

# Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 9th February, 2024

## MEETING OF THE STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

HELD IN THE LAVERY ROOM AND  
REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor Black (Chairperson); and  
Councillors Beattie, Bunting, Cobain, de Faoite,  
M. Donnelly, R.M. Donnelly, Ferguson, Garrett,  
Hanvey, Long, Maghie, Maskey, I. McLaughlin,  
R. McLaughlin, Nelson, Nic Bhranair and Whyte.

In attendance: Mr. J. Walsh, Chief Executive;  
Ms. N. Largey, Interim City Solicitor/Director of Legal and  
Civic Services;  
Mr. J. Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy;  
Mr. T. Wallace, Director of Finance;  
Mr. J. Greer, Director of Economic Development; and  
Mr. J. Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer.

### **Apologies**

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Alderman McCoubrey and Councillor Smyth.

### **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were recorded.

### **Restricted Items**

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

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

The Members were also reminded that the content of 'restricted' reports and any discussion which took place during closed session must be treated as 'confidential

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information' and that no such information should be disclosed to the public as per Paragraph 4.15 of the Code of Conduct.

**Extended Cultural Support Programme**

The Members were reminded that, during discussion at the January meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, officers were asked to consider support for groups that have been underrepresented within Belfast City Council's historic funding programmes. This was also discussed at the January meeting of the City, Growth and Regeneration Committee.

At the special meeting of the Committee held on 26th January, the Director of Economic Development submitted a report seeking approval to progress with an extended cultural support programme to provide co-design support for groups requiring additional assistance to overcome barriers to accessing funding and to agree additional investment to support Belfast's bid for Fleadh Cheoil.

The Committee had agreed to defer consideration of the report to enable a further report on the full Belfast 2024 Programme to be presented to this special meeting of the Committee.

Accordingly, the Director submitted the report for the Committee's consideration.

After discussion, the Committee agreed to the allocation of £200,000 to support the proposed programme of activity, with support up to a maximum of £50,000 for individual direct awards in relation to Orangefest, Ulster Scots Week and Pride. The remainder will be used for events which will support Belfast's bid for the Fleadh Cheoil as outlined below.

**Belfast 2024 funding reallocation**

The Committee agreed to defer consideration of the report.

**Belfast 2024 Update**

The Committee considered a report which provided a further update on the Belfast 2024 Programme and granted approval for up to:

1. £150k towards BBC Co-Production – *A Century of Stories*; and
2. App £140k for Oliver Jeffer's programme of work as Headline Artist.

**Pay and Grading Review**

The Committee considered a report which provided details of the new Pay and Grading structure for NJC staff on Belfast City Council Terms and Conditions and seeking its approval for the proposed next steps within the Industrial Relations Framework.

The Committee:

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- Approved the proposed pay and grading model (“C3”) and associated assimilation rules;
- Approved that a formal offer on the above can be issued to TUS;

Subject to a successful TUS ballot:

- Approved the awarding of the proposed non-consolidated awards;
- Approved the implementation of the C3 pay and grading model;

The Committee also:

- Noted that the costs for the new pay and grading model (C3) have been included in the rate setting process for Financial Year 2024/25;
- Noted that the total non-consolidated payments for 2023/24 and 2024/25 was approximately £1.6m and would be offset by either in-year underspends and/or realignment of specified reserves; and
- Noted the proposed next steps for the Pay and Grading Review.

**Revenue Estimates and District Rate 2024-25**

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 26th January 2024, it had agreed to defer consideration of the report on the Revenue Estimates and District Rate 2024/25 to afford officers the opportunity to address the issues raised in respect of the pay and grading review. It was agreed also that a special meeting of the Council be held to consider the setting of the district rate.

The Director of Finance reminded the Members further that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, at its meeting on 19th January 2024, had agreed the cash limit for the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for 2024/25 and the recommended cash limits for the People and Communities, City Growth and Regeneration and Planning Committees.

He reported that those Committees had now met and agreed their cash limits. Accordingly, he resubmitted a report in this regard, together with recommendations on the district rate for 2024/25 as follows, that the Committee.

1. Confirms the cash limits agreed by the Committee at its meeting on the 19 January 2024 as follows:
  - a. A cash limit of £54,550,808 for the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for 2024/25, including £1,270,000 for Belfast Investment Fund and £3,000,000 for City Deal.
  - b. A cash limit of £105,332,936 for the People and Communities Committee for 2024/25.

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- c. A cash limit of £21,550,927 for the City Growth and Regeneration Committee for 2024/45.
  - d. A cash limit of £2,344,219 for the Planning Committee for 2024/25.
  - e. A Capital Financing Budget of £22,274,022 for 2024/25.
2. Agrees that the increase in the district rate for 2024/25 should be 5.44%, based on an estimated penny product of £6,664,800 meaning a non-domestic rate of 30.9162 and a domestic rate of 0.4056 and that the amount raised through the district rate in 2024/25 would be £199,532,062.
3. Notes the Chief Executive's statement on the adequacy of the Council's reserves position and the robustness of the revenue estimates as required by the Local Government Finance Act (NI) 2011.
4. Notes the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement (Appendix 5) as required by the Local Government (Capital Finance and Accounting) Regulations (NI) 2011.
5. Agrees that the decisions would not be subject to call-in because it would cause an unreasonable delay which would be prejudicial to the Council's and the public's interests in striking the rate by the legislative deadline of 15th February 2024.

Proposed by Councillor R. McLaughlin,  
Seconded by Councillor Long,

That the Committee agrees to adopt the recommendations.

On a recorded vote, eighteen Members voted for the proposal and none against, and it was accordingly declared carried.

<b>For 18</b>	<b>Against 0</b>
Councillors Black, Beattie, Bunting, Cobain, de Faoite, M. Donnelly, R.M. Donnelly, Ferguson, Garrett, Hanvey, Long, Maghie, Maskey, I. McLaughlin, R. McLaughlin, Nelson, Nic Bhranair and Whyte.	

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Chairperson