

People and Communities Committee

Wednesday, 4th March, 2026

MEETING OF THE PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Cobain (Chairperson);
Councillors Abernethy, Black, Bower, Bradley,
R. Brooks, Bunting, Canavan, Collins, M. Donnelly,
R-M Donnelly, Doran, Garrett, Magee, Maghie,
Murray, McKeown and Verner.

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

Apologies

Apologies were reported on behalf of Alderman Copeland and Councillor Flynn.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 10th February were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council on 2nd March.

Declarations of Interest

Councillors Bradley, Canavan and M. Donnelly declared interests under the item 'Generalist Advice Funding 2026/27' in that they were employed by organisations which had applied for funding under the scheme. Since the item did not become subject to discussion or debate, the Members were not required to leave the meeting.

Restricted Item

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

Departmental Budget – Period 3

The Committee noted contents of a report, together with the information contained within an associated financial report pack, which provided an overview of the departmental budget to the period ending 31st December, 2025.

Notices of Motion/Issue Raised in Advance

Compact Mechanical Sweeper

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 3rd June, 2025, it had adopted a number of recommendations relating to the Council's Dog Warden Service. One of those recommendations related to the undertaking of a trial of a mechanical sweeper within local neighbourhoods as a measure to address the problem of dog fouling. It was reported that the trial had been conducted in the east, south and west of the City and, accordingly, a report was presented which outlined the findings.

After discussion, the Committee noted the information which had been provided and the Director of Open Spaces, Resources, Fleet and Transport undertook to explore a number of options in relation to the operation of that type of mechanical machine within neighbourhoods and to submit a further report in this regard. Such a report would include also details of the financial considerations, should there be any proposed changes to cleansing operations.

Operational Issues

Proposals for Dual Language Street Signs

The Committee considered a report which outlined details of six applications which had been received for the erection of a second street sign in Irish, specifically at Onslow Gardens, Kimberley Street, Stormont Park, St. John's Place, Indiana Avenue and Mountainview Drive. It was noted that, whilst all of the applications had reached the 15% support threshold required under the Council's policy, a majority of the residents who had completed and returned the surveys in Stormont Park and Onslow Gardens had opposed to the erection of a second sign in Irish.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor Maghie,
Seconded by Councillor R. Brooks,

That the Committee agrees to approve four of the six applications for the erection of second street nameplates in Irish with the exception of the applications for Stormont Park and Onslow Gardens.

Amendment

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

That the proposal be amended to provide that, in accordance with the Council's policy for the erection of dual language street signs, the Committee approves all six applications.

On a vote, nine Members voted for the amendment and nine against. As there was an equality of votes, the Chairperson exercised his second and casting vote against the amendment and it was declared lost.

The proposal was then put to the meeting whereupon nine Members voted in favour and nine against. Since there was an equality of votes, the Chairperson exercised his second and casting vote in favour of the proposal and it was declared carried.

Service Level Agreement NIEA Drinking Water Inspectorate

The Director of City Services reminded the Committee that the Council operated a service level agreement (SLA) with the Northern Ireland Environment Agency's Drinking Water Inspectorate; whereby Council officers undertook a range of duties, primarily concerning the sampling of private water supplies, risk assessments and investigatory services. She added that the agreement ensured compliance with 'The Private Water Supplies Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2009', which involved annual monitoring programmes. The current agreement had been in place since 2015, and the Director outlined the principal aspects of a revised SLA to oversee the financial year 2026/27.

The Committee granted approval for the Director of City Services to sign the associated service level agreement.

Consultation Response - Northern Ireland Nature Recovery Strategy

The Committee considered a corporate response to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) consultation exercise relating to its draft Northern Ireland Nature Recovery Strategy. It was explained that DAERA had a legislative duty to publish a strategy to address the conservation of biodiversity in Northern Ireland. The draft strategy contained five strategic objectives that would help DAERA meet its international and national legislative obligations up to 2032.

The Committee approved the [consultation response](#) and agreed that it be submitted by the submission date of 18th March, subject to the proviso that amendments, if any, made at April's meeting of the Council would be forwarded to the department.

Requests for the Use of Parks for Events

The Committee granted approval to the holding of the undernoted events, subject to the organisers meeting all of the stipulations as set out within the report:

- March for Jesus – Ormeau Park;
- Mary's Meals: Sponsored Walk – Falls Park;
- 'Fundamania' – Boucher Playing Fields; and
- Belfast Memory Walk – Ormeau Park.

In addition, the Committee granted approval also to the Strategic Director to negotiate an appropriate fee with Athletics Ireland for the hosting of the All-Ireland Schools Cross Country Championships at the City of Belfast Playing Fields on Saturday, 7th March.

Generalist Advice Funding 2026/27

The Committee noted the contents of a report in respect of the above-mentioned matter and endorsed a set of arrangements that would be put in place to provide Generalist Advice payments in lieu of the receipt of a letter of offer from the Department for Communities for Community Support Funding in the financial year 2026/27, of which Generalist Advice was an element. Specifically, the arrangements would provide that fifty per cent funding would be paid to groups in advance, subject to the receipt of the required paperwork; and that a second payment would be paid on the receipt of further satisfactory paperwork, which would be subject to availability within the allocated budget. A table of proposed payments was appended to the report.

The Committee noted also that the Council did not have a budget allocated to support activity that was one hundred percent funded through the Community Support Plan and that a further report on the one hundred percent funded elements would be provided once the Community Support Plan letter of offer had been received.

Chairperson