Public Document Pack

BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

1st September, 2026

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 on Tuesday, 1st September, 2026 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 - 12)

5. Official Announcements

6. Requests to address the Council

   - Gaels Against Genocide - Notice of Motion ‘Mobile Maternity Units for Gaza’

7. Minutes of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee (Pages 13 - 60)

8. Minutes of the People and Communities Committee (Pages 61 - 70)

9. Minutes of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee (Pages 71 - 74)

10. Minutes of the Licensing Committee (Pages 75 - 84)

11. Minutes of the Planning Committee (Pages 85 - 92)

12. Minutes of the Climate and City Resilience Committee (Pages 93 - 104)

13. Minutes of the Standards and Business Committee (Pages 105 - 106)

14. Notices of Motion

    a) Mobile Maternity Units for Gaza (Pages 107 - 108)

    b) Open Doors World Watch 2026 (Pages 109 - 110)

    c) Evidence-Based Approach to Preventing Radicalisation and Supporting the De-Radicalisation of Young Men (Pages 111 - 112)

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

John Walsh
Chief Executive

This page is intentionally left blank

Council

Held in the Council Chamber, City Hall
on Wednesday, 1st July, 2026 at 6.00 p.m., pursuant to notice.

Members present: The Lord Mayor, Councillor R.M. Donnelly (Chairperson); The Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Abernethy); The High Sheriff (Alderman McCoubrey); Aldermen Copeland, Lawlor, McCullough and Rodgers; and Councillors Anglin, Beattie, Bell, Black, Bower, Bradley, Brennan, R. Brooks, T. Brooks, Bunting, Canavan, Carson, Cobain, Collins, de Faoite, P. Doherty, M. Donnelly, P. Donnelly, Doran, D. Douglas, S. Douglas, Duffy, Ferguson, Flynn, Garrett, Groogan, Kelly, Long, Lyons, Magee, Maghie, McAteer, McCabe, McCallin, McCann, McCormick, McDonough-Brown, McDowell, McKay, McKeown, I. McLaughlin, R. McLaughlin, Meenehan, Murphy, Murray, Nelson, Ó Néill, Smyth, Verner, Walsh and Whyte.

Summons

The Chief Executive submitted the summons convening the meeting.

Apologies

Apologies were received on behalf of Councillor Hanvey and McCusker.

Declarations of Interest

Regarding the item 'PEACEPLUS Distillery Street Regeneration Project' under the minutes of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 19th June, Councillor Long declared an interest in that the report referenced the Department of Justice, in respect of which his wife was the Minister.

Councillor Duffy declared an interest under the heading 'Minutes of Shared City Partnership' within the minutes of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 19th June, in that his employer was one of the delivery partners for the schemes referred to therein.

Councillor Groogan declared interests under the minutes of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 19th June under the headings 'Belfast Stories – Belfast Film Festival', 'Local Community Ownership Fund' and 'Minutes of Shared City Partnership'. In addition, she declared an interest under the heading, 'Vacant to Vibrant Scheme' within the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 18th June. All of the foregoing interests related to her employer who was associated with, or had applied for funding, under schemes associated with the items.

Councillors Verner and McCabe declared interests under the heading 'Minutes of Shared City Partnership' within the minutes of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 19th June in that their employers were delivery partners in schemes referred to therein.

Councillors de Faoite and McCabe declared interests under the minutes of the Licensing Committee of 17th June in that they were associated with applications for the grants of 14-day occasional licences. Councillor de Faoite in that he had lobbied on behalf of an applicant during the planning process; and Councillor McCabe in that her employer had applied for one of the licences.

In respect of the items 'Proposal for RAPID Drugs' Disposal Bin - Ormeau Park' and 'Update on The Tobacco and Vapes Act 2026', under the minutes of the People and Communities Committee of 23rd June, Councillor McKeown declared interests in that his employer was associated with the initiatives. In addition, he declared an interest under the heading 'Pilot Drug and Pill Testing at Events' within the minutes of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 19th June in that his employer was associated with the item also.

Councillor R. McLaughlin declared an interest within the minutes of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 18th June under the heading 'Belfast City and Region Place Partnership' in that he was a member of the Harbour Commissioners, which was referenced within the report, specifically the MIPIM real estate and investment event.

None of the above-mentioned items, with the exception of the item 'Belfast City and Region Place Partnership' specifically the Council's participation at MIPIM, became subject to debate. Accordingly, Councillor R. McLaughlin left the meeting for the duration of that item.

Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Council

Moved by the Lord Mayor,
Seconded by the Deputy Lord Mayor and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Council of 1st June, be taken as read and signed as correct.

Official Announcements

Civil Unrest in Belfast

The Lord Mayor referred to the violence which had taken place in parts of the city in the aftermath of a stabbing incident which had occurred in Kinnaird Avenue on Tuesday, 9th June. She expressed sympathy for the victim of the attack and to all of those who had been targeted by racist violence and intimidation over the following days. She stated that everybody, regardless of race, faith, background or nationality, had the right to live in safety within their communities. The Council, she added, should stand united in support of all of the victims of the violence. She concluded by thanking those individuals, organisations and statutory bodies which had provided help and support throughout the period of unrest. A number of Members spoke in support of the sentiments expressed and condemned the threats which had been made to the Lord Mayor.

Miscellaneous Announcements

The Lord Mayor referred to the forthcoming retirements of staff members Briege Madden and Sean Conlon and thanked them both for their long-standing service to the Council and wished them well in the future. It was agreed that letters of thanks be sent by the Lord Mayor to the two staff members.

Councillor McAteer congratulated East Belfast Sure Start on being shortlisted for an Advancing Healthcare Award for their ‘Connect with Me’ booklet, which had been written in conjunction with speech and language therapists from the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust.

Councillor M. Donnelly congratulated the Gort na Móna CLG Under-15 girls' football team which had won the All-Ireland Féile Peile na nÓg Championship on 27th June. He paid tribute to their players, coaching staff and volunteers and thanked the Lord Mayor for hosting an event in the parlour to mark their achievement.

Councillor Maghie congratulated Belfast Healthy Cities on the redesignation of Belfast as a World Health Organisation Healthy City. That achievement, she pointed out, was an excellent example of partnership working across Belfast which recognised also the city’s determination to address health inequalities and its causes.

Councillor Long wished everybody a happy Canada Day and thanked the Deputy Lord Mayor for attending an event to mark the occasion earlier that day.

Councillor de Faoite congratulated two young representatives of the L’Arche organisation who had represented Belfast at a United Nations event in New York, which was one of the largest inter-governmental conferences ever held to address disability rights, participation and dignity. He suggested that the Lord Mayor might consider a visit to the centre at a future date.

Councillor Carson congratulated the Under-14 hurlers of Pádraig Sáirseil CLG on their winning of the Antrim and Ulster Feile na nGael Region 2 championship. The Lord Mayor undertook to write the club’s chairperson to convey congratulations on behalf of the Council.

Changes of Positions on Committees

The Chief Executive reported that notification had been received from the DUP indicating that it wished to replace Councillor Ferguson with Councillor S. Douglas on the Climate and City Resilience Committee. In addition, it was reported that notification had been received from the Alliance Party indicating that it wished to replace the Deputy Lord Mayor, Councillor Abernethy, with Councillor Bell on the Licensing Committee.

The Council noted the changes.

Deputation

The Chief Executive reported that a request to address the Council had been received from representatives of several youth organisations regarding the minute within the People and Communities Committee of 23rd June under the heading ‘Support for Youth Work Charter’.

The Council acceded to the request and the Lord Mayor welcomed Mr S. McMullan, Ms. O. Floyd and Ms. T. O’Reilly to the meeting. The Council was advised that the Youth Work Charter, which had been launched by the Youth Work Alliance, was an advocacy framework to protect, fund and unify the voluntary youth sector. The Charter set out eight core demands, primarily calling for the Minister of Education to secure a ring-fenced funding to guarantee universal open access and adequately resource proactive violence prevention.

The Charter, it was pointed out, demanded also parity of esteem with the formal education sector, the protection of frontline youth work staff delivering high-risk interventions, together with a genuine and needs-led partnership between the statutory and voluntary sectors. The Charter, it was added, was urging full government compliance with the Children's Services Co-operation Act (NI) 2015 to deliver joint, enhanced strategies that tackle the root causes of violence, whilst protecting the diverse 'one youth service' ecosystem that encompasses uniformed, Irish-medium, faith-based, and community provision.

The Lord Mayor, on behalf of the Council, thanked the deputation for attending and for the information which had been provided.

Minutes of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Moved by Councillor I. McLaughlin,
Seconded by Councillor J. Maghie,

That the minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 19th June, 2026, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

Amendments

Belfast Stories

Moved by Councillor Smyth,
Seconded by Councillor de Faoite,

That the Committee’s decision of 19th June under the above-mentioned heading be amended to reflect that the Council would examine further the potential of entering into agreements with a number of creative sector organisations in respect of the operating model for the site.

On a vote, six voted in favour of the amendment and fifty against and it was declared lost.

Belfast Stories

Moved by Councillor Maghie,
Seconded by Councillor Murray,

That the decision of the Committee of 19th June under the above-mentioned heading be rejected and, accordingly, the Council agrees to proceed with the proposed user for the studio and event space at the site.

On a vote, thirty Members voted in favour of the amendment and twenty-four against, with two 'no votes' recorded, and it was declared carried.

Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann

Moved by Councillor Murphy,
Seconded by Councillor Smyth and

Resolved – That the Council agrees that the decision of the Committee of 19th June, under the above-mentioned heading, be amended to reflect that a delegation of traders from Smithfield Market be invited to a future meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee to discuss a range of issues relating to the site; and a cleaning and enhancement operation be undertaken thereat. The Council noted also that the Chief Executive would revert to Members in respect of the proposed usage of the car park during Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann.

Minutes of the Shared City Partnership

Moved by Councillor Duffy,
Seconded by Councillor Carson and

Resolved – That the Council agrees that the decision of the Committee of 19th June, under the above-mentioned heading, be amended to reflect, should any additional Good Relations funding be made available by The Executive Office to address the causes of the recent disorder, that delegated authority be granted to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to distribute such funding.

Installations Working Group

At the request of Councillor Lyons, the Council agreed that the decision of the Committee of 19th June, under the above-mentioned heading, be amended to reflect that, within the third bullet point, the words 'stained glass window' be replaced by 'plaque'; and the words 'in due course' be replaced by 'in September' in relation to the proposed Fire Service memorial in the City Hall.

Adoption of Minutes

Subject to the foregoing amendments, the minutes of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 19th June, 2026, omitting matters in respect of which the Council had delegated its powers to the Committee, were approved and adopted.

Minutes of the People and Communities Committee

Moved by Councillor Maghie,
Seconded by Councillor M. Donnelly,

That the minutes of the proceedings of the People and Communities Committee of 23rd June, 2026 be approved and adopted, subject to an amendment under the heading 'Partnership Agreements 2026/27' to note that the organisation listed as 'Outdoor Recreation NI' had been renamed 'Outscape'.

Amendments

Dual Language Street Signs - Long Streets

Moved by Councillor Ó Néill,
Seconded by Councillor M. Donnelly,

That the decision of the Committee of 23rd June under the above-mentioned heading be rejected and, accordingly, the Council agrees that dual language street signs be erected along the length of both Donegall Park Avenue and the Oldpark Road.

On a vote, thirty-one Members voted for the amendment and twenty-five against and it was declared carried.

Dual Language Street Signs - Pilot Street

Moved by Councillor Ó Néill,
Seconded by Councillor M. Donnelly,

That the decision of the Committee of 23rd June under the above-mentioned heading be rejected and, accordingly, the Council agrees that residual discretion be exercised and the applications for dual language street signs at be approved.

On a vote, twenty-eight Members voted in favour of the amendment and twenty-nine against and it was declared lost.

Dual Language Street Signs - Caffrey Avenue and Glenwood View

Moved by Councillor Ó Néill,
Seconded by Councillor M. Donnelly,

> That the Council agrees that the decision of the Committee of 23rd June under the above-mentioned heading be rejected and, accordingly, residual discretion be exercised and the applications for dual language street signs at Caffrey Avenue and Glenwood View be approved.

On a vote, thirty-one Members voted in favour of the amendment and twenty-six against and it was declared carried.

Northern Ireland Housing Executive -
Tenancy Succession Policy

At the request of Councillor Collins, the Chief Executive indicated that a report in relation to a Notice of Motion regarding 'Action to Address Empty Homes', which had been adopted by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 21st March, 2025, would be submitted to that Committee in due course.

Adoption of Minutes

Subject to the foregoing amendments, the minutes of the People and Communities Committee of 23rd June, 2026, were approved and adopted.

Minutes of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Moved by Councillor Duffy,
Seconded by Councillor Murphy,

> That the minutes of the proceedings of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 10th and 18th June, 2026, be approved and adopted.

Amendment

Belfast City and Region Place Partnership

Moved by Councillor Groogan,
Seconded by Councillor Smyth,

> That the decision of the Committee of 18th June under the above-mentioned heading, specifically that portion relating to the Council's proposed attendance at MIPIM 2027, be rejected and, accordingly, the Council agrees not to be represented at the event.

On a vote, five Members voted in favour of the amendment and twenty-three against, with eighteen 'no votes' recorded, and it was declared lost.

Accordingly, the minutes of the Committee of 18th June as presented were approved and adopted.

Minutes of the Licensing Committee

Moved by Councillor T. Brooks,
Seconded by Councillor McCann,

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Licensing Committee of 17th June, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

Minutes of the Planning Committee

Moved by Councillor Murphy,
Seconded by Councillor Carson and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Planning Committee of 16th June 2026, be approved and adopted.

Minutes of the Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee

Moved by Councillor McAteer,
Seconded by Councillor Duffy and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee of 15th June, 2026, be approved and adopted.

Lord Mayor
Chairperson

Council

SPECIAL MEETING OF BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

Held in the City Hall on Wednesday, 1st July, 2026
at the hour of 10.45 o'clock a.m., pursuant to Notice.

Members present: The Lord Mayor, Councillor R.M. Donnelly (Chairperson);
The Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Abernethy);
The High Sheriff (Alderman McCoubrey);
Aldermen Copeland, Lawlor, McCullough and Rodgers; and
Councillors Bower, Bradley, Brennan, R. Brooks, T. Brooks, Carson, Cobain, Doran, D. Douglas, S. Douglas, Duffy, Ferguson, Garrett, Groogan, Kelly, Long, Lyons, Maghie, McAteer, McCabe, McCallin, McCann, McDowell, McKay, I. McLaughlin, R. McLaughlin, Murphy, Ó Néill and Verner.

Summons

The Chief Executive submitted the summons convening the meeting.

Apologies

Apologies were reported on behalf of Councillors Flynn, Murray, McCormick and Smyth.

Battle of the Somme Anniversary

Moved by the Lord Mayor (Councillor R.M. Donnelly),
Seconded by the Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Abernethy) and

Resolved – That we, the Lord Mayor and Citizens of the City of Belfast, on the 110th Anniversary of the Battle of the Somme, desire again to record our feelings of gratitude to the brave men of the 36th (Ulster) Division, the 16th (Irish) Division and other forces who, by their glorious conduct in that battle, made an imperishable name for themselves and their people and whose heroism will never be forgotten.

The Council stood in silence for one minute as a mark of respect to all of those who had lost their lives in the Battle of the Somme.

Lord Mayor
Chairperson

This page is intentionally left blank

Council

SPECIAL MEETING OF BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

Held Remotely, via Microsoft Teams on
Friday, 10th July, 2026 at 12.00 p.m., pursuant to notice.

Members present:	The Lord Mayor, Councillor R.M. Donnelly (Chairperson); Aldermen Copeland, Lawlor, McCullough and Rodgers; and Councillors Anglin, Beattie, Black, Bradley, Brennan, R. Brooks, Bunting, Canavan, Carson, Cobain, Collins, de Faoite, M. Donnelly, P. Donnelly, Doran, D. Douglas, S. Douglas, Duffy, Ferguson, Flynn, Garrett, Groogan, Kelly, Long, Lyons, Magee, Maghie, McAteer, McCabe, McCallin, McCann, McCormick, McDonough-Brown, McDowell, McKay, McKeown, I. McLaughlin, R. McLaughlin, Meenehan, Murphy, Murray, Nelson, Ó Néill, Smyth, Verner and Walsh.

Summons

The Deputy Chief Executive submitted the summons convening the meeting.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported on behalf of the Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Abernethy) and Councillors Bell, Bower, T. Brooks and Whyte.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Motion on Bilingual Interpretive Panels at the Assembly Rooms

In accordance with notice on the agenda, it was

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

"This Council agrees to grant officers delegated authority to progress, approve and erect bilingual interpretive panels at the Assembly Rooms.

The purpose of these panels will be to promote the history, heritage and cultural significance of the Assembly Rooms in both Irish and English and to ensure that this important civic and historic space is better presented and accessible to residents and visitors.

The Council further agrees that officers should seek to have these bilingual panels designed, produced and installed in advance of Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann, so that they are available as part of the wider visitor experience during the festival."

Amendment

Moved by Councillor Bunting,
Seconded by Councillor Kelly,

That the motion standing in the name of Councillor Murphy and seconded by Councillor R. McLaughlin be amended as follows:

Replace all ‘bilingual’ with ‘trilingual’ and, in the second paragraph after ‘Assembly Rooms’, **replace** ‘in both Irish and English’ with ‘to both the main communities of Belfast in English, Ulster Scots and Irish’.

The motion, as amended, therefore read:

"This Council agrees to grant officers delegated authority to progress, approve and erect trilingual interpretive panels at the Assembly Rooms.

The purpose of these panels will be to promote the history, heritage and cultural significance of the Assembly Rooms to both the main communities of Belfast in English, Ulster Scots and Irish and to ensure that this important civic and historic space is better presented and accessible to residents and visitors.

The Council further agrees that officers should seek to have these trilingual panels designed, produced and installed in advance of Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann, so that they are available as part of the wider visitor experience during the festival."

The amendment was put to the Council and on a vote, twenty-seven Members voted for the amendment and twenty-two against and it was declared carried.

The amendment was thereupon put to the Council as the substantive motion and on a vote, twenty-eight Members voted for the motion and twenty-two against and it was declared passed.

Lord Mayor
Chairperson

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 21st August, 2026

HYBRID MEETING OF THE
STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Carson (Deputy Chairperson);
Councillors Beattie, Black, Brennan,
Bunting, Doran, de Faoite, Long, Lyons,
Maghie, R. McLaughlin, Murphy, Nelson,
Ó Néill, Smyth and Verner.

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;
Mr. T. Wallace, Director of Finance;
Mr. S. Leonard, Director of Resources, Fleet, Transport and Open Spaces and Street Scene;
Ms. C. Sheridan, Director of Human Resources;
Mrs. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and Development;
Mr. K. Heaney, Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty;
Mr. D. Logan, Senior Programme Delivery Manager
Mr. J. Hanna, Democratic Services and Governance Manager; and
Ms. E. McGoldrick, Democratic Services and Governance Coordinator.

Apologies

Apologies were reported on behalf of the Chairperson, Councillor I. McLaughlin and Councillors Cobain and Garrett.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 19th June, 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, subject to the following amendments:

- *Belfast Stories* - That the decision of the Committee of 19th June under the above-mentioned heading be rejected and, accordingly, the Council agreed to proceed with the proposed user for the studio and event space at the site.

- *Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann* - That the Council agreed that the decision of the Committee of 19th June, under the above-mentioned heading, be amended to reflect that a delegation of traders from Smithfield Market be invited to a future meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee to discuss a range of issues relating to the site; and a cleaning and enhancement operation be undertaken thereat. The Council notes also that the Chief Executive would revert to Members in respect of the proposed usage of the car park during Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann.

- *Minutes of the Shared City Partnership* - The Council agreed that the decision of the Committee of 19th June, under the above-mentioned heading, be amended to reflect, should any additional Good Relations funding be made available by The Executive Office to address the causes of the recent disorder, that delegated authority be granted to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to distribute such funding.

- *Installations Working Group* - The Council agreed that the decision of the Committee of 19th June, under the above-mentioned heading, be amended to reflect that, within the third bullet point, the words ‘stained glass window’ be replaced by ‘plaque’; and the words ‘in due course’ be replaced by ‘in September’ in relation to the proposed Fire Service memorial in the City Hall.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Nelson declared an interest in item 3.m) Belfast Hills Partnership - Request for increase to annual funding, in that he was on the Board of the partnership and he left the meeting whilst the item was under consideration. He also declared an interest in item 4.c) Correspondence received – Department of Justice – Tackling Anti-Social Scrambler and E-Scooter Use in Belfast Response, in that his partner was named in the correspondence.

In relation to Item 5.b) Independently Managed Community Centres (IMCC's), Councillor Black declared an interest in that she was employed by Grosvenor Recreation Centre and she left the meeting whilst the item was under consideration.

Councillor de Faoite declared an interest under item 5. (d) Planning Information, in that he was on the Board of Governors of Forge Integrated Primary School. As the item did not become the subject of debate, he was not required to leave the meeting.

Councillor Verner declared and interest in items 3.a) Area-based Community Planning and Community Wealth Building and 8.a) Minutes of Shared City Partnership Meeting of 12th August, 2026, in that she was associated with an organisation which was noted in the reports and left the meeting whilst the items were under consideration

In relation to items 3.b) EVAWG: Local and Regional Change Fund 2026/2027 and 3.g) TEO Rapid Response Funding, Councillor R. McLaughlin declared an interest in that his partner was a Junior Minister, and he left the meeting whilst the items were under consideration.

Regarding item 3.a) Area-based Community Planning and Community Wealth Building, Councillor Brennan declared and interest in that she was a Council appointee on the board of the Forward South Partnership but she was not required to leave the meeting.

Councillor Long declared an interest in item 4.c) Correspondence received – Department of Justice – Tackling Anti-Social Scrambler and E-Scooter Use in Belfast Response, Councillor Long declared an interest, in that his wife was the Justice Minister and he left the meeting whilst the item was under consideration.

Presentation

**Ulster University Job Cuts –
Vice Chancellor (Prof. Bartholomew)**

The Chairperson welcomed to the meeting the Vice Chancellor of Ulster University, Prof. P. Bartholomew.

Prof. Bartholomew provided members with a detailed overview of the circumstances and challenges that had emerged over the previous 18 months, culminating in Ulster University's decision to introduce a voluntary Staff Reduction Scheme across all campuses. He outlined the financial and operational pressures facing the University, including sector-wide challenges affecting higher education institutions.

He explained that the Staff Reduction Scheme formed part of a broader programme of measures designed to ensure the University's long-term financial sustainability while minimising the need for compulsory redundancies.

Prof. Bartholomew also provided an overview of the current higher education funding model and the challenges associated with it. He highlighted increasing costs, constraints on public funding, and the growing gap between institutional income and expenditure. He noted that these pressures had created an increasingly difficult financial environment for universities and suggested that significant change would be required to ensure the sector remained viable and competitive in the future.

In concluding, he emphasised that the existing funding model was no longer sustainable in its current form and that universities would need to adapt to a changing financial landscape.

The Chairperson thanked the Vice Chancellor for his presentation.

Noted.

Restricted Items

The information contained in the reports associated with the following fourteen 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 fourteen items as, due to the nature of the items, there would be a disclosure of exempt information as described in Section 42(4) and Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

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

Area-based Community Planning and Community Wealth Building

The Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty provided an update on the proposed next steps in relation to the development of area-based community plans alongside enabling communities to bring forward proposals to transform local places through demonstrator projects.

The Committee:

I. Noted the contents of the report, which included a summary of the area-based community planning fund submissions so far;

II. Agreed to proceed to the next stage of the process to allocate the funding to take forward the proposals submitted for North, West, East and Greater Shankill;

III. Noted that a further report would be brought back to Committee in September 2026 outlining proposals for South Belfast;

IV. Noted that a further report would be brought back outlining proposals on how the £100k DfC funding might be used; and

V. Noted that progress updates on the area-based community planning process would be submitted for the consideration of the Committee.

EVAWG: Local and Regional Change Fund 2026/2027

(Ms. S. Gowling, Safer City Coordinator, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee considered a report which outlined the recent correspondence from The Executive Office (TEO) in terms of the role of the Council in supporting the implementation of the Strategic Framework to End Violence Against Women and Girls, and associated delivery plan for the next 2 years, 2026 – 2028.

The Committee was reminded that, in January, the it had agreed to accept the planned extension to the 2025/2026 Letter of Offer for the Regional Change Fund to mitigate against any risks to business continuity of programme delivery, noting that that extension was for a period of three months to ensure business continuity and provide security for staff currently in place. A further extension was received to September 2026.

The Safer City Coordinator also advised that, since the report had been published, the TEO had agreed to allow groups to also apply for Tier 2 and Tier 3 grants.

During discussion, a range of suggestions were put forward by the Committee, in particular, the need for online engagement and the Director of Resources, Fleet, Transport and Open Spaces and Street Scene confirmed that the final Action Plan would reflect the Committee's discussion.

After discussion, the Committee:

i. Noted the related council resource requirements to ensure successful delivery of the programme and the opportunity to compliment Council's Corporate Plan 2025 – 2028;

ii. Accepted the TEO's letter of offer for 2026/2027 and agreed that, as part of the Local Change Fund (LCF), the Council would deliver EVAWG Grants to equip Belfast's community voluntary sector to prevent violence against women and girls;

iii. Noted that TEO had confirmed it was content to raise the Tier 1 grant maximum award to £10,000 and had agreed to allow groups to also apply for Tier 2 and Tier 3 grants; and the total amount available for grants was £229,500;

iv. Therefore, agreed that Belfast City Council offers EVAWG Local Change Fund Grants with the same value for Tier 2 and Tier 3, but increases the value of Tier 1 up to £10,000; with the last day for delivery Wednesday 31st March 2027;

v. Agreed the recipients of 2026/2027 Tier 1 EVAWG Local Change Fund Grant awards would be approved under delegated authority by the Operational Director of Neighbourhood Services;

vi. Agreed to maintain the minimum score of 60% to ensure a good standard of projects within a complex topic and often with vulnerable people;

vii. Would consider Councillors' desire to support more project activity with men and boys and agreed that guidance for the grant scheme would emphasise that projects of this nature would be particularly welcome;

viii. Accepted the TEO's letter of offer for 2026/2027 and agreed that, as part of the Local Change Fund, the Council continues to lead the EVAWG Momentum Programme delivering a strategic approach to prevent violence against women and girls;

ix. Noted that the EVAWG Momentum Programme 2026/2027 offer included work under the following headings:

<u>*Communications*</u>

- Amplify what Belfast was doing to End Violence Against Women and Girls.
- Continue to communicate the key messages and campaigns of the EVAWG strategy.
- Showcase and maximise the impact of the change fund activity to inform shared learning and good practice events.

- Improve and maintain the End Violence page and social media production and promotion

Work with men and boys
- Continue to engage with appropriate networks working with men and boys. Enhance how men and boys observe and understand VAWG and build their capacity to end it.
- Empower community leaders working with men and boys by providing tailored resources, enhancing their knowledge, skills and confidence to EVAWG.

Area work
- Engage new people and support community understanding of VAWG so that they consider how they can play an active role in preventing it.
- Area work will widen engagement with new people, identify and address area specific needs and empower groups of all sizes, whether funded by Change Fund or not.
- Collaborative neighbourhood activities to EVAWG, codesigned with community partners.

Training
- Appropriate EVAWG training for a range of participants including the public, third sector volunteers, community leaders, BCC elected members and officers

Thematic delivery
- Showcasing and shared learning events with a particular focus on arts and culture, safe spaces and sports.

Networking and funding advice
- Networking, information and funding advice to support potential EVAWG grant applicants.

x. Noted that officers would complete and submit the final Action Plan to reflect committee discussions;

xi. Accepted the TEO's letter of offer to continue to lead the EVAWG Regional Change Fund with the roll out of current contracts, offering funding to March 2027; and

xii. Noted that the total Regional Change Fund delivery budget for 2026/2027 was £1,483,154, however, there was the potential for this to increase should further need for investment be identified and additional budget secured.

Northern Ireland Local Growth Fund

The Director of City Regeneration and Development presented a report to update the Committee on the Northern Ireland Local Growth Fund (LGF), including potential for in year allocation for the Council's projects and future direction of travel for 2027/28 and 2028/29.

The Committee:

I. Noted the update on the Local Growth Fund 2026/27 in year allocation, including the potential allocations to Belfast City Council Projects;

II. Noted the update on the "Pride in Place Impact Fund" (formerly referred to as the Belfast Trailblazer) as referenced in the June 2025 budget statement, including correspondence issued by the Chief Executive to the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) and Cabinet Office which sought clarification on the £2m annual allocation for Belfast. The Committee noted that the Chief Executive would seek further clarification on the matter from the NIO and also request confirmation from the Department of Finance on the issue;

III. Noted that further detailed reports would be brought back to the Committee and the City Growth and Regeneration Committee, as appropriate, in relation to further developments and funding updates associated with the Local Growth Fund;

IV. Noted that a further detailed paper would be brought to the September meeting of the Committee outlining the wider emerging external funding landscape and opportunities across various funding streams; and

V. Agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting regarding potential emerging projects for Members consideration in the context of future funding opportunities across various funding streams.

Update on Employees on Temporary Contracts and Agency Workers

The Committee noted the quarterly update on the number of employees occupying temporary posts, employees on secondment arrangements, agency assignees engaged by the Council and recent recruitment activity.

Organisational Reviews and Change Programme

The Committee noted the progress on the work programme for the Organisational Reviews and Change Portfolio and timescales going forward.

TEO Rapid Response Funding

(Mr. G. McCartney, Good Relations Manager, attended in connection with this item.)

The Good Relations Manager advised that, following the recent disorder in Belfast, the Executive Committee sought proposals from Council under a "Rapid Response Fund", which was intended to ensure Belfast City as a whole was in a state of preparedness if this ever happened again whilst providing support in the current environment following the racist disorder.

The Committee agreed to the proposed programme outlined in the report and noted that the Committee's suggestions regarding the support programme, integration into sport and use of amenities would be investigated.

<u>2026-27 Quarter 1 Finance Report</u>

The Committee noted the Quarter 1 financial position and year end forecast (Appendix1) and the Quarter 1 Treasury Management report (Appendix 2).

The Committee also noted that a Workshop had been scheduled for 2nd October and Members feedback on the venue and time would be considered.

<u>An Droichead – Stabilisation Support</u>

The Director of Finance provided an update on the due diligence which had been undertaken in relation to the An Droichead stabilisation grant request and sought agreement on a timeline for the release of funding for stabilisation support.

The Committee:

1. noted that the organisation remained financially high risk, but that the recovery plan provided a plausible route to short-term stabilisation and medium-term breakeven if external support, strict delivery discipline and strengthened governance were all secured;

2. noted that any proposal for Council financial assistance should only be considered on a restricted, time-limited and conditional basis, with phased drawdown and enhanced monitoring arrangements; and

3. agreed to the release of £50k financial support, and additional payments of £25k would then be made at the end of Quarter 2 and Quarter 3, (total support of £100k), subject to further due diligence including monthly financial reporting, milestone-based monitoring, restrictions on use of funds, and a requirement to demonstrate continuing progress toward breakeven and stronger reserves.

<u>Outcome of Structural Review – Northern Ireland Houses of Multiple Occupancy (NIHMO) Service, City and Neighbourhood Services Department</u>

The Committee was apprised of the Continuous Improvement (CI) findings of a structural review carried out within the Northern Ireland Houses of Multiple Occupancy (NIHMO) Service, within City and Neighbourhood Services Department.

The Committee noted the contents of the report and approved the revised staffing structure.

Waste Specialist

The Director of Resources, Fleet, Transport and Open Spaces and Street Scene provided an update on the work of the Waste Specialist working on behalf of the eleven Councils through the Operational Partnership Agreement (OPA).

The Committee noted the work of the Waste Specialist to date and the intention to extend the contract of employment for a further two years to assist the Council in the implementation of a number of key waste policies.

5-year Service Level Agreement for the management of 11 chargers across 5 Council depots, installed via the Depot Charging Scheme

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting in October 2025, it had approved the submission of an application to the Depot Charging Scheme.

The Committee considered an update on the Scheme and the subsequent Service Level Agreement with a charge point operator.

The Committee:

- Agreed that the Council enter into a 5-year Service Level Agreement with the charge point operator, Weev, for the management of the 11 phase one chargers across 5 Council depots; and

- Noted the Depot Charging Scheme phase one and phase two updates.

Belfast Hills Partnership – Request For Increase to annual funding

It was reported that a request had been received for an increase in the funding support provided to Belfast Hills Partnership on an annual basis which was referred by the People and Communities Committee at its meeting of 23rd June, 2026.

The Committee approved the request for additional funding from the Belfast Hills Partnership for a 30 per cent increase in funding from Belfast City Council from £36,900 to £47,970: an increase of £11,070.

Website Upgrade

(Mr. P. Gribben, Head of Digital Services, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee considered an update in relation to the website upgrade of the Council’s website estate for security reasons.

The Committee noted:

- the ‘go live’ date of 22nd September, 2026;

- the blackout dates 7th September to 21st September, 2026; and

- that this was a Phase 1 update (to ensure website security).

Strategic Acquisition

The Director of City Regeneration and Development presented a report which sought approval to the targeted acquisition of property in the city centre.

The Committee:

I. Agreed that a conditional offer be made to acquire a city centre property as outlined in the report, subject to:

- completion of all necessary legal and due diligence requirements and on terms to be agreed by the City Solicitor and the Director City Regeneration and Development.
- external funding as noted in the report.

II. Noted that it created an enhanced opportunity to address vacancy and bring forward a comprehensive regeneration scheme and provide an investment return to the Council; and

III. Noted that further reports would be brought back to the Council in relation to the short- and longer-term proposals for the property.

Matters referred back from Council/Motions

Correspondence received - Removal of Ring-fenced Protection for Youth Service Funding - Department of Education

The Committee noted the correspondence which had been received from the Department of Education in relation to the removal of ring-fenced protection for youth service funding within the Education Authority (Appendix 1).

Correspondence received - Pre Accession Assistance – EU

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 22nd May, 2026, it had agreed to write to the EU Commission and the British and Irish Governments to request that Northern Ireland be granted access to the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) for the ability to draw down on the available funding.

Subsequently, Democratic Services wrote to the European Commission on the issue which had been raised, and the following response had been received via email for consideration:

"…Thank you for contacting the Europe Direct Contact Centre.

The Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) supports countries that are formally recognised as EU candidate or potential

candidate countries in preparing for EU membership. It is not intended for regions within Member States or third countries outside the enlargement framework. Northern Ireland, as part of the United Kingdom, is therefore not eligible for IPA funding.

For more information, please refer to the following page: https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/funding-technical-assistance/overview-instrument-pre-accession-assistance_en..."

It was reported that an additional update would be provided to the Committee once further responses had been received.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor de Faoite,
Seconded by Councillor Lyons and

Resolved – That the Committee agrees that the Council should continue to work in partnership with the British and Irish Governments to advocate for Northern Ireland's access to the funding, or to a future dedicated funding programme.

After discussion, the Committee noted the correspondence as set out in the report and agreed that the Council should continue to work in partnership with the British and Irish Governments to advocate for Northern Ireland's access to the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) funding, or to a future dedicated funding programme.

Motion Correspondence received – Tackling Anti-Social Scrambler and E-Scooter Use in Belfast - Department of Justice

The Committee noted the response which had been received from the Department of Justice (Appendix 1) in relation to the Motion which had expressed concern at the growing impact of antisocial scrambler and e-scooter use across the City.

Motion Correspondence received - Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder- Department of Health and Public Health Agency

The Committee noted the correspondence from the Department of Health (Appendix 1) and Public Health Agency (Appendix 2) as set out in the report.

Belfast Agenda/Strategic Issues

Belfast Region City Deal - Annual Report

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 This report is to provide an update to Committee on the progress of the Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) and seek approval for the

BRCD Annual Report 2025/26 and for Belfast City Council to commence work on the AI Adoption Programme on behalf of BRCD.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- **Approve the BRCD Annual Report for 2025/26**
- **Approve the commencement of work on a £4.6 million AI Adoption programme on behalf of Belfast Region City Deal partners (subject to DfE business case approval).**

3.0 Main report

Annual Report 2025/26

3.1 The agreed reporting arrangements for all City and Growth Deals requires both the production of an Annual Report and a meeting with the Northern Ireland Delivery Board in order to discuss deal progress as part of an 'Annual Conversation' which is scheduled for 25th August 2026.

3.2 A high level, outward focused Annual Report has now been produced for 2025/26 to outline the progress made at programme level. A number of notable achievements are included in this reporting year.

To date at Programme level:

- **22 projects with Outline Business Cases and 5 with Full Business Cases approved.**
- **More than £674m investment committed to the BRCD in signed Contracts for Funding.**
- **More than £86m paid out to partners for the projects.**
- **22 contracts - with an estimated value of £158m - initiated across the Programme. Together these contracts have committed more than 15,000 in social value points.**
- **Two projects now have their Operators appointed, 3 are at Fit Out stage, 3 more at construction stage and 12 are at design stage.**
- **Further information on emerging benefits and real world impacts can be found in section 3 of the report.**

During the year at project level:

- **Construction was completed at AMIC's Factory of the Future in Newtownabbey.**

- **The first productions were filmed and broadcast.at Studio Ulster.**
- **Construction continued at iREACH Health and Momentum One Zero and planning permission was granted for CDHT.**
- **An operator was appointed for I4C Innovation and Cleantech centre.**
- **The UK Digital Twin Centre completed its first Industry Accelerator.**
- **A funding agreement was signed for the £4.4m Regional Contracts for Innovation and a £2m BRCD Innovation Centre Collaborative Grants Programme was approved. In addition an OBC was approved for the Enabling Infrastructure Fund.**
- **DFI approved the OBC for BRT2 and procurement for a contractor for the Lagan Pedestrian and Cycle Bridge is underway. Newry Southern Relief Road awaits a decision on the need for a public enquiry before it can be further progressed.**
- **Belfast Stories OBC was approved and progress is continuing on Bangor Waterfront, and Destination Royal Hillsborough.**
- **Construction for the theatre and conference element of Newry Regeneration was scheduled to commence in June and engagement continues at Carrickfergus Regeneration.**
- **An additional cross deals skills assessment was completed for the Life and Health Sciences sector – bringing the total completed to 5 – and engagement is underway to strengthen the contribution projects make to inclusive growth particularly through skills.**

3.3 The Annual Report, which was approved by the BRCD Executive Board in June, is attached at Appendix 1 for Members' consideration. The individual BRCD partners will also be seeking approval for the Annual Report through their own governance structures. The report will be formally published after all approvals have been secured.

3.4 The report will then be shared with the Department of Finance and used to inform the Annual Conversation.

3.5 Moving into Year 5 (2026/27) we will see significant progress across the programme with:

- **Construction due to commence on CDHT and Newry Regeneration Theatre and Conference Centre and continuing for iREACH Health and Momentum One Zero.**
- **Design Teams will be appointed for Bangor Waterfront Urban Waterfront and Public Realm and Marina.**

- **Belfast Stories Contract for Funding will be signed, the planning application submitted and a Contractor appointed.**
- **Carrickfergus Regeneration planning applications will be submitted and the Supply Team Contract packages will be issued to market.**
- **The BRCD Regional Contracts for Innovation programme and the BRCD Innovation Centres Collaborative Grants programme will be launched.**
- **Further business cases to support adoption of innovative projects utilising advanced wireless and AI technologies will be submitted and approved.**
- **The OBC Addendums for Destination Royal Hillsborough, i4c Innovation & Cleantech Centre and The Gobbins Phase II will be approved, enabling design development and submission of planning applications.**
- **Our final Skills Assessment on Tourism and Hospitality will be produced.**

Financial and Implementation Plan

3.6 The overarching deal document is supported by a Financial and Implementation Plan and the annual submission for 2025/26 sits alongside the Annual Report.

3.7 As the programme is now firmly in delivery phase this year's financial and implementation plan has again been combined into one document. The document includes the expenditure profile of all the projects broken down annually and the high level project milestones based on the Quarter 4 financial and performance returns. The PMO engaged closely with partners and following consideration by the Finance Directors' Group and the Executive Board it was formally submitted to the Department of Finance at the end of June as required by the governance and assurance arrangements.

3.8 During 2025/26 a further £46.2m was drawn down from both the Department for the Economy and the Department for Communities demonstrating the positive progress being made across the programme. Up to 31st March 2026, claims totalling £87m have been processed by Programme Management Office (£46m in FY25-26).

Belfast Region AI Adoption programme

3.9 Belfast City Council, on behalf of Belfast Region City Deal partners, has submitted a business case proposal to the Department for the Economy (DfE) to deliver a £4.6 million AI Adoption programme across the region.

3.10 The new programme will provide rounds of competitive grants of between approximately £20,000 to £100,000 to support organisations in the innovative adoption of AI in ways that contribute to increased productivity and improved service delivery. The programme will also offer expert guidance to organisations during the bid development phase and afterwards during the implementation of those projects that are awarded funding.

3.11 The AI Adoption programme will directly contribute to the growth ambitions of the Belfast Region City Deal Digital pillar and it also aligns well with a key recommendation of the recent NI Science Panel AI report to *'establish new programmes of support for established companies- integrating AI into their organisations and operations'*.

3.12 Subject to DfE approval of the business case, which is expected imminently, Members are asked to approve the commencement of work on the programme by Belfast City Council. The business case includes funding to Belfast City Council for staffing and programme costs. It also includes funding for the Council to commission technical third-party support, approval for which is included in this month's Contracts Report.

Financial and Resource Implications

3.13 All costs associated with the BRCD are within existing budgets. Belfast City Council's staffing and programme costs for the delivery of the Belfast Region AI Adoption programme will be funded by Belfast Region City Deal.

Equality or Good Relations Implications/
Rural Needs Assessment

3.14 The approach taken to develop the City Deal has been subject to independent equality screening and rural proofing and states that;

> ***'BRCD is inherently inclusive, affording an opportunity for the region to grow in a way that will benefit the economy of Northern Ireland as a whole, thereby enhancing the lives and well-being of its citizens. If during further development of the programme it becomes apparent that there may be an adverse impact on certain groups or communities then the partnership commits to carrying out further Section 75 work and including screening and EQIAs as and when appropriate.'***

During discussion, regarding the AI Adoption Programme, the Deputy Chief Executive answered a range of questions in relation to the environmental and economic impact of AI. She explained further the intended use of the Programme and scope of the competitive grants.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor Smyth,
Seconded by Councillor Lyons,

That the Committee agrees to defer consideration of the report so that further information could be provided in relation to the environment and economic impact, together with detailed analysis of the fund, the target sectors and how it aligned to the Council's Strategic Objectives and Belfast Agenda.

On a vote, three Members voted for the amendment and thirteen against and it was declared lost.

Accordingly, the Committee:

- Approved the BRCD Annual Report for 2025/26;
- Approved the commencement of work on a £4.6 million AI Adoption Programme on behalf of Belfast Region City Deal partners (subject to DfE business case approval);
- Noted that a further report would be submitted to a future committee regarding the AI Adoption Programme and the broader impact of AI.

Independently Managed Community Centres (IMCC's)

(Ms. M Higgins, Lead Officer – Community Provision,
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:

- **advise committee of correspondence received from Shaftesbury Community Recreation Centre on 23rd July 2026 and seek their view on the request for additional funding for 2026/27.**
- **Provide an update on actions agreed at SP&R committee in March 2026.**

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 That the Committee consider the request for additional funding contained in the correspondence and the update on recent and planned activity in relation to IMCCs.

3.0 Main Report

Key Issues

3.1 Members will recall Council has long standing arrangements in place to provide financial support to 7 Council community centres that are managed independently by the community sector.

3.2 In March 2026, following a written request from 4 IMCCs, SP&R agreed to double the annual award to these facilities so that they received an uplift of £74,000 each (totalling £296,000) for 2025/26 financial year.

3.3 In July this year, Council received a further request from these 4 facilities to pay the same uplift in the 2026/27 year. Members are asked to consider this and whether they wish to approve an additional payment. Detail of this request can be found in Appendix I.

3.4 The table below shows the individual allocations to IMCCs for 2026/27. To date 50% of these awards have been issued. An annual CPI increase of 2.8 % for 2026/27 will be included with the second payment which will be paid in October 2026. The 4 organisations requesting the increase are highlighted.

Independently Managed Centres	Amount	CPI Increase	Total 2026/27
Shaftesbury Recreation Centre	£74,056.80	£2,073.59	£76,130.39
Grosvenor Recreation Centre	£74,056.80	£2,073.59	£76,130.39
Denmark Street Community Centre	£25,680.28	£719,04.	£26,399.32
Carrick Hill Community Centre	£40,867.01	£1,144.27	£42,011.28
Sally Gardens	£74,056.80	£2,073.59	£76,130.39
Hanwood Trust	£74,056.80	£2,073.59	£76,130.39
Total	£362,774.49		£372,932.15

3.5 In March 2026, when considering the request for additional funding, SP&R agreed that a number of actions would be

completed by council officers. An update on these is provided below:

- **Agreed that a report would be brought back to the committee which would provide members with options on proceeding with standard Legal Agreements outlining Terms and Conditions for all IMCCs at a future meeting.**

3.6 Officers have been working on a cross departmental basis to gather this information for all IMCCs and are working with IMCCs to gather information that will inform a consistent approach in relation to legal agreements, funding levels and capture of activity and outcomes delivered by IMCCs.

3.7 At its meeting on 11th August People and Communities Committee agreed that an elected member workshop on Community Services would be held at 5.15pm on 26th October. An update on the outcome of the work above and options for a consistent approach to IMCC funding and legal agreements will form part of the agenda for this workshop. All elected members will be invited to attend.

- **Agreed that a condition survey would be undertaken across all Independently Managed Community Centres.**

3.8 This work is underway by Property and Projects Department and is due for completion in the Autumn.

Financial and Resource Implications

3.9 Annual awards to IMCC's including CPI increases are contained within approved budgets and factored into future budgeting/forecasting processes. There is no available departmental budget to pay the additional funding of £296,000 in the 26/27 financial year that has been requested.

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

3.10 This will be considered throughout and any appropriate issues highlighted to Members. Any amendments to existing arrangements will be considered in the context of any Equality/Good Relations and Rural Needs considerations.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor Brennan,
Seconded by Councillor O'Neill and

Resolved - That the Committee agrees, in principle, to the request for additional funding of £296,000 in the 2026/27 financial year so that £74k could be allocated to each of the following IMCCs: Shaftesbury Recreation Centre, Grosvenor Recreation Centre, Sally Gardens, and Hanwood Trust, subject to the identification of sufficient in-year underspend or specified reserve and also agrees to delegate authority to the Director of Finance to release the funding, subject to the conditions being met.

In addition, the Committee noted the update on recent and planned activities relating to IMCCs.

Belfast Place Based Growth Proposition

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on the Belfast Place Based Growth & Regeneration Proposition and ongoing engagement in relation to devolution and associated funding.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

I. **Note the update on the Belfast Place Based Growth and Regeneration Proposition, including the update on ongoing strategic engagement with the UK Government and the Northern Ireland Executive.**

II. **Note the update on the Scottish Cities Alliance Devolved Nations Political Leaders Meeting and approve the signing of a joint letter to the Prime Minister aimed at working together to develop models of city and regional empowerment within Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland that unlock growth. Further updates to be brought to Committee as this engagement progresses.**

III. **Approve attendance of the Lord Mayor as set out in the report at the Belfast MP's sponsored event at Houses of Parliament in Westminster, as part of advocacy and engagement activities to support the Belfast Place Based Growth & Regeneration Proposition.**

3.0 Background

3.1 The Committee will recall receiving an update in November 2025, followed by a further report to the CG&R Committee in February 2026, on the Belfast Place-Based Growth & Regeneration Proposition. The Proposition sets out the case for enhanced regeneration funding consistent with other UK cities, and aligned with a growth proposition which is underpinned by a full Business

Case predicated on city regeneration priorities. As part of this work, the Council has submitted a proposal to the UK Government seeking support for a new £250 million City Regeneration Fund and associated powers to drive growth, regeneration and investment in the city.

3.2 As previously reported to Committee, Belfast faces a structural regeneration deficit that cannot be addressed through existing funding mechanisms. The city has experienced long-term underinvestment in regeneration, limited devolved powers and stalled development activity. Public spending on regeneration is approximately half that of comparable English cities, while key funding streams available elsewhere in the UK have not been extended to Northern Ireland, resulting in missed economic and social opportunities. The English Devolution White Paper signalled a significant shift in funding and powers for English cities. Without parity of targeted regeneration investment, Belfast risks falling further behind in terms of growth, competitiveness and investment attraction.

3.3 The Belfast Place-Based Growth & Regeneration Proposition seeks the powers and responsibilities required to drive growth and investment in the city, centred on the establishment of a £250 million City Regeneration Fund (CRF). The proposal responds directly to Belfast's longstanding regeneration challenges through targeted investment in housing-led regeneration across all tenures, the remediation of derelict and underutilised sites, green and blue infrastructure, public realm and placemaking, and enabling infrastructure to unlock strategic development opportunities.

3.4 The CRF is designed to complement and enhance the impact of other investment, including the Belfast Region City Deal by accelerating regeneration and development activity, unlocking private sector investment and supporting inclusive economic growth. The Proposition would provide Belfast with investment mechanisms comparable to those available to English Core Cities without impacting on the Northern Ireland Executive's core funding settlement.

3.5 As set out in the Proposition, the proposal builds on existing governance structures established through Belfast City Council's City Centre Investment Fund and draws on proven investment models operating in cities such as Liverpool, Leeds and Greater Manchester. It is intended to deliver a strong economic and social return through robust governance, targeted investment and the creation of long-term regeneration capacity.

3.6 Development of the Proposition has been informed by extensive engagement with cross-sector stakeholders and aligns with the findings of the Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment

Strategy (BCCRIS) Stocktake, which received political and stakeholder endorsement.

4.0 Main Report

Belfast Business Case for Place-Based Growth & Regeneration Investment

4.1 As previously reported to Committee in November 2025, the Belfast Place-Based Growth & Regeneration Proposition is underpinned by a full Five Case Business Case comprising the Strategic, Economic, Commercial, Financial and Management Cases. The business case sets out the rationale for enhanced regeneration investment and powers for Belfast and demonstrates the significant preparatory work undertaken by the Council and its partners to establish the conditions for successful delivery.

4.2 The business case seeks the powers and responsibilities required to drive growth and investment in the city, centred on the establishment of a new £250 million City Regeneration Fund (CRF). The proposed fund would support targeted investment in housing-led regeneration, green urban infrastructure, placemaking, site assembly and remediation, enabling infrastructure, and the delivery of strategic regeneration schemes, including stalled major schemes, capable of unlocking wider economic and social benefits The business case emphasises the Council's commitment to working collaboratively with the Executive and relevant departments through a new model of partnership and joint delivery to maximise the impact of any investment secured.

4.3 Importantly, the business case and delivery at city-region level demonstrates that Belfast already possesses many of the governance and delivery mechanisms required to expedite delivery. Building on the governance arrangements established through the City Centre Investment Fund, this approach draws on proven investment models operating across a number of English cities, including the Chrysalis Fund in Liverpool, the Leeds Revolving Investment Fund and the Greater Manchester Property Venture Fund, which have successfully used targeted public investment to stimulate regeneration and attract private sector capital.

4.4 The proposed City Regeneration Fund is intended to complement and enhance the impact of other investment including the Belfast Region City Deal by accelerating regeneration and development activity, unlocking private sector investment and supporting inclusive economic growth.

4.5 The CRF also proposes a more collaborative model of working between local and central government, enabling Belfast City

Council and Northern Ireland departments to respond more effectively to market opportunities and regeneration challenges. This approach is consistent with the principles of place-based growth and devolved decision-making set out within the UK Government's English Devolution White Paper and more recent Integrated Settlements model for Mayoral Combined Authorities. The CRF would place Belfast on a footing more comparable with the English Core Cities by providing access to dedicated regeneration funding additional to existing City Deal arrangements.

4.6 It is important to note that council has a number of partnerships committed to attracting investment and finance to the city and city-region and a collaborative, unified approach will be taken to engagement and advocacy. More information will be brought to Members as this develops further.

<u>Advocacy and Engagement</u>

4.7 A programme of advocacy and engagement continues to support the advancement of the Proposition. Council officers and Elected Members have undertaken a programme of engagement with the Northern Ireland Office, HM Treasury and MHCLG, alongside Belfast MPs and Northern Ireland Executive departments, to advocate for the proposal and demonstrate its alignment with the UK Government's growth mission and place-based investment priorities.

<u>Scottish Cities Alliance Devolved Nations Political Leaders Meeting</u>

4.8 Following approval at SP&R Committee in November 2025, the Lord Mayor, the Council's nominated Elected Member BCRD Lead and senior officers attended a devolution-focused roundtable with city leaders from Scotland and Wales in London in January 2026.

4.9 The meeting was convened by the Scottish Cities Alliance (SCA), a collaboration between Scotland's eight cities and the Scottish Government. It brought together representatives from the SCA, the Cardiff Capital Region, and Belfast City Council to discuss evolving city-regional governance and devolution arrangements across the UK.

4.10 Discussions focused on the implications of the accelerating programme of English devolution, particularly the establishment of Mayoral Combined Authorities, and the potential impact on the competitiveness, investment attractiveness and reform capacity of cities in the devolved nations. Participants noted the increasing momentum behind English devolution deals, the continued extension of mayoral powers, and growing alignment between

English city regions and UK Government funding, policy development, and institutional focus.

4.11 The meeting concluded that, without coordinated action, the pace and scale of English devolution could reshape the UK's economic and institutional landscape in ways that disadvantage cities in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. However, participants also recognised a significant opportunity to secure deeper, fairer and more effective city-level devolution through collective advocacy, evidence-based case making and governance models tailored to the specific circumstances of each devolved nation.

4.12 A follow up meeting was held in May 2026 at UKREiiF, the UK Real Estate, investment and infrastructure Forum. As approved by CG&R Committee in February 2026, the Chair of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee and the Council's nominated Elected Member/Chair of the BRCD Council Panel attended this meeting.

4.13 Building on the January discussions, participants considered the challenges facing cities in the devolved nations, including what the shared diagnosis of the "double squeeze" of UK-level decision-making and limited devolved powers at city-regional level. It was argued that this combination restricts access to long-term funding, capital flows and policy discretion available to English Mayoral Authorities. Participants felt that deeper, faster devolution tailored to national contexts is required, supported by long-term funding under city control and strengthened multi-level governance between UK Government, devolved governments and city regions. Five areas of common ground were identified: the readiness of cities to deliver growth; the value of place based governance pluralism; the need for varied pace and models of devolution; opportunities for joined-up engagement; and the importance of a sustained collective voice in UK-level discussions.

4.14 Participants considered continued group engagement and joint case-making to Westminster, to include the development of shared representation to the new Prime Minster. A draft letter has been prepared by the SCA welcoming the new Prime Minister's focus on advancing devolution, noting that there is a significant opportunity to work together to develop models of city and regional empowerment within Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland that unlock growth while complementing the responsibilities of devolved governments and seeking engagement with UK Government, the devolved administrations and city and regional leaders on the next phase of devolution. Subject to approval from Members, it is proposed that Belfast City Council signs this joint letter and continues ongoing engagement alongside Scotland and Wales, with updates to be brought back to Committee as this engagement progresses.

4.15 **During UKREiiF, senior Council officers also participated in a roundtable discussion with senior HMT officials, facilitated by Core Cities and also attended by other UK Core City representatives. The roundtable concluded with agreement to convene a further engagement between HM Treasury and representatives from Glasgow, Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast to consider how the economic potential of these cities can be more fully reflected within the UK Government's growth agenda, while remaining consistent with the respective devolution settlements across the devolved nations. Discussions highlighted the particular importance of investment policy and the use of financial and fiscal levers, recognising that current arrangements differ across jurisdictions. Participants noted the significant opportunities to leverage private sector investment and accelerate regeneration priorities with resultant economic growth, as demonstrated through engagement at UKREiiF. HM Treasury officials indicated a willingness to continue the dialogue through a dedicated follow-up meeting with the Devolved Nation Core Cites to explore these issues in greater detail and identify areas for future collaboration focused on regeneration and place-based growth. Work is on-going to arrange this follow up meeting.**

<u>Westminster Engagement</u>

4.16 **To support engagement with Westminster on the Belfast Place Based Growth & Regeneration Proposition, Belfast's MPs have agreed to host a roundtable meeting with Members of Parliament and Peers in September at the Houses of Parliament in Westminster. Approval is sought for the Lord Mayor, accompanied by senior Council officers, to attend this engagement in order to promote the Belfast Proposition, strengthen relationships with key stakeholders, and participate in a programme of one-to-one meetings to further advance the proposition.**

4.17 **This engagement is particularly important given the recent changes within the UK Government. Work is ongoing to build relationships with the new administration and to align the Belfast Place Based Growth & Regeneration Proposition with emerging government priorities, including the renewed focus on devolution, place based regeneration, regional growth, and commitment to undertake the biggest transfer of power, funding and responsibility from Westminster in a generation. The proposed engagement will provide an opportunity to raise Belfast's profile and the Place Proposition, notably in advance of the Autumn Statement, and importantly, complements ongoing work across innovation, economic development and City Deals.**

<u>Engagement with the Northern Ireland Executive</u>

4.18 **As noted in the November 2025 Committee update, the Belfast City & Region Place Partnership (BCRPP) has facilitated a number of high-level engagements with the Northern Ireland Executive to advance the Belfast Place Based Growth & Regeneration Proposition. This engagement has included convening a joint Ministerial meeting with the Ministers for Finance, Economy, Infrastructure and Communities in September 2025; a meeting with the First Minister and Deputy First Minister held in April 2026; and subsequent follow up meeting with Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) officials and the Strategic Investment Board (SIB) in May 2026.**

4.19 **In addition, following an invite from the BCRPP, the Minister for Communities attended UKREiiF supporting the region's presence at the UK's leading forum for real estate, regeneration and infrastructure investment. This provided a further opportunity to discuss the Belfast Place Based Growth & Regeneration Proposition, including a ministerial roundtable facilitated by the Director of Core Cities UK.**

5.0 **<u>Financial and Resource Implications</u>**

5.1 **Financial impact directly associated with the proposition and business case recommendations will be brought back to Committee in due course following consideration by UK Government.**

5.2 **Costs including travel and subsistence for the Lord Mayor's attendance at the Belfast MPs sponsored event in the Houses of Parliament at the time of preparing the report for Committee are estimated at £900.**

6.0 **<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/</u>**
<u>Rural Needs Assessment</u>

None associated with this report.

The Committee:

i. Noted the update on the Belfast Place Based Growth and Regeneration Proposition, including the update on ongoing strategic engagement with the UK Government and the Northern Ireland Executive;

ii. Noted the update on the Scottish Cities Alliance Devolved Nations Political Leaders Meeting and approved the signing of a joint letter to the Prime Minister aimed at working together to develop models of city and regional empowerment within Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland that would unlock growth. Further updates to be brought to Committee as this engagement progresses; and

iii. Approved the attendance of the Lord Mayor as set out in the report at the Belfast MP's sponsored event at Houses of Parliament in Westminster, as part of advocacy and engagement activities to support the Belfast Place Based Growth and Regeneration Proposition.

Planning Update

The Committee noted the update which had been provided on Major planning applications and applications which had been determined by the Planning Committee.

Performance Improvement Plan

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

It was reported that a draft 2025-2026 Performance Improvement Self-Assessment Report (Appendix 1) included 33 actions and 57 key performance indicators (7 statutory and 50 self-imposed).

Following consideration by the Committee the proposed next steps were outlined as follows:

- 1st September - Full Council ratification of PIP Self-Assessment report;
- 11th September: Audit and Risk Panel Performance Update; and
- 30th September: Submission of PIP Self-Assessment report to NIAO and published online.

The Committee:

i. approved the draft Performance Improvement Self-Assessment report 2025-26 (Appendix 1); and

ii. authorised its publication on the council's website by the statutory deadline of 30th September (subject to any minor updates required, including the receipt of outstanding data detailed in section 3.3 and formal ratification by full council on 1st September).

Irish Language Policy – Implementation Plan

The City Solicitor presented the following report for consideration:

1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

The purpose of this report is to update Members on progress relating to the implementation of the Irish Language Policy and associated two-year implementation plan previously approved by the Council in October 2025.

The report highlights the next steps required to support programme delivery, including consideration of governance arrangements and resourcing requirements.

2.0 Recommendations

It is recommended that Members:

- **Note the contents of this report;**
- **Note that officers have continued to progress the planning and scoping phase of the Irish Language Policy implementation plan;**
- **Note that implementation timelines have been impacted due to a number of factors, primarily by the call-in of the initial Council decision to adopt the Policy, which was reported to Council in June 2026, supporting delivery of the Fleadh over the summer and leave arrangements;**
- **Note that officers are developing the programme governance and delivery arrangements required to support implementation of the policy; and**
- **that a further update report will be brought back to Committee in September.**

3.0 Main report

Background

Members will recall that the Council approved the Irish Language Policy and the associated high-level two-year implementation plan in October 2025. The implementation plan identified a number of priority areas including the development of a bilingual corporate identity, bilingual signage, enhanced Irish language visibility across Council communications and social media channels, and preparatory work for future website improvements.

Members will note that the Plan envisages 5 key stages over a 2 year period and adopts a phased approach to the implementation of the policy. Phase 1 is "Planning and Scoping". This is preparatory in nature and will take place in the first 3 months. Once this phase is complete, there will be a need for further decisions, on such matters as design or logo/materials, programme plan and governance model. Phase 2 is "Design and Procurement". Phase 3 is "Build and Development". Phase 4 continues the roll-out. Phase 5 is "Review and evaluation". The Implementation Plan is subject to review and is likely to be amended throughout its lifespan in order to reflect developments throughout the phases.

The initial phase of the Implementation Plan focused on planning and scoping activities, including the development of programme

planning, communications protocols, developing design guidelines and stakeholder engagement.

Alongside the Implementation Plan, officers continue to progress a range of commitments contained within the Language Strategy Action Plan, including actions relating to service provision, staff awareness, communications and language development initiatives.

3.1 <u>Progress to date</u>

Since approval of the policy, officers have continued preparatory work to enable implementation and have maintained engagement across relevant Council services regarding future delivery requirements. This has included planning in relation to communications, branding and service-delivery commitments arising from the policy and a preliminary assessment of resource and staffing requirements to support delivery of the Implementation Plan.

A cross-departmental officer working group will oversee and coordinate the first phase of the Implementation Plan and will oversee the implementation of the Policy until such times as it has bedded in as business as usual.

3.2 <u>Governance and Resourcing Requirements</u>

Given the cross-cutting nature of the Implementation Plan, which impacts on multiple Council services and workstreams, dedicated programme governance arrangements will be required to ensure effective coordination, oversight and delivery.

The Implementation Plan contains a broad range of commitments spanning communications, branding, signage, website development, stakeholder engagement, procurement, monitoring and reporting. Delivery of these commitments will require coordinated oversight across a number of Council departments and external partners.

This work will be aligned with the outcomes of the Equality and Diversity Unit review and any relevant workforce planning processes.

3.3 <u>Next Steps</u>

In accordance with the Implementation Plan, the initial planning and scoping phase will take 3 months before we move into active delivery. Notwithstanding being in this initial phase, bilingual signage will be factored into design work and procurement arrangements for any new projects. The communications commitments in the Language Strategy Action Plan will continue

in terms of the promotion of Irish language related matters bilingually etc.

Key actions over the next 3 months will include:

- **Developing recommendations arising from the working group regarding governance, programme management and resource requirements;**
- **Development of a detailed programme plan;**
- **Development of design guidelines for signage, uniforms etc;**
- **Development of communications guidelines; and**
- **Continued stakeholder engagement.**

The cross-departmental working group will oversee delivery of the planning and scoping phase and regular updates will be brought to the Language Strategy Working Group and Strategic Policy & Resources Committee.

3.4 Financial and Resource Implications

The Council has approved a financial commitment of £1.9 million to cover early-stage activation priorities aligned with the draft policy, including branding, staffing, signage, communications, ICT requirements.

The Equality and Diversity Unit will be responsible for assisting the City Solicitor in monitoring compliance with this Policy, along with the other proposed language policies under the Language Strategy. The Unit is currently undergoing a service review and may require additional resources to deliver the Council's commitments in the Language Strategy to develop bespoke policies in respect of each of the 5 language strands.

3.5 Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment

The development of the Irish Language Policy was carried out in line with the Council's Equality Scheme. A draft EQIA was prepared for the policy and was consulted upon alongside the draft policy.

A Rural Needs Assessment was also prepared and included within the consultation documentation.

During discussion, one Member requested monthly progress reports on the implementation.

In response to a Member's question in relation to expenditure of the plan, the City Solicitor advised that details would be submitted to the Committee in due course.

After discussion, the Committee:

- Noted the contents of the report;

- Noted that officers had continued to progress the planning and scoping phase of the Irish Language Policy implementation plan;

- Noted that implementation timelines had been impacted due to a number of factors, primarily by the call-in of the initial Council decision to adopt the Policy, which was reported to the Council in June 2026, supporting delivery of the Fleadh over the summer and leave arrangements;

- Noted that officers would be developing the programme governance and delivery arrangements required to support implementation of the policy; and

- Noted that monthly updates would be provided to the Committee.

Physical Programme and Asset Management

Physical Programme Update

The Committee:

Capital Programme Stage Movements –

- **Fire Service Blitz Memorial** – Agreed that the project be moved to *Stage 3 – Committed* with a maximum allocation of up to £5,000.
- **Depot Charging Scheme 2026/27** - Agreed that the project be moved to *Stage 2 – Uncommitted* to allow options to be fully worked up, with further detail to be brought back to the Committee in due course.
- **Drumglass Park SuDS Project –** Agreed that the project be moved to *Stage 2 – Uncommitted* to allow options to be fully worked up, with further detail to be brought back to the Committee in due course. Note that this project was fully funded by NI Water and DfI.
- **Belfast Castle** - Agreed that the project be moved to *Stage 2 – Uncommitted* to allow options to be fully worked up, with further detail to be brought back to the Committee in due course.
- **City Hall Programmable Floodlighting Replacement** - Agreed that the project be added to the Capital Programme at *Stage 1 – Emerging* to allow a business case to be developed.
- **Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall 3010 Modernisation** - Agreed that the project be added to the Capital Programme at *Stage 1 – Emerging* to allow a business case to be developed.

Project Updates

- **Girdwood Hub Health & Safety Works -** Agreed up to £300,000 to carry out essential health and safety remedial works.

- **Capital Letters of Offer** - Noted the update in relation to capital letters of offer.
- **Contracts awarded in Q1 2026/27** - Noted the update in relation to contracts awarded.

Asset Management

The Senior Programme Delivery Manager provided an update on the Botanic Gardens (Lower Section) –Proposed Licence Agreements in connection with the Upsurge Project.

He advised that Queens University Belfast (QUB) and Friends of the Field (FotF) had been working in partnership with Belfast City Council on the delivery of the Horizon 2020 UPSURGE project at Botanic Gardens (Lower Section).

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 20th February, 2026, approval was granted for a licence agreement with Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens (FoBBG) for the delivery of the UPSURGE project at this location for a six-month period. The Senior Programme Delivery Manager advised that, subject to Members' approval, it was proposed that the Council now entered into new licence agreements with QUB, FotF and FoBBG, commencing 1st September, 2026 and running to 31st August, 2027. He highlighted that, in line with the established UPSURGE partnership arrangements, no licence fees would apply.

The Committee was also reminded that, at its meeting on 6th February, 2026, it had been agreed that the development of a GAA pitch on the Lower Section be progressed as part of the approved implementation plan. Entering into the proposed licences with QUB, FotF and FoBBG up to 31st August, 2027 would not impede delivery of the pitch project, which remained at design stage and would be subject to the statutory planning process.

The Senior Programme Delivery Manager provided an update on the Upsurge Project. He pointed out that the Upsurge Project (both the demonstrator site and community garden) would remain at the Lower Botanic site until construction of the GAA pitch was scheduled to commence. This was currently estimated as Quarter 3 2027/28, however, this would be subject to further refinement as the project was developed and was dependent also on planning timelines.

He explained that, when the Upsurge Project was first approved in August 2020, Members were advised that the project had a 48-month duration. The Project started in September 2021 and was scheduled to finish in September 2025, however, an extension was granted until February 2026. He highlighted that, it subsequently transpired that there was a further period of time required for the exploitation of the results of the Project and this was due to expire in February 2030.

The Senior Programme Delivery Manager advised that there was no absolute obligation to retain the UPSURGE Project in situ until that time. However, if it was to be moved, the Council must implement viable mitigating measures in order to avoid the risk of funding clawback. Cognisant of the Committee's decision to develop a GAA pitch at this location, officers were exploring whether it was possible to co-locate the projects. In tandem, they were also seeking to identify suitable alternative sites. As part of that process, they would engage with EU Horizon, QUB and the organisations that use the Upsurge site as appropriate.

He pointed out that the Climate and Resilience Committee would be kept up to date as those discussions progressed. However, any final decision in relation to this site would be for Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to consider.

During discussion, Members requested further information on the initial requirements and duration of the project and its subsequent extension. The Senior Programme Delivery Manager advised that these queries would be included in a cross departmental response on the project which had previously been requested at the Climate and Resilience Committee.

In response to a query regarding the commencement of the Pitches Strategy Consultation, the Director of Resources, Fleet, Transport and Open Spaces and Street Scene advised that a further update would be brought to the Committee in September.

In relation to a Member's proposal for further information regarding sports development and biodiversity initiatives, the City Solicitor advised that the request should be raised at the People and Communities Committee for consideration.

The Committee:

i. Approved licence extensions at Botanic Gardens (Lower Section) for the continued delivery of the Horizon 2020 Upsurge Project for each partner; and

ii. Noted the update in relation to the Upsurge Project as set out within this report and that a further update would be provided in due course.

Physical Programmes - SEUPB Grant Funding Increase Request for Additional Activity

(Mr. G. McCartney, Good Relations Manager, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee was advised that the Council had been approached by the Urban Villages (UV) team within The Executive Office (TEO) to make a request for grant funding increase to SEUPB for the Ballysillan Redevelopment project that was currently on site.

It was reported that the funding request related to the Council's Letter of Offer which was in place for the Local Action Plan (LAP) and, if successful, the Council would receive additional monies through this Letter of Offer to be spent (or claimed back from spend) on the Ballysillan project (which was being delivered in partnership with UV).

The Committee was advised that discussion on the matter had taken place at the Shared City Partnership meeting on 12th August and the minute of the Partnership and its recommendation formed a separate item on the Committee's agenda.

The Committee was reminded that, in April 2026, it had agreed for proposals to be submitted to SEUPB for additional funding in the region of £2-3m. This application (included the Fleadh and Forthmeadow Greenway signage) was considered in July 2026 by SEUPB as “not sufficiently meeting the selection criteria”.

SEUPB had since advised that they would accept a new application relating to the Ballysillan Project as outlined above. The application deadline had been extended to 18th August and was due to be assessed on 20th August at a special panel and the deadline could not be extended further. As advised at the Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum meeting of 13th August, the application would need to be submitted by officers under delegated authority, in advance of the Committee meeting, owing to the immovable deadline restriction, however, the Council maintained the right to withdraw the application if it was not subsequently ratified.

It was reported that the grant funding increase request would focus primarily on a 3G pitch, event space and programming. The application (including programming) was for approximately £1.4m. The grant funding must be spent / claimed by the end of September at the latest and the entire claim process completed within the 2026 calendar year. For this reason, it was not feasible to submit other projects.

During discussion, several Members raised concern in relation to the management of the fund and the associated decision making processes, as well as the need to ensure a balanced distribution of funding across the city.

After discussion, the Committee approved the submission of the grant funding increase request to SEUPB for 26/27 monies and noted that its comments on the matter would be incorporated into the letter from the Shared City Partnership to SEUPB, as detailed in the Minutes of the Shared City Partnership Meeting of 12th August, 2026.

Finance, Procurement and Performance

Contracts Update

The Deputy Chief Executive provided an overview of the Contracts Update report.

She highlighted that, since the report had been published, an amendment had been received in relation to the Provision of Property Details Surveys to Land and Property Services as outlined under paragraph 8.0 of the report. She explained that LPS had requested that the contract for this service be renewed, effective from 1st April, 2026, with modifications as outlined in the report for a further term of **1 year**, with the option to extend for 2 periods of 12 months.

The Committee:

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

- Approved the award of STAs in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions as detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 2);

- Noted the award of retrospective STAs in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions as detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 3);

- Approved the modification of the contract as per Standing Order 37a detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 4);

- Approved Contracts awarded by Arc 21 on behalf of the Council (Table 5)

- Note the non-procurement expenditure (Table 6); and
- Under 8.0 of the report - Provision of Property Details Surveys to Land and Property Services - noted that LPS had requested that the contract for this service be renewed, effective from 1st April, 2026, with modifications as outlined in the report for a further term of 1 year, with the option to extend for 2 periods of 12 months.

Table 1: Competitive Tenders

Title of Tender	Proposed Contract Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Short description of goods / services	On published pipeline (Y/N)	Prior Committee approval (Y/N) If Y name Committee & Date	External Funding (Y/N)
Traffic management service for Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann 27	Up to 1 year	£400,000	D Martin	Due to this expanded scope and the need for a dedicated, event-specific solution, a new standalone contract must be procured to ensure safe, compliant and effective delivery of traffic management services for Fleadh 2027. Please note that due to time required in planning and road closure notices this tender was advertised w/c 3rd August to allow sufficient time for award and implementation.	N	N	N
Provision of the cleaning services	Up to 5 years	£1,000,000	N Largey	Critical service to ensure facilities are clean and operational for staff, visitors and	Y	N	N

Title of Tender	Proposed Contract Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Short description of goods / services	On published pipeline (Y/N)	Prior Committee approval (Y/N) If Y name Committee & Date	External Funding (Y/N)
				commercial partners across a wide range of facilities and services across Belfast This contract is used across Departments to cover assets and buildings not historically covered by in-house cleaning teams.			
Supply and delivery of playground parts	Up to 3 years	£60,000	S Leonard	This contract will ensure a steady supply of replacement playground parts for the Council's playground inspection teams.	Y	N	N
Supply, delivery and installation of summer plants and containers	Up to 3 years	£250,000	D Sales	This contract supports OSS and Bereavement Services with hanging baskets, flower towers, wall mounted manger baskets and barrier/troughs for Belfast in Bloom	Y	N	N
Assessment of biodiversity enhancement opportunities across parks and open spaces, pitches, playgrounds and amenity spaces	Up to 18 months	£41,667	S Leonard	One of the specific deliverables within the Nature Towns and Cities Project is professional work on the topic – Enhancing existing parks and open spaces for nature and climate resilience	N	N	N

Title of Tender	Proposed Contract Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Short description of goods / services	On published pipeline (Y/N)	Prior Committee approval (Y/N) If Y name Committee & Date	External Funding (Y/N)
Hotel Accommodation for Fleadh 2027	Up to 8 days	£300,000	D Martin	The contractual agreement between Council and Comhaltas includes the provision of hotel accommodation and business suite facilities. Dates for Fleadh 27 need to be secured with hotel accommodation asap.	N	N	N
Annual abstract of accounts training, technical guidance & treasury management advice	Up to 4 years	£31,200	T Wallace	Specialist consultancy services and training required for compliance purposes Please note that this procurement was conducted by Newry, Mourne & Down District Council on behalf of all NI councils with contracts award in July 26.	N	N	N
Web streaming and AV services at Roselawn Crematorium	Up to 3 years	£90,000	P Gribben	To facilitate secure remote access to funeral services for invited attendees who are unable to attend in person. This will enhance the quality and accessibility of the service provided to bereaved families during a difficult time.	N	N	N

Table 2: Single Tender Actions

Title	Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Description	Supplier	STA Reason	Other Committee approval (Y/N) If Y name Committee & Date	External Funding (Y/N)
Delivery of Output Belfast - Ireland's biggest one-day music conference	Up to 4 months	£22,000	K Forster	There are no other suppliers who can deliver the conference activity. The Output Conference is a key event within the City of Music programme and Music Matters strategy. 2 months & £11k being reported as retrospective	Score Draw Music Ltd	2.	CG&R committee 15/04/2026	N
The provision 3D model, design and planning software	Up to 3 years & 8 months	£48,500	P Gribben	The current platform is widely used by key architectural practices across Northern Ireland who subscribe to the VU.CITY model. Replacing the current supplier at this stage would require a significant system configuration, implementation, migration of historical and live data, testing, user training and managed transition to a	VU.City	7.	N	N

				replacement platform.				

Table 3: Retrospective Single Tender Actions

Title	Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Description	Supplier	STA Reason	Other Committee approval (Y/N) If Y name Committee & Date	External Funding (Y/N)
Park & Ride management for Fleadh 26	Up to 8 days	£170,000	D Martin	The end-to-end car park management solution is required for 3 x park and ride locations with Translink as part of Fleadh 26. The requirement emerged late in the planning stages and did not allow sufficient time to tender. This requirement will be procured via open competition for Fleadh 27.	Car Parking Services	5.	N	N
Delivery of Output Belfast - Ireland's biggest one-day music conference	Up to 2 months	£11,000	K Forster	Further to STA request above this is retrospective STA approval to cover services from July and Aug 26	Score Draw Music Ltd	2.	CG&R committee 15/04/2026	N
The provision 3D model, design and	Up to 4 months	£4,500	P Gribben	Further to STA request above this is retrospective	VU.City	7.	N	N

planning software				STA approval to cover services from 4 months from May to Sept 26.				

Table 4: Modification to Contract

Title of Contract	Original Duration & Value	Modification	SRO	Description	Supplier
Research on Advanced Wireless Investment Models (T2696)	Up to 3 months & £70k	Additional 3 months	S McNicholl	Initial contract provided for a second sprint to develop proposals for investing Enabling Infrastructure Funds but subsequent agreement with DfE was that developing a business case would be an improved outcome for that work. The modification is retrospective.	Bloom Procurement Services (NEPRO3)
Health & Safety advice for Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann 26	Up to 1 year & £30k	Additional £20,000	K Forster	The additional funds are required due to the increased level of support required from the contractor in the months leading up to and over the delivery period of the Fleadh. The nature of the support will not change. The modification is down to the increased level of support required to deliver this event for the first time. Contract is being reported as it now exceeds £30k.	Paul Scott
Deliver the resourcing plan to support the Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann 26	Up to 3 months & £29k	Additional £8,500	K Forster	The Eventor is already in contract to manage this programme for Fleadh and therefore it makes sense that they continue to manage the additional asks and pressures on the programme and budget.	The Eventor

				The nature of the support will not change. The modification is down to the increased level of support required to deliver this event for the first time. Contract is being reported as it now exceeds £30k.	

Table 5: Contracts awarded by Arc 21 on behalf of the Council

Title of Contract	Original Duration & Value	Modification Required	SRO	Description	Supplier
The receipt and processing of kerbside mixed dry recyclables – lot 1	Up to 7 years & £4.5m (BCC Spend)	Additional 6 months & £330k	D Sales	Arc21 are in the process of procuring a new contract for reception and treatment of dry recyclables (our blue bin waste) but due to delay in the DAERA consultation on future collections schemes Arc 21 are going to extend their contract for an additional six months.	Contract managed by arc 21

Table 6: Non-Procurement Expenditure

Title	Duration	Value	SRO	Description	Supplier
The Northern Light Incubation Project at Studio Ulster	Up to 2 years	£700,000	D Martin	As part of the Council's Local Economic Partnership Ulster University have been selected to support the delivery of this project. This is considered an exempted contract under the Act in line with Schedule 2, section 3 (1) - horizontal arrangement. Externally Funded	Ulster University

<u>Request for funding - Belmont Bowling Club</u>

The Committee was reminded that, at the meeting of the People and Communities Committee on 11th August, the request for funding was raised by a Member for Belmont Bowling Club to support updates to the clubhouse to become DDA compliant to host the Atlantic Challenge Bowling Championships in September 2026.

Subsequently, the People and Communities Committee agreed that, given the timeframe, a report would be submitted to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in August to ascertain if any funding streams could be utilised to support the hosting of the Atlantic Challenge bowls event at Belmont Bowling Club, specifically in the provision of an access ramp and toilet facilities.

Further to the Committee meeting, officers followed up with the Club to gather more information in relation to the event and to the request which was detailed in Appendix 1 of the report.

It was reported that the Irish Bowling Association had requested the use of Belmont Bowling Club for the Atlantic Challenge on 6th-10th September 2026, an event which was listed in the European City of Sport bid document. The competition was between Scotland, Ireland, USA and Canada, involving Ladies, Men's and Para players.

The Committee approved the request of the reprofiling of European City of Sport funding of up to £6,500 to the Irish Bowling Association to support the upgrade of Belmont Bowling Club in becoming DDA compliant in advance of the Atlantic Challenge Bowling Championships in September 2026.

Equality and Good Relations

Minutes of Shared City Partnership of 12th August 2026

(Mr. G. McCartney, Good Relations Manager, attended in connection with this item.)

The Strategic Policy and Resources Committee approved the minutes and recommendations from the Shared City Partnership Meeting held on 12th August, including:

Members Updates

- Updates were received from the North and East Belfast Community representatives and are noted in the minutes for members information.

Good Relations Q1 Action Plan Update

- The Shared City Partnership recommends that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report

PEACEPLUS – Local Community Action Plan Secretariat Update

- The Shared City Partnership recommends that members of the Strategic Policy and Resources (SP&R) committee note the contents of the report and agree an additional funding proposal of up to £1.5m (10% of the LAP LoO) for the Ballysillan Urban Villages project is explored and submitted to SEUPB.
- Shared City Partnership also recommends to SP&R, that Officers correspond on behalf of the Shared City Partnership to SEUPB to outline Council's disappointment that the four projects which had been submitted

for support within the programme-wide underspend had not been deemed eligible for funding and request the specific and detailed reasons for the decisions be provided.

Peace Plus Thriving and Peaceful Communities Thematic Update

- Shared City Partnership noted the contents of the report and agree and recommends that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report and agree **TPC1 Community Empowerment** – a change request to enable flexibility regarding the duration of the Local Community Empowerment Programme (LCEP) delivery of between 7-18 months, to enable condensed delivery.

Peace Plus Celebrating Culture and Diversity Thematic Update

- The Shared City Partnership recommends that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee Members note the contents of the report and agree CCD1 – Interfaith and Belief - a contract extension to 31 March 2028

Community Regeneration and Transformation Thematic Update

- The Shared City Partnership recommends that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report

Update from June Special SCP

- Shared City Partnership noted the update provided by the Good Relations Manager

Any Other Business

- There was no further business reported.

<u>Operational Issues</u>

<u>Minutes of the Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum of 13th August</u>

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum of 13th August, 2026.

<u>Requests for use of the City Hall and the provision of Hospitality</u>

The Committee:

- Agreed to delegate authority to the City Solicitor to agree an appropriate room hire fee with the organisers of the UNISON conference scheduled for 13th November, 2026; and

- Approved the recommendations as set out below:

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	CHARGES
Belfast Health & Social Care Trust	12 October 2026	**Launch of the Belfast Child Document –** which outlines the design for a seamless developmental pathway for children in Belfast. Numbers attending - 250	Yes	• ROOM HIRE OF £1250 • Any applicable additional charges
Ulster Baseball & Softball Club	17 October 2026	**30th Anniversary End of Season Awards** evening event with drinks reception, awards, speeches and dinner to celebrate the work of the club over last 30 years to promote the playing of baseball and softball locally. Numbers attending - 100	Yes	• NO ROOM HIRE • Any applicable additional charges *With 20% charity deduction applied to final total*
UNISON	13 November 2026	**UNISON LGBT+ Conference Reception** evening event with drinks reception and speeches. The event is attached to the national UNISON LGBT+ conference which will bring around 200 delegates to Belfast for a weekend conference in the ICC. Numbers attending – 200	Yes	• ROOM HIRE *– To be considered* • Any applicable additional charges

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	CHARGES
Newington Housing Association Ltd	16 November 2026	**Newington HA 50th Anniversary Celebration** - celebrating with the local community and voluntary sector 50 years since formation as a registered social housing provided in 1976 with dinner, speeches and entertainment. Numbers attending – 150	Yes	• NO ROOM HIRE • Any applicable additional charges *With 20% charity deduction applied to final total*
Conradh Na Gaeilge	20 November 2026	**ELEN General Assembly Launch Event –** is hosted by Conradh Na Gaeilge in Belfast bringing together delegates and language activist organizations from across Europe to discuss minoritised languages and language rights. Numbers attending – 100	Yes	• ROOM HIRE OF £450 • Any applicable additional charges *With 20% charity deduction applied to final total*
Consulate General of India, Belfast	16 January 2027	**Republic of India (National Day)** Celebration evening with cultural performances and dinner. The event will showcase India's rich heritage, culture and democratic values and would also reinforce Belfast's growing international partnerships, supporting good relations and cultural exchange Numbers attending - 300	Yes	• ROOM HIRE OF £1250 • Any applicable additional charges

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	CHARGES
Northern Ireland Medico Legal Society	6 April 2027	**Northern Ireland Medico Legal Society 50th Anniversary Dinner -** established to foster collaboration, mutual understanding, and collegiality between the medical practitioners, barristers, solicitors and members of the judiciary the evening will consist of a drinks reception and dinner accompanied by speeches, historical talk and music. Numbers attending – 150	Yes	• NO ROOM HIRE • Any applicable additional charges
British Nuclear Medicine Society	18 May 2027	**BNMS Annual Awards Dinner – Spring 2027** – Drinks reception followed by an awards ceremony an ending with dinner. Event to support conference activity in the city with 300-400 delegates. Numbers attending – 200	Yes	• ROOM HIRE OF £1250 • Any applicable additional charges *With 20% charity deduction applied to final total*
Aflac Northern Ireland	25 November 2027	**Aflac NI Con 27 -** Internal employee conference for technology and cyber Security company with keynotes speeches, panel discussions, presentations and refreshments throughout. Numbers attending – 160	Yes	• ROOM HIRE OF £1250 • Any applicable additional charges

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	CHARGES
Society for Endocrinology	7 March 2028	**SfE BES 2028 Conference Dinner –** UK and Irish Endocrine Society will hold their annual conference at the ICC. This evening event will include welcome drinks and dinner followed by speeches and entertainment. Numbers attending – 300	Yes	• ROOM HIRE OF £1250 • Any applicable additional charges *With 20% charity deduction applied to final total*

Request for Use of City Hall Grounds for two events in Autumn 2026

The Committee was advised that the following two requests had been received for events in October to use the City Hall Grounds and, due to the larger scale of activities involved, it was deemed necessary to seek Committee approval:

- Northern Ireland Housing Executive on 19th October, 2026 to host Domestic Abuse Awareness Week Candlelit Vigil; and
- Belfast One BID on 30th – 31st October, 2026 for Halloween themed animation.

During discussion, in response to a Member’s request for an update on the Halloween city animation that had been planned for this year, the City Solicitor advised that the enquiry would be referred to the Strategic Director of Place and Economy.

After discussion, the Committee:

1. Authorised the use of City Hall grounds on dates noted above; and
2. Authorised the events to take place on the basis of submission of an event management plan and risk assessment to ensure delivery of a safe public events.

Minutes of the Disability Working Group of 14th August, 2026

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the Disability Working Group of 14th August, 2026.

Request for Illumination of City Hall to mark International Safe Abortion Day 2026

The Committee considered a request which had been received from the National Women's Council of Ireland for the illumination of City Hall in the colour green to mark International Safe Abortion Day, on the 28th September, 2026.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor Maghie,
Seconded by Councillor Smyth,

That the Committee agrees to the request to illuminate the City Hall in the colour green to mark International Safe Abortion Day on 28th September 2026.

On a vote, eleven Members voted for the amendment and three against and it was declared carried.

Accordingly, the Committee approved the request from the National Women's Council of Ireland for the illumination of City Hall in the colour green to mark International Safe Abortion Day, on the 28th September, 2026.

Chairperson

This page is intentionally left blank

People and Communities Committee

Tuesday, 11th August, 2026

MEETING OF THE PEOPLE
AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Maghie (Chairperson);
The Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Abernethy);
and Councillors Beattie, Black, Bower, Bradley,
R. Brooks, Bunting, Canavan, Cobain,
de Faoite, M. Donnelly, Doran, Flynn, Garrett,
Magee, Murray, McKeown and Verner.

In attendance: Mr. D. Sales, Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services;
Ms. S. Toland, Director of City Services;
Mr. S. Leonard, Director of Open Spaces, Resources, Fleet and Transport;
Ms. K. Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control; and
Mr. B. Flynn, Committee Services Officer.

Apology

An apology was reported on behalf of Alderman Copeland.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 23rd June 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, subject to the following:

- That the decision under the heading ‘Dual Language Street Signs – Long Streets’ was rejected and, accordingly, the Council agreed that dual language street signs be erected along the length of both Donegall Park Avenue and Oldpark Road; and

- That the decision under the heading ‘Dual Language Street Signs - Caffrey Avenue and Glenwood View’ was rejected and, accordingly, the Council agreed that the applications for dual language street signs be approved.

Declarations of Interest

Under the ‘Generalist Advice Funding’ item, Councillor Bradley indicated that her employer was in receipt of funding under the scheme. Under the ‘Tobacco and Vapes Act – Consultation’ item, Councillor McKeown reported that his employer provided funding towards several initiatives related to the subject matter. Neither item became subject to debate and the Members were not required to leave the meeting.

Community Support Plan - Workshop

The Committee agreed that an all-Members' workshop in respect of the above-mentioned matter be held on Monday, 26th October at 5.15 p.m.

Restricted Items

The information contained in the following reports was restricted under Part 1, Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (NI) 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.

Resources and Fleet/Waste Management - Update

The Committee considered a report which provided an update in respect of waste management service performance, associated projects, ongoing reviews and consultation exercises.

After discussion, the Committee:

- approved the initiation of a 'knife surrender' initiative at Household Waste Recycling Centres, subject to management being satisfied with all operational aspects of the scheme;

- noted the findings of the review of Household Waste Recycling Rates (policies and performance) and noted further the intention to commission residents' surveys and research to consider the options which had been outlined; and

- approved the response to the 'DAERA Waste Prevention' consultation exercise.

Financial Reporting - Year-end 2025/26

The Committee noted the contents of the above-mentioned report and the information which was contained within the associated financial reporting pack.

Matters referred from Council/Motions

Motion and Items Raised in Advance - Update

The Committee considered a report in respect of the above-mentioned matter.

The Committee agreed to the closure of eight of the ten motions and items raised in advance as recommended within the report, with the exception of the '30 by 30 Biodiversity Campaign' and the 'Playful Belfast City Streets'.

Committee/Strategic Issues

Planning Application for Burial Land Development at Dundrod - Consultation Response

The Committee endorsed a draft response to the above-mentioned consultation exercise, a copy of which was made available on the Council's website.

Tobacco and Vapes Act – Consultation on Packaging, Device Appearance and Shop Displays

The Committee endorsed a draft response to the above-mentioned consultation exercise, a copy of which was made available on the Council's website.

DAERA Consultation re: Draft Air Quality (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2026

The Committee endorsed a draft response to the above-mentioned consultation exercise, a copy of which was made available on the Council's website.

Dual Language Street Signs - Policy Review

Prior to considering the above-mentioned report, it was

Moved by Councillor Beattie,
Seconded by Councillor M. Donnelly and

> Resolved – that the Committee agrees to defer consideration of the report to enable the views and guidance of the Irish Language Commissioner and the Commissioner for the Ulster-Scots and the Ulster-British Tradition to be obtained on best practice in relation to the proposed scope and terms of reference for the review.

The Committee noted the names of several stakeholders which had been suggested for consideration as part of the review.

Operational Issues

Request for the Use of Boucher Road Playing Fields

The Committee considered a request which had been received from CinePark Limited seeking permission to host a 'drive-through' cinema experience at Boucher Road Playing Fields throughout the month of December, 2026.

The Committee granted approval, subject to the applicant adhering to all of the stipulations outlined within the report.

Requests for the Use of Parks

The Committee considered the following requests for the use of parks:

- North Belfast Lantern Festival - Alexandra Park, 30th October;

- TinyLights for Baby Loss Awareness Week - Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park, 15th October; and

- Twilight Walk - Barnett Demesne, 26th September.

The Committee granted approval, subject to the applicants adhering to all of the stipulations outlined within the report.

In response to a Member's query regarding the length of time taken to process applications for events, the Director of Open Spaces, Fleet and Transport undertook to submit a report in this regard to a future meeting.

European City of Sport 2026

The Committee noted the information which had been provided within a report in the above-mentioned matter, which outlined the number of events which had been – and would be - supported through the delivery of the programme in 2026.

The Committee approved also the hosting of a City of Sport Coaching Conference in October, in partnership with Greenwich Leisure Limited, which would coincide with Coaching Education Week. It was noted that the costs associated with the event would be in the region of £10,000, provision for which existed within the programme underspend.

In addition, the Committee approved, in accordance with required guidelines, the production of a report to review the overall impact of the initiative, costs in respect of which would be in the region of £10,000, provision for which existed within the programme budget.

Belmont Bowling Club

Arising from discussion, it was agreed that a report be submitted to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, at its meeting on 21st August, to ascertain if funding streams from within the European City of Sport budget could be utilised to support the hosting of the Atlantic Challenge bowls event at Belmont Bowling Club, specifically in the provision of an access ramp and toilet facilities.

Generalist Advice Funding and Welfare Reform Mitigation Payments 2026/27

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 4th March, it had agreed to provide fifty per cent advance payments to those groups eligible for Generalist Advice Funding and Welfare Reform Mitigation Payments in 2026/27. That funding had been provided on the condition that the second payment would be released on the receipt of satisfactory documentation. It was reported that all of the eligible groups had submitted the required paperwork and, accordingly, it was recommended that the second fifty per cent payments be made to the eligible groups.

The Committee adopted the recommendation and noted that that the second payments might be less than anticipated, given the uncertainty that existed over the level of funding to be provided by the Department for Communities (DfC). In such a circumstance, the Committee agreed that, should any additional in-year funding be forthcoming from DfC, it would be reallocated on a pro-rata basis amongst the eligible groups.

Sports NI Grants - Get Active NI

The Committee was informed that Sport NI had launched an initiative entitled 'Get Active NI', which had been developed to align with community plans across each of the eleven district councils. Members were provided with an overview of the objectives of the scheme which sought to strengthen collaboration across the sporting, health, community and voluntary sectors. The total amount allocated to the Council would be £103,000. Applications for support had to be submitted by 21st August, with successful projects to be delivered by the end of the financial year. Given the limited timescales, the Committee was provided with an overview of a recommended delivery model designed to maximise the number of applications submitted by the Council. It was reported that the chosen delivery partners had a proven ability to deliver programmes and an inbuilt capacity to manage successful initiatives within required timescales.

The Committee agreed that the application process would commence in accordance with the terms outlined. Delegated authority was granted to the Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services (or their nominee) to oversee the process and that the maximum funding allocated per project would be £5,000. It was noted that any funding reallocation deemed necessary amongst delivery groups would fall within the aforementioned delegated authority.

Abandoned Bins Protocol and
Improvements to Bulky Waste Collections

The Committee considered the following report:

1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 To update committee on the development of an abandoned bins protocol, improvements to the council's domestic bulky waste collection service and plans to consider the issue of bagged waste raised at its June meeting.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Committee is requested to note the contents of this report.

3.0 Main Report

Abandoned Bins Protocol

3.1 The council currently provides all domestic recycling and food waste containers free of charge to remove barriers to recycling. Black/General Waste Bins Black bins are also provided but incur a charge depending on the size of the bin. Whilst the council does supply most householders' bins, householders can procure them privately online or through established providers such as hardware stores.

3.2 Black general waste bins remain the legal property of residents and cannot simply be removed without their consent or knowledge. All recycling bins and containers provided by the council remain the property of the council and as such, are straightforward to remove/uplift. The council continues to provide recycling containers free of charge, so residents are never negatively impacted financially if a recycling container needs to be replaced. The opposite is true of general waste containers if they are removed or disappear without warning, householders will incur a cost in the replacement of that container.

3.3 Currently, Waste Management issue "Bring Your Bin Home" (BYBH) letters to areas where multiple containers are left out for periods of time obstructing public pavements, public entry heads, or the street. This function previously sat with Enforcement but was transferred to the Resource Advisor team in 2021. Resource Advisors issue letters containing relevant information, sign posting and collection information specific to their property. This informs residents to remove their bin to their property and when their next scheduled collections are due.

3.4 The issue of abandoned bins is more common in densely populated urban areas and is often associated with entries and communal collection points which can sometimes involve non-domestic premises. While the standard BYBH approach is effective in some areas, persistent hot spots show repeated non-compliance and complaints from residents in areas where abandoned containers are a problem. Some of the abandoned bins encountered are damaged or without a lid, factors that can encourage owners of the bins to abandon them in the first place. It can also cause the bins to attract pests as the waste is more accessible if the bin is damaged.

3.5 A strengthened and more robust response is required to address persistent issues, ensure compliance, and support long term behavioral change and improvements to the environment. The stickers required to support the protocol are in development with Corporate Comms and should be in hand and operationally deployable in September 2026.

<u>Bulky waste collection service</u>

3.6 The Council offers a free bulky waste collection service for households, facilitating residents to dispose of unwanted household items. The service is not available for businesses. Residents can book collections up to three months in advance, and the council will confirm the collection date within two working days. Collections run Monday to Friday, excluding bank and public holidays, and reminders are sent via email or text the day before

collection to residents who have provided a mobile number or e-mail address.

3.7 Bulky Waste collections are managed through the council's Priority Waste team.

3.8 Current bulky waste collection vehicles include: –

- **3 x Compact vehicles – disposes of items that can be 'compacted' in the back of this vehicle i.e. Sofas, armchairs, mattresses, cabinets etc**
- **3 x Open vehicles – these vehicles have a tail lift, which aids with the collection of 'white goods' i.e. Fridge freezers, washing machines, TVs etc**
- **1 x HIAB vehicle – this vehicle has a large crane that assists with the collection of bulkier items such as American fridge freezers, pianos, oil tanks etc**

3.9 Bulky Waste collections are planned and managed through a route optimization software application called Elogii. The Elogii systems sequence the running order for collections, which has improved efficiency and removed the need for daily manual route planning by the driver. The system also sends out a reminder notification to the resident a day before their scheduled collection. The collections plan in terms of split of vehicles and territories is outlined in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Bulky Waste Collection plan

Vehicle	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Compact 1	West	West	North & Central	West	North
HIAB	West	N/A	North	East, South & Central	N/A
Open 1	West	North	North	East	South & Central
Open 2	North	East & South	South	West	Central
Compact 2	East	South	North	East	North
Compact 3	*SR's	East	*SR's	*SR's	East

3.11 Reports of longer lead times for bulky services in East Belfast were raised with officers earlier this year. On reviewing these officers identified that the response time in the East was significantly higher than in other areas of the city. Additional bulky waste slots were added in June 2026 to improve performance in the East. East Belfast is one of the more densely populated quadrants of the city and as such, demand is higher, so this adjustment should serve to better meet that demand and reduce lead times. Lead times before implementing this change are highlighted in Table 2 and lead times after the additional capacity was added in June 2026 are shown in Table 3.

Pre Additional Capacity						
Average Lead Time - 12/01/26 to 10/06/26 (prior to additional capacity)						
Area	**Comp1**	**Comp2**	**Hiab1**	**Open1**	**Open2**	**Area Avg**
Central	5.04		5.67		4.91	**5.21**
East		17.82	18.85	4.65	5.79	**11.78**
North	4.4	4.25	9.29	5.48	6.05	**5.89**
South		7.96	18.7	3.84	4.37	**8.72**
West	5.23		6.03	6.57	7.25	**6.27**
Veh Avg	**4.89**	**10.01**	**11.71**	**5.14**	**5.67**	

Table 3 – lead times after changes were made

Post Additional Capacity							
Average Lead Time - 11/06/26 to 05/08/26 (after additional capacity added)							
Area	**Comp1**	**Comp 2**	**Comp3**	**Hiab1**	**Open1**	**Open2**	**Area Avg**
Central	5.53			6.85		5.08	**5.82**
East		9.41	8.67	5.75	5.03	6.11	**6.99**
North	4.2	4.14		13.05	4.96	5.87	**6.44**
South		7.73		8.35	3.33	3.87	**5.82**
West	4.5			6.5	8.15	8.64	**6.95**
Veh Avg	**4.74**	**7.09**	**8.67**	**8.10**	**5.37**	**5.91**	

3.12 These steps have improved response times in the east and balanced performance across each of the four quadrants. This has led to a slight increase in collection times in some quadrants of the city. Officers are keeping this under review. The current domestic bulky waste collection service will be decanted to Whitespace and Incab functionality after the introduction of Incab to the council's domestic routes, which will present an opportunity for a broader review of bulky waste service provision and will look to improve even further collection times across the city. This will also feed into the wider Transformation and efficiency review of Waste Services.

<u>Collection of bagged waste</u>

3.13 At last month's meeting an issue was raised in advance regarding bagged waste been left out for collection on pavements. Officers will undertake to look at this practice as part of the Transformation and efficiency programme and reports will be brought back to members for their consideration.

During discussion, the Committee noted comments which had been made by a Member suggesting that officers re-examine the wording within correspondence issued to residents with a view to providing clarity on their obligations with regards to bin reclamation. It was suggested that the Council should seek to engage further with landlords in the management of the process. It was noted also that, on a longer-term basis, alternative collection models should be examined, particularly in areas where issues remained unresolved.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided.

Update on Alleygates

The Committee considered a report which provided an overview of Phase 5 of the alleygating programme. The Members were reminded that it had been anticipated that a review would be undertaken at the conclusion of Phase 5, which would provide a comprehensive overview of the effectiveness of the programme to date. In this regard, it was reported that a contractor from Ulster University had been appointed to carry out the review. The research would consider whether the objectives of the programme had been met, i.e., in reducing crime and antisocial behaviour; improving community safety; reducing nuisance; and regenerating neighbourhoods. The review would also explore the internal processes used in the selection of sites.

Noted.

Issue Raised in Advance

125th Anniversary of First Association Football Game on the Island of Ireland

With the permission of the Chairperson, Councillor Smyth informed the Committee that the 150th anniversary of the first-ever organised Association Football game on the island of Ireland would occur on 24th October, 2028. That game, which had been played between Scottish clubs Queen’s Park and Caledonian, had been organised by the Belfast businessman John McAlery and had taken place at the then Ulster Cricket Ground, now Ulidia Playing Fields. He added that it might be appropriate for the Council to seek to mark the historic anniversary with a series of events to be delivered in conjunction other stakeholders.

The Committee agreed that officers would examine the feasibility of marking the anniversary and that a report be submitted in due course.

Chairperson

This page is intentionally left blank

City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Wednesday, 26th August, 2026

MEETING OF THE CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Members present:	Councillor J. Duffy (Chairperson); Alderman Lawlor; and Councillors Black, Bower, Bunting, Collins, de Faoite, S. Douglas, Groogan, Kelly, Lyons, McAteer, McCabe, McKay, R. McLaughlin, Meenehan, Nelson and Ó Néill.
Also attended:	Councillor McKeown.
In attendance:	Mr. D. Martin, Strategic Director of Place and Economy; Mrs. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and Development; Mr. S. Dolan, Senior Development Manager; Ms. R. Campbell-Palmer, Culture Development Manager; and Mr. C. Mealey, Committee Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported on behalf of Councillors McDonough-Brown and I. McLaughlin.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 18th June, 2026, 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, 2026.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Groogan declared an interest in relation to the item 'Vacant to Vibrant Programme' in that her employer was in receipt of a grant through the scheme. She was not required to leave the meeting for this item.

Restricted Items

The information contained in the report associated with the following two 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 item 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.

Vacant to Vibrant Programme

The Director of City Regeneration and Development submitted for the Committee's consideration a report which provided an update on the Vacant to Vibrant Programme and which sought approval for recommendations from the Vacant to Vibrant assessment panel following the receipt and assessment of recent applications.

The Committee:

i. noted the update in relation to the Vacant to Vibrant Programme which would be supporting up to 87 businesses/organisations to locate or expand into long-term vacant units; and

ii. agreed the recommended citywide grant awards as outlined within the report.

Financial Reporting - Quarter 4 2025/26

The Strategic Director of Place and Economy submitted for the Committee's consideration a report which provided an update on the Committee's financial position for Quarter 4 of 2025/26.

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

Correspondence

Minister for Infrastructure Response –
York Street Pedestrianisation

The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister for Infrastructure in response to its request for consideration to be given to the pedestrianisation of spaces within the York Street area.

Department for Communities Response –
Basic Income for Artists Scheme

The Committee considered correspondence from the Department for Communities in response to a motion passed by the Council at its meeting in March, 2026, which had called on the Northern Ireland Executive to introduce a basic income for artists scheme.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor Lyons,
Seconded by Councillor Nelson and

Resolved – That the Committee agrees to write to the Minister for Communities to seek clarification on his position in respect of a basic income for artists and to ask whether, as the Minister responsible for the arts, he would promote the need for provision to be made to facilitate the introduction of a basic income for artists scheme.

Positioning Belfast to Compete

Visit Belfast - Renewal of the Sharing Agreement with Translink and Visit Belfast

The Committee considered a report which sought approval for the renewal of the Partnership Agreement with Translink and Visit Belfast for the operation of a ticketing area at the Belfast Welcome Centre.

During discussion, a Member highlighted the public consultation which was being undertaken by Translink on a range of proposed changes to services and fares. The Member expressed concern regarding the potential impact of those changes.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor Collins,
Seconded by Councillor Lyons and

Resolved – That the Committee agrees for a report to be submitted to its next meeting which would outline a draft Council response to Translink's public consultation on potential changes to services and fares.

Accordingly, the Committee:

i. approved the renewal of the Partnership Agreement with Translink and Visit Belfast for the operation of a ticketing area within the Belfast Welcome Centre at 8-9 Donegall Square North, up to 31st March 2029; and

ii. agreed that a report be submitted to its next meeting which would outline a draft response to Translink's public consultation on potential changes to services and fares.

Issues Raised in Advance by Members

Pedestrianisation in Belfast City Centre (Councillor McKeown to raise)

(Councillor McKeown attended in connection to this item.)

With the permission of the Chairperson, Councillor McKeown addressed the Committee in respect of pedestrianisation within the city centre.

Councillor McKeown reminded the Committee that, following the fire in the Bank Buildings in 2018, the Council had passed a motion in May, 2019, which called on the pedestrianisation of Donegall Place and Castle Place and which recognised the opportunity to redevelop the city centre and provide economic, social and cultural opportunities for traders, residents and traders. He expressed concern at the lack of progress in relation to the potential transformation of the city centre core through pedestrianisation, street animation and other incentives which would benefit businesses, increase footfall and improve its offering to residents and visitors. He added that the success of the recent Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann which was held in the city had demonstrated clear demand for pedestrianised spaces within the city centre core. In respect of Donegall Place and Castle Place, the Member highlighted the need for the Council to reiterate the position outlined within the motion passed in 2019 and call on the Minister to ensure that those areas are included in any pedestrianisation proposals brought forward for the city centre.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor de Faoite
Seconded by Councillor Lyons,

‘That the Committee agrees to write to the Minister for Infrastructure to request that, in collaboration with the Council and other relevant stakeholders, Donegall Place and Castle Place be included in a pedestrianisation programme for the city centre.’

During discussion, several Members highlighted the need for any pedestrianisation plans to be taken in consultation with all relevant stakeholders to ensure that those spaces would be as inclusive and accessible as possible.

A Member also suggested that the Committee request an update briefing from the Department for Infrastructure in relation to the proposals contained within the forthcoming Eastern Transport Plan.

Accordingly, the Committee agreed to write to the Minister for Infrastructure to:

i. request that, in collaboration with the Council and other relevant stakeholders, Donegall Place and Castle Place be included in a pedestrianisation programme for the city centre; and

ii. request that the Department for Infrastructure provide the Committee with an update briefing in relation to the proposals contained within the Eastern Transport Plan.

**Christmas Market Expansion Plans
(Councillor Kelly to raise)**

At the request of Councillor Kelly, the Committee agreed that a report be submitted to its next meeting which would outline the potential to expand the Christmas Market beyond the grounds of City Hall.

Chairperson

Licensing Committee

Wednesday, 22nd July, 2026

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE LICENSING COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor C. McKay (Deputy Chairperson);
Alderman Rodgers; and
Councillors Anglin, Bradley, R. Brooks, de Faoite,
M. Donnelly, P. Donnelly, D. Douglas, Ferguson,
Kelly, McCallin, McCann, McDowell, McKeown and Smyth.

In attendance: Mrs. K. Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control;
Mr. S. Hipkins, Building Control Manager; and
Mrs. L. McLornan, Committee Services Officer.

Apologies

An apology for inability to attend was reported from the Chairperson, Councillor T. Brooks.

(Councillor McKay, Deputy Chairperson, in the chair)

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were recorded.

Delegated Matters

THE COMMITTEE DEALT WITH THE FOLLOWING ITEMS IN PURSUANCE OF THE POWERS DELEGATED TO IT UNDER STANDING ORDER 37(d)

ITEM WITHDRAWN

The Committee noted that Item 2b, Application to provide outdoor musical entertainment beyond 11.00 pm at Custom House Square, had been withdrawn by the applicant for commercial reasons.

Application for the Grant of a 14-Day Occasional Outdoor Entertainments Licence for St Anne's Cathedral Car Park (South) and request to provide entertainment beyond 11.00 pm

The Committee was advised that a request had been received from the applicant, Mr. S. Magorrian, for his item to be taken first due to a family commitment. The Committee acceded to the request.

The Director of Planning and Building Control provided the Committee with the details of the application for a 14-Day Occasional Outdoor Entertainments Licence for St. Anne's Cathedral Car Park (South side), based on the Council's standard conditions to provide outdoor musical entertainment, primarily for use during Fleadh Cheoil na hEireann from 2nd to 9th August, 2026.

The day and hours that outdoor musical entertainment was proposed to be provided were Monday to Sunday, 11.30am to 12:00 am. The applicant proposed to provide non-amplified music in the space.

As entertainment was proposed to be provided beyond the standard finishing time for outdoor musical entertainment, if granted, a special condition would be added to the licence relating to the sole provision of non-amplified musical entertainment.

She outlined that St Anne's Cathedral was within the road closure pedestrianised area for the Fleadh Cheoil. The applicant wished to host entertainment in line with the Fleadh's traditional music entertainment offering in the outdoor area.

The Committee was reminded that the following conditions were attached to Outdoor Entertainments Licences:

- Maximum numbers would be agreed at the discretion of the Building Control service and would vary depending on the individual entertainment proposals.
- Prior to entertainment taking place, the licensee was required to demonstrate evidence of early consultation with the Building Control service and have in place a robust system for dealing with complaints. This was to be agreed in advance.
- Should an application to provide entertainment beyond 11.00 pm be granted and the Council then receive a significant number of complaints regarding noise or the complaint was of such significant impact, authority was granted to the Director of Planning and Building Control, in consultation with the City Solicitor, to reduce the finishing time for any subsequent nights of the event, in which case the promoter would be required to make contingency arrangements.

The Committee was advised that public notice of the application had been placed in the newspaper, and no representations had been received as a result.

The Director advised the Committee that the police had been consulted in relation to the application, however, a response had not yet been received. Should Members be minded to approve the Grant of the Outdoor Entertainments licence, it should be subject to a satisfactory response from the PSNI on the matter.

Officers had engaged with the event organisers and colleagues in the Fleadh events team in relation to the proposed use of the space and would participate in pre-event meetings. An event management plan had also been received.

The Chairperson advised the Committee that the applicant, Mr. Magorrian, was in attendance to answer any questions, however, no queries were raised.

The Committee agreed to approve the application for the grant of the 14-Day Occasional Outdoor Entertainments Licence, subject to any special conditions considered necessary by officers and to all technical requirements being met, and to extend the hours of entertainment to 12:00am; and agreed that non-amplified musical entertainment be permitted to take place to 12:00am on all nights, 2nd – 9th August, 2026, inclusive.

Application to provide outdoor musical entertainment beyond 11.00 pm at Bank Square

The Director of Planning and Building Control provided the Committee with the details of the application from Mr H. Downey to permit the planned musical entertainment at Bank Square to run beyond 11.00pm on up to eight nights during the Fleadh Cheoil na hEireann, from 2nd to 9th August, 2026.

She explained that Bank Square had a 7-Day Annual Outdoor Entertainments Licence and a 7-Day Annual Indoor Entertainments Licence for a Marquee, and both had been used to hold events in the past. The Licence was held by the Department of Communities and was transferred to Mr. Downey for the duration of the Fleadh.

The Members were reminded that the following Special Conditions were attached to both the Marquee and Outdoor Entertainments Licences:

- Maximum numbers would be agreed at the discretion of the Building Control Service and would vary depending upon individual concert set up proposals.
- Prior to any event taking place the promoters were required to demonstrate evidence of early consultation and have in place a robust system of dealing with any complaints, to be agreed in advance with the Council.
- Any requests to provide entertainment later than 11.00 pm must be considered by the Licensing Committee; and
- Should an application to provide entertainment beyond 11.00 pm be granted and the Council then receive a significant number of complaints regarding noise or the complaint is of such significant impact, authority was granted to the Director of Planning and Building Control, in consultation with the City Solicitor, to reduce the finishing time for any subsequent nights of the event, in which case the promoter would be required to make contingency arrangements.

As it was not an application to vary the terms of the Outdoor licence, rather, a request for the Council's permission to extend the hours under an existing Licence Condition, there was no requirement for public advertisement in this case.

The Committee was advised that the event organiser was requesting to provide outdoor musical entertainment to 1.00 am on all eight nights, 2nd to 9th August, 2026.

A rationale for extended hours beyond 11.00 pm had been provided by the event organiser.

The Director advised the Committee that the police had been consulted in relation to the application, however, a response had not yet been received. Should Members be minded to approve the Grant of the Outdoor Entertainments licence, it should be subject to a satisfactory response from the PSNI on the matter.

Officers had engaged with the event organisers and colleagues in the Fleadh events team in relation to the events and would participate in pre-event meetings. An Event Management Plan for the Fleadh had been received and was being evaluated by officers.

The Director highlighted that a significant consideration for the Environmental Protection Unit (EPU) would be the proposal to provide outdoor entertainment after 11.00pm. Members were reminded that the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 gave councils additional powers in relation to entertainment noise after 11.00 pm. The noise mitigation strategy would be discussed at the pre-event meetings.

The event organisers would be required to engage with an acoustic consultant and to document a noise mitigation strategy for each night of entertainment.

The organisers had produced a neighbour pre-notification letter containing a nominated event organiser contact that residents and businesses could refer concerns or make complaints to. The extent of the letter's distribution, which would take place prior to the event, would be agreed with the event organiser by the Service in consultation with EPU officers.

The Committee agreed that entertainment be permitted to take place beyond the standard hours of licence, to 1.00 am, on all eight nights of the Fleadh, 2nd-9th August, 2026, subject to all technical requirements being met.

Application for the Grant of a 14-Day Occasional Outdoor Entertainments Licence for St Annes Cathedral Car Park (North) and request to provide entertainment beyond 11.00 pm

The Director of Planning and Building Control provided the Committee with the details of the application for a 14-Day Occasional Outdoor Entertainments Licence for St Annes Cathedral Car Park (North side), based on the Council's standard conditions to provide outdoor musical entertainment, primarily for use during Fleadh Cheoil na hEireann, 2-9 August 2026.

The proposed hours for entertainment were Monday to Sunday, 11.30am to 12:00am, on all eight nights of the Fleadh Cheoil.

The Committee was reminded that St Anne's Cathedral was within the road closure pedestrianised area for the Fleadh Cheoil. The entertainments licence applied for was to facilitate the provision of outdoor entertainment to the North side of St Anne's Cathedral site, the location of the food and drink market. The applicant wished to host entertainment in this outdoor area in line with the Fleadh Cheoil's traditional music entertainment offering.

The Committee was reminded that the following conditions were attached to Outdoor Entertainments Licences:

- Maximum numbers would be agreed at the discretion of the Building Control service and would vary depending on the individual entertainment proposals.
- Prior to entertainment taking place, the licensee was required to demonstrate evidence of early consultation with the Building Control service and have in place a robust system for dealing with complaints. This was to be agreed in advance.
- Should an application to provide entertainment beyond 11.00 pm be granted and the Council then received a significant number of complaints regarding noise or the complaint was of such significant impact, authority was granted to the Director of Planning and Building Control, in consultation with the City Solicitor, to reduce the finishing time for any subsequent nights of the event, in which case the promoter would be required to make contingency arrangements.

The Committee was advised that public notice of the application had been placed in the newspaper, and no representations had been received.

The Director advised the Committee that the police had been consulted in relation to the application, however, a response had not yet been received. Should Members be minded to approve the Grant of the Outdoor Entertainments licence, it should be subject to a satisfactory response from the PSNI on the matter.

Officers had engaged with the event organisers and colleagues in the Fleadh events team in relation to the proposed use of the space and would participate in pre-event meetings. An event management plan had been received.

The applicant proposed to provide non-amplified musical entertainment within the outdoor area in the form of traditional music live bands during the Fleadh. As entertainment was proposed to be provided beyond the standard finishing time for outdoor musical entertainment to 12:00 am, if granted, a special condition would be added to the licence relating to the sole provision of non-amplified musical entertainment.

The Committee agreed to approve the application for the grant of the 14-Day Occasional Outdoor Entertainments Licence, subject to any special conditions considered necessary by officers and to all technical requirements being met, and to extend the hours of entertainment to 12:00am and agree that musical entertainment be permitted to take place to 12:00am from 2nd – 9th August, 2026, inclusive.

Application for the Variation of a 7-Day Annual Entertainments Licence for Thompsons Garage

The Director of Planning and Building Control provided the details of the application for the variation of a 7-Day Annual Entertainments Licence, based on the Council's standard conditions to provide music, singing, dancing or any other entertainment of a like kind at Thompsons Garage.

The Committee was advised that the premises had been extended at first floor level to form a new function room. The works had been inspected and a Building Regulations Completion Certificate had been issued. The new function room would accommodate 150 persons. The nature of the variation applied for was to permit entertainment to be provided in the new function room to 3.00am the following morning on every night of the week and to increase occupancy to include the new area.

The areas currently licensed to provide entertainment were:

- Ground Floor, with a maximum capacity of 280 persons.
- Mezzanine Floor, with a maximum capacity of 200 persons.
- Second Floor, with a maximum capacity of 50 persons.

The days and hours during which entertainment may be provided under the terms of the current Entertainments Licence were:

- Monday – Sunday 11:30 am to 3.00 am the following morning

The licensee had stated that they intended to use the new function room on selected nights to 3.00am, primarily weekends. The entertainment to be provided in the function room would be in the form of acoustic sets in the afternoon and early evenings, with DJ performances from late evening until 3.00am. Permitting entertainment to 3.00am would allow the new area to be operated as an integral part of the existing premises.

Public notice of the application had been placed in the newspaper and to date no written representation had been lodged as a result of the advertisement.

The Director advised the Committee that the police had been consulted in relation to the application, however, a response had not yet been received. Should Members be minded to approve the Grant of the Outdoor Entertainments licence, it should be subject to a satisfactory response from the PSNI on the matter.

Should the Committee approve the application, it would also be subject to a satisfactory response from the NI Fire and Rescue Service on the matter.

The service was not in receipt of any noise complaints for the venue within the last 12 months. The Members were reminded that the Clean Neighbourhood and Environment Act 2011 gave the Council additional powers in relation to the control of entertainment noise after 11.00 pm. The Licensee had engaged an acoustic consultant and an acoustic report had been submitted to the Environmental Protection Unit (EPU) for appraisal.

The Chairperson advised the Committee that the owner, Mr. M. McCourt, was in attendance to answer any questions from Members, however, no queries were raised.

The Committee agreed to approve the application for the variation of the 7-Day Annual Entertainments Licence to permit entertainment to be provided in the new area to 3.00 am, as requested, subject to any special conditions considered necessary by officers.

Application for the Grant of a 14 day Occasional Outdoor Entertainments Licence for land bounded by 1-7 Fountain Street and 22-40 Castle Street

The Director of Planning and Building Control provided the details of the application for a 14 Day Occasional outdoor Entertainments Licence to provide outdoor musical entertainment at the above site, which was within the road closure pedestrianised area for the Fleadh Cheoil na hEireann.

The existing Voodoo premises, adjacent to the site, was owned by the applicant.

The maximum numbers within the event space would be agreed by the Building Control Service and could vary depending on individual concert set-up proposals.

The days and hours during which entertainment was proposed to be provided were as follows:

- Monday to Saturday: 11.30am to 11.00pm and
- Sunday: 12.30pm to 11.00pm

The applicant proposed to provide non-amplified musical entertainment within the outdoor area in the form of traditional music live bands during the Fleadh. An acoustic report had therefore not been sought for the proposal.

The Members were reminded that the Clean Neighbourhood and Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 gave the Council additional powers in relation to the control of entertainment noise after 11.00 pm.

Public notice of the application had been placed in the newspaper and to date no written representation had been lodged as a result of the advertisement.

The Director advised the Committee that the police had been consulted in relation to the application, however, a response had not yet been received. Should Members be minded to approve the Grant of the Outdoor Entertainments licence, it should be subject to a satisfactory response from the PSNI on the matter.

The Committee was advised that if it was minded to provisionally grant the application, it would not be declared final until all works were completed to ensure compliance, amongst other matters, with all fire safety, structural and access requirements. All certification pre-requisite to the grant of a licence would also be required before the licence could be confirmed.

The Committee agreed to approve the application for the provisional grant of a 14-Day Occasional Outdoor Entertainments Licence, subject to any special conditions considered necessary by officers and to all technical requirements being met.

<u>Application for the Grant of a 14-Day Occasional Outdoor Entertainments Licence, to consider a request to provide outdoor entertainment beyond 11.00pm and a request to provide indoor musical entertainment beyond 11.00pm at the former Norwich Union House site, 24-40 Castle Street</u>

The Director of Planning and Building Control outlined the details of the application for a 14-Day Occasional Outdoor Entertainments Licence to provide outdoor entertainment beyond 11.00pm and a request to provide indoor musical entertainment beyond 11.00pm.

Power Pictures Limited was requesting a Licence for the former Norwich Union House site, to accommodate a temporary venue for TV production, based on the Council's standard conditions to provide outdoor musical entertainment. It also sought permission for planned entertainment to run beyond 11.00pm on four nights of the Fleadh Cheoil na hEireann in the outdoor area, and also within a marquee on the site. The applicant sought extension of the hours to 11.30pm for Thursday 6th, Friday 7th, Saturday 8th and Sunday 9th August, 2026.

The applicant was an independent production company commissioned by Irish language television channel, TG4, with experience in broadcasting live coverage of Fleadh Cheoil na hEireann events.

The site was within the pedestrianised area of the Fleadh Cheoil na hEireann.

The applicant had advised that there would be minimal amplification of music in the outdoor area for the benefit of a small crowd attending. It would be intermittent as the bulk of the performances would take place within the marquee and the priority was the broadcast. There would be amplified entertainment in the marquee.

The Committee was reminded that the following conditions were attached to both the Marquee and Outdoor Entertainments Licences:

- Maximum numbers would be agreed at the discretion of the Building Control service and would vary depending on the individual entertainment proposals.
- Prior to entertainment taking place, the licensee was required to demonstrate evidence of early consultation with the Building Control service and have in place a robust system for dealing with complaints. This was to be agreed in advance.
- Should an application to provide entertainment beyond 11.00 pm be granted and the Council then received a significant number of complaints regarding noise or the complaint was of such significant impact, authority was granted to the Director of Planning and Building Control, in consultation with the City Solicitor, to reduce the finishing time for any subsequent nights of the event, in which case the promoter would be required to make contingency arrangements.

As it was not an application to vary the terms of the indoor (marquee) licence but rather a request for council's permission to extend the hours under an existing licence condition, there was no requirement for public advertisement.

The Director advised the Committee that the police had been consulted in relation to the application, however, a response had not yet been received. Should Members be minded to approve the extended hours requested, it should be subject to a satisfactory response from the PSNI on the matter.

The Members were advised that officers had engaged with the event organisers and colleagues in the Fleadh events team and would participate in pre-event meetings. An Event Management Plan for the entertainment offerings had been received and was being evaluated by the service and shared with other colleagues.

The Director highlighted that a significant consideration for the Environmental Protection Unit (EPU) would be the proposal to provide outdoor entertainment after 11.00pm. Members were reminded that the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 gave councils additional powers in relation to entertainment noise after 11.00 pm.

The Members were advised that the outdoor performances would have minimal amplification of music. It was a requirement of the applicant that the level of noise generated in the outdoor space would not impact on the broadcast of performances filmed within the marquee located on site. An acoustic report was not sought in that instance for the outdoor application.

Amplified music would be provided within the marquee located on site. Amplification of music was solely to cater for patrons within the marquee and the recording of performances for TV. The level of amplification was therefore not considered likely to give rise to noise disturbance to residents in the area and an acoustic report was not sought in that instance either.

The Committee agreed to:

- approve the application for the grant of a 14-Day Occasional Outdoor Entertainments Licence, subject to any special conditions considered necessary by officers and to all technical requirements being met;
- extend the hours of entertainment to 11.30pm on four consecutive days, between Thursday 6th and Sunday 9th August, 2026, inclusive;
- in relation to the marquee, the Committee agreed to extend the hours of entertainment to 11.30pm on 4 consecutive days, between Thursday 6th and Sunday 9 August, 2026, inclusive, subject to all technical requirements being met.

Chairperson

This page is intentionally left blank

Planning Committee

Tuesday, 18th August, 2026

HYBRID MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE

Members present:	Councillor Brennan (Chairperson); Aldermen Lawlor, McCullough and Rodgers; Councillors Anglin, Bell, T. Brooks, Carson, Doran, D. Douglas, Garrett, Groogan, Hanvey, Magee, McCann and Murphy.
In attendance:	Ms. K. Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control; Mr. K. McDonnell, Solicitor (Regulatory and Planning); Mr. E. Baker, Planning Manager (Development Management); Mr. P. O'Reilly, Senior Planning Officer; and Ms. C. Donnelly, Committee Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported on behalf of Councillors Abernethy, McCabe and Whyte.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 16th June 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, 2026.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Murphy declared an interest in relation to the item under the heading "Revisions to terrestrial elements of Planning Permission ref. LA04/2016/0421/F (Construction of a new multi-purpose berthing facility at D3) comprising upgrade of existing access track along northeastern boundary of site and installation of associated street lighting/parking area; additional security hut; relocation and extension of main cruise terminal building and associated parking/drop-off areas with covered walkways; additional baggage building; and other associated site works in respect of lighting, landscaping and ancillary infrastructure. Retention of approved cruise quay with minor relocation of mooring dolphins, 25m wide piled relieving slab along quay length, associated hardstanding on hinterland, tower lights (with one to be relocated), security hut, access road adjacent to RSPB lands and other ancillary works" in that he was on the board of the Belfast Harbour Commissioners and he left the meeting whilst the item was under consideration.

Councillor McCullough declared an interest in relation to the item under the heading "LA04/2025/0110/F - Resurfacing and minor extension of existing 3G pitch; replacement floodlighting; 50 seater covered mini-stand (3.8m tall by 7.5m long and 3.3m wide); additional 1.2m fencing enclosure to pitch; replacement dugouts: storage container (3.6m by 2.4m); removal of portacabin and associated minor works/drainage modifications. - Hammer Playing Pitch Agnes Street, Shankill Road" in that his colleagues were associated with the proposal and he left the meeting whilst the item was under consideration.

Planning Appeals Notified

The Committee noted the appeals decisions.

Planning Decisions Issued

The Committee noted the planning decisions issued in June and July, 2026.

Live Applications for Major Development

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

Committee Decisions that have yet to issue

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

Miscellaneous Reports

Updating Customers on Live Planning Enforcement Cases

The Committee noted the proposed changes to the Planning Service's approach to providing updates on live enforcement cases to customers and elected representatives.

Planning Applications

LA04/2024/2134/F - Mixed use scheme for new community recreational facilities, including basketball court, parkland and residential development comprising 37no social/affordable housing units with landscaping and associated works. - Site of the former Dunmurry Cricket Club, Ashley Park, Dunmurry, Belfast BT17 0QQ, located north of 1-10 Ashley Park and south of 1-20 Areema Grove and Areema Drive

The Planning Manager provided the Committee with a summary of the application and highlighted the following key areas for consideration:

- Principle of housing in the location (including protection of open space);
- Landscape impact;
- Housing density;
- Affordable housing;
- Housing mix;
- Adaptable and accessible accommodation;
- Design and placemaking;
- Climate change;
- Residential quality and impact on amenity;
- Access and transport;
- Environmental protection;

- Flood risk and drainage;
- Natural heritage; and
- Section 76 planning agreement.

He explained that 16 third-party objections had been received and summarised the concerns which had been raised, that no objections had been received from DfI Rivers, NI Water or Environmental Health and that the Northern Ireland Housing Executive supported the proposal for 100% social housing. He added that consultation responses were still outstanding from DAERA NIEA or Shared Environmental Services.

The Planning Manager outlined the issues for consideration in relation to the proposal, with a particular focus on the issues of loss of protected open space and landscape impact.

He stated that the proposal was considered to be contrary to Policy OS1 in that it would result in the loss of protected open space and that the exception test of the proposal bringing substantial community benefits that decisively outweighed the loss of open space had not been met, furthermore, that the proposal was considered to be contrary Policies LC1 and LC1C in that, if approved, it would significantly erode the character of the Local Landscape Policy Area and would not protect, restore or improve the quality and amenity of the landscape, contrary to Policy LC1, he added that the proposal would have a significant adverse impact on the amenity, character and environmental quality of the area.

He stated that it was recommended that the application be refused, due to the loss of protected open space and adverse landscape impact.

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. R. Moore, Ms. G. Jobling and Mr. A. Bunbury to the meeting, attending on behalf of the applicant.

Ms. Jobling explained that the principal issue before the Committee was the loss of designated open space and that Policy OS1 established a strong presumption of protection of lands but also recognised exceptional circumstances where redevelopment can be permitted where substantial community benefits outweigh the loss of open space.

She stated that the decision was one of planning balance and asserted that the proposal represented a unique opportunity to deliver meaningful community development on a site that had not been performing its former recreational function for more than a decade, was inaccessible and had attracted fly tipping and antisocial behaviour.

She stated that the proposal was not to replace open space with housing but rather for housing and open space that would retain more than half of the site as open space that would be transformed into open parkland with walking routes and a children's playpark alongside 37 much needed social and affordable homes in an area of acute unmet housing need.

She further outlined the community benefits within the proposal and how it could contribute positively the area and that the substantial community benefits would greatly outweigh the loss of open space and asked the Committee to approve the application.

In response to a question from a Member with regard to the involvement of housing associations, Ms. Jobling explained that the applicant had engaged with a number of housing associations and discussions were still ongoing.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor McCann,
Seconded by Councillor Magee,

"That planning permission be granted on the basis that the community benefit greatly outweighs the loss of open space. "

Amendment

Moved by Councillor Groogan,
Seconded by Councillor Bell,

"That consideration of the application be deferred until outstanding consultation responses have been received from DAERA NIEA, Shared Environmental Services and NI Water."

On a vote, nine Members voted for the Amendment and seven against and it was declared carried.

Accordingly, the Committee agreed to defer consideration of the application until outstanding consultation responses had been received from DAERA NIEA, Shared Environmental Services and NI Water.

LA04/2026/0442/F - Revisions to terrestrial elements of Planning Permission ref. LA04/2016/0421/F (Construction of a new multi-purpose berthing facility at D3) comprising upgrade of existing access track along northeastern boundary of site and installation of associated street lighting/ parking area; additional security hut; relocation and extension of main cruise terminal building and associated parking/drop-off areas with covered walkways; additional baggage building; and other associated site works in respect of lighting, landscaping and ancillary infrastructure. Retention of approved cruise quay with minor relocation of mooring dolphins, 25m wide piled relieving slab along quay length, associated hardstanding on hinterland, tower lights (with one to be relocated), security hut, access road adjacent to RSPB lands and other ancillary works. - Land at D3 adjacent to the RSPB Reserve Airport Road West

The Senior Planning Officer summarised the application and outlined the following key considerations:

- Principle of development at the location;
- Design, Placemaking and impact on amenity;
- Landscape impact;

- Masterplanning approach;
- Built heritage;
- Natural heritage;
- Climate change;
- Flood risk and drainage;
- Waste-water infrastructure;
- Control of Major Accident Hazards (COMAH);
- Environmental protection;
- Waste management;
- Employability and skills; and
- Pre-application Community Consultation.

He reported that no third-party representations had been received in respect of the application and that no objections had been received from consultees and that responses were still outstanding from DAERA NIEA, SES and Waste Management.

He stated that, having regard to the Development Plan and other material considerations, the application was considered acceptable and it was recommended that planning permission be 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 to deal with and any other issues that might arise, including the outstanding consultation responses from DAERA NIEA, SES and BCC Waste Management team, provided the issues were not substantive.

LA04/2026/0282/F - Renewal of application reference LA04/2020/0659/F - Refurbishment of existing four storey terrace including alteration, extension to rear, partial demolition and reinstatement. Part change of use from art galleries to two cafes at ground floor. Retention of offices within existing building at second, third and fourth floor. Erection of new 13 storey aparthotel building to rear and associated works including public realm improvements - 29-33 Bedford Street

The Planning Manager summarised the application and highlighted the following key issues for consideration:

- Approach to assessing a renewal application;
- Principle of hotel and café use at the location;
- Economic benefits;
- Impact on built heritage and the principle of demolition in the conservation area;
- Scale, height, massing and design;
- Impact on traffic and parking;
- Impact on amenity;
- Climate change;
- Promoting healthy communities;

- Waste-water capacity;
- Waste management;
- Impact on human health;
- Impact on the amenity of adjacent land users;
- Developer contributions; and
- Pre-Application Community Consultation.

He stated that one representation had been received from the BBC which raised concerns with regard to noise conflict during construction and operations and he stated that the issues had been addressed within the case officer's report. He added no objections had been received from consultees other than from DfC HED and the Council's conservation advice which raised concerns with regard to the height of the 13-storey aparthotel and adverse impact on the setting of Listed Buildings and the Conservation Area.

He explained that policy issues had not been significantly changed since consideration of the previous application, that the height, scale and massing were considered acceptable, having regard to the context of the site and other tall buildings in the vicinity, that the setting of Listed Buildings would not be harmed and the character and appearance of the Conservation Area would be preserved.

He stated that, having regard to the Development Plan and other material considerations, it was recommended that planning permission be granted, subject to conditions.

<u>Proposal</u>

Moved by Councillor Groogan,
Seconded by Councillor T. Brooks,

"That the application be refused on the grounds that the application is contrary to the advice of the Council's Conservation Officer and the objection received from DfC HED."

On a vote, four Members voted for the proposal and ten against and it was declared lost.

The Chairperson put the officer's recommendation to the Committee and upon audible dissent, called for a vote.

On a vote, ten Members voted for the recommendation and four against and it was declared carried.

Accordingly, the Committee approved the renewal of planning permission, subject to conditions and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions and to deal with any other matters that might arise, provided that they were not substantive.

LA04/2025/0110/F - Resurfacing and minor extension of existing 3G pitch; replacement floodlighting; 50 seater covered mini-stand (3.8m tall by 7.5m long and 3.3m wide); additional 1.2m fencing enclosure to pitch; replacement dugouts: storage container (3.6m by 2.4m); removal of portacabin and associated minor works/ drainage modifications. - Hammer Playing Pitch Agnes Street, Shankill Road

The Committee considered the case officer's report and granted planning permission, subject to conditions, and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the Habitats Regulations Assessment, the wording of the conditions and to deal with any other matters that might arise, provided that they were not substantive.

LA04/2026/0928/LBC - Building fabric investigation works prior to restoration - Bank Of Ireland Buildings, 92-100 Royal Avenue

The Committee considered the case officer's report and granted Listed Building Consent, subject to conditions, and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions and to deal with any other matters that might arise, provided that they were not substantive.

Chairperson

This page is intentionally left blank

Climate and City Resilience Committee

Thursday, 13th August, 2026

MEETING OF THE CLIMATE AND CITY RESILIENCE COMMITTEE

Members present: Aldermen McCoubrey and McCullough; Councillors Anglin, Bell, T. Brooks, Collins, M. Donnelly, P. Donnelly; S. Douglas, Groogan, Long, Magee, Meenehan and Walsh.

In attendance: Ms. D. Caldwell, Climate Commissioner; Mr. K. Heaney, Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty; Ms. S. Healy-Thow, Food Systems Coordinator; Mr. O. Crolly, Local Energy Systems Advisor; and Mrs. L. McLornan, Committee Services Officer.

(Councillor Anglin, Deputy Chairperson, in the Chair)

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from the Chairperson, Councillor Lyons, and Alderman Copeland.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 14th May 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 June.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were recorded.

Withdrawn items

The Committee was advised that the following items (5 and 6) had been withdrawn from the agenda:

- Request to present at a future meeting - UK100
- Tree planting / 1 Million trees - Councillor Lyons to raise

Presentations

Belfast's Heat Highway - Integrating heat networks into the wider energy system – SAV EnergiRaven

The Deputy Chairperson welcomed Mr. S. Kerr to the meeting.

He set out the case for heat networks as a key part of a more secure, flexible and de-carbonised energy system. He described a heat network as a system of pipes which transported heat from locations where it was readily available to where it was needed. A major advantage was that a network could use a wide range of current and future heat sources rather than relying on a single fuel.

He outlined that energy systems remained vulnerable when they depended heavily on particular fuels or sources, and that greater diversification was required. He highlighted previous periods of energy insecurity, including post-war coal rationing, the oil crises of the 1970s, the energy disruption associated with Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and the recent Strait of Hormuz crisis.

The Committee was advised that heat networks could help balance electricity demand. Strategically sized thermal storage would allow heat to be produced when electricity was plentiful or inexpensive and stored for later use. During periods of high electricity prices or constrained supply, heat generation could be reduced and the stored heat released.

He highlighted to the Members that significant amounts of usable heat were currently being wasted. He illustrated the potential for a Belfast heat transmission network to connect multiple sources of heat with areas of demand. He suggested potential sources including power generation, waste-to-energy, wastewater treatment, industrial processes which could potentially provide heat for around 100,000 homes. He also highlighted the potential of Northern Ireland's geothermal resource.

The Members were advised to look towards future heat opportunities, including industrial clusters, agricultural and biogas CHP, biochar production and data centres. He illustrated how heat that would otherwise be rejected could become a useful resource within a local energy system.

He demonstrated that the approach was already being used in Denmark, where the Triangle Region Heat Transmission Company (TVIS) operated a 123km heat transmission system, connecting heat suppliers with nine district heating companies and supplying more than 60,000 consumers. The model demonstrated how industrial clustering and sector integration enabled low-cost waste heat to be shared across a wider area. He also highlighted Shetland Heat Energy and Power, with around 1,300 homes already connected, and Lothian Heat, established in 2025, with plans to connect more than 100,000 homes by 2031.

Overall, he stated that heat networks could address the energy “trilemma” of security, affordability and de-carbonisation simultaneously. Using multiple heat sources reduced dependence on any single fuel; thermal storage allowed the cheapest available heat to be used at the most appropriate time; and the network could maximise renewable energy while capturing heat which would otherwise be wasted by industry.

He highlighted that the transition to net zero should not simply focus on producing more energy, but on making better use of energy which was currently being wasted.

During discussion, he provided the Committee with details of the East Lothian and Tallaght schemes.

In response to a Member’s question as to what pitfalls Belfast should be wary not to make, Mr. Kerr outlined that the design, installation and quality of the pipe insulation was key to a successful, long-term project. He also highlighted that it was important for authorities not to ignore the fuel poor in their considerations.

In response to further comments regarding data centres, he explained that Switzerland and Denmark had regulated water-intensive cooling methods often used in data centres with heat generation minimised and waste heat recovered where possible.

A Member stated that he and his Party’s position on net zero was clear and that they felt it was common sense to use whatever resources we had. He and another Member also stated that their constituents would not want the city’s roads to be dug up for the installation of the pipes required for the scheme.

Mr. Kerr advised the Committee that there were billions of pounds sitting in green pension pots, with investors always looking for something to invest in.

The Chairperson thanked Mr. Kerr for his presentation and he retired from the meeting.

Noted.

Aggregating excess rooftop solar and wind generation in Belfast - Reverve Energy

The Deputy Chairperson welcomed Mr. P. Doyle to the meeting.

The Local Energy Systems Advisor advised the Committee that Reverve had recently won the mini “hackathon” which the Council had held to explore how innovators in the market could deliver and improve the commercial viability of a heat network in Belfast.

Mr. Doyle outlined Reverve’s proposal to help decarbonise Belfast’s district heat network by using renewable electricity which would otherwise be curtailed. He advised the Committee that Northern Ireland currently produced more wind energy than the electricity grid could accommodate, with around 25% of wind generation being curtailed. Reverve’s proposition was to capture the surplus electricity, store it in batteries and use it to power heat pumps, providing a low-carbon source of heat for the City.

Reverve proposed creating a Virtual Power Plant (VPP) made up of hundreds of distributed sites across Northern Ireland. The sites would have solar panels and battery storage. The system would use curtailed wind as the main source of electricity during winter, with solar providing a greater contribution during summer. Batteries would allow renewable electricity to be stored when it was available and dispatched when required.

He described how the proposed system was designed to provide around 67 GWh of zero-carbon heat per year, using approximately 500 participating sites. Electricity would be converted into heat through air-to-water heat pumps and supplied to Belfast's district heat network. Reverve's objective was for this electricity to be supplied under a long-term Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) at a price competitive with natural gas, while also providing greater long-term price stability.

The Committee was advised that participating commercial and public buildings would also benefit from the model. Reverve proposed to install additional solar generation and battery storage, with the aim of significantly reducing electricity costs. He stated that generating sites could reduce their power costs by up to 90%, with core assets paid off within five years and additional generation and storage provided at zero net cost to the customer. In return, participating sites would make surplus electricity available to the heat network and other off-takers at a 40% discount.

He outlined a particular opportunity for social housing, whereby tenants could achieve around a 40% reduction in winter heating costs through access to cheaper, battery-shifted renewable electricity.

The Committee was advised that the commercial model would depend heavily on a long-term commitment from Belfast City Council and other off-takers. Reverve proposed a multi-year PPA under which the Council would purchase around 67 GWh of renewable electricity each year for the heat network. The intention being that the long-term commitment would unlock the investment required to develop the wider system.

The longer-term vision was for Belfast to develop a city-wide energy network. Buildings could generate and store electricity, receive heat, or potentially do both. The model could expand gradually to include Housing Executive estates, council buildings, schools, leisure centres, GP practices and commercial or industrial sites, allowing Belfast to build the network incrementally rather than relying on one large centralised system.

Overall, Reverve's proposal aimed to solve several problems at once: reduce wasted wind energy, provide a low-carbon alternative to gas for heating, reduce energy costs for participating buildings and create a more flexible electricity system. He stated that Belfast could be a potential pioneer for the type of distributed heat and energy network, with a model that could eventually be replicated elsewhere in the UK.

In response to Member's questions, he confirmed that the price of solar and battery technology had dropped dramatically enabling the new business model to be tested and rolled out in Northern Ireland.

In response to further questions, he advised the Members that customers would be rewarded financially when they shared their stored energy and releasing it at the time of most need.

After discussion, the Chairperson thanked Mr. Doyle for his presentation and he retired from the meeting.

Noted.

Draft Belfast Sustainable Food Strategy - The Belfast Way

The Food Systems Coordinator presented the following report to the Committee:

1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 To present the Draft Belfast Sustainable Food Strategy – The Belfast Way, Action Plans and Communications Plan to SPR for consideration.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Climate and City Resilience Committee is asked to:

i. note that the draft Belfast Sustainable Food Strategy was co-designed by the Belfast Food Partnership (BFP), a cross-sectoral group of 29 partners working together to improve the food system and informed by significant engagement and good practice research.

ii. consider and approve, in principle, the direction and focus of the draft 'Belfast Sustainable Food Strategy: The Belfast Way' (as attached at Appendix 1).

iii. note that whilst some of the action plan can commence within existing budget provision, further proactive work is underway to secure external funding that will support delivery of the multi-year Strategy.

iv. agree that council officials will continue to work on the two expressions of interest for significant funding as referred to in this report as well as other funding opportunities.

v. note that updates will be brought back to Committee for consideration, with final approval of the budget allocation being sought from SP&R Committee.

3.0 Main Report

Background

3.1 **In 2023 the Sustainable Food Partnership was re-established in Belfast under the auspices of the Community Planning Partnership and in recognition of the growing pressures facing by many individuals and families in accessing affordable and healthy food. The Belfast Food Partnership, as it is now called, is hosted by the Climate Team through a full-time Food Systems Coordinator.**

3.2 **The Belfast Food Partnership (BFP) is part of the UK wide Sustainable Food Places (SFP) initiative, a network that brings together pioneering food partnerships across the UK who are driving innovation and best practice on all aspects of healthy and sustainable food. It is led by the Soil Association, Food Matters and Sustain. As well as offering support and coordination on NI and UK wide food challenges, the SFP runs an awards system designed to recognise and celebrate the success of those places taking a joined up, holistic approach to food and that are achieving significant positive change on a range of key food issues. The Belfast Food Partnership was awarded the Bronze Sustainable Food Places Award for Belfast in 2024.**

3.3 **The BFP is currently made up of 29 partners across Belfast working to improve food systems. It is co-chaired by two partners and coordinated by the Council's Food Systems Coordinator (within the Climate team). The BFP works across sectors and is driven by the following values, developed collaboratively over the past two years:**

- **Systems Driven**
- **Food Justice**
- **Circular and Regenerative**
- **Resilience**
- **Place-based and sustainable**
- **Participatory and asset based**
- **Community wealth building**

3.4 **Aligning with these values, a draft "The Belfast Way - Sustainable Food Strategy" has been co-designed with 6 underpinning action plans, which it is proposed will be delivered through 6 cross-sectoral working groups), 3 collective and flagship actions and importantly a costed implementation plan for the strategy.**

3.5 **The development of the strategy was led by a consortium of partners including the Council, Community Garden Support, Brink! Stories CIC, Grow NI, and Ulster University, supported by the Food Ethics Council (all members of the Belfast Food Partnership). The emerging draft strategy has been informed by local stakeholders and people with lived experience of growing and accessing food in the city.**

Engagement process

3.6 **The draft Strategy was collaboratively developed with respect for a plurality of views, opinions, and beliefs gathered via many workshops, conversations, and events, and is underpinned by a considerable amount of research and references. This included:**

- **Three Belfast Sustainable Food Partnership meetings and three working group meetings.**
- **Presentations at each of the four Belfast City Council Area Working Groups.**
- **Presentation to the Our Planet Board.**
- **Three bespoke workshops involving people with lived experience of food insecurity.**
- **Individual meetings with DAERA Food Policy Unit, Climate Co+ Centre, Co-Centre for Sustainable Food Systems, Food Farming and Countryside Alliance, Sustainable Food Places, Centre for Sustainability Equality and Climate Action, Unite, Nourish NI, Food NI, BCC officers, and others working across the food system in Belfast and Northern Ireland.**
- **Six public-facing events.**

Rationale for a Belfast Food Strategy

3.7 **Belfast city needs a Sustainable Food Strategy to address a range of challenges facing its food system, which is part of a wider and interconnected complex global supply chain. As the food system has globalised, we have moved further from the source of our food and the people who produce it. This has created vulnerabilities including price volatility, environmental strain, reduced resilience, health inequality, and growing food security risks. These issues disproportionately affect the city's most vulnerable communities.**

3.8 **The food system is estimated to account for up to 35% of greenhouse gas emissions globally. Belfast has set an ambitious target to reach net zero by 2050, and a strategy is needed so that the food system can contribute to efforts to**

reduce emissions. In addition to this, more people are accessing food aid in Belfast. According to University of Sheffield data:

- **14.8% of Belfast adults worry about not having enough food**
- **5% struggle to access food; and**
- **2.5% of people in Belfast are experiencing hunger.**

3.9 In NI, £7.6bn is spent by society fighting the effects of an unhealthy diet. A Sustainable Food Strategy will help to strengthen local and regional food systems, reduce emissions, and improve public health outcomes, whilst supporting community resilience through urban growing, skills development, and circular economy initiatives. The vision of the sustainable food strategy is:

> ***"To ensure that every person in Belfast can access, enjoy, and help shape a sustainable, resilient, and equitable food system that promotes human and planetary health. A food system that enables everyone in Belfast to have equitable access to nutrient rich, affordable food and one that creates conditions for a strong, circular and fair local economy for all"*.**

Taking a whole food systems approach as outlined in Belfast's Resilience Strategy 2020, enables the city to address root causes rather than symptoms, aligning efforts across health, climate, economy, and equity.

<u>A focus on delivery</u>

3.10 As referred to above, as part of this work six draft actions plans (attached at Appendix 2a) have been developed in support of the delivery of the Strategy. Each plan outlines the key outcomes to be realised as well as specific actions to deliver against such outcomes. The focus of these is:

1. **Good Food Governance**
2. **Community Growing and Right to Grow**
3. **Food Access and Justice**
4. **Circular Food Economy**
5. **Transforming Procurement**
6. **Nature Friendly Farming**

A short summary of the plans is attached at Appendix 2b.

<u>Initial cost projections and considerations</u>

3.11 Delivering the ambitions of the Belfast Way requires sustained and diversified investment across the partnership. High level cost estimates have been developed for the six action plans over 3 a three-year below as set out below.

Thematic Area / Action Plan	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
Good Food Governance	£70,000	£70,000	£70,000	£210,000
Food Access and Justice	£38,000	£328,000	£323,000	£689,000
Community Growing and Right to Grow	£33,000	£65,000	£40,000	£138,000
Circular Food Economy	£15,300	£75,000	£20,000	£110,300
Transforming Procurement	£8,000	£105,000	£100,000	£213,000
Nature Friendly Farming	£12,000	£135,000	£100,000	£147,000
TOTALS	**£176,300**	**£778,000**	**£653,000**	**£1,507,300**

3.12 It considering these cost projections, it is important to note that:

- **An estimated £100,000 has already been secured by partners organisations through the Belfast Food Partnership which would be aligned (and offset) against an element of the costs above e.g:**

    - **Good Food Governance: £7,200**
    - **Food Access Working Group: £9,650**
    - **Community Growing and Right to Grow: £11,000**
    - **Transforming Procurement: £72,000**

- **The council has contributed £70k annually which includes funding the Food Systems Coordinator (a temporary post created for 18 months until April 2027)**

- **The Council's Food Systems Coordinator is involved in the development of the following Expressions of Interest which may secure significant funding to support the Food Strategy:**

    i. **£7million EOI bid (over 5-year period) through the Belfast Food Partnership**
    ii. **£6million EOI bid (over 5-year period) as part of a wider UK bid with England, Scotland and Wales for Public Diners.**

3.13 The Sustainable Food Places network has consistently highlighted that underfunding of local food partnerships represents one of the principal barriers to translating food

strategy into systemic change. As with other food partnerships across the UK, long-term financial sustainability remains a strategic challenge and work will continue to identify and seek to secure other available funding opportunities. There is also a need for ongoing coordination and engagement across a wide range of funders, including DAERA, public health bodies, the community and voluntary sector, and European-successor funding streams.

3.14 Looking ahead, the alignment of the Belfast Way with the 'Northern Ireland's Third Climate Change Adaptation Programme, (NICCAP3)' and regional food strategy further strengthens the case for dedicated government investment, positioning Belfast's food partnership infrastructure not as a discretionary addition to Council services, but as an essential delivery mechanism for regional food, climate, and public health commitments.

4.0 <u>Financial and Resource Implications</u>

4.1 There are no current financial or resource implications for BCC in approving the Strategy. The implementation of the associated action plans will remain subject to external funding being secured, with a further report to be brought back to Committee on the funding model and seeking agreement to proceed with implementation.

4.2 <u>Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment</u>

An EQIA screening for the strategy is underway and will be available in due course.

The draft strategy is available to view here.

In response to a Member's query, the officers confirmed that they were seeking the Members' comments and endorsement of the strategy but that its delivery would be dependent on securing external funding.

During discussion, a Member stated that he and his party were not in favour of the strategy and that he had a different view, politically, on a number of the issues within it.

A further Member commended the officers on the work completed to date and stated that it was important to map out the whole strategy to ensure the city got maximum value from it.

After further discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendations within the report.

Notices of Motion Quarterly Update

After discussion, the Committee agreed:

- to keep the "New Ireland Forum and Citizens Assemblies" issue open, and to write to the Taoiseach's office one final time, outlining that the Council had written twice before with no response; and

- that the "Climate and City Resilience Dashboard" issue would be closed, given that the dashboard was now available on Interlink.

BCC response to the DfC Consultation on Warm Healthy Homes Fund (WHHF)

The Committee considered the draft response, available here.

After discussion, the Committee:

i. agreed, subject to the following amendments suggested by Members, that it be submitted to the Department for Communities in line with the closing date of 19th August 2026;

   a. regarding the eligibility thresholds, to tick "no" and outline that, while the Council would be supportive on many of the proposals set out, including the exclusion of certain disability and health benefits from the income threshold, it was important to recognise the nuances around adopting a whole-house approach to any such income thresholds in terms of outgoing financial requirements and therefore available income; and

   b. that landlords should have to contribute 20-25% of the cost for properties availing of the scheme, with protections considered for existing tenants in any properties which were upgraded under the scheme, in order to prevent landlords increasing the rent as a result of said upgrades; and

ii. noted that the Council's response would be submitted on the basis that it would remain subject to full Council ratification on 1st September, with any further comments submitted at that point.

Chairperson

This page is intentionally left blank

Standards and Business Committee

Tuesday, 25th August, 2026

MEETING OF THE STANDARDS AND BUSINESS COMMITTEE

Members present: Alderman Lawlor (Chairperson);
Alderman McCullough; and
Councillors Bower, Bradley, Carson,
P. Donnelly, D. Douglas, Ferguson, Flynn,
Kelly, Long, Magee, McAteer, McCallin,
McDonough-Brown, McDowell, McKeown,
R. McLaughlin, Murphy and Walsh.

In attendance: Ms. N. Largey, City Solicitor and Director of Legal and Civic Services;
Mr. J. Hanna, Democratic Services and Governance Manager; and
Mr. B. Flynn, Committee Services Officer.

Apologies

There were no apologies.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 26th May, 2026, 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 June, 2026.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor R. McLaughlin declared interests in items 2a and 2b in that his partner was a Junior Minister within the Northern Ireland Executive. Since the items did not become subject to discussion he was not required to leave the meeting.

Notices of Motions

The Committee considered the following Notices of Motion and agreed to the course of action as set out:

Mobile Maternity Units for Gaza

The Committee agreed that the motion, which had been moved by Councillor Doherty and seconded by Councillor McCusker, be referred to the Council for debate on 1st September with no restriction on the number of speakers.

Open Doors World Watch 2026

The Committee agreed that the motion, which had been moved by Alderman McCullough and seconded by Councillor Ferguson, be referred to the Council for debate on 1st September with no restriction on the number of speakers.

Evidence-based Approach to Preventing Radicalisation and Supporting the De-Radicalisation of Young Men

The Committee agreed that the motion, which had been moved by Councillor Whyte and seconded by Councillor de Faoite, be referred to the Council for debate on 1st September with no restriction on the number of speakers.

Parks Outreach Team

The Committee noted that the motion, which had been moved by Councillor McKeown and seconded by Councillor de Faoite, would, in the first instance, be referred for to the People and Communities Committee for consideration.

Chairperson

Mobile Maternity Units for Gaza

"This Council:

Notes with grave concern the continuing genocide and humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza and the devastating impact on pregnant women, newborn babies and families requiring urgent medical care.

Further notes that three mobile maternity units have been developed to provide safe and secure maternity and newborn care for women and babies in Gaza.

Commends the extraordinary fundraising efforts of Gaels Against Genocide and communities across Belfast, the North and Ireland which have made these three mobile maternity units possible. Many Belfast residents have contributed directly to this humanitarian effort, demonstrating the depth of solidarity in our city with Palestinian women, babies and families.

Is deeply concerned that, despite these efforts and the urgent humanitarian need, the units have not been permitted to enter Gaza.

Believes that humanitarian medical aid must never be blocked, and that pregnant women and babies must be protected in all circumstances.

Agrees to write to the First Minister and deputy First Minister, and all Executive Ministers, calling on the Northern Ireland Executive to make urgent representations to the Irish Government, UK Government and relevant international bodies to secure the immediate and unrestricted entry of these mobile maternity units into Gaza."

Proposer: Councillor Doherty

Seconder: Councillor McCusker

This page is intentionally left blank

Open Doors World Watch 2026

“Belfast City Council notes with profound concern that more than 388 million Christians around the world face high levels of persecution and discrimination for their faith.

The Council further notes the findings of the Open Doors World Watch List 2026, including that 4,849 Christians were killed worldwide during the reporting period because of their Christian identity, of whom 3,490 were killed in Nigeria.

The Council expresses particular concern at the extreme levels of violence, persecution and displacement faced by Christians in Nigeria and recognises that these events will also be of particular concern to members of Belfast's Christian and Nigerian communities, including those with family and community connections to Nigeria.

The Council further notes the recent European Parliament resolution condemning the ongoing persecution of Christians in Nigeria and calling for greater protection and accountability.

Therefore, this Council notes the Open Doors World Watch List 2026 Advocacy Report and commits to:

- Condemning the persecution, discrimination and violence faced by Christians around the world;

- Writing to the UK Government urging it to continue to promote and protect freedom of religion or belief as a leading priority in foreign policy and diplomatic engagement;

- Urging the UK Government, through its engagement with Nigeria, to press the Nigerian Government to take effective action to protect vulnerable communities, tackle the culture of impunity surrounding attacks, and ensure that those responsible for violence against Christians and other civilians are brought to justice; and

- Highlighting the findings of the World Watch List 2026 and the plight of persecuted Christians on the Council's social media channels.”

Proposer: Alderman McCullough

Seconder: Councillor Ferguson

This page is intentionally left blank

Evidence-Based Approach to Preventing Radicalisation and Supporting the De-Radicalisation of Young Men

"This Council unequivocally condemns the recent knife attack and expresses its solidarity with those affected;

- further condemns attempts to exploit this or any other serious crime to inflame racial tensions, spread hatred or justify violence against minority communities;

- notes with alarm the growing challenge of far-right, misogynistic and xenophobic radicalisation among young men, and recognises that children and young people, as they develop their identity and seek belonging and purpose, can be particularly vulnerable to radicalisation;

- recognises that many young men are drawn towards extremist ideas not through deep ideological commitment, but through a search for belonging, respect, identity and community, particularly where they experience isolation, disadvantage or poverty;

- acknowledges the role that far-right radicalisation has played in racist violence and disorder in our city and expresses alarm at the disturbing rise in recorded hate crimes and incidents;

- expresses concern that, without effective early intervention, more young men will be vulnerable to individuals and organisations which deliberately exploit grievance, alienation and insecurity to spread hatred and prejudice;

- calls on the Executive Office and Department of Justice to develop a new, evidence-based approach to preventing radicalisation and supporting the de-radicalisation of young men, drawing on international best practice and developed in partnership with experts and practitioners in education, youth work and community development;

- further calls for this approach to go beyond traditional forms of outreach and engage young people in the spaces where radicalisation increasingly takes place, including social media, online communities and gaming platforms."

Proposer: Councillor Whyte

Seconder: Councillor de Faoite

This page is intentionally left blank