme or when addressing area specific issues. While some Programmes do need to be defined within a certain area for a specific reason, it is acknowledged that using standard approaches may not always provide the best results and may lead to parties, groups, businesses or communities just outside the boundary area failing to be able to avail of or engage with the initiative.

4.9 While it is normal that the parameters of a new project are presented to the City Growth & Regeneration Committee prior to finalisation and initiation, it is recommended that at the development stage the proposed boundary areas are outlined as a specific element of the parameters for discussion and agreement by the Committee within the remit and constraints of the project, but recognising that budgetary constraints may influence the scope and impact.

5.0 **Financial and Resource Implications**

There are no financial or resource requirements associated with this paper, although financial implications will need to be considered on a project-by-project basis as boundary areas are agreed.

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

There are no Equality, Good Relations nor Rural Needs Implications associated with this paper.”

During discussion, the Committee requested a larger, clearer map of the City Centre Boundary. Members also suggested that the Committee be consulted on the city centre boundary as part of the Local Policies Plan process and highlighted the importance of flexibility in relation to funding boundaries.

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee,
Wednesday, 11th September, 2024**

After discussion, the Committee:

- Noted the context of the Draft BMAP City Centre Boundary and the update on the rationale for allocating city centre boundaries to specific projects;
- Agreed that an appropriate City Centre Boundary Map be circulated to the Committee; and
- Agreed that, in relation to any further consultation on the city centre boundary as part of the Local Policies Plan process, a briefing be provided by Planning Officers at a future meeting of the Committee.

Off-Street Car Parking – Notice of Motion Update

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting in January 2021, former Councillor Mulholland, on behalf of former Councillor McMullan, had outlined the following proposal:

“This Council is committed to ensuring that the city and neighbourhood areas of Belfast are accessible and inclusive for disabled people, older people and carers. This Council recognises that access to a car is central to the independence of many people with mobility issues but notes the low provision of accessible bay parking spaces in its off-street car parks with just 3% of its spaces designated as accessible across the city. This Council agrees to join Disability Motoring UK’s Disabled Parking Accreditation scheme to improve the minimum number, size and quality of our accessible bay parking spaces. This Council further notes this is one of many interventions that need to be taken by this Council and partners as part of our commitment to an inclusive COVID-19 response and recovery and our commitment in the Belfast Agenda to become an accessible city for all by 2035.”

It was reported that the Committee had been provided with updates on the motion through quarterly Notice of Motion updates that officers had contacted the British Parking Association (BPA) to discuss the general principles of the accreditation criteria and how this could be achieved within the Council’s current portfolio.

Along with general access requirements and a prerequisite number of bays, consideration would also be made of the standard and location of the pay and display machines within each car park. Following these conditions being met, the Council could apply for accreditation and pay an annual fee for membership. Officers had met with the BPA to conduct site assessments, within the charged car parks in the city centre, to apply the criteria for the accreditation and making recommendations where appropriate.

The Committee was informed that, to achieve accreditation, car parks must not only have accessible bays correctly marked and in the specified number but must also have alternative ways to enter and pay. Following the site assessments, the BPA noted

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee,
Wednesday, 11th September, 2024**

that, although our provision was below the number designated within the criteria, there was an under use of DB bays. This could be explained by the number of blue badge holders parked on-street within the vicinity of car parks.

The general condition of the car parks was deemed acceptable, with an acknowledgement that some additional pedestrian access was required for people with more complex needs and the reconfiguration of some DB's for the same purpose. Officers had examined how to reconfigure the car parks to meet the criteria, including structural changes where required. It was also noted that most of the car parks had been earmarked for development and City Regeneration and Development were currently advancing plans for these locations.

It was reported that officers were in the process of reconfiguring the car parks to address the comments made during the Strategic Site Assessments.

Rather than incur the cost of accreditation, (£5,100 for initial registration and a £2,550 yearly fee), it was recommended that any costs should go towards work to reach compliance with the BPA's audit recommendations (attached at [Appendix 1](#)).

It was explained that there could be costs to get the car parks relined for additional DB accommodation, including remarking and any structural works. These costs would be delivered within existing budgets.

The Committee:

- Noted the update on progress with respect to the original notice of motion detailed at section 3.1; and
- Noted the Council's desire to make parking provision compliant with the provisions set out in the Park Access criteria but not to seek accreditation.

**Department for Communities' Access
and Inclusion Programme 2024/25**

It was reported that, in line with previous years, it was expected that the Department for Communities would be inviting local Councils to administer the Access and Inclusion Programme 2024-25 within their respective local Council areas and to apply for funding to the Department. Whilst the Departments for Communities capital budget was currently fully allocated, approval was requested to launch the programme as a competitive process should the Department open the funding at a later date in 2024/25.

The Committee was reminded that the Department for Communities' Access and Inclusion Programme aimed to:

- I. Improve access to arts, culture and active recreation venues across NI for people with disabilities.

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee,
Wednesday, 11th September, 2024**

- II. Make arts, cultural and active recreation venues more inclusive across society; and
- III. Increase participation in arts, culture and active recreation activities by people with disabilities.

The Senior Manager, Culture and Tourism, advised that the Council oversaw the assessment and recommendation of projects via a competitive open call internally and externally and was responsible for delivery of all projects in receipt of funding.

She pointed out that the Culture Development Unit had managed the programme since its inception in 2018/19 and in 2023/24 funding had been reduced by 50%, resulting in 2 external projects with grants equating to £30,926. Examples of projects supported included improved access to the City Hall and the Tropical Ravine; easier access for audience and participants to not for profit cultural venues across the city; installation of new specialised playground facilities and changing spaces; and provision of equipment to provide immersive theatrical experiences for children with complex needs.

The Senior Manager, Culture and Tourism, explained that capital works and equipment costs were eligible under this programme. The maximum grant available was £30,000, (the maximum project cost cannot exceed £80,000), and applicants were required to contribute at least 10% of the total project costs. To receive a £30,000 grant therefore, applicants must provide a contribution of at least £3,000.

She informed the Committee that the Department for Communities was particularly keen to welcome applications for Changing Places facilities, accessible equipment for play parks and projects that would impact positively on sustainability and climate change. Projects must complete on or before 31st March, 2025.

She highlighted that the Culture Development Unit would work closely with the Council's Equality Unit and the Department for Communities to ensure positive equality implications which is the central component of the Programme. Officers would discuss the Programme with the Council's Disability Advisory Panel.

During discussion, the Senior Manager, Culture and Tourism, advised that the Programme would be open to all applicants and the Council intended to have feasibility studies ready in order to put forward Council assets also.

After discussion, the Committee agreed to recommend that the Chief Executive exercise his delegated authority to grant permission for Council to apply for, promote, assess and manage the Access and Inclusion Programme 2024-25.

Belfast Waterfront Framework - Waterfront Tour Request

The Committee was advised that a request had been received from the Waterfront Task Group to invite Members of the City Growth and Regeneration and the members of the Planning Committee to attend a presentation on the progress of the Belfast Waterfront Framework, followed by a boat tour along the lower Lagan waterfront area providing an overview of the of the proposals included within the Framework and to receive an update

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee,
Wednesday, 11th September, 2024**

on the work of the Maritime Belfast Trust in preserving, developing and promoting the Maritime Mile. Representatives from Maritime Belfast Trust, Belfast Harbour Commissioners and Titanic Quarter Ltd would be in attendance along with officers from the Council, and it was suggested that the visit would take place in October.

The Committee was reminded that a Waterfront Task Group had been established to develop a focused approach to the Belfast waterfront, aligned to the A Bolder Vision key move 'Embracing the River'. The Task Group, chaired by the Council's Chief Executive and consisting of Maritime Belfast Trust, Belfast Harbour Commissioners, Titanic Quarter Ltd, Department for Communities, Department for the Economy, Tourism NI, Odyssey Trust and Department of Agriculture, Environmental and Rural Affairs commissioned a detailed analysis of the waterfront area from the Ormeau Road Bridge to Thompsons Dock.

The Committee was also reminded that consultants, Schulze + Grasso, had undertaken a detailed analysis of over 10km of the waterfront, compiling analysis on the completed and pending developments, as well as identifying the catalyst opportunities and gaps in infrastructure to maximise the social, economic and environmental opportunities that existed along the waterfront. This work also undertook to identify the existing and proposed projects emerging from within the adjacent communities, and to identify catalyst opportunities to connect these projects and the local communities to the wider education, employment and leisure facilities along the waterfront corridor. This work was carried out in consultation with a range of stakeholders, including local communities, through online surveys and a dedicated charrette style design workshop. In addition, a specific Waterfront Neighbourhood Network had been established to build relationships and support ongoing engagement with the Task Group. It was noted that the network would be asked to nominate two representatives to sit on the Task Group going forward to ensure representation and feedback.

It was reported that the Waterfront Task Group had also proposed a study visit to Copenhagen in November 2024 for members of the Task Group and members of the Waterfront Neighbourhood Network. The study visit would explore best practice examples of a leading waterfront city in terms of how the city engaged with the water's edge, how the public realm integrated art and maritime heritage, and how the area engaged and connected to the local communities and the wider city. The trip would be subsidised by Maritime Belfast Trust reducing the costs for organisations to approximately £550 per attendee for travel, accommodation and food. Members were asked to approve the attendance of the Chairperson (or his nominee), the Chief Executive and up to two officers on the study visit.

During discussion, in relation to the presentation of the Belfast Waterfront Framework area, the Director of City Regeneration and Development advised that there was a forthcoming meeting of the Neighbourhood Network in October. She advised that the Network included the Markets, Sailortown, Eastside, LORAG, the Dock, Titanic Quarter Residents and representatives from these groups had also been invited to the study visit to Copenhagen.

One Member highlighted that water ways and ecological groups should also be included in the consultation review process, such as the Lagan Navigation Trust.

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee,
Wednesday, 11th September, 2024**

Members highlighted the importance of including community views in the progression of the Framework. It was suggested that the Neighbourhood Network representatives were invited to the forthcoming boat tour and presentation and be given the opportunity to input into the Copenhagen tour objectives.

The Director of City Regeneration and Development advised that feedback would be provided to the Waterfront Task Group on the issues which had been raised.

After discussion, the Committee:

- I. Agreed to attending the boat tour and presentation of the Belfast Waterfront Framework area and that a request be made to the Waterfront Task Group to invite community representatives to also attend; and
- II. Agreed to the Chairperson of the Committee or his nominee, the Chief Executive and up to two Council Officers attending the proposed Waterfront Task Group study visit to Copenhagen.

Positioning Belfast to Compete

Night-time Economy Notice of Motion Update

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting in October 2021, Councillor de Faoite had raised a Notice of Motion which focussed on Belfast City's Nightlife and Night-time Economy which sought to deliver two specific actions, including:

- a roundtable engagement event which seeks to identify the main challenges facing the city centre's evening and nighttime economy (ENTE) and opportunities for the future; and
- the establishment of an ENTE 'coordinator'.

It was reported that, at a meeting of the City Centre All-Party Working Group (CCAPWG) on 26th January, 2023, Members had welcomed Amy Lamé, London's Night Czar, who had provided an overview of her background, role and collaborative approach to ensuring London thrives as a 24-hour city.

Ms. Lamé had outlined the challenges that she had faced, including changing perceptions of the city at night, ensuring women felt safe in London at night, addressing issues relating to nighttime workers and improving nighttime transport links. Members had heard that, key to addressing these challenges, was working in partnership with the nighttime industries, local authorities, the Metropolitan Police, Transport for London and the general public.

At the same meeting, Members had also received a presentation from the Council's Director of Economic Development who provided an update on council related work which was assisting with the revitalisation effort of the night-time economy following

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee,
Wednesday, 11th September, 2024**

the Covid pandemic. This included a presentation on case studies and best practice from other cities and information on Belfast's Purple Flag status. (Purple Flag was an internationally recognised accreditation for excellence in the nighttime economy and helped to create safe and thriving locations at night for all users).

It was reported that Belfast City Centre First Achieved Purple Flag Status in 2020, just prior to the lock down and more recently Belfast City Council had joined the Steering Group that was seeking re-accreditation. Membership of the group included representatives from the following organisations:

- Belfast One BID;
- Linen Quarter BID;
- Destination CQ BID;
- Belfast City Council;
- Belfast Chamber of Trade & Commerce;
- PSNI;
- SOS Bus;
- Value Cabs;
- Hospitality Ulster; and
- Translink.

As part of its recent application for Purple Flag status, the Steering Group undertook a self-assessment evening in September 2023 which identified the main challenges facing the city's nighttime economy and a number of areas of improvement in relation to the Purple Flag themes. Belfast City Centre's Purple Flag status was successfully re-certified in January 2024 (following an assessment conducted by assessors in November 2023).

The Committee was informed that the CCAPWG had also received a presentation from Mr. C. McCracken, Managing Director of the Linen Quarter BID (on behalf of the Purple Flag Steering Group), at its meeting in May 2024. Mr. McCracken had updated the Working Group on the latest status and outlined the next steps of the process, which included addressing a number of recommendations within the assessors' feedback report (attached at Appendix 1). It was agreed that the CCAPWG would be used to collate and direct Members' feedback to the ongoing work of the Purple Flag Steering Group.

Night Czar

On 11th June 2024, Belfast's three BIDs (Linen Quarter, Belfast One and Destination CQ) had announced the appointment of Mr. M. Stewart as Belfast's city centre's first Night Czar. The role reflected a previous Purple Flag recommendation and would focus on enhancing, coordinating, leading and advocating for the city's night-time economy. The Night Czar position followed appointments in cities such as London, Manchester, and Edinburgh and was an honorary role attracting remuneration of £12K per year which was jointly funded by the three BIDs.

Following discussion by the CCAPWG in May, it had been recommended that the Night Czar should be invited to future meetings to engage with elected members. It was proposed that the Working Group would enable ongoing political engagement to ensure

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee,
Wednesday, 11th September, 2024**

that elected representative's feedback could be provided and discussed (as suggested by best practice from other cities).

During discussion, several Members highlighted the need to develop the role and the potential for increased Council involvement and funding requirements.

The Committee also suggested that the Purple Flag Steering Group engage with Community Groups, Women's Groups and LGBTQ+ Groups and consider consultation with local neighbourhoods, Queen's University Belfast, Ulster University, Belfast Metropolitan College and NUS-USI.

The Committee:

- Noted the update on action in relation to the Notice of Motion on Belfast City's Nightlife and Night-time economy;
- Agreed that Members engage with the newly appointed Night Czar through the City Centre All-Party Working Group;
- Agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting on how to develop the Night Czar role and the potential for increased Council involvement, together with options based on best practice advice and funding requirements;
- Noted that feedback be given to the Purple Flag Steering Group on ensuring effective engagement of Community Groups, Women's Groups and LGBTQ+ Groups;
- Noted that feedback be given to the Purple Flag Steering Group to consider consultation with local neighbourhoods, Queen's University Belfast, Ulster University, Belfast Metropolitan College and NUS-USI; and
- Agreed not to close the Night-time Economy Motion which was recommended for closure as part of the quarterly Motion update.

City Centre Animation

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 This report presents a number of proposals for increased animation opportunities within the city and for extended destination profile.**

Members are asked to provide approval to progress with an extended city centre animation programme to provide support for key stakeholder to deliver partnership initiatives

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to note the contents of the report, and agree the allocation of the following direct awards in relation to;

- **Belfast One - Busking activity – up to the value of £20,000**
- **Belfast One - Halloween activity – up to the value of £40,000**

3.0 Background

3.1 The 10 year cultural strategy – A City Imagining outlines a vision of Belfast as a city:

- **where everyone fulfils their potential**
- **where everyone benefits from a thriving and prosperous economy**
- **where everyone experiences good health and well being**
- **that is welcoming, safe, fair and inclusive for all**
- **that is vibrant, attractive, connected and environmentally sustainable**

Building on the community planning process, It acknowledges that change requires ambition, long-term commitment and a sustainable and adaptable approach building on the creativity and resilience in the very fabric of our city. A city imagining can be the catalyst for the urgency and agency required to encourage innovation, new connected thinking and greater collaboration.

In response to ongoing significant regeneration efforts, aiming to drive increased footfall and activity within the city centre. It is essential to address the challenges that the city centre is facing while aligning with initiatives such as the UNESCO City of Music designation, Belfast 2024, Make Yourself at Home tourism strategy and the core principles of co-design and partnership working.

As such the cultural unit have been working with city stakeholders to consider upcoming opportunities to continue to build and grow the positioning of Belfast as a welcoming and culturally vibrant destination.

4.0 **Main Report**

- 4.1 Whilst there have been a range of very positive developments and investments in the city centre, the economic environment is challenging and the impact of the dereliction associated with the Tribeca site continues to be felt.

Initiatives have been put forward to work in partnership with 'Belfast One' to respond to the ongoing need for a continued programme of city centre activity to drive footfall and give additional reasons to visit the city centre and attract both residents and tourists.

Officers have worked with stakeholders at Belfast One to identify the following proposals;

4.2 **BuskFest - up to £20,000**

Objective: Increase footfall and create a vibrant atmosphere through Music further building on the work aligned to realising Belfast's UNESCO city of music status.

BuskFest will bring musicians into designated areas of the city to perform live music, creating an engaging and lively environment for visitors. This initiative will support local artists and provide entertainment that encourages people to spend more time in the city centre. Belfast One would aim to run a competition and have 5-6 locations across the city for buskers to perform in over 4 weekends in through to November and in the run into 'Sound of Belfast' with the winner getting a recording prize and time on one of the local radio stations.

This would build on previous success realised on activity delivered in 2018 and 2019 on the Great Belfast Busk Off.

4.3 **Halloween 2024 – up to £40,000** (if both components progressed)

Objective: Boost seasonal footfall and create a festive atmosphere.

Belfast One has already committed to hosting 5 monsters in buildings across the city BCC are seeking to provide increased funding to enhance this to 7 creating a monster trail and placing monster eyes in trees on Donegal Place.

These are attractive and award-winning outdoor attractions which have been on display in other cities including

Manchester, London, Glasgow and Dublin with great success. Through an exciting primary-school competition to name each of the monsters, we can drive footfall from children and their families into the City Centre to visit the monsters to enter the 'Name the Monster' competition.



- 4.4 The remaining funding would deliver in partnership with Belfast One a pumpkin patch in the grounds of City Hall over 2-3 day replicating the popular event to draw families and Halloween enthusiasts into the city. The event would be a free ticketed event and would encourage participants to take their pumpkins to designated design stations across the city to dress their pumpkins. This event creates stunning visual images in front of the City's main municipal building and demonstrate visually that the City is open for families and children.**



5.0 Financial and Resource Implications

The cost of delivering the programme is up to £60,000.

This will be funded from existing budgets and, if all options are fully implemented, also from specified reserves.

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

There are no Equality, Good Relations nor Rural Needs Implications associated with this paper.”

During discussion, in response to Members’ questions, the Senior Manager, Culture and Tourism, advised that access, inclusion, and considerate ticketing would form part of the agreement with Belfast One and she would confirm where pumpkins were being sourced for the event. She highlighted that attendee feedback would be compiled in relation to future Halloween events as part of the core programme feedback.

In response to a Member’s question in relation to the process for the delivery of the aforementioned events, she confirmed that a formal process for Halloween events would be considered for future programming.

After discussion, the Committee:

- Noted the contents of the report, and agreed the allocation of the following direct awards in relation to:-

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee,
Wednesday, 11th September, 2024**

- Belfast One - Busking activity – up to the value of £20,000; and
- Belfast One - Halloween activity – up to the value of £40,000

- Noted that access, inclusion, and considerate ticketing best practice would form part of the agreement with Belfast One;

- Noted that attendee feedback would be compiled in relation to future Halloween events as part of the core programme feedback; and

- Noted that a formal process for Halloween events would be considered for future programming.

Growing Business and the Economy

International Relations Activity Update

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Members’ approval for council engagement in and attendance at a number of international profiling events in USA in early 2025 as well as support for the upcoming Friendship Four event.**

2.0 Recommendation

It is recommended that Members:

- **Note the invitations for the Lord Mayor to attend the St Pat’s for All event in early March 2025 as well the Nashville Peace Summit in late February 2025 and agree attendance at both events by the Lord Mayor and appropriate senior officers up to a total maximum cost of £12,000**
- **Note and approve the request for £15,000 financial support towards the Friendship Four event to take place in November 2024**
- **Note and approve the request for £10,000 financial support towards the touring route for ‘The Agreement’.**
- **Note the planned review of international opportunities and potential areas of interest aligned to city priorities and agree to receive a future report to consider how targeted international engagement activity can support and advance our key ambitions.**
- **This will be developed alongside a paper for the committee setting out the principles that will underpin an updated international relations framework.**

3.0 Main Report

3.1 St Pat's for All engagement – New York – early March 2025

Members will be aware that Belfast City Council annually participates in the New York New Belfast Economic Showcase. This showcase event has been running for more than a decade, and for the last three years has been streamlined to focus solely on seeking economic opportunity within New York City and the wider East coast. Over 150 business, civic and political leaders gather to hear the latest Belfast developments and updates on trade and investment opportunities across key growth sectors as well as capital investment development and opportunities.

3.2 At this year's 15th annual event, the Lord Mayor took part in a number of side meetings with City and State political representatives. He was also invited to speak at a key focal point for LGBTQIA rights, the Stonewall Inn. This aligned with the Lord Mayor's inclusive city theme. The event was attended by many influential business, political, academic and civic leaders, including former City Council Speakers Christine Quinn and Corey Johnson, along with NY State Comptroller Tom Di Napoli.

3.3 On the back of this engagement, the Lord Mayor has now been invited to lead the 26th annual 'St Pat's for All' Parade, assuming the role of Grand Marshall. The Parade attracts over 3,500 participants, and around 28,000 spectators. In addition to participating in the parade, the St Pat's for All President and Board have offered to facilitate a wider programme of engagements around inclusive growth and neighbourhood regeneration, in line with Corporate Plan priorities. The Lord Mayor will also undertake a series of follow-up business meetings arising from the June 2024 New York New Belfast event.

3.4 Reframing international and Sister Cities engagement activity

Members will be aware that Belfast City Council has been a formal Sister City with Nashville and Boston since 1994 and 2015, respectively. The objective of these agreements is to develop and deliver collaborative and mutually beneficial activity for each city in the areas of the economy (both business trade and investment), education (mainly through attracting international students and research partnerships), tourism development and cooperation in culture and music.

- 3.5 Activity with both cities at civic level has been intermittent since the pandemic. This is due to a number of factors including changes in personnel; competing priorities and immediate funding and resource pressures on other issues. Despite this, organisational partnerships between educational establishments, business and community organisations have continued to strengthen. As we emerge from the recent economic shocks, there appears to be an appetite from both cities to re-engage, with the potential for renewed conversations across a range of areas for collaboration. Officers are undertaking a review of opportunities and potential areas of interest aligned to city priorities and a report will be brought back to a future meeting of the Committee to consider how targeted international engagement activity can support and advance our key ambitions.
- 3.6 In the interim, the city of Nashville is currently making plans to visit Belfast with an economic mission from 29 September-4 October this year. The council is working with economic partners – in particular Invest NI – to ensure that a targeted programme of meetings and engagement is in place for each of the delegates. Updates on opportunities for engagement with elected members will be flagged once there is greater clarity around timings and attendees.
- 3.7 Given that 2024 marks the thirtieth anniversary of the Belfast-Nashville Sister City link, the City Council in Nashville is planning a number of activities to mark the occasion. One flagship event is a Peace Summit which is being developed by Queen's University Belfast and Belmont University (who have long standing connections and yearly joint work programmes) and which will take place from 25-28 February 2025. The programme for this event is still being finalised but it is likely to involve recognition of the work on Civil Rights through storytelling, history, music, community, and building peace in Nashville and around the world. The event will focus on issues related to past, present, and future movements and the connections between Civil Rights and peacebuilding. Primary partners include Belmont University, Fisk University, and Queen's University Belfast. The Lord Mayor has been asked to speak at the event on the Belfast experience of peace building and community and place building. Nashville Metro Council through the Office of Mayor Freddie O'Connell, along with the Sister City Board have endorsed the invitation and have extended an offer to organise a series of wider business engagements. These meetings will provide a helpful re-introduction to some of the key local business partners, on the assumption that we have commitment from Nashville to engage in this area of work in

the future. Our engagements with Invest NI have confirmed the specific opportunities for collaboration between NI and the Nashville/Tennessee area and they have committed to working with us on opportunities arising from the discussions.

3.8 Friendship Four

Members will be aware that, since 2015, the Council has supported the work of the Odyssey Trust in developing and delivering the Friendship Four series. This tournament and wraparound activity have been an important element of the Belfast-Boston Sister City relationship and have been used as a platform to promote Belfast as a study, investment, and tourism destination.

3.9 In 2019, the Friendship Four was expanded to incorporate a Women's Tournament. Both events attract positive international TV exposure for Belfast in the United States and Canada, reaching over 150 million households.

3.10 The 2024 Friendship Four series is due to take place in November and is divided into two distinct parts, namely the delivery of the tournament (29-30 November 2024) and the Friendship Four Legacy Project (25-28 November 2024). This year's tournament will involve teams from Notre Dame, Harvard, Boston University and Merrimack College. It will attract over 1,000 overseas visitors to the city and account for over 3,000 bed nights to the Belfast economy. Each team will travel with 40-50 players and immediate staff members as well as 10 match officials, with typical home crowds of 3,000 fans attending their respective games. It is estimated through the Tourism NI return on investment calculator that the visitor spend during the event will be £500K and the total direct economic spend will be in the region of £750K generated for the city over the event.

3.11 The Legacy Project will extend beyond the main sporting activities and will include a schools cultural exchange programme involving over 400 young people. The main tournament event will be used as a 'hook' to draw out discussion topics such as confidence, resilience and self-esteem, mental health and wellbeing and diet and nutrition. It will also involve a two-day STEM conference focusing on science and youth empowerment through sport. Finally, the overall event will be supported through a large-scale volunteer skills development programme which will see the recruitment, training and development of 60 volunteers to support a variety of roles across the weeklong programme.

- 3.12 Alongside the main event, there will also be a series of side programmes involving representatives from business and educational, sports and cultural institutions. Building on previous programmes, collaborative arrangements have already been made involving student engagement and faculty collaboration across the key educational establishments in Belfast and this year's programme will seek to support and enhance these. With the introduction of new teams this year, there are opportunities to provide additional opportunities, not just for university-to-university collaboration, but also for business-to-business collaboration. Several opportunities have already been identified by universities competing in the 2024 tournament around the areas of cyber security and AI, sports tech and data reporting and STEM.
- 3.13 The event receives financial support from a range of partners including Tourism NI, the Department for Communities and the US Consulate alongside ticket income and corporate sponsorship. To continue this longstanding partnership, the event organisers are seeking a financial contribution of £15,000 towards the November 2024 event.

The Agreement

- 3.14 The cultural unit have been engaging with The Lyric theatre in relation to a request to support the touring route for 'The Agreement' up to the value of £10,000. The Agreement is an award-winning play by renowned playwright Owen McCafferty. It examines the negotiations leading to the Good Friday Agreement revealing the drama behind this complex, pivotal moment for Northern Ireland.
- 3.15 The Lyric Theatre, Belfast and the Gate Theatre, Dublin are bringing this important work to audiences during Dublin's Theatre Festival for four weeks from end Sept – Oct 2024.
- 3.16 Other key partners in this initiative include Tourism NI and officers are in discussion on leveraging the opportunity this presents to host key ROI/International media and stakeholders and further build on the destination reputation of Belfast and our artistic partners.
- 3.17 **Financial and Resource Implications**

Members are asked to approve a maximum of £12,000 in support of both the Nashville Peace Summit and wider Sister City visit, as well as the New York St Pat's for All and wider inclusivity visit to New York, both city visits aligned between

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee,
Wednesday, 11th September, 2024**

25 February and 3 March 2025. Members are also asked to agree to a financial contribution of £15,000 towards the Friendship Four November 2024 event and £10,000 towards the touring route for 'The Agreement'.

3.18 All above costs will be met within the existing budget for 2024/25.

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

There are no direct Equality or Good Relations implications associated with this report."

During discussion, in response to Members questions in relation to the review of international events and the tracking of benefits, the Senior Manager, Economy, advised that the approach to International relations, the framework and its themes was currently being reviewed, together with the overall external engagement approach. She highlighted that a report would be submitted to the Committee in October to consider the principles and high-level objectives of the new Framework. The European and International Relations Manager also provided further information on the benefits of engagement to foreign investment.

During further discussion, in response to a Member's query in relation to the request for the financial support towards the touring route for 'The Agreement', the Senior Manager, Culture and Tourism, explained further the process and rationale for the request.

The Committee:

- Noted the invitations for the Lord Mayor to attend the St Pat's for All event in early March 2025 as well the Nashville Peace Summit in late February 2025 and agree attendance at both events by the Lord Mayor and appropriate senior officers up to a total maximum cost of £12,000;
- Noted and approved the request for £15,000 financial support towards the Friendship Four event to take place in November 2024;
- Noted and approved the request for £10,000 financial support towards the touring route for 'The Agreement';
- Noted the planned review of international opportunities and potential areas of interest aligned to city priorities and agreed to receive a future report to consider how targeted international engagement activity can support and advance our key ambitions; and
- Noted that a paper would be presented to the October committee setting out the principles and high-level objectives of the new international relations framework.

Business Growth and Scaling Support

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting in May 2024, it had endorsed the Enterprise and Business Growth workplan for the 24/25 year. The report set out key priority areas of work for the 2024/25 financial year, aligning to the delivery of the targets under the 'Our Economy' pillar of the Belfast Agenda.

The report had provided plans for scaling support and innovation, focusing on key technologies and priority sectors, including Fintech and Financial Services, Creative and Digital Life and Health Sciences, and Advanced Manufacturing. Since that time, officers had continued to work closely with the City Innovation Team to develop and deliver on new interventions which build capacity among local businesses – including those aligned to the Belfast Region City Deal interventions. Through this work and engagement with stakeholders in the wider ecosystem, including Digital Catapult, Ulster University, Queen's University, and the Fintech Corridor, the Senior Manager, Economy, explained that two key projects had been identified which were considered to have clear alignment to the overall plan and which could lever resources and support from other key organisations.

Fintech Support Programme

Working in partnership with the Fintech Corridor, the Fintech Support Programme would aim to address the issues and strategic objectives identified in the Fintech NI action plan. The Fintech Corridor was established in 2020 and was a cross-border cluster working with multiple Fintech companies, academic institutions, and development agencies along the Dublin to Belfast corridor. It supported local SMEs working in the financial services to utilise new technology to grow and scale and provided important networking opportunities for companies along the corridor as well as with international companies working in this space.

The Senior Manager, Economy, advised that the Council sought to support 40 Belfast based companies to provide new partnership and networking opportunities, mentoring to support business growth, scaling and access to finance, and to look at opportunities to support the skills development and pipeline into the sector.

The support programme would focus on addressing specific barriers to SME growth and would provide the tools to overcome these barriers, including mentoring, education, and support to enable business and product development, route to market engagements enabling b2b opportunities for Fintech SMEs, facilitated networking and collaborative space to explore and develop innovation, future opportunity identification and shaping SMEs for a growth mindset.

Advanced Media Production Capacity Programme

The Senior Manager, Economy, informed the Committee that, working in partnership with Digital Catapult, the Advanced Media Production (AMP) capacity programme would aim to address key barriers to growth and explore opportunities for creative digital SMEs to engage with large scale Advanced Media Production (AMP) facilities such as Studio Ulster. The AMP programme would support up to 50 Belfast based companies wishing to build capacity in the commercial use of, and access to,

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee,
Wednesday, 11th September, 2024**

Advanced Media Production (AMP). Through this programme businesses would have the opportunity to gain valuable skills and learning linked to Advanced Media Production and Studio Ulster in particular, to apply this new understanding to offer potential new market opportunities and to develop a pathway for local SMEs to engage and benefit from large scale City Deal projects, Studio Ulster, in this case.

Test trading opportunities for growing businesses

The May 2024 Committee report had provided an overview of the role which the Enterprise and Business Growth team takes in supporting businesses at all stages of their journey, including improving start-up and survival rates of new businesses and encouraging a culture of entrepreneurship across the city.

The report had outlined plans for the continuation of the Council's dedicated start up space at St George's Market. Since April this year, the team had enhanced the promotion of this service and demand had grown for the offer as a result. Two stalls at the market were set aside for new traders and participants rotated on a six-week basis in order to ensure that businesses got a feel for the retail environment – as well as ensuring that the opportunity was available to a growing list of interested businesses. Further to this, the team had enhanced its stakeholder engagement, ensuring that services were accessible in all areas of Belfast and across all communities. Through this stakeholder engagement, the Council had explored various opportunities with shopping centres and trading locations across Belfast to explore further opportunities for test trading. As part of this engagement, the team had identified an opportunity to provide test trading to approximately 30 pre/early start businesses in a busy retail environment.

In order to pilot this approach, the team had developed a partnership with the Kennedy Centre in West Belfast. Through this, a space would be provided for approximately 30 traders over the duration of the pilot. If feedback was positive and this process successful, the team proposed providing test trading opportunities across other retail locations in Belfast. Early discussions were already under way to identify viable opportunities. The pilot would include wraparound support being provided to the businesses through the established Go Succeed service and each business would avail of branding, marketing, and sales support. Following successful completion of the pilot programme, the Kennedy Centre had committed to a period of reduced costs on more permanent trading space within the centre. A maximum budget of £20,000 was proposed for this activity to include pilot development, recruitment and marketing, wraparound support for businesses, and evaluation of the pilot.

The Committee:

- Noted and approved the allocation of £20,000 from the existing 2024/25 Economic Development budget to support the Fintech Support Programme, in partnership with the Fintech Corridor;
- Noted and approved the allocation of up to £65,000 from the existing 2024/25 Economic Development project to support the Advanced Media Production (AMP) capacity programme in partnership with Digital Catapult; and

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee,
Wednesday, 11th September, 2024**

- Noted and endorsed the proposal to invest in a localised test trading pilot to support pre/early start businesses with a maximum budget of £20,000.

Strategic and Operational Issues

Notice of Motion Quarterly Update

The Committee was provided with a quarterly update on the Notices of Motion that it was responsible for, in line with the agreement of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that all standing committees receive regular updates.

It was reported that there were currently seven Notices of Motion and Issues Raised in Advance for which the Committee was responsible for and it was recommended that the Committee agree to close the following 4 motions and note the status updates for the remaining 3 motions which remained open:

Category 1 Recommended Closures:

- Disabled Parking Accreditation Scheme (ID = 153)
- Belfast City Nightlife and Night-time Economy (ID = 208)
- Belfast 2024 Animation Culture Night (ID = 381).

Category 2 Recommended Closures:

- Environmental Infrastructure in Council Car Parks (ID = 152) which will now be considered as part of the council's Low Emissions Vehicle Strategy.

One Member highlighted that the motion on Belfast City Nightlife and Night-time Economy would remain open, as previously agreed under item 5.a).

The Committee:

- Noted the updates to all Notices of Motion/ Issues Raised in Advance that it was responsible for as referenced in Appendix 1 of the report; and
- Agreed to the closure of three Motions, as referenced in Appendix 1, as it had been agreed that Belfast City Nightlife and Night-time Economy Motion (ID = 208) would remain open under the previous item 'Night-time Economy Notice of Motion Update'.

Meeting request from the Department of Education

The Committee noted that a meeting request had been received from the Department of Education to discuss the RAISE program, an educational disadvantage intervention from the 'A Fair Start' report and that the Committee would be invited to attend.

Chairperson

D427

Planning Committee

Tuesday, 17th September, 2024

MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE

- Members present: Councillor Carson (Chairperson);
Aldermen McCullough and Rodgers;
Councillors Abernethy, Bell, Brennan,
T. Brooks, Doran, S. Douglas, Ferguson, Garrett,
Groogan, Magee, McCann and Murphy.
- Also attended: Councillor Maskey.
- In attendance: Ms. K. Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control;
Mr. K. McDonnell, Solicitor (Regulatory and Planning)
Mr. D. O’Kane, Acting Planning Manager (Plans and Policy);
Ms. C. Reville, Principal Planning Officer;
Ms. L. Walshe, Principal Planning Officer;
Mr. P. O’Reilly, Senior Planning Officer; and
Ms. C. Donnelly, Committee Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported for Councillors Anglin, McCabe and Whyte.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 27th June and 13th August, 2024 were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council, at its meeting on 2nd September, 2024, subject to the omission of those matters in respect of which the Council had delegated its powers to the Committee.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

Committee Site Visits

Note of Committee Site Visits

The Committee noted the site visits and agreed to undertake two pre-emptive site visits in relation to the following applications:

- LA04/2024/0626/F - Proposed residential development of 104no. dwelling units providing General Needs Social Housing and Category 1 over 55's accommodation consisting of a varied housing mix including family maisonettes, apartments and wheelchair accessible units with all associated site works including; landscaping communal and private amenity space and ancillary

**Meeting of Planning Committee,
Tuesday, 17th September, 2024**

cycle and car parking provision. 1 Havelock House Havelock Place;
and

- LA04/2024/0483/F and LA04/2024/0480/DCA - Proposed change of use from Office (B1) and restaurant (Sui Generis) to Hotel comprising of 88 no. bedrooms, two storey rooftop extension, restaurant and bar offerings, gym facilities, including new dormer windows on roof, demolition, internal and external refurbishment and alterations, and all associated site works. - 34-44 Bedford Street and 6 Clarence Street.

Notification of Provision/Removal of Accessible Parking Bay

The Committee noted the notifications regarding accessible parking bays at the following locations:

- Provision at 81 Joanmount Park; and
- Provision at 108 Ligoniel Road.

Notifications of Abandonment and Extinguishment

The Committee noted the correspondence in relation to the confirmation of an Abandonment Order for Marcus Ward Street and the proposed abandonment at Mill Avenue, Ligoniel.

Appeals

The Committee noted the appeals decisions.

Planning Decisions issued

The Committee noted the planning decisions issued in August, 2024.

Live Applications for Major Development

The Committee noted the list of live applications for major development.

Committee Decisions yet to issue

The Committee noted the list of Committee decisions which had not yet been issued.

Miscellaneous Reports

Update on Planning Performance

The Committee noted the update.

**Meeting of Planning Committee,
Tuesday, 17th September, 2024**

**Belfast Waterfront Framework –
Waterfront Tour Request**

The Committee agreed to attend a tour and presentation of the Belfast Waterfront Framework area that would consist of a strategic overview of the waterfront area characteristics and opportunities only, and would not include discussion of specific or individual development or project proposals.

Notices of Motion - Annual Update

The Committee noted the update.

LDP Engagement Strategy

The Development Planning and Policy Manager provided the Committee with an update on the ongoing review and refresh of the Local Development Plan Engagement and Communications Strategy, Plan and Action Plan and provided detail around ongoing and upcoming engagement for the Local Policies Plan.

The Committee noted the update.

Planning Applications previously considered

**LA04/2023/4215/F - Proposed 3no. residential
apartment blocks (19no. Cat 1 Elderly
apartments and 2no. Wheelchair apartments, 21
units in total) Associated car parking, site works
and landscaping. - 141-147 Upper Dunmurry
Lane**

The Principal Planning Officer outlined the application to the Committee and highlighted the following key issues for consideration:

- Principle of housing in this location;
- Housing density;
- Affordable housing;
- Housing mix;
- Adaptable and accessible accommodation;
- Design and placemaking;
- Public realm;
- Impact on heritage assets;
- Climate change;
- Residential quality and impact on amenity;
- Open space;
- Access and transport;
- Health impacts;
- Environmental protection ;
- Flood risk and drainage;

**Meeting of Planning Committee,
Tuesday, 17th September, 2024**

- Waste-water infrastructure; and
- Section 76 planning agreement.

She informed the Committee that sixteen objections had been received and had been addressed within the report. She explained that, on balance, the proposal was considered acceptable and that it was recommended that planning permission was granted.

The Committee granted planning permission, subject to conditions and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions and Section 76 planning agreement, and to resolve any environmental health issues resulting from the outstanding consultation response, so long as they were not substantive.

LA04/2023/4162/F - Change of use from retail unit to amusement arcade and adult gaming centre. - 51 Rosemary Street

The Principal Planning Officer outlined the application to the Committee and highlighted that the application had been deferred by the Committee at its meeting in May to facilitate a Committee site visit that took place on 21st May.

She reminded the Committee that the application was subsequently deferred at its meeting in June so that planning policy concerns which had been raised by Members could be considered in more detail by officers and reported back.

She explained that officers had concerns with the issues raised and that refusal reasons on SP3 and paragraph 7.1.5 of the Plan Strategy would be unsustainable. She stated that the proposal complied with the LDP Plan Strategy and that officers' opinion remained unchanged, in that it was recommended that the application should be approved, subject to conditions.

She added that officers did recognise that whether the proposal would enhance the conservation area in line with SPPS and policy BH2, and whether it would impact the setting of the listed building was a matter of judgement for the Committee.

The Chairperson welcomed Ms. D. Thompson to the meeting, who spoke in objection to the application on behalf of First Church.

Ms. Thompson explained that her clients wished to thank the Committee for the rigorous scrutiny that had been given to the proposal at its previous meetings and that they had hoped that, based on the robust discussions, the professional recommendation might have been different.

She stated that the proposal was the wrong development for the wrong place, in that amusement arcades were not an acceptable use in the prime retail core, approval would cause a cluster of those uses, within a small area, and that it would be a bad neighbour to the church.

She outlined the following four areas of concern on behalf of her clients:

**Meeting of Planning Committee,
Tuesday, 17th September, 2024**

- The application was for a change of use and that shop front alterations should not be considered;
- Opening hours;
- The impact on the conservation area; and
- Proliferation.

She concluded by highlighting that, at a previous meeting of the Committee, the applicant had stated that the proposal was a relocation of an existing arcade within walking proximity but that there were no mitigations in place to prevent another arcade operator from moving into the applicant's current unit and could give rise to the potential of two arcades in close proximity to the church. She asked the Committee to refuse the application.

The Chairperson thanked Ms. Thompson for her representation and welcomed Mr. A. Mains to the meeting who attended on behalf of the applicant.

Mr. Mains addressed concerns which had been raised by Members of the Committee at its previous meetings with regard to the application. He stated that concerns had been raised that adequate consideration had not been given to the site's proximity to the Extern treatment centre, but that there was no reason to anticipate any synergy between the two, as there were other gaming centres within walking distance of the centre and there was no evidence of any harmful synergy.

He addressed the concern regarding proliferation and stated that, to provide assurance to the Committee, the applicant was content to accept a condition that would require the closure of the North Street premises before the opening of the Rosemary Street premises.

With regard to streetscape, he stated that the proposal consisted of a discreet low-profile shopfront in muted colours through a refurbishment of the façade which was in contrast to the surrounding area he described as a depressed part of Belfast.

He concluded by stating that the applicant had proposed a Planning condition that would limit Sunday opening from 12pm to avoid conflict with morning worship and would mirror the opening hours of the adjacent 3Cs Social Club, he asked the Committee to approve the application as the proposal would deliver betterment within the primary retail core.

Following discussion, the Committee granted planning permission, subject to conditions and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions and deal with any other issues that arise provided that they were not substantive.

LA04/2023/4153/F - Conversion of an existing dwelling house to a 5 bed HMO dwelling house. No works to the exterior or elevation of the property. - 44 Ponsonby Avenue

The Principal Planning Officer provided the Committee with an overview of the application and explained that, following the Committee site visit to the application site where it was noted that there was an oil tank located in the rear yard where the application had stated

**Meeting of Planning Committee,
Tuesday, 17th September, 2024**

bins would be situated, the applicant had since changed the properties heating from oil to gas and the tank had been removed.

She reported that it was recommended that the application be approved, subject to conditions.

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Maskey to the meeting, who wished to address the Committee with regard to the application.

Councillor Maskey stated that he was speaking in objection to the application and explained that he had lived in the area and that there was an existing proliferation of HMO properties in the area. He referred to the Committee's previous refusal of an application for a change of use to HMO for No. 27 Ponsonby Avenue due to a lack of amenity space and stated that the rear of the properties did not have the amenity space to facilitate adequate waste disposal for a HMO property and asked the Committee to be consistent with its previous decision regarding No. 27 Ponsonby Avenue and refuse the application.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor Murphy,
Seconded by Councillor Garrett,

“That the Committee refuses the application on the basis that that it would have a negative impact on residential amenity and would conflict with the character of an established residential area and an area of townscape character.”

On a vote by show of hands, fifteen Members voted for the proposal and one against and it was declared carried.

Accordingly, the Committee delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the reasons for refusal.

At the request of Councillor Garrett, the Committee agreed, when undertaking a site visit to a property where an application was being considered to convert an existing dwelling house to a HMO dwelling house, that access to the premises would be requested from the applicant.

New Planning Applications

LA04/2024/0681/F - Erection of Purpose-Built Managed Student Accommodation development with additional use of accommodation by further or higher education institutions outside term time, comprising 4 no. blocks of accommodation with building heights ranging from 5 to 9 storeys and up to 35,850sqm gross external floorspace, café, associated communal facilities including landscaped courtyards, internal bin stores and cycle stores, PV array, disabled parking, public realm provision, associated site works and extension of Titanic Boulevard to form new junction with Hamilton Road. - Lands to the northeast of Olympic House, east of Queen's Road and south of Belfast Metropolitan College

The Principal Planning Officer provided the Committee with an overview of the application and pointed out that the proposal was for 1007 unites with a mix of cluster rooms and studios across four blocks of accommodation with an extensive central courtyard, entrance plaza, public realm and landscaped boundaries.

She highlighted the following key issues for consideration:

- Principle of PBMSA in this location
- Design and placemaking;
- Impact on heritage assets;
- Impact on amenity;
- Climate change;
- Open space;
- Access and transport;
- Health impacts;
- Environmental protection;
- Flood risk and drainage;
- Waste-water infrastructure;
- Natural heritage;
- Waste management;
- Section 76 planning agreement; and
- Pre-Application Community Consultation.

She stated that the proposed building was considered to be of a high-quality design, appropriate to its location that would regenerate the land and be delivered as part of Phase 3 of the Titanic Quarter Development Framework (TQDF).

She reported that no objections had been received from statutory or non-statutory consultees, one letter of support had been received and that it was recommended that the application be approved, subject to conditions.

**Meeting of Planning Committee,
Tuesday, 17th September, 2024**

The Chairperson welcomed Ms. S. Murphy, Lacuna Developments, Mr. C. O'Hara, RPS, and Mr. S. McKee, Turley, to the meeting in support of the application.

Ms. Murphy explained that, with the support of Titanic Quarter and Belfast Harbour, Lacuna/Watkin Jones were very much focused on delivering quality schemes that would provide safe, modern and sustainable places to live and study.

She stated that the rationale for bringing another scheme to Belfast was predicated on need which had been clearly demonstrated, supported by the fact that recent schemes, that included Nelson Place were currently full, with waiting lists in place.

She informed the Committee that the location was ideal and would bring an additional 2000 residents and students to the area that would contribute to the long-term regeneration of Titanic Quarter.

Mr. McKee explained that the application was preceded by a robust PAD process and was a development with community, wellbeing and sustainability at its core.

He outlined the proposal design and stated that a range of sustainable transport options made it a highly accessible location and stated that the proposal aligned with Belfast's Resilience Strategy, the Belfast Agenda and the emerging Queens Island Decarbonisation Plan, reduced car parking was proposed alongside a suite of green travel measures to support the promotion of active and sustainable travel.

He stated that a sustainable transport fund would contribute towards a further enhancement of public transport services and a green travel measures fund would support the provision of Belfast Bikes memberships, 310 student bike spaces and 20 public visitor cycle spaces would be provided as part of the scheme.

He explained that the scheme would create approximately 140 full time jobs during the construction phase with a multitude of in-kind interventions, similar to those which were being delivered as part of the Loft Lines development.

He concluded by stating that a final management plan, to ensure appropriate management of the facility in perpetuity, would be secured via a Section 76 agreement.

In response to a question from a Member in relation to a future change in demand from students, Mr. O'Hara explained that the proposed structure would have internal flexibility and, in theory, the usage could be changed from student accommodation to residential use.

The Committee granted planning permission, subject to conditions and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions, finalise the Section 76 Planning agreement, and deal with any other matters which might arise, provided that they were not substantive.

**Meeting of Planning Committee,
Tuesday, 17th September, 2024**

LA04/2024/1086/F - Variation to the wording of Condition 4 of Outline Planning Approval Z/1990/0127, to allow for the sale of bulky and non-bulky goods for a charity shop. - Unit 1, Connswater Retail Park

The Principal Planning Officer explained that the application sought to vary Condition 4 of planning permission Z/1990/0127 under Section 54 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 which restricted sales on the type of goods that were permitted to be sold as bulky goods. She stated that this was to amend the types of goods that were permitted to be sold from Unit 1 to include the sale of bulky and non-bulky goods in order to facilitate the occupation of the unit by Cancer Research UK, in its new format store.

She reported that, having regard to the Development Plan and other material considerations, and in the planning balance, the proposed development was considered acceptable and that it was recommended that planning permission be granted, subject to conditions.

The Committee granted planning permission, subject to conditions and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions and deal with any other issues that arise provided that they were not substantive.

LA04/2023/3879/F - Vary of condition 11 of LA04/2021/2815/F to extend opening hours. Vacant lands at access road to Olympia Leisure Centre - directly opposite and approx. 70m east of, Nos 9-15 Boucher Road

The Principal Planning Officer provided an overview of the application and the Committee agreed to vary condition 11 of LA04/2021/2815/F to extend opening hours for an additional hour on a Saturday, from Saturday 08:00-21:00hrs to Saturday 08:00-22:00hrs, and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the conditions and to deal with any other matters which might arise, provided they were not substantive.

LA04/2024/0470/F - To develop a community garden for sustainable food growth and education purposes - Lower Botanical Gardens

The Principal Planning Officer outlined the application and the Committee granted planning permission and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the approval reasons and to deal with any other issues that arise, if they were not substantive.

**Meeting of Planning Committee,
Tuesday, 17th September, 2024**

LA04/2024/1084/F - 2 no. (35m width x 16m height) ball stop fences. 1.2m height perimeter fencing with 2 no. gate access points. 2 no. (10m width x 4m depth) dugouts + hardstanding path and associated site works. - Henry Jones Playing Fields, Church Road

The Principal Planning Officer outlined the application and the Committee granted planning permission and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the approval reasons and to deal with any other issues that arise, provided that they were not substantive.

Restricted Items

Quarter 1 Finance Report

The Director of Planning and Building Control provided the Committee with an update on the Quarter 1 financial position for the Planning Committee that included a summary of the financial indicators and an executive summary.

The Committee noted the report and the associated financial reporting pack.

Chairperson

Climate and City Resilience Committee

Thursday, 12th September, 2024

MEETING OF THE CLIMATE AND CITY RESILIENCE COMMITTEE HELD IN THE LAVERY ROOM

Members present: Councillor R-M Donnelly (Chairperson);
Alderman McCoubrey; Councillors Bell,
Bower, R. Brooks, T. Brooks, Brennan,
Bunting, M. Donnelly, P. Donnelly, S. Douglas,
Flynn, Long, Lyons, Magee and Walsh.

In attendance: Mr. J. Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy;
Ms. D. Caldwell, Climate Commissioner;
Ms. B. Roddy, Project Support Officer; and
Mr. B. Flynn, Committee Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies were reported on behalf of Alderman Copeland, Councillors Anglin and Doherty.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 8th August were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 2nd September.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest reported.

Presentations

Feasibility Study: Green Shipping Corridor Belfast – Liverpool

The Committee was reminded that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, at its meeting on 19th January, 2024, had agreed that the Council would partake in a scoping study for a project to examine the feasibility of establishing a Green Shipping Corridor between Belfast and Liverpool. The project would seek:

- to mitigate transition risk for the two ports as the global economy decarbonised ensuring that the ports of Liverpool and Belfast served as gateways to trade and investment in decarbonisation technologies; and
- to position Liverpool and Belfast at the forefront of net zero innovation and as testbeds for commercialising new approaches and technologies.

**Climate and City Resilience Committee,
Thursday, 12th September, 2024**

The Chairperson welcomed Ms. A. Cousins, Director of Regional Development, Connected Places Catapult, who delivered a presentation in the matter. She explained that the creation of the Belfast/Liverpool green shipping corridor would support in delivering the United Kingdom's obligations as set out under the Clydebank Declaration. The corridor, which was one of six envisaged for the Irish Sea area, recognised the role of ports as places which could promote effective energy innovations to support the maritime sector.

The Committee was advised that the key findings of the study had been as follows:

- that existing infrastructure was capable of, but needed to be adapted to use methanol and low carbon fuel;
- that significant investment was required in the national grid; and
- that there was a requirement to design and deliver new terminal infrastructure.

Ms. Cousins indicated that multi-agency collaboration and innovation would be necessary to address the issues identified within the study. As such, a range of civic leaders would be required to become advocates for policy change to overcome barriers and to enable progress. In addition, significant investment from both the private and public sectors would assist to realise regional economic benefits. She concluded by outlining the next steps that would be undertaken in progressing the Belfast/Liverpool corridor.

Ms. Cousins answered several questions which were posed by Members.

The Chairperson thanked Ms. Cousins for her presentation and the Committee noted the information which had been provided.

**Saughton Park Green Energy –
City of Edinburgh Council**

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. A Crichton, Energy Officer with the City of Edinburgh Council, who delivered a presentation in respect of the Saughton Park Green Energy Project.

Mr. Crichton explained that the project had been Edinburgh's first green-powered, low carbon park. It combined a micro-hydro scheme to generate electricity, together with ground source heat pump, which generated heat for properties across the park. The Committee was informed that the scheme, which had been funded through a range of partners, used Ground Source Heat Pump (GSHP) technology to provide a low carbon heating solution for the park's visitor facilities, cafe and greenhouses. In addition, a micro-hydro scheme located on the Water of Leith used an Archimedes Screw Turbine to generate electricity by utilising water flow. He explained that the Council was exploring how similar projects could be replicated across its portfolio to support its target of net zero emissions by 2030.

Mr. Crichton concluded by reporting that it was estimated that greenspaces in Edinburgh could provide ground source heating to approximately 11 per cent of households, which would be equivalent to the carbon footprint of 15,600 homes using gas to heat their homes each year.

**Climate and City Resilience Committee,
Thursday, 12th September, 2024**

Mr. Crichton answered several questions which were posed by Members regarding the feasibility of utilising Belfast's several tributary rivers in similar-type projects.

The Chairperson thanked Mr. Crichton for his presentation and the Committee noted the information which had been provided.

Belfast Sustainable Food Programme – Update

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 To provide an update on the sustainable food programme for Belfast.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- i. Note the contents of the report.**
- ii. Note the ongoing work of the Belfast Sustainable Food Partnership and the city's success in re-establishing its Bronze Sustainable Food Award status.**
- iii. Note that the Sustainable Food Strategy work is underway and due for completion by April 2025.**
- iv. Note the progress that has been made on the Horizon 2020 UPSURGE project and agree to request a six-month project extension until February 2026, subject to agreement by the funders.**
- v. Agree to a knowledge exchange and learning programme for the UPSURGE project being developed through the Sustainable Food Partnership's Community Growing Working Group, subject to agreement by the funders.**
- vi. Note the work ongoing to establish a baseline of community growing space in the city, and agree this approach is developed further.**
- vii. Note the grant offer from the Shared Island Fund to test community growing within the UP2030 area, partnering with Cork Food Policy Council to work collaboratively to improve community growing provision in both cities.**

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Sustainable Food Places Bronze Award

Belfast previously achieved its Bronze Award from Sustainable Food Places in 2016 but it had since lapsed and needed to be renewed. A previous unsuccessful attempt for Bronze in September 2023 indicated that there wasn't sufficient evidence of partnership working for it to be renewed. The Belfast Sustainable Food Partnership has now been established and collectively developed a new bid for Bronze in June 2024 which has been successful.

Funding from Sustainable Food Places for a Sustainable Food Coordinator role (0.3FTE) to support the bid for Bronze has now ended. The role to date has been delivered by the Adaptation and Resilience Advisor in the Climate Team. Given the expansion of the programme during this period, there is now a need to resource the Sustainable Food Programme work through an additional temporary part time post (1 day per week) shared between the Climate and Anti-Poverty & Inclusive Growth teams for two (?) years. This will help service the Partnership and its working groups and help develop a Sustainable Food Strategy and a 3 year plan to progress to Silver Award status in line with the Belfast Agenda. This work is currently underway, with the Strategy due for delivery by April 2025.

3.2 Belfast Sustainable Food Partnership

The Belfast Sustainable Food Partnership was established in August 2023 and currently has twenty-three individual partner organisations, representing local and regional government, businesses, and the community and voluntary sector. The Partnership has met five times to date and delivered two food network events to over 200 members of the public. A cross council officer workshop has also helped identify the key areas that the Council is responsible for and can influence, in relation to sustainable food. This includes food poverty, waste, environmental health, community growing, procurement, climate, education and outreach, culture and regeneration.

In April, the Climate Team supported Northern Ireland Environment Link to host a Food and Farming Conversation with DAERA, and also supported Brink! one of the SFP partners to deliver a programme of free events centred around food and sustainability as part of their Summer Solstice Weekend.

Working groups have been setup representing key areas of focus for the partnership. These include food access, food supply

chains, community growing, and climate and nature. The partnership also supports the Belfast Food and Drink Network in its ongoing work to encourage food businesses in the city to become more sustainable. Further work is needed to develop a governance and food waste working group in the future. The purpose of the working groups is to engage citizens across the city on the sustainable food issue and develop a 3-year goal as part of the Sustainable Food Strategy work.

The Partnership has also supported a placement student in the Climate Team to carry out spatial mapping of the food system in Belfast, with food access and community growing mapping underway to establish baselines. Another work-based placement student is currently researching policy and legal issues relating to the Right to Grow which was brought forward as a Motion by councillors in November 2023, with the report to come forward with findings once completed.

3.3 Horizon 2020 UPSURGE Project Update

The Climate Team has been progressing with the Horizon UPSURGE Project since 2022, developing a demonstrator site at Lower Botanic Gardens. A Project Board structure was established and is overseeing a capital delivery group and operational group of council officers from CNS, Climate and Property and Projects. There are four nature-based solutions being tested on the site with capital works almost completed:

Nature based solution 1: Agroecological community garden

Nature based solution 2: A soil decontamination and food growing research space

Nature based solution 3: A climate resilience garden

Nature based solution 4: Habitat enhancement works

In addition to the above, improvements to the paths, a new entrance and active travel infrastructure has been installed on site. Environmental sensors that are recording live data on climate and pollution are due to be installed this month.

There has been engagement with local groups throughout the process, and a number of volunteer days have been delivered, including a garden open day and tree giveaway, a bioblitz, planting, and weed pulling days, working in partnership with CNS.

The project will move into its operational phase in September, with a knowledge and learning exchange programme for climate action and community growing to be delivered, centred around the main demonstrator site at Lower Botanic Gardens.

The original funding application was to develop five BCC satellite sites in the city, however upon discussion with key stakeholders and officers, it is agreed that a more inclusive way to distribute the funding should be via a participatory budgeting exercise, made available to groups across the city (North, South, East, West and Central) and that the learning programme also be widened across the city. Participatory budgeting is a recognised process that allows local people to decide how money is spent within their city or local community and has been piloted by the Council through the Move More and Eat Well and Bank of Ideas projects already.

The proposed criteria for participation of groups in the programme would be that they are involved in active or future potential community growing spaces, and that they should become a member of the SFP Community Growing Working Group to participate in the UPSURGE programme.

Due to unforeseen delays across the five UPSURGE cities, the project partners are being asked by the funder to seek a project extension from August 2025 to February 2026 to allow the demonstrator sites time to develop, gather data, and to allow the programme of activities and research to be completed.

3.4 Shared Island Funding

Members were informed in August that an offer of Shared Island Funding had been secured through the Cork – Belfast partnership (which previously accessed funding for the solar PV study). Alongside funding to install solar PV on Donegall Pass Community Centre, this offer included funding for Cork Food Policy Council and Belfast City Council to deliver community growing improvements across the two cities. The letter of offer has subsequently been accepted, and the funding (€30,000) will be used support the improvement of community growing infrastructure across the UP2030 project area, as one of their key strategies for greening across these inner city neighbourhoods. There may be an opportunity to link this funding with the UPSURGE programme by doing a joint participatory budgeting exercise. This is currently being scoped by officers.

3.5 Financial and Resource Implications

There are no financial and resource implications.

3.6 Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment

None known.”

**Climate and City Resilience Committee,
Thursday, 12th September, 2024**

The Committee adopted the recommendations as set out within section 2.1 of the report.

Notices of Motion - Quarterly Update

The Committee noted an update in regard to the Notices of Motion which had referred to the Committee for its consideration.

Chairperson

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Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee

Monday, 16th September, 2024

MEETING OF THE MEMBERS OF THE BELFAST WATERFRONT AND ULSTER HALL LTD. SHAREHOLDERS' COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Ferguson (Chairperson); and
Councillors Bower, Brennan, Bell, S. Douglas,
Flynn, Maghie, McCann, McDowell, McKay and Ó Néill.

In attendance: Mr. J. Greer, Director of Economic Development;
Mrs. L. Toland, Senior Manager, Economy;
Mr. I. Bell, Acting Chief Executive and Director of
Finance, Risk and Corporate Services (ICC Belfast);
Mr. C. McCloskey, Director of Events and Customer
Experience (ICC Belfast);
Ms. C. Davidson, Head of Governance and Stakeholder
Engagement (ICC Belfast); and
Mrs. L. McLornan, Committee Services Officer.

Also attended: Councillor Cobain; and
Mr. S. Daniels, Chair of the BWUH Ltd. Board.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Alderman Copeland and Councillors R. Brooks, Canavan, Doherty, McCabe, Nic Bhranair and Verner.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 17th June, 2024, were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st July.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were recorded.

Restricted Items

The information contained in the reports associated with the following three items are 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 items as, due to the nature of the items, there would be a disclosure of exempt

Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee
Monday, 16th September, 2024

information as described in Section 42(4) and Section 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

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

Performance Report Q1 2024/2025

The Acting Chief Executive and Director of Finance, Risk and Corporate Services provided the Committee with an update on the Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd's business performance and an analysis of actual performance against the budget for the first quarter covering the period 1st April to 30th June, 2024.

He outlined that the quarter had been busy, as expected, with a large number of events spanning conferences, meetings and entertainments.

The Director of Events and Customer Experience outlined the company's Corporate Social Responsibility programme, including with the charity Inspire and other volunteering opportunities and fundraising activities. He also provided the Committee with an update on the apprenticeships and placements within the company.

The Committee was advised that BWUH Ltd. was working towards the Earthcheck Company Standard.

In response to a Member's question regarding the impact that the Covid-19 pandemic had had on sales, the Director of Finance, Risk and Corporate Services pointed out that there was a long lead-in time for booking large conferences, usually with planning taking place 3-5 years out for the biggest ones.

After discussion the Committee noted the update which had been provided.

Head of Events Role

The Director of Economic Development outlined that BWUH Ltd. had set out an ambitious five-year business plan which followed a period of business growth and development since reopening in September 2021.

He explained that the Head of Events position had been occupied in BWUH in some capacity since 2018 but that it had not been filled for the past number of years due to the Covid-19 pandemic and cost control measures. During that time, the responsibility of ensuring the successful delivery of events had fallen to the Director of Events and Customer Experience, supported by two Senior Event Managers. However, with the growth of the event operations team and to ensure continuous development, strategic continuity planning and improving the resilience of the team, it was recommended that BWUH re-introduced the position of Head of Events.

Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee
Monday, 16th September, 2024

The Committee was advised that local market research had indicated that the new evaluation would place the Head of Events role at a salary of around £55,000, with the associated costs set aside within existing BWUH budgets.

The Committee approved the job revaluation of the Head of Events role.

**BWUH Senior Positions Recruitment –
Non-Executive Director and Chief Executive Positions**

The Director of Economic Development advised the Committee that Ms. L. Jackson had been a Board Member for two terms and that she was stepping down. He advised the Members that her experience had been a great asset to the company and that the recruitment of a new Non-Executive Director would be advertised in the coming weeks.

He also outlined that Ms. J. Corkey, the former Chief Executive of BWUH Ltd, had resigned in August to pursue other opportunities and that the process of recruiting the company's new Chief Executive would commence shortly.

Noted.

Mr. John Greer

The Chairperson reminded the Committee that this would be the last Shareholders' Committee meeting at which the Director of Economic Development would be in attendance as he would be leaving to take up the role of Permanent Secretary of the Department for Communities.

The Members and the Chairman of the BWUH Ltd. Board paid tribute to Mr. Greer for his hard work and dedication, particularly for his support in guiding the business through the Covid-19 pandemic, and wished him well in his future role.

Mr. Greer thanked the Members and advised them that Mrs. L. Toland, Senior Manager (Economy) would be taking over as the Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) for BWUH Ltd.

Noted.

Chairperson

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