

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 23rd August, 2024

MEETING OF THE STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

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

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

Apologies

Apologies were reported from Councillors Cobain, de Faoite and Long.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 21st and 28th 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 omission of those matters in respect of which the Council had delegated its powers to the Committee.

Declarations of Interest

Councillors Beattie, Black, M. Donnelly, Duffy, R. McLaughlin and Nelson declared an interest in item 2f – Discretionary Payments in that they worked for or were associated with organisations which had submitted applications and left the meeting whilst the item was under discussion.

Restricted Items

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

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

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

Update on Temporary Contracts and Agency Workers

The Director of Human Resources submitted for the Committee's consideration a report providing an update on the number of employees on temporary contracts and agency assignees engaged by the Council and outlining the steps being taken to reduce the Council's reliance on those two categories.

She reported that, as at 30th June, 2024, 211 staff had been filling posts on a temporary basis, 121 of whom had substantive Council posts to return to when no longer required. The other 90 were fixed term contract employees who did not have a substantive post to return to. Between 1st April and 30th June, 22 staff had joined the Council on a temporary contract, with 9 having a substantive post and 13 being on fixed term contracts.

She reported further that 215 agency assignees had been engaged by the Council as at 30 June, 33 of whom were seasonal workers. She outlined the cost of employing agency assignees for the three-month period ending on 30th June and pointed out that this did not represent a financial burden, as it was met through departmental underspends.

From 1st April 2024 to 30th June 2024 there were 136 appointments made. As of 30th June 2024, there were an additional 40 posts in transition (at public advertisement / internal trawl stage; shortlisting and/or interview stage; pre-employment checking stage, etc.

The Director then stated that the Corporate Contract Manager, who had been in post since February, had established regular compliance and challenge meetings across Departments, with a view to driving down long-term agency usage and that data was being reviewed to assess the potential for creating some permanent flexible roles.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 23rd August, 2024**

In-house Agency Research Report - Findings

The Committee agreed to defer consideration of the report and agreed that the matter be included on the agenda of the Members' workshop on financial planning which was scheduled to be held in September.

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;
- the update on the Pay and Grading Review; and
- the update to business planning for Continuous Improvement for the current financial year.

2024-25 Quarter 1 Finance Report

The Director of Finance submitted for the Committee's consideration a report providing information on the financial position for Quarter 1 2024/25.

He reported that, at the end of Quarter 1, the financial position for the Council had shown an underspend of £1.8m, representing 3.8% of the net expenditure budget. The Quarter 1 Departmental forecast was an underspend of £169k, representing 0.1% of the net expenditure budget.

The Director then provided updates on the 2024/25 reserves position, additional vat receipts, the rates finalisation 204/25 and the capital projects.

The Committee noted:

- the Quarter 1 financial position; and
- the half year Treasury Management report.

**Medium Term Financial Plan
and Efficiency Programme**

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on the assessment of the key financial factors which would influence the development of the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan for 2025/26 - 2028/29 and the rate setting process for 2025/26, together with an overview of the priorities and work in progress to establish the 2025/26 - 2028/29 Efficiency Programme.

The Committee:

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 23rd August, 2024**

- noted the challenges to be taken into consideration as part of the annual and medium-term rate setting; and
- agreed that the same district rate increase would be levied on domestic and non-domestic properties.

Discretionary Payments

The Director of Finance submitted a report which provided details on the outcome of the assessment of Discretionary payment applications received during July and August 2024 and which sought agreement in relation to the award of the grant.

The Committee:

- 1) noted the number of applications received and the total funding requested; and
- 2) agreed the payment of grant to those who scored over 50%.

2 Royal Avenue

The Committee noted that an update on the initial Expression of Interest / Soft Market Testing Exercise in respect of the Ground Floor of 2 Royal Avenue was presented to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee on 7 August 2024, and noted the next steps on commencing detailed discussions with interested parties which would be reported back to the City Growth and Regeneration and Strategic Policy and Resources Committees in Autumn 2024 for consideration.

Low Emissions Strategy

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on the ongoing development of a Low Emission Vehicle Strategy for Belfast City Council and which sought approval to move forward with an initial first phase to assess the commercial viability of council owned assets for possible Electric Vehicle investment.

The Committee:

- (i) noted the emerging draft Belfast City Council Low Emission Strategy;
- (ii) noted that detailed financial modelling was ongoing to understand the implications of implementing the emerging draft strategy and that a further report would be brought back to the Committee;
- (iii) agreed that officers progress with phase 1 and phase 2 of the strategy, which would support a commercial assessment and market testing of Council land assets to understand potential scope to bring forward for possible locations for low emissions infrastructure investment; and

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 23rd August, 2024**

- (iv) noted that a further report would be brought back to Committee on phase 1 and phase 2.

Wider University and Lower Ormeau Intervention Programme

The Committee considered a report, the purpose of which was to provide Members with a progress update on the Wider University and Lower Ormeau Intervention and the development of a shared multi-agency action plan; to request Members to consider the approach for securing resources to deliver the 4-year action plan, the need of which had been further amplified given recent protests and violence which had severely impacted vulnerable people within the area and increased community tensions and the sense of safety; and to highlight and seek the views of Members in relation to a number of objections that have been received from LANI and the wider landlord community in relation to the emerging action plan, alleygating scheme and LIF environmental improvement project.

After discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor McDonough-Brown,
Seconded by Councillor Groogan,

That should the contributions being requested from the other partners in the Inter-Agency Group for the continued funding of the post of Intervention Manager be not forthcoming, then the remaining budget in the discretionary fund be used for this purpose.

On a vote four Members voted for the proposal and 10 Members against and it was declared lost.

Accordingly, the Committee:

- (i) noted the progress update in relation to the development and delivery of the Wider University and Lower Ormeau (WULO) Intervention;
- (ii) noted the objections raised from LANI and the wider landlord community in relation to the WULO Action Plan;
- (iii) granted approval to publicly launch the WULO Action Plan, with the omission of LANI as being a support partner to the plan;
- (iv) agreed to write to the Inter-Agency Group partners seeking funding contributions towards the proposed extension of the Area Intervention Manager up to 2028 which was aligned to the 4-year action plan; and
- (v) agreed, in principle, the Council's funding contribution towards the Area Intervention Manager position.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 23rd August, 2024**

Assets Report

(On the advice of the City Solicitor, the Members of the Planning Committee, that is, Councillors Ferguson, Garrett, Groogan, Murphy and Whyte left the meeting whilst part (ii) was under discussion. Councillor R. McLaughlin took the Chair.)

The Committee:

- i) Knocknagoney Linear Park – Boundary Rectification**
 - approved the rectification of lands at Knocknagoney Linear Park.
- ii) The Lighthouse Building, Gasworks Estate – Change of Use from Office to Residential Use**
 - deferred consideration of a change of use from office to residential to enable a further report to be submitted on the type of residential property and the land contamination.
- iii) Blythefield Multi Sports Pitch and Pavilion – Lease Variation**
 - approved the lease variation to Greater Village Regeneration Trust re the insurance and maintenance liabilities on the Blythefield multi-sports pitch and pavilion.
- iv) Ormeau Embankment – Notification of Footpath Adoption**
 - noted the notification of the footpath adoption at Ormeau Embankment by the Department for Infrastructure.
- v) Fullerton Park – Lease Renewal**
 - approved the Lease Renewal of a site lease at Fullerton Park to Dunmurry Young Men’s Football Club.
- vi) Olympia – Update on Commercial Development Sites & New Lease Agreement**
 - noted the update to the commercial development sites to Lidl NI Limited.
 - approved that a lease is entered into between the Council and NIE on a portion of the Olympia site to facilitate a NIE sub-station to service the development.
- vii) The Keep Cornmarket Concept Store- Licence**
 - agreed in-principle to enter into an agreement with DFI to facilitate additional security measures on the pavement outside the proposed new occupiers concept store with a further agreement to be entered into between Council and the occupier regarding the upkeep of the works.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 23rd August, 2024**

NI Water update

The Director of Property and Projects submitted a report which provided details of correspondence which had been received from NI Water in respect of its constraints and which outlined the potential impacts of this for the city, along with the Council's proposed response. The Committee:

- (i) noted the correspondence received from NI Water regarding budgetary constraints and the potential impact of this for Belfast;
- (ii) noted the next steps as outlined at paragraphs 3.4-3.6 of the report; and
- (iii) agreed to invite the Chief Executive of NI Water to attend a future meeting of the Committee and noted that this would be raised with the Minister of Infrastructure as part of the All-Party meeting at the start of October.

Belfast Bikes Operating Model and revenue Structure

The Committee deferred consideration of the new operating model and revenue structure for the Belfast Bikes Scheme to enable Party briefings to take place.

Peace Programmes – Peace Plus and Peace IV Update

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on the Peace Programme, namely, Peace Plus and the Peace IV Programme.

The Committee noted the following:

Peace Programmes

- the significant investment that has been secured to date for Belfast under the Peace programmes (Peace – Peace Plus) of over £60m which had delivered significant and transformational projects across the city.

Peace Plus Programme

- Theme 1.1 – Local Action Plan – that the Council's Local Action Plan for Belfast under Theme 1.1 had been approved and represented an investment of over £15.1m in the city and would cover three themes as laid out in paragraphs 3.5-3.7 of the report.
- Theme 1.4 – that SEUPB's Steering Group was due to meet in September to determine the outcome of applications under this Theme which included the Council's proposals for the reimagining of Waterworks and Alexandra Park.

Peace IV Programme

- the updates on the Peace IV programme projects and the update on the procurement issue at Black Mountain Shared Space.

Matters referred back from Council/Motions

Notices of Motion – Neonatal Leave

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1 At the SP&R committee on 24th March 2023 the Committee was advised that the Standards and Business Committee, at its meeting on 21st February 2023, had referred the following motion which had been proposed by Councillor Spratt and seconded by Councillor Bunting:

“This Council will amend maternity leave provision for mothers of babies defined as premature so that maternity leave will not commence until the certified due date of the child. All/any leave required from delivery date of a premature baby by parents will be considered compassionate leave and not reduce an employee’s right to standard parental leave.”

- 1.2 The SP&R Committee adopted the motion, and it was forwarded to The Director of Human Resources to review / action.

This report informs Committee of the outcome of the consultation with the trade unions and the development of a proposed Neonatal Leave and Pay Policy which will be implemented in September 2024.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- Note the agreed Neonatal Leave and Pay Policy and to agree to the implementation of the policy for all staff with immediate effect.

3.0 **Main report**

3.1 **Commencement of Maternity Leave**

- 3.1 As maternity leave and pay provisions are a statutory right and the entitlement to maternity leave and pay is enshrined within legislation, including when maternity leave must begin, i.e. no later than the day of the birth (regardless if the child is born prematurely), Council are unable to amend the commencement date of a new mother's (or the equivalent for an adopter/surrogate) maternity leave to that of the expected due date as opposed to the date of the birth. However, there is no restriction upon the Council providing another form of leave which can be added on to the end of maternity leave to enhance the time a mother has to spend with her new-born child.

On 24th May 2023 a new Neonatal Care (Leave and Pay) Bill became law and will come to effect in 2025 in England, Scotland and Wales. This is not applicable in Northern Ireland.

In addition, Neonatal Leave is included within the current consultation on the Department for the Economy's "*Good Jobs*" *Employment Rights Bill*.

Despite this, there is no restriction upon the Council developing its own policy to allow for the provision of this additional leave and therefore consultation was commenced with the trade unions through the Council's Industrial Relations Framework to seek to develop a policy which would offer this provision to staff.

3.2 **Neonatal Leave and Pay Policy**

Following consultation between management and trade unions a Neonatal Leave and Pay Policy was agreed by JNCC on 20th June 2024.

The policy provides additional leave for staff, whereby they have a newborn child who has spent time in a neonatal care unit following birth. This will ensure such parents have the opportunity to spend the same amount of time at home with their newborn child, as would be the case had the child not spent time in neonatal care.

The proposed entitlements are based upon the statutory entitlements that will be provided to employees in England, Scotland and Wales as part of the Neonatal Care (Leave and Pay) Act 2023 and will create an additional family related leave over and above that which is already provided by the Council through its various work life balance entitlements.

Furthermore, the same entitlements will apply to mothers, fathers/non birthing parents, adoptive parents and the intended parent (if having the baby through surrogacy arrangements).

3.3 Entitlement to Neonatal Leave

The policy provides additional leave for Council employees whose newborn child has had to spend a minimum of seven consecutive days in a neonatal care unit within the first 28 days following birth.

The amount of leave will be dependent upon how long the baby spends in neonatal care and will be based upon full weeks only. The minimum period of leave will be one week (i.e. one period of seven consecutive days), with the maximum being 12 weeks.

The leave can be taken at any time up to 68 weeks following the birth of the baby. However, for the mother of the child it must be taken following her maternity leave (this will also apply to the main adopter of the child – i.e., it can only be taken at the end of the adoption leave). This is because, once maternity leave has commenced it cannot be ended and then restarted again.

For the father or non-birthing parent the leave can be taken at any time up to the 68 weeks and does not impact upon the entitlement to paternity leave.

3.4 Entitlement to Neonatal Pay

Payment for a period of neonatal leave will be paid at the same rate as the weekly rate of statutory maternity pay, maternity allowance, statutory paternity pay, statutory shared parental pay, statutory adoption pay and statutory parental bereavement pay. Currently, this equates to £183.03 per week.

While entitlement to the leave is a day one right, entitlement to the pay will require the employee to have completed 26 weeks of continuous service. This is in line with the current requirements for other types of paid “family leave” and mirrors the legislation to be introduced in GB.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.5 Based upon UK average numbers of newborn babies who spend time in neonatal care following birth, and using the numbers of Council employees who were on maternity leave during 2021 – 2023 the estimated costs to the council would range from £497.84 (one weeks leave) to £5,974.09 (12 weeks leave).

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 23rd August, 2024**

- 3.6 Following ratification at council, we will work with colleagues in External Affairs, Communications and Marketing to deliver both external and internal communications around the benefits of the policy.**

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

- 3.7 There are no equality or good relations implications with the Neonatal leave policy.**
- 3.8 The introduction of the enhanced leave provisions should have a positive impact on equality and good relations as it will ensure that the parents of children born premature or sick, requiring a longer hospital stay, will have the same amount of time to spend at home with their newborn child as those employees whose child is born healthy.**
- 3.9 This policy has undergone equality and rural needs screening and has been screened out.”**

The Committee noted the agreed Neonatal Leave and Pay Policy and agreed to the implementation of the policy for all staff with immediate effect. It was agreed also that a report be submitted to a future meeting on the Council’s current Maternity Pay rates.

**Response received from DfC
re NOM – Anti-Poverty Strategy**

The Committee was reminded that, at the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee meeting held on 19th April, 2024, it was agreed to write to the Minister for Communities requesting that the Anti-Poverty Strategy be brought forward as quickly as possible.

The Committee was advised that a response has been received from Mr. Carl Savage, Deputy Director Central Policy Division, Department for Communities.

In his response he advises “*Minister Lyons is committed to delivering long-term, sustainable solutions to poverty in all its forms for our communities right across Northern Ireland and ensuring the best possible future for those suffering socio-economic disadvantage.*

The Minister will be engaging with his Executive colleagues over the coming weeks and months to identify and implement effective and sustainable actions that will address the issues faced by all living in poverty within Northern Ireland.

The intention is for a draft Anti-Poverty Strategy to be brought to the Executive as soon as possible, taking account of the current delivery environment and Executive and Ministerial priorities.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 23rd August, 2024**

Final decisions on the content and implementation of the Anti-Poverty Strategy will be subject to Executive agreement."

The Committee was advised that officers would continue to work with colleagues from DfC to seek to maximise the draw-down of available funding to support those affected by the cost-of-living crisis through the Hardship Programme. The Council would also continue to raise awareness and create referral pathways to existing support services which might be available through the annual publication of the cost-of-living guide.

The Committee noted the response.

Response received from DfI re Trademark Belfast's request

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting held on 19th April, 2024, it was agreed to write to Mr John O'Dowd, Minister for Infrastructure, to communicate the Council's support for Trademark moving to Bankmore Square as an important catalyst for local business activity and as a unique offering to tourists, and ask that the Department ask Linen Quarter BID to surrender their lease and award Trademark the lease of Bankmore Square, with all the due diligence required, from July 2024 in order to protect jobs and reduce any disruption to their business and the dozens of small independent businesses which rely on Trademark.

The Committee was advised that a response had been received from Ms Mary Toner, Lands Branch, Department for Infrastructure.

In her response she advises that "the area of land in question is not surplus to the Department's requirements. You are aware that the Department has already entered arrangements with another party (Linen Quarter BID) in respect of this land. The Department will not be seeking to terminate its licence agreement with Linen Quarter BID as there has been no breach of their obligations."

Noted.

Response received from Translink re NOM – Bilingual Signage at Weavers Cross

The Committee was reminded that, at the Standards and Business Committee meeting held on 28th March, 2024, it was agreed to write to Translink advising them of a Notice of Motion in connection with bilingual signage at Weavers Cross.

The Committee was informed that a response had previously been received from Mr. Chris Conway, Group Chief Executive of Translink, dated 7th May, which noted that Translink was planning a series of meetings with a range of interested parties, where they would listen carefully to all viewpoints and consider a response once this process had been completed.

The Committee was advised that a further response had subsequently been received, dated 18th July, again from Mr. Chris Conway, Group Chief Executive Translink,

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 23rd August, 2024**

advising that, during recent weeks, representatives had met with a wide variety of groups, including Conradh na Gaeilge, Foras na Gaeilge, Ulster-Scots Agency/Board o Ulster Scots, Sinn Féin, DUP, and Belfast South Community Resources to discuss the issue. He detailed that Translink's position had been consistent throughout all meetings, a desire to listen to the issues raised and look for solutions.

In conclusion the correspondence advises that further dialogue on this issue within and between communities and political representatives will be required to reach a solution.

The Committee noted the response.

Governance

Appointment to Outside Body: Integrated Care System NI Area Integrated Partnership Board

The City Solicitor advise the Members that Correspondence had been received from the Department of Health advising that work was underway on the development and implementation of the Integrated Care System for Northern Ireland (ICS NI).

The letter indicated it had been agreed that council representation on Area Integrated Partnership Boards would be undertaken by local councillors. Therefore, the Department was now seeking to secure one local government representative from each relevant council within each shadow AIPB area, which would include one from Belfast City Council

This fell under the appointments to outside bodies under the St. Lague Order of Choices.

In accordance with the decision of the SP&R Committee 21/6/19 which "*agreed a process to deal with any additional requests from outside bodies for Council representation during the Council term, in that the Party or Parties who would have had the next available choice(s) under the Saint Lague table would be asked to nominate a representative(s)*".

Accordingly, the positions will be offered in the instance to the next Party on the list, namely, the DUP.

The Committee acceded the request to appoint to the Integrated Care System NI Area Integrated Partnership Board and noted that the nomination would be made in accordance with Committee's decision of 26th June, 2023 in relation to additional appointments to outside bodies.

Amendments to Standing Orders - The Local Government (Remote Meetings) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 To consider amendments to Standing Orders to allow all meetings of the Council and its Committees to be held in a hybrid format, that is in-person and remotely.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Committee is asked to agree the amendments to Standing Orders and to approve the Supplement to Standing Orders – Remote Meetings Protocol and Procedure Rules.

3.0 Main Report

Background

3.1 Members will be aware that The Local Government (Remote Meetings) Regulations (Northern Ireland) “The Regulations” 2024 came into effect from 25th June 2024.

3.2 The Regulations makes provision for remote attendance at council and committee meetings by members of a council and requires the council to make standing orders regarding the decision to hold the meeting remotely, the conduct of a meeting and access by the public.

3.3 By way of background, Members will be aware that the Council has always been supportive of the introduction of legislation to allow Councillors to attend meetings on a remote basis. The Council had previously responded to a Call for Evidence from the Department for Communities back in early 2022 indicating that it supported proposals to have legislation put in place which would allow remote/hybrid meetings to be held on a permanent basis, legislation which had previously been available temporarily under the Coronavirus Act 2020.

3.4 As recently as 19th April, 2024, the Committee had agreed to write to the Minister for Communities requesting that the Local Government (Remote Meetings) Regulations (NI) 2024 be brought forward as quickly as possible.

Amendments to Standing Orders

3.5 The Regulations state at paragraph:

(5) A council must make standing orders governing remote attendance at meetings of that council, which shall—

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 23rd August, 2024

- (a) specify the basis or process for considering whether (including who is to assess or decide whether) council meetings should or are to be held remotely;*
- (b) govern the arrangements for and conduct of such meetings whenever such meetings are to be held remotely; and*
- (c) regulate –*
 - (i) the public's access to such meetings, and*
 - (ii) the availability to the public of documents pertaining to such meetings,*

whenever such meetings are to be held remotely.

- 3.6 Regarding 5(a), given the Council's previous views on the holding of remote meetings, it is suggested that Standing Orders should be amended to provide that the default position is that all meetings of the Council and its Committees shall be held remotely, that is, in a hybrid format so that Members may attend in person or remotely.
- 3.7 For 5 (b) the arrangements and conduct of meetings shall be governed by the Supplement to Standing Orders – Remote Meetings Protocol and Procedure Rules (set out in appendix 1).
- 3.8 In relation to 5(c), the public can access all Council and Committee meetings in-person. In addition, these meeting are streamed live and can be accessed through the Council's website. All papers will be uploaded through the software as per normal procedures and this is also set out in appendix 1.
- 3.9 Therefore, it is proposed that Standing Orders be amended as follows:
 - 2(a) All meetings of the Council and its Committees shall be held remotely, that is in a hybrid format so that Councillors can attend in-person or remotely, in accordance with The Local Government (Remote Meetings) Regulations Northern Ireland (2024).
 - 2(b) The arrangement and conduct, public access and availability of documents is set out in the Supplement to Standing Orders – Remote Meetings Protocol and Procedures Rules.
- 3.10 If the Committee is minded to agree to the amendments to Standing Orders then, following ratification by the Council and the expiry of the call-in period, it is proposed that the first meeting

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 23rd August, 2024**

which will be convened in a hybrid format will be the September meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

- 3.11 The Protocol will be kept under review, with the authority delegated to the City Solicitor/Director of Legal Services to make any minor changes. More substantial changes will be brought back to the Committee for approval.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.12 None associated with this report. The Council already has the equipment and resources in place to host meetings in a hybrid format.

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

- 3.13 None.”

**Supplement to Standing Orders –
Remote Meetings Protocol and Procedure Rules**

The Local Government (Remote Meetings) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024 “The Regulations” which came into operation with effect from 25th June makes provision for remote attendance at council and committee meetings by members of a council and requires a council to make standing orders regarding the decision to hold a meeting remotely, the conduct of and access by the public.

This supplement should be read in conjunction with Standing Orders 2(a) and 2(b) which give effect to that.

Introduction and Application of the Remote Meetings Procedure Rules

This Protocol and Procedure Rules sets out the basis upon which any remote meeting of the Council, and its various Committees, will be held. This Protocol and Procedure Rules should be read in conjunction with the Council’s Standing Orders. The Regulations make modifications to the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

The effect of the Regulations on the Authority’s Constitution is to insert what are, in effect, mandatory Standing Orders if the Council wishes to hold meetings remotely, either wholly or partially.

A reference in any enactment of a council or committee meeting is not limited to a meeting of persons all of whom, or any of whom, are present in the same place and a reference to a “place” where a meeting is held, or

to be held, includes reference to more than one place including electronic, digital, or virtual locations such as internet locations, web addresses or conference call telephone numbers.

1. Public Access

- 1.1 All meetings will be held in a hybrid format.
- 1.2 The public can access all meetings in-person.
- 1.3 In addition, these meetings will be streamed live, and can be accessed through the Council's website. Those details will be published on the Council's website and on social media.
- 1.4 It is important to note that the public accessing the meeting by remote means, as described here, is different from the public attending to exercise a right to speak. A technological failure removing the ability for the public to access the meeting by remote means does not render the whole or part of a meeting incapable of proceeding. A member of the public who attends to exercise their right to speak and is unable to do so renders only their item incapable of proceeding (This is set out paragraph 3 below).
- 1.5 All documents for the meetings will be uploaded through the software as per normal procedures.
- 1.6 These will be available to the public via the Council's website.
- 1.7 Access to meetings and documents will be limited for "exempt" issues as set out in paragraph 6.1.

2. Management of Remote Meetings for Members

- 2.1 Democratic Services will give the requisite notice of the time of the meeting, and the agenda, together with details of how to join the meeting.
- 2.2 Members will be notified of a remote meeting by email and all agenda papers will be available on the Council's website and the Modern.Gov app.
- 2.3 Remote access to meetings will be via Microsoft Teams. The meetings will be facilitated by officers from Democratic Services and Digital Services.
- 2.4 If this is not possible, attendance may be through an audio link or by electronic means.
- 2.5 Any Member participating in a meeting remotely, must when they

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 23rd August, 2024**

are speaking, be able to be heard (and be seen where practicable) by all other Members in attendance, and the remote participant must, in turn, be able to hear (and see where practicable) those other Members participating.

- 2.6 In addition, a remote participant must be able to be heard by, and in turn hear any members of the public entitled to attend the meeting and who exercise a right to speak at the meeting.
- 2.7 The Chairperson will normally confirm at the outset and at any reconvening of a Committee meeting that they can see and hear all participating members (this is unlikely to be practical for a meeting of full Council). Any Member participating remotely should also confirm at the outset and at any reconvening of the meeting that they can see and hear the proceedings and the other participants.
- 2.8 The attendance of those members at the meeting will be recorded by the Democratic Services Officer.
- 2.9 The normal quorum requirements for meetings as set out in the Council's Standing Orders will also apply to a remote meeting.
- 2.10 In the event of any apparent failure of the video, telephone or conferencing connection, the Chairperson should immediately determine if the meeting is still quorate:
 - if it is, then the business of the meeting will continue; or
 - if there is no quorum, then the meeting shall adjourn for a period specified by the Chairperson, expected to be no more than fifteen minutes, to allow the connection to be re-established.
- 2.11 Should any aspect of a Member's remote participation fail, the Chairperson may call a short adjournment of up to five minutes or so to determine whether the connection can quickly be re-established, either by video technology or telephone in the alternative. If the connection is not restored within that time, the meeting should continue to deal with the business whilst this happens, providing the meeting remains quorate and the public are able to hear.
- 2.12 In the event of connection failure, the remote Member(s) will be deemed to have left the meeting at the point of failure and if the connection cannot be re-established to those Member(s) before the end of the meeting, then the presumption will be that the meeting should continue to deal with the item(s).

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 23rd August, 2024**

2.13 If the connection is successfully re-established, then the remote Member(s) will be deemed to have returned at the point of re-establishment.

2.14 If a connection to a Member is lost during a regulatory meeting, the Chairperson will stop the meeting to enable the connection to be restored. If the connection cannot be restored within a reasonable time, the meeting will proceed.

3. **Remote Attendance of the Public**

3.1 Any member of the public participating in a meeting remotely in exercise of their right to speak at Council or in regulatory or other meetings must meet the same criteria as members of the Council. Members of the public attending a meeting remotely must, likewise, when they are speaking be able to be heard (and ideally be seen) by all other Members in attendance, and the remote participant must, in turn, be able to hear (and ideally see) those other members participating be so heard and, where practicable, be seen by any other members of the public attending the meeting.

3.2 A process is in place which requires advance notification from members of the public wishing to attend remotely (if practicable). For those items of business, an invitation to participate in the remote technology can then be sent out in advance.

3.3 Alternatively, if the Council is unable to provide a technological solution, the existing public speaking rights will be replaced with public participation by receipt of representations in writing only, unless there is an express legislative provision which requires the person to be given the opportunity to appear before and be heard by the Committee. Submissions received from the public can then be read out by the Chairperson or a supporting officer.

3.4 The Democratic Services Officer or meeting facilitator should mute the member of the public once they have spoken, and remove them from the remote meeting on the instruction of the Chairperson, in order to maintain the good administration of the meeting or to retain order.

3.5 A breakdown of the technology should not disadvantage the member of the public in remote attendance wherever possible.

4. **Meeting Procedures**

4.1 Democratic Services will facilitate the meeting. Their role will be to control the video, telephone or conferencing technology

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 23rd August, 2024**

employed for remote access and attendance and to administer the public and Member interaction, engagement, and connections on the instruction of the Chairperson.

- 4.2** Given the reliance on technology it is particularly important that those making proposals or amendments differing from or in addition to report recommendations should, where possible, ensure these are provided to Democratic Services in advance of the meeting also. Political Parties are also encouraged to coordinate this activity wherever possible in respect of full Council meetings and other meetings likely to result in a high number of requests to speak. This is particularly important if Members are unable to participate via video conference.
- 4.3** The Chairperson will follow the rules set out in Standing Orders when determining who may speak, as well as the order and priority of speakers and the content and length of speeches in the normal way.
- 4.4** The Chairperson, at the beginning of the meeting, will explain the protocol for member and public participation and the rules of debate. The Chair's ruling during the debate will be final.
- 4.5** Members are asked to adhere to the following etiquette during remote attendance at a meeting:
- Committee members are asked to join the meeting no later than fifteen minutes before the start to allow themselves and the meeting facilitator the opportunity to test the equipment.
 - Any camera (video-feed) should show a non-descript background or, where possible, a virtual background and members should be careful to not allow exempt or confidential papers to be seen in the video-feed.
 - Mute the microphone when not talking.
 - Rather than raising one's hand or rising to be recognised or to speak, Members should avail themselves of the remote process for requesting to be heard:
[e.g., where available]
 - o Members are to use any chat facility to indicate to the Chairperson that they wish to speak. Members will unmute their microphone and turn their cameras on when the Chairperson invites them to

speaking. The chat facility must not be used for private conversations between Councillors.

- Only speak when invited to by the Chairperson
- Only one person may speak at any one time
- Turn on the microphone and also the video-feed (if available or unless speaking to a diagram, presentation slide or drawing), then state your name before you make a comment
- When referring to a specific report, page, or slide, mention the report, page, or slide so that all members have a clear understanding of what is being discussed at all times.

4.6 Where members of the public are exercising speaking rights at the meeting via remote attendance, the Chairperson will, as part of their introduction, explain the procedure for their participation which will reflect those relevant elements of the above. Members of the public must adhere to this procedure otherwise they may be excluded from the meeting.

Voting

4.7 When satisfied that there has been sufficient debate, the Chairperson will ask for a proposer and seconder for the item being discussed and progress to making a decision. Unless a Recorded Vote is called, the method of voting will be as follows:

- Where there is a clear recommendation(s) in a report, the Chairperson will put the recommendation(s) forward. If there is no dissent then it is taken as agreed; or
- If there is a single amendment to the recommendation(s) or an alternative proposal, the Chairperson will put this forward. If there is no dissent then it is taken as agreed; or
- Where there is dissent or more than one proposal/amendment, these will be dealt with in the normal manner by means of a vote.
- Voting will take place as follows:
 - an officer will call out the name of each member present with:
 - members stating 'for', 'against', or 'abstain' to indicate their vote when their name is called

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 23rd August, 2024**

- the Democratic Services Officer clearly stating the result of the vote
- once confirmed the Chairperson will then move onto the next agenda item

4.8 Details of how Members voted will not be minuted (the minutes will, as normal practice state the numbers for and the numbers against) unless a Recorded Vote is called. Where a Recorded Vote is requested the Chair will ask members in turn to signify verbally whether or not they support that request.

Leaving a Meeting

4.9 Members leaving the meeting should use the chat facility or otherwise indicate to the Chairperson that they are exiting the meeting. Failure to do this will lead to an assumption that the Member has dropped out through a technology failure. The meeting may be adjourned to re-establish the remote link or to utilise the alternative phone connection. The Chairperson of the meeting will check with Members, joined to the meeting by phone, if they wish to make any contribution during discussion on any item. As the technology will make it difficult to monitor drop out at a Council meeting at which 60 Members may be present, a number will be provided enabling a message to be conveyed by text to Democratic Services.

5 **Declaration of Interests**

5.1 Any Member participating in a remote meeting who declares a disclosable pecuniary interest, or other declarable interest, in any item of business that would normally require them to leave the room, must also leave the remote meeting. Their departure will be confirmed by the Democratic Services Officer or meeting facilitator, who will invite the relevant Member by link, email or telephone, to re-join the meeting at the appropriate time.

6 **Exclusion of Public and Press**

6.1 There are times when Council meetings are not open to the public, when confidential, or “exempt” issues (as defined in Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972) are under consideration. Where the technology is available, the Democratic Services Officer or meeting facilitator will ensure that there are no members of the public in remote attendance or remotely accessing the meeting are able to hear or see the proceedings once the exclusion has been agreed by the meeting.

6.2 Each Member in remote attendance must ensure and verbally

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 23rd August, 2024**

declare that there are no other persons present who are not entitled to be (either hearing or seeing) consideration of such items, and/or recording the proceedings.

The Committee agreed the amendments to Standing Orders and approved the Supplement to Standing Orders – Remote Meetings Protocol and Procedure Rules.

Belfast Agenda/Strategic Issues

Director of Economic Development Recruitment

The Committee agreed that the post Director of Economic Development be recruited on a permanent basis and that the selection panel for the post comprise the Chairperson of the SP&R Committee: the Deputy Chairperson of the SP&R Committee (or their nominees); and one additional elected member from the DUP; along with the Chief Executive (or his nominee) and the Strategic Director of Place and Economy.

Belfast Stories

(Ms. W. Langham, Programme Director, attended in connection with this item.)

The Programme Director submitted for the Committee's consideration the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 Purpose of the report

- **Update Members on the Belfast Stories programme as part of the Belfast Region City Deal including design work undertaken to date as part of RIBA Design stages 1 & 2.**
- **Outline activity to support the next phase of development up to the end of RIBA Design stage 2 and the submission of the Outline Business Case.**
- **To note a 12-week public consultation on emerging designs including an Equality Impact Assessment and Rural Needs Assessment.**

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- **Note a 12-week public consultation on emerging concept designs for Belfast Stories, to run from 26th September until 19th December 2024.**

- Agree that a Members' workshop take place during the public consultation.
- Note that a report in December 2024 will be submitted to approve the submission of the Outline Business Case (OBC) to the Department for Economy (DfE) to secure a contract for funding as part of the Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD).

3.0 Main Report

- 3.1 Members will be aware that Belfast Stories is the Council's flagship project under the Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) and is due to open 2030. Positioned as a tourism anchor, Belfast Stories is set to deliver significant economic and social impact for Belfast and beyond helping to regenerate the city centre and connect the tourism offer to the neighbourhoods.
- 3.2 A dedicated Programme Management Office within the Council has been operational since 2020 and the team provides regular updates to Committees and to the Belfast Stories Members Working Group.
- 3.3 In March 2024, an update was provided to SPR Committee outlining work undertaken to date and the appointment of design teams including the architectural team which is a partnership between Oslo-based Snøhetta and Belfast based TODD Architects. Gleeds was also appointed to oversee project management and design assurance.
- 3.4 In April 2024 Ralph Applebaum Associates (RAA) was appointed to head up the Experience Design Team to deliver the Interpretive Masterplan and Concept Design through to the end of the current project stage. The teams have been working together towards the delivery of RIBA stage 2 concept designs by the end of March 2025.

Programme activities and key milestones 2024

- 3.5 The focus in 2024 is the development of the design brief and concept designs for the experience and build and the development of the Outline Business Case (OBC) for submission to the Department for the Economy (DfE) for BRCD funding, which is expected to be submitted January 2025, subject to Council approval.
- 3.6 Key milestones in 2024 are as follows:

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 23rd August, 2024**

- Development of the Project Brief RIBA 1 by Q1 2024 - *complete*
- Concept Design (experience and build) RIBA 2 - Q2 & Q3 2024 - *ongoing*
- Establish the Belfast Stories Network by Q1 2024 - *complete*
- Stories Pilot by Q1 2024 - *complete*
- Set up the Stories Panel by Q2 2024 – *due September 2024*
- Develop the Outline Business Case (OBC) to be complete Q4 2024 - *ongoing*
- Members' Study Visit by Q3 2024 - *scheduled*
- Consultation on the Concept Design (experience and build) Q4 2024 - *seeking approval to proceed*
- Completion of the OBC for SPR approval December 2024 - *ongoing*
- Submission of the OBC to BRCD January 2025 - *ongoing*

3.7 These activities have been underpinned by a programme of ongoing engagement that recognises that the success of Belfast Stories hinges on the active participation and input of those who know the city best—its residents, local communities, cultural groups, business owners and visitors. Engaging with these diverse stakeholders through a structured consultation process is crucial to ensuring that the project reflects the collective vision and meets the needs and aspirations of all who will use and enjoy the space. A detailed Engagement Framework has been developed and an overview is included in Appendix 1.

First Public Consultation, August - November 2022

3.8 The first public consultation on Belfast Stories was delivered from August to November 2022 running for 14 weeks. The consultation focused on:

- Raising awareness of Belfast Stories so that people are excited and want to continue to be engaged in its development.
- Making sure that Belfast Stories can be a positive experience for everyone, including consultation on the EQIA, RNIA and Story Collection Framework.
- Asking people how they would like to continue to be involved in the ongoing engagement.

3.9 A comprehensive consultation programme included:

- Online consultation hub
- Workshops and exhibitions
- General Public events and on street research
- Creative engagement.

3.10 The reach of this consultation included:

- 2,755 visits and 2,495 unique visitors to Belfast Stories online consultation hub
- 234 unique visitors viewed or downloaded the consultation documents and videos
- 149 responses to online survey and polls
- 65 consultation workshops
- 1,148 participants engaged through consultation workshops and events
- 82 per cent of those completing the survey or responding at consultation and engagement events are now excited by the concept of Belfast Stories.
- In the survey, 58 per cent of respondents offered stories, experiences, knowledge and networks they could share to help develop Belfast Stories.

3.11 Whilst the feedback received during the consultation was overwhelmingly supportive of Belfast Stories, there were several areas that were noted as requiring careful ongoing consideration throughout the development of the project. In particular, responses indicated that the main barriers that would stop people enjoying Belfast Stories included concerns over the experience not being considered inclusive, potential to be politically partisan or lack of trust in how the stories would be represented.

3.12 Specific barriers in relation to the building included:

- Cost
- Feelings of it 'not being for us'
- Specific design considerations
- Lack of interest/ relevance
- Concerns over duplication or competition with what is on offer elsewhere

Second Public Consultation, September – December 2024

3.13 From an early stage and in line with Council's consultation and engagement framework, the project had made a commitment to consult with the public, communities and key stakeholders at key points in the design process to allow feedback to be meaningfully taken on board. RIBA Stage 2 represents an important milestone and as such a second public consultation has been planned. It is anticipated that this second public consultation will take place for 12 weeks from 26 September to 19 December 2024.

3.14 This consultation programme will demonstrate how the emerging designs are already responding to feedback received to date. The

information presented during this consultation is commensurate with the current design phase. As such it will not present detailed designs, however, it will offer a genuine and inclusive opportunity to engage on two primary areas of interest, the design of the building and the envisioned visitor experience. Through the consultation exercise it is hoped Belfast Stories will gain both quantitative and qualitative responses to inform the next stage of project development up to the end of RIBA stage 2 and beyond. By undertaking consultation events, workshops and targeted activity, Belfast Stories will continue to ensure the potential of the project to deliver on inclusive growth through focusing on positive economic, social and environmental impacts.

3.15 The specific objectives of this consultation are to:

- Promote the project, raise awareness and gain buy-in.
- Ensure that Belfast Stories is for everyone including undertaking an equality impact assessment and rural needs impact assessment.
- Gain feedback on current plans and thinking.
- Inform next phase of project development and design - feedback will be taken on board and reported on as part of the end of RIBA stage 2 report (March 2025).

3.16 Activities and opportunities for feedback during the public consultation will focus on the:

- Emerging design concept to reflect the current stage of the project, RIBA Design stage 2 of a RIBA seven-stage process.
- Proposed facilities mix including creative hub, visitor attraction and public space.
- Visitor experience as informed by the *draft* Interpretive Masterplan, and specifically focusing on primary audiences (visitor journeys) for all elements of the Belfast Stories site.

Design Concept

3.17 Emerging proposals bring the former Bank of Ireland back into the life of the city respecting the importance of Royal Avenue whilst developing the full site, ensuring that the design orientates towards and embraces local communities. In designing a home for stories, the design teams have placed significant emphasis on inclusivity and generosity, making spaces for stories and for a multiplicity of uses. Above all, their proposals focus on making spaces for both visitors and local people.

Facilities Mix

- 3.18 The proposed facilities mix at Belfast Stories is based on the site bringing together three threads as one:
1. A *creative hub* where writers, musicians, artists and film makers can meet to create, collaborate and develop art and stories to sustain us. Proposals include education and learning facilities together with development and showcasing spaces for industry and a new home for archive.
 2. A *visitor attraction* that visitors can engage with which clearly communicates the spirit of the city – its past, its present and its future. Proposals include a ticketed experience that can support a 90-minute core visitor journey aimed at local and international visitors as well as free to access areas including orientation and a springboard to neighbourhood tourism.
 3. A *public space* – a place for everyone to gather, helping us to express our unique identities and share them with others. Proposals include generous outdoor space comprising of a programmable central courtyard for activities and events and an extensive roofscape offering panoramic views of the city.

Defining the proposed facilities mix further will continue to be an iterative process as we progress through the business case and design development processes.

Visitor Experience

- 3.19 The emerging masterplan for the visitor experience challenges a conventional thematic approach to storytelling and replaces it with a narrative framework comprising of the two main proposed routes of time and space, supported by a series of crossroads that will support large scale interventions and creative installations. This approach also emphasises the importance of the city's authentic voice focusing on engagement with the people of Belfast through an extensive programme of ongoing story gathering as well as establishing a creative commissioning model for local artists.
- 3.20 The consultation programme and materials will be designed to be accessible for a wide range of stakeholders and groups. Activities will be structured around five key themes, aligned to the overarching aspirations of Belfast Stories and mapped against the physical form that the building could potentially take. These themes are:

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 23rd August, 2024**

- Regenerating the city centre
- Providing outdoor space for all
- Providing indoor space for all
- Trusted storytelling
- Engendering pride.

3.21 Planned activity during the consultation includes:

- Online consultation hub
- Pop up hubs including 2 Royal Avenue and neighbourhood locations
- Partnership sessions co-hosted by local organisations
- Citywide stakeholder events
- Creative engagement projects working with Belfast 2024 and NI Screen
- Deep dive programmes with priority groups and Section 75 groups
- Internal Council events including workshop for Members.

Full details of the consultation activity programme will be shared with Members, and we would encourage dissemination and communication of these details further when shared.

3.22 A detailed report on the findings from the consultation, including how RIBA 2 end of stage designs have responded to feedback, will be presented to Committee in Q1 2025.

Outline Business Case

3.23 An interim Outline Business Case was completed in 2020 in advance of the purchase of the site. This business case estimated that investment in a worldclass attraction could deliver an estimated:

- £15m GVA (Gross Value Added)
- 700,000 visitors per year anticipated
- Potential to create 1,200 jobs including construction
- Ambitions to become a net zero exemplar for the city.

3.24 This work is now being reviewed and updated to reflect progress, emerging concept designs and project development with an updated OBC due to be developed by December 2024. At this stage the project will then move to departmental casework review with Tourism NI and the Department for Economy. A detailed report will be presented to Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in December 2024, in advance of the submission of the Outline Business Case for departmental review.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 23rd August, 2024**

- 3.25** The estimated approval period for the OBC is 6 months. This will hopefully be followed by a BRCD Contract for Funding estimated by September 2025.

Next steps

- 3.26** It is proposed that a Members' workshop is held during the public consultation period in October 2024. A report on the OBC will be presented to Committee in December 2024 followed by a further report in Q1 2025 outlining the key findings of the public consultation with details on recommendations and next steps.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.27** There are no new financial implications to this report.

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

- 3.28** An Equality Impact Assessment and a Rural Needs Assessment were undertaken in 2022. These will be reassessed and updated in line with emerging designs and as part of the public consultation 2024. Findings will be reported on in Q1 2025."

The Committee:

- noted that a 12-week public consultation on emerging concept designs for Belfast Stories, would run from 26th September until 19th December 2024;
- agreed that a Members' workshop take place during the public consultation; and
- noted that a report in December 2024 would be submitted to approve the submission of the Outline Business Case (OBC) to the Department for Economy (DfE) to secure a contract for funding as part of the Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD).

Belfast Region City Deal – update

The Committee considered the following 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 2023/24.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- Approve the BRCD Annual Report for 2023/24
- Note the update in relation the Implementation and Financial Plan
- Note the update in respect of programme communication and the BRCD Council Panel

3.0 Main report

Annual Report 2023/24

3.1 As previously reported to Members, the agreed reporting arrangements for all City and Growth Deals requires the production of an Annual Report and the requirement to meet with the Northern Ireland Delivery Board in order to discuss deal progress as part of an 'Annual Conversation'.

3.2 The annual report has been produced for 2023/24 and outlines the significant progress made now that the deal is fully into delivery. The report provides an update on the progress of all the BRCD projects across its pillars of investment, and key highlights as of 31 March 2024 include:

- A total of fifteen projects with Outline Business Cases (OBC) now approved.
- The first Full Business Case (FBC) was approved for the Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre (AMIC) project in March 2024 marking a significant milestone for deal delivery. This was followed shortly thereafter with approval for the FBC for Studio Ulster.
- Nine Contracts for Funding (CfF) and Funding Agreements (FA) have been signed with an approximate value of £500m. These signed contracts for funding which include, Studio Ulster, Carrickfergus Regeneration, Bangor Waterfront, Newry City Centre Regeneration, AMIC, Momentum One Zero, iReach Health, Augment the City and Digital Twin, will enable project delivery.
- As the Accountable Body for the Deal, BCC has paid out £5.2m of claims to individual projects up to March 2024, with the most advanced projects now recruiting and upskilling staff, constructing new premises, co-designing projects with industry, procuring next generation technology and equipment and moving fully into operation.
- This year has seen key recommendations brought forward through the advanced manufacturing skills assessment for the projects associated with Advanced Manufacturing.

Skills assessments for the Creative Industries (Virtual Production) and Digital sectors are also now in progress.

- The Infrastructure projects, which have so far received £350k from BRCD funding are also progressing well towards the delivery phase.
 - Launched in December 2022, the Belfast Region City Deal website www.belfastregioncitydeal.co.uk continues to be regularly updated with programme and project information, as well as the latest news and events. 27 key news and events announcements were uploaded to the BRCD website during the year.
- 3.3 The Annual Report, which was approved by the BRCD Executive Board on 12th June 2024, 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 (and is therefore restricted until then).
- 3.4 The report will be shared with the Department of Finance in advance of the Annual Conversation which is scheduled to take place on 25th August 2024.
- 3.5 Moving into Year 3 (2024/25) we will see significant pace across the programme with:
- The opening of Studio Ulster anticipated later this year
 - The innovation centres of excellence continuing to build capacity through ongoing recruitment of key positions and development of operating models
 - Five additional CfFs currently in process for approval – committing an additional £150m
 - Three FBCs at advanced stages of the approval process
 - Eight major design and delivery contracts in place
 - Two more skills assessments completed
 - A Benefits Realisation Framework developed for the Programme
 - Implementation of our Strategic Engagement Framework
 - Participation of the BRCD Partnership at showcase investment events
 - Partners continuing to seek to ensure that inclusive growth opportunities are maximised for those priority groups defined in the Deal's ambitions

Delivering Social Value and Inclusive, Sustainable Growth

- 3.6 As members will be aware, ensuring that the growth generated through the BRCD is inclusive and sustainable and that it

balances societal and economic needs with those of the economy, remains a central tenet of the BRCD. To this end we continue to monitor the efforts of partners to incorporate social value considerations into their contracts through the development of Social Value Delivery Plans. These Plans are reported through the SIB's social value portal and allow us to see the extent to which contracts are delivering against the social value points to which they have committed. This also gives the PMO an opportunity to identify any challenges to achieving these targets and to connect contractors relevant employability and skills services. All partners are aware of their obligations in this regard and training on this aspect of integrating social value is offered on an ongoing basis.

3.7 More broadly we will deliver for inclusive and sustainable growth through:

- Our Employability and Skills programme of activities which includes, skills for growth in high growth sectors within the deal as well as skills for inclusion providing opportunities and pathways to employment for economically inactive and marginalised groups – aligning with DfCs Labour Market Partnership ambitions
- Integrating inclusion and sustainability commitments in project design and development and holding projects to account for these commitments
- Adopting additional policy levers as appropriate

3.8 The BRCD PMO will shortly be recruiting an Employability and Skills Manager, funded by Belfast Met, to support the delivery of the Employability and Skills programme across the BRCD projects.

Financial and Implementation Plan

3.9 The overarching deal document is supported by a Financial and Implementation Plan. This year's Financial and Implementation Plan has been combined into one document which includes the expenditure profile of all the projects broken down annually and the high level project milestones. The Programme Management Office has engaged closely with partners and updated the plan alongside the production of the Annual Report. This has now been considered by the Finance Directors' Group and approved by the Executive Board and was submitted to the Department of Finance in June as required by the Contract for Funding.

Programme Communication

- 3.10 With the investment programme now in delivery phase, communication and engagement at programme, pillar and individual project level is becoming ever more important.
- 3.11 External support, which includes implementation of a strategic engagement plan, is now in place for the Belfast Region City Deal Programme. With an initial focus on local businesses, the plan will be further developed to engage with elected members and MLAs across the region to update on progress and identify further priorities and areas of collaboration, as well as future investment.
- 3.12 The Belfast City and Region Place Partnership has also been engaged to share relevant messaging with investors across the UK, Ireland and internationally, at showcase investment events such as UKREiiF - The UK's Real Estate Investment and Infrastructure Forum, MIPIM, the world's leading real estate market event and New York New Belfast. The partnership will continue to participate in wider investment events to maximise the benefits of the investment.

BRCD Council Panel

- 3.13 The next meeting of the Council Panel will be held on 25th September 2024, hosted by Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council. At the meeting members will be provided with a programme update and presentations on the highlights outlined in this report in relation to the 2023/24 Annual Report and a Destination Royal Hillsborough update.
- 3.14 The minutes from the meeting hosted by Belfast City Council on 31 January are attached at Appendix 2 for information.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.15 All costs associated with the BRCD are within existing budgets.

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

- 3.16 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

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 23rd August, 2024**

an adverse impact on certain groups or communities then the partnership commits to carrying out further Section 75 work and including screening and EIAs as and when appropriate.'

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Corporate Plan (2024-28) and Annual Delivery Plan

The Committee considered a report which sought approval for the draft Corporate Plan 2024-25 and which provided an update on the process which was underway to develop the new four-year Corporate Plan.

The Committee:

- i. agreed the draft Corporate Delivery Plan (2024-25) as attached at Appendix 1 to the report;
- ii. noted the refreshed focus on measuring impact of the annual delivery plan through setting, monitoring and reporting against KPIs; and
- iii. approved the proposed next steps in relation to development of the new Corporate Plan, including the proposed Members' workshop in late September / October.

Hardship Programme

(Mr. K. Heaney, Head of Inclusive Growth and Ant-Poverty, attended in connection with this item.)

The Members were reminded that an update had been provided to the Committee in June 2024 on the need for and positive impact of the £1million+ hardship scheme implemented in the 2023/2024 year which was fully funded by the Department for Communities. The Members were also reminded that the Council had fully funded and delivered a £1million Fuel Hardship Programme in 2022/23.

At the meeting in June, Members had been informed that, whilst some underspend from previous years was available to support a hardship programme in 2024/2025, the amount available was £100,773, which was significantly lower than previous years.

As agreed by the Committee, the Council had issued correspondence to the Department for Communities seeking confirmation as to whether any in-year funding allocation for hardship would be made available to the Council and highlighting the need for a longer-term commitment to such funding by the Department and NI Executive.

A response had been received from the Permanent Secretary of DFC, Mr Colum Boyle. The correspondence stated that, given the very constrained financial/budgetary position and competing priorities, the Department was currently unable to provide any

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 23rd August, 2024**

hardship funding for 2024/25. It also confirmed that it would not be possible at this time to consider a recurrent hardship funding model.

The Committee had previously agreed significant grant funding to support the social supermarket network across the city which provides direct support to those in need. Members were also advised that officers were working with key support agencies across the city to host a exhibition event in City Hall in late October / early November which would acknowledge and showcase the important work being done across the city to help people in poverty. The event would enable key service providers and support organisations to network with each other, to explore possibilities to collaborate and importantly to understand the referral pathways to key areas of support which exist for vulnerable people. Elected Members would receive an invite to the event when details are confirmed.

The Committee:

- (i) noted the contents of this report, including the recent response received from the Department for Communities;
- (ii) noted the current budget position (£100,773) in relation to the development and delivery of a hardship programme in 2024/25; and
- (iii) noted the planned exhibition and awareness event to be held in Belfast City Hall for those agencies and partners which provided support and advice; with invites to be issued to Elected Members.

Belfast Learning Cities

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 To update Members on the work underway in support of Belfast’s membership of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities and the repositioning of this work in the context of community planning.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

- i) note the ongoing work being taken forward in support of the city’s designation as a UNESCO Learning City including the cross sectoral partnership in place.**
- ii) note the £25k funding secured through the Public Health Agency in support of the Belfast Learning Cities initiative.**
- iii) note the proposed theme of ‘Connect’ for the 2024-2025 Belfast Festival of Learning.**
- iv) consider and agree, subject to SP&R approval, the proposed £40k funding to be allocated from existing budgets within**

City and Organisational Strategy to support the Belfast Learning Cities programme.

- v) consider and agree, subject to SP&R approval, the proposed £20k allocation to set aside to support opportunities for celebrating success or enabling access to learning opportunities across the city with up to £4,000 available N/S/E/W/Shankill.
- vi) consider and agree the proposed open call for small grant funding (up to a maximum of £500) to support community groups to design and delivery events as part of the Belfast Learning Cities Festival.

3.0 Key Issues

Background

3.1 Members will be aware that Belfast joined the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities in 2018 in recognition of the City's commitment to promoting and encouraging lifelong learning for people of all ages. Within The Belfast Agenda, we have a vision that our city should be a great place for everyone to live and providing lifelong learning opportunities is a core part of this. Learning has the potential to transform lives for the better- it can build better relationships and help enhance quality of life for everyone in the city.

3.2 Whilst Belfast continues to play its role as a member of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities as well as a member of an All-Island Network of Learning Cities, it is felt there is a real opportunity to build on Belfast's Learning City status and to bring city stakeholders together to reenergise our focus and maximise the opportunities presented. Under the auspices of community planning, a cross-sectoral 'Learning Cities Leadership Group' currently exists and comprises representatives from QUB, UU, BMET, BHSCT, PHA, Education Authority, Libraries NI, community partners and Council. Other key partners, including the Open University and Belfast Healthy Cities, are engaged and plan to join the Leadership Group.

3.3 Emerging programme of work 2024-2025

i. Belfast Learning Festival 2025

A key focus of the annual programme of work has been a 'Festival of Learning' which is a week-long programme of free interactive and engaging events for local residents and partners. A thematic approach was adopted for the recent festival (held on 22-27 April 2024) which brought focus to the climate challenges facing the

city and our communities through the delivery of 120+ events across the city and attracting significant participation.

3.4 Council officers are actively scoping opportunities for the 2025 Festival of Learning Week. The theme of 'Creating Connections' is proposed alongside a strapline of 'Take Time to Connect'. This theme aims to promote the fact that learning is a lifelong journey and encourage individuals of all ages to connect with new knowledge, technologies, skills and each other. Similar to previous years, it is proposed that the programme of events is created through a combination of the following:

- Open call for small grants (up to a maximum of £500) to help local voluntary and community sector organisations to develop and/or showcase an event.
- Open call for in kind events, working in collaboration with key departments internally as well as external partners and anchor institutions.

3.5 *ii. Learning Neighbourhoods*

Another key area we would wish to scope and bring forward a potential initial demonstrator initiative is in relation to 'Learning Neighbourhoods'. The potential of this for Belfast emerged through shared learning and good practice from Cork Learning City and the work of the All-Island Network of Learning Cities.

3.6 A learning neighbourhood is an area that has a commitment to learning, providing inclusive and diverse opportunities for whole communities through partnership and collaboration and help build a culture of lifelong learning. It is proposed that the first demonstrator is realised in West Belfast, this is something that part of the city is already working towards and provides an opportunity to learn, and replicate based on evidence (aligned to values of our status).

3.7 *iii. Celebrating excellence*

A core way to help foster a lifelong culture across Belfast is to celebrate excellence. Rather than duplicating efforts or developing a bespoke approach to celebrating excellence this year, Belfast as a Learning City aims to capitalise on existing schemes/initiatives which align with our ethos or address gaps where appropriate.

3.8 In this context, a recent request has been received for the Council, under the auspices of learning cities, to support the Aisling Education Bursaries up to a value of £4,000. The Aisling Bursaries provide financial support to students from disadvantaged or

challenging backgrounds in West Belfast and Shankill to help make their ambitions of taking up further and higher education or training a reality, leading to securing a fulfilling career. Those who are supported through the initiative include young people who were perhaps the first person in their extended family to go to university; women and men returning to education and training having missed out education the first time around; ex-prisoners and victims of the conflict, lone parents, those from low-income households and those disadvantaged through disabilities. Since the Bursaries began in 2000, 1248 students of all ages from west Belfast and Shankill have been awarded £905,500 in Bursaries.

- 3.9 It is understood that the bursaries have received an unprecedented level of eligible applicants (i.e. 224) and the request of support from Council would help enable all applicants to be awarded a Bursary. Officers are actively exploring other opportunities to partner with other initiatives which celebrate success and/or enable access to learning opportunities across the city

Funding

- 3.10 It should be noted that £25,000 has been secured through the Public Health Agency in support of the festival and other related areas of work including the recognising and celebrating excellence as well as exploring the potential to bring forward a demonstrator initiative in relation to 'Learning Neighbourhood'. Similar to last year, it is proposed that the Council consider allocating funding to the learning city initiative up to a value of £40,000 from within existing in-year departmental budget. This would be spent on the following:
- i. **Belfast Learning Festival: £15,000 to enhance the small grant funding, the delivery of a launch event and to contribute to marketing & communications related costs.**
 - ii. **Learning Neighbourhood: £5,000 to progress the demonstrator and a report on key learning/impact etc.**
 - iii. **Celebrating Excellence: £20,000 to enable support to be provided to initiatives and schemes which celebrate success or provide opportunities to access learning opportunities. It is suggested that up to a maximum of £4,000 be made available to support initiatives across the city (N/S/E/W/Shankill). It should be noted that any future year support would be subject to Members consideration.**

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.11 £25K funding has been secured through the Public Health Agency in support of the delivery of the Festival of Learning. An additional £40k funding from Council is proposed and will be funded through available in-year budgets within City and Organisational Strategy.

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

- 3.12 There are no Equality, Good Relations or Rural Needs implications contained in this report.”

The Committee:

- (i) noted the ongoing work being taken forward in support of the city’s designation as a UNESCO Learning City including the cross sectoral partnership in place;
- (ii) noted the £25k funding secured through the Public Health Agency in support of the Belfast Learning Cities initiative;
- (iii) noted the proposed theme of ‘Connect’ for the 2024-2025 Belfast Festival of Learning;
- (iv) approved the proposed £40k funding to be allocated from existing budgets within City and Organisational Strategy to support the Belfast Learning Cities programme;
- (v) approved the proposed £20k allocation to be set aside to support opportunities for celebrating success or enabling access to learning opportunities across the city, with up to £4,000 available N/S/E/W/Shankill;
- (vi) agreed the proposed open call for small grant funding (up to a maximum of £500) to support community groups to design and delivery events as part of the Belfast Learning Cities Festival.

Belfast Business Promise Update

The Director of City and Organisational Strategy submitted the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The report provides an update on the work being taken forward to scale up the Belfast Business Promise including proposals to support organisations become JAM card friendly and adopt practices which supports those who may have a hidden disability or communication barrier.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- (i) note the work being progressed in relation to the refinement of the Belfast Business Promise and the increase in the number of organisations becoming supporters; and**
- (ii) consider and agree the proposed establishment of a seed-fund/bursary (up to a value of £27,480) to support up to 80 organisations over a 2-year period to achieve JAM card friendly status, enabling them to become more inclusive.**

3.0 Main Report

3.1 The Committee will be aware of the pioneering work which has been taken forward to develop, pilot and scale-up the Belfast Business Promise (BBP). As a key commitment in the Council’s Inclusive Growth Strategy and Belfast Agenda, the BBP is an accreditation for employers working to improve Belfast. It encourages, supports and recognises excellence and its flexibility makes sure all employers can take part, regardless of size or sector. The scheme has created a growing community of organisations committed to improving how they do business together.

3.2 The BBP is a demonstration of effective partnership working across sectors and across Council in designing, implementing, and securing commitment to the model. In May 2024, the Committee noted the positive response and commitment from businesses of all sizes and sectors during the first year of operation. There are currently 49 organisations committed as BBP Supporters (refer to Appendix 1 attached)

3.3 The BBP is a commitment from organisations to inclusive business practices and work towards achieving eight pledges including three core pledges which all businesses are committed to (refer to Appendix 2 attached). An underpinning accreditation process has been developed in conjunction with key Council

Departments, partner organisations such as the Labour Relations Agency and external advisers, including those with expertise and experience in auditing quality standards (IIP, EFQM and ISO standards). This enables organisations to benchmark their performance and practice against the eight pledges and gain support from the Belfast Business Promise community and network to continually improve.

- 3.4 In delivering the BBP and engaging with businesses and employers, a key area identified for possible improvement related to enhancing the accessibility to services for those with disabilities (including hidden disabilities). In response, and working alongside BBP partners, including the Equality Commission and the NOW Group, the following standard for organisations has been attached to core pledge 2 (Working in partnership with our communities):

“Ensure services are accessible and inclusive for those with disabilities (including hidden disabilities) through, for example, JAM Card membership (or equivalent)”

Just A Minute (JAM)

- 3.5 Members may be aware of the Just A Minute (JAM) Card, an award-winning initiative which originated within Belfast. The JAM Card is a discrete way for people with a disability (including hidden disabilities) or communication barriers to indicate that they need extra time and understanding in a private and easy way. It is a card that can be displayed in physical form or via an App, and which is widely recognised by both the people and participating businesses around the world, There are in excess of 2,500 businesses signed-up. Belfast City Council is already JAM card friendly alongside other organisations such as Danske Bank, Bank of Ireland, Translink, Belfast Harbour, Belfast City Airport, Labour Relations Agency, NHS as well as many smaller and community-based businesses. The NICS has also committed to becoming JAM Card friendly and have trained 17,000 staff across the region. Becoming JAM Card friendly, enables organisations to access the training, support and knowledge they need to ensure users of the JAM Card feel welcome in their premises.
- 3.6 Within the Belfast Agenda, there is a stated commitment to work towards Belfast becoming a JAM Friendly City; ensuring that all individuals are confident living, working and socialising in the city. There is a strong recognition across the Belfast Business Promise supporters and network of the benefits and social impact of becoming a JAM friendly organisation (refer to Appendix 3 for examples of feedback and testimonials received).

- 3.7 To encourage and support Belfast Business Promise support organisations to adopt more inclusive practices and to avail of available training and advice, it is proposed that the Council consider the creation of a 'JAM Card Bursary' scheme. The scheme would be put in place in collaboration with the NOW Group, who is the custodian of the JAM Card as well as a BBP partner. The scheme would act as a seed/fund to enable up to 80 organisations, over a 2-year period, to start their journey to become JAM Card Friendly. The scheme will target BBP supporters covering micro, small and third sector (voluntary, community, social enterprise) organisations. The scheme will provide one-off funding to participating organisations to become a JAM Card member and enable them to access the training and support available for a three year period. Any subsequent membership beyond the three years would be subject to consideration and funding by the organisations themselves.
- 3.8 Some examples of expected outcomes from the bursary include:
- i. enhance awareness and promote inclusivity and accessibility in the workplace and in service provision;
 - ii. demonstrate the Council's commitment to promoting inclusion;
 - iii. support the delivery of the Belfast Business Promise and increase the number of organisations achieving the core pledge 'Working in partnership with our communities'; and
 - iv. enable up to 80 businesses to become JAM Card Friendly and directly contributing to the Belfast Agenda commitment for Belfast to become a JAM card friendly city by 2028.

Ongoing development of BBP model

- 3.9 The process to refine and develop the Belfast Business Promise includes identifying different mechanisms to encourage, support and challenge organisations on their improvement journey, particularly in terms of bolstering the core pledges. The expertise and input from BBP Partners, including their resources, is critical to this. For example, external technical expertise has been provided to support the core pledge 'Protect our Environment' and work is underway with BBP Partners to improve and develop this further. Work is also ongoing to maximise the alignment and support through the Go Succeed programme.

- 3.10 As the BBP moves through its second year of delivery with 49 Supporters there is need to maintain momentum by continuing to build the programme of support available to Supporters and providing the robust assurance process to support the accreditation process, encouraging organisations to continue to improve and recognise their good practice.
- 3.11 As part of the ongoing development of the model, officers have commenced a process of independent evaluation of work undertaken to date in order to advise on the optimal approach for the BBP work for the next phase of development. An update on the key findings, implications and proposals will be brought back to a future meeting of the Committee for information and endorsement.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.12 The proposed JAM Card bursary scheme to be put in place to enable and encourage up to 80 Belfast Business Promise supporter organisations (micro, small and voluntary, community and social enterprise sector organisations) to become a member over a 2-year period is estimated to cost £27,420 (approx.). This budget would cover an organisations JAM Card membership and accessing associated training and support services. The actual costs incurred will depend on the level of uptake by organisations which will be monitored by the BBP team.
- 3.13 The proposed budget has been included within existing City and Organisational Strategy departmental budget.

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

- 3.14 An Equality screening and Rural Needs Assessment has been carried out, with the Belfast Business promise screened out with mitigating actions. Whilst the Belfast Business Promise is a key tool to deliver on the Inclusive Growth Strategy and is not expected to have any adverse impacts on the Section 75 categories, the programme will continue to be informed by practice and review, with an interim evaluation planned. This will ensure that modifications and mitigations can be put in place to meet the needs of programme participants as delivery matures.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Update on Planning Performance

The Committee noted the contents of a report which provided an update on Planning Performance. The report set out how current performance challenges were being addressed through the Planning Service's updated Improvement Plan.

The Committee noted the report.

City Innovation programme update

The Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Services submitted the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 To update Members on City Innovation initiatives and to seek approval on a number of key projects developing over the next few months.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- 1. Note the launch of the £277,000 Belfast 5G competition call aimed at businesses across the Belfast Region.**
- 2. Note plans to test and launch the Immersive experience within the City Hall Exhibition in late September – and the invitation to Members to attend a preview on 20th September.**
- 3. Note the launch of the Augment the City Phase Two funding call in September with approx. £50,000 available to up to five companies.**
- 4. Note ongoing discussions to support an ‘meanwhile use’ inclusive innovation hub at Weaver's Cross.**
- 5. To approve the development of a collaborative area-based inclusive innovation project with Queen’s University’s Communities and Place team.**
- 6. To note the request to work with Connected Places Catapult on forthcoming Horizon Europe inclusive innovation calls.**

3.0 Main report

3.1 The Smart Belfast urban innovation programme encourages innovative collaboration between government, industry, SMEs, academia and communities. The aim is to harness digital innovation to address public policy challenges, while at the same time encouraging greater investment in innovation to stimulate economic growth. The following initiatives seek to contribute to both these aims:

3.2 (1) Belfast 5G Innovation Regions competition

As part of the Belfast 5G Innovation Regions programme, funded by the Dept for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT), Belfast City Council has launched a £277,000 competition aimed at businesses across the Belfast City Deal region.

3.3 The competition is designed to encourage the early commercial adoption of advanced wireless connectivity. The Council published full guidance on 20 August and the competition has already received 50 expressions of interest. Funded projects will run from October until March 2025 (when the main Belfast IR programme is due to end).

(2) Belfast City Hall Immersive experience

3.4 Work is almost complete on the augmented reality immersive experience within the existing City Hall exhibition (located in three rooms on the east side of City Hall). This is a significant collaborative R&D project with BT Northern Ireland.

3.5 Work is also underway on arrangements to manage the experience which is expected to go live in late September and run for six months. Officers are planning a Members preview on the afternoon of 20 September following the next SPR meeting. (An invite will be issued to Members once details are confirmed.

(3) Augment the City Challenge competition

3.6 This City Deal funded competition is providing £575,000 across three phases to up ten organisations to work directly with the team from Belfast Stories to explore the role of immersive technologies in supporting individuals to contribute their stories to future Belfast Stories collection. The aim is to inform the future procurement and design of digital solutions for managing the story-collection aspects of Belfast Stories.

3.7 Ten organisations received £10,000 each in phase one to develop concepts initial which were presented to a panel at a stakeholder

workshop in June. The audience included representatives from the region's Tourism sector and other local councils.

- 3.8 Work is now underway for the launch of Phase 2 which will open in September. Up to five of the original 10 organisations will receive further funding to develop Proofs of Concepts that are more tailored to the specific needs of Belfast Stories. A third phase will follow with final working proto-types solutions being developed early in winter 2025.

(4) Inclusive innovation

- 3.9 At the June SPR committee, Members asked for an update on the Council's work on inclusive innovation. The following sets out the current status of this work.

- 3.10 In developing its Smart Belfast framework, Belfast City Council recognised the importance of integrating an inclusive approach to its urban innovation programme. The national Innovation Agency, NESTA, was commissioned in 2023 to engage with local innovation partners to identify opportunities for integrating such an approach into the activities, not only of Belfast City Council, but other innovation partners including Innovation City Belfast and the Belfast Region City Deal.

- 3.11 The Nesta work identified two main drivers for inclusive innovation in Belfast:

- A commitment to a place-based, challenge-led approach that requires the ability of citizens and communities to collaborate with government, universities and industry to better understand and address complex urban problems. (and likewise the capacity of these other sectors to collaborate effectively with communities.) This includes a commitment to direct citizen participation and co-design in developing and delivering innovative solutions.
- A commitment to building core competencies and skills with residents and communities to maximise the benefits of living in a society increasingly shaped by digital technology. This is not just about providing a pathway to training and employment but about supporting communities to address issues of data privacy, disinformation, and access to services.

- 3.12 Nesta indicated that forthcoming UK and EU funding for research and innovation will be increasingly predicated on the capacity of cities and institutions to integrate inclusive innovation into their approaches.

- 3.13 Nesta noted that Belfast's existing community development infrastructure provides an important foundation on which to develop an inclusive innovation programme. And that the development of a core city programme would add significant value to existing approaches.
- 3.14 In parallel with the Nesta work, the City Innovation Office has led on a number of inclusive innovation projects including the £2m Homes for Healthy Ageing project which brought together health companies and university researchers, to work with older people in the Market area to test medical technologies that sought to address issues of stress, anxiety and loneliness. Feedback from the people taking part in the project was extremely positive, while a number of the companies involved went on to develop successful products.
- 3.15 The Office has also led on the three-year €675,000 'Hubs of Innovation' programme in partnership with the Belfast Maritime Trust. This EU funded project brought together communities along the city's waterfront, with tech innovators and creatives, to develop new ways to explore local cultural and heritage as part of the wider regeneration of the maritime mile.
- 3.16 Lately, the City Innovation Office has been engaging with Ormeau Labs, Young Social Innovators, Queen's University and Ulster University on joint opportunities to take forward inclusive innovation projects.
- 3.17 Professor Joan Condell from Ulster University is developing a programme similar in nature to Homes for Healthy Ageing that would work with carers, GPs and med tech companies. Professor Condell is awaiting a funding decision for the initiative and if successful is keen to work with Belfast City Council on accessing a city centre managed location close to inner city communities.
- 3.18 With funding from Invest NI, Ormeau Labs and other partners, wish to develop a Tech for Good programme based in Belfast that would work with young people to develop entrepreneurial skills and opportunities to grow new businesses that address social issues such as climate change and health issues.
- 3.19 Young Social Innovators (YSI) recently received €2.2 million from Peace Plus to deliver the IGNITE programme. This is aimed at 16 to 24 year olds across Northern Ireland and border counties and is designed to build innovation skills with people who are not in traditional education or skills pathways. IGNITE will build competencies in problem-solving, group work, leadership and the use of tech. While the programme covers all of Northern Ireland

YSI are keen to have a city centre location to allow it to focus on cohorts in inner city communities. YSI are working with Council officers to develop onward opportunities for people who take part in the IGNITE programme including training and apprenticeships.

- 3.20 The Council has also been approached by Translink and their master developer, MRP, about the potential of making available a shared innovation space as part of a 'meanwhile use' social value programme at Great Victoria Street bus station (which is due to permanently close this autumn). They are currently in discussion with partners (including those above) to determine if such a space could add value to inclusive innovation projects and generate specific opportunities for communities close to Weaver's Cross. An update on this will be brought to Members in the coming months.
- 3.21 Finally, the City Innovation Office has been engaging with Queen's University's Communities and Place (QCAP¹) team. With funding from Queen's and the Dept of Communities, QCAP have been working with the Market Development Association to establish an inclusive innovation programme that provides local people with the research, tech, data and training necessary to harness digital innovation to understand and address local issues.
- 3.22 Ultimately QCAP are interested in scaling their model across the entire city. As a next step they are keen to collaborate with Belfast City Council on a pilot, similar in nature to the Market project, but based in another inner-city community to explore local issues of climate and urban health. This would allow both QCAP and the Council to better understand how this unique approach can inform planning and service delivery within the Council and the public sector more broadly. Queen's have costed a one-year project at £64,000 and have asked Council to consider providing joint funding.
- 3.23 Members are asked to approve the development of a such collaborative project with QCAP. Following approval, the QCAP team and council officers will engage with local Members and community organisations on the merits and focus of such a project to determine how the existing Market model could be best adapted for another context. Officers would then engage with the relevant Area Working Group and bring a final proposal back to committee in the coming months for approval.
- 3.24 Finally, it was noted above that inclusive innovation forms a major strand of several EU funding programmes including Horizon

¹ <https://www.qub.ac.uk/sites/qcap/>

Europe. For example, there are two current calls each to the value of €90 million aimed at supporting work between government, industry, universities and the citizen. Belfast City Council has been approached by Connected Places Catapult which is engaging with other European cities to consider a joint bid to these or similar competitions. Work such as that undertaken by QCAP, YSI, Ormeau Labs and others would provide important foundations for Belfast's participation in such competitions.

4.0 Financial and Resource Implications

4.1 Budgets for the initiatives noted above are funded via third-party sources, with any Council contributions identified within the existing City Innovation Office and Belfast Region City Deal budgets. Members have also approved £29,500 for an inclusive innovation pilot.

5.0 Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment

5.1 None.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Physical Programme and Asset Management

Physical Programme Update

The Director of Property and Projects submitted for the Committee's consideration the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The Council's Physical Programme currently includes over 200 capital projects with investment of £150m+ via a range of internal and external funding streams, together with projects which the Council delivers on behalf of external agencies. The Council's Capital Programme forms part of the Physical Programme and is a rolling programme of investment which either improves existing Council facilities or provides new facilities. This report presents requests for stage movement approvals under the Capital Programme, along with updates on capital letters of offer and contracts awarded.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- ***Capital Programme - Waste Plan - Expansion of kerbside glass collection*** – Agree that the project is moved to ***Stage 3 – Committed*** with a maximum budget of up to £802,000 and that necessary procurement processes (including the invitation of tenders and/or the use of appropriate ‘framework’ arrangements) be initiated with contract to be awarded on the basis of most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver.
- ***Capital Programme – IT Programme – Folder Inserter Equipment*** – Agree that the project is moved to ***Stage 3 – Committed*** and held at Tier 0 – Scheme at Risk pending further development of the project and a satisfactory tender return; and that necessary procurement processes (including the invitation of tenders and/or the use of appropriate ‘framework’ arrangements) be initiated with contract to be awarded on the basis of most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver.
- ***Shared Island Funding*** - that €46,620 in Shared Island funding has been secured as part of a joint funding application with Cork City Council to install solar photovoltaics (PV) on the roof of Donegal Pass Community Centre subject to acceptance of the grant offer.
- ***Capital Letters of Offer*** – to note the update in relation to capital letters of offer in Q1 2024/25.
- ***Contracts awarded*** – to note the update in relation to contracts awarded in Q1 2024/25.

3.0 **Main report**

Key Issues

Capital Programme - Proposed Movements

- 3.1 Members will be aware that the Council runs a substantial Physical Programme. This includes the rolling Capital Programme – a multimillion regeneration programme of investment across the city which improves existing Council assets or provides new council facilities. Members are advised that the Property & Projects Department is happy to arrange a site visit to any projects that have been completed or are underway.

3.2 Members have agreed that all capital projects must go through a three-stage process where decisions on which capital projects progress are taken by the Committee. This provides assurance as to the level of financial control and will allow Members to properly consider the opportunity costs of approving one capital project over another capital project. Members are asked to note the following activity on the Capital Programme:

Project	Overview	Stage movement
Waste Plan – Expansion of Glass Collection Scheme	Part of the Waste Plan. The project involves the phased expansion of the kerbside glass collection scheme to households in the outer city/ blue bin area.	Move to Stage 3 – Committed
IT Programme – Folder Inserter Equipment	Folder inserter equipment is hardware used for automated mailing processes within Digital Services. It is required for large volume communications processing for NIHE and the Council.	Move to Stage 3 – Committed

Waste Plan – Expansion of Glass Collection Scheme

3.3 In March, SP&R Committee agreed to move the Waste Plan – Expansion of Glass Collection Scheme project to Stage 2 – Uncommitted. As per the three stage approvals process, an Outline Business Case has been completed and the project can now progress to delivery stage. The total costs of this capital project are estimated to be £1.6m. As reported to People and Communities Committee on 6 August 2024, the Council has recently been successful in securing an offer of match funding from DAERA for 50% of the total cost estimate, meaning that the funding required from the Council is up to a maximum of £802,000.

Members are asked to agree that this project is moved to Stage 3 – Committed with a budget of up to £802,000. The Director of Finance has confirmed that this is within the affordability limits of the Council.

IT Programme – Folder Inserter Equipment

3.4 A new folder inserter is required to continue to provide a high volume enveloping service for NIHE mandated via a Service Level Agreement, and internally for council departments. The current hardware is coming to end of life. Maintenance requirements are now frequent and increasing in recent years, and sourcing parts for this machinery is no longer possible within the UK. This project aims to enable Digital Services to continue to provide SLA mail processing service for NIHE and for council departments.

Members are asked to agree that the project is moved to *Stage 3 – Committed* and held at Tier 0 – Scheme at Risk pending further development of the project and a satisfactory tender return; and that necessary procurement processes (including the invitation of tenders and/or the use of appropriate ‘framework’ arrangements) be initiated with contract to be awarded on the basis of most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver.

Shared Island Funding Awards

- 3.5 In 2023 Belfast City Council partnered with Cork City Council on a Shared Island funded feasibility study that assessed the solar PV potential on a number of high consuming council sites in both Cork and Belfast. In Belfast, the potential solar PV generation for 25 council owned buildings was estimated and linked with consumption. The results of the study were then used to complete a joint application with Cork City Council last summer to access capital funding to install solar PV on three community centres with one of these being in Belfast (Donegall Pass Community Centre) and the other two in Cork. One of the conditions of the funding was that it had to have a community focus. Donegall Pass community centre was selected due to their high potential solar PV generation matched to high energy consumption levels as highlighted in the feasibility study. Members are asked to note that this a positive funding award and that once the solar panels are installed, the panels could generate 37,898 kWh/year against a current energy consumption of approximately 19,000kWh/year (ie the panels will produce approximately double the amount of energy currently used). This would reduce carbon emissions in the city by approximately 12.99 tonnes CO₂e/kWh annually and save around £7,000 per year on the electricity bill. A contract for funding is currently being reviewed and will be signed by the Council and Cork City Council. The project will be delivered by Property and Projects. Members are asked to note the award of funding and necessary procurement processes (including the invitation of tenders and/or the use of appropriate ‘framework’ arrangements) be initiated with contract to be awarded on the basis of most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver.
- 3.6 A further application was put in to test interventions in community growing within the net-zero (UP 2030) neighbourhood area – Donegall Pass, Sandy Row, Markets, Barrack Street and the Linen quarter. Interventions include horticulture/growing training sessions; co-design of urban sustainable food interventions; implementation of urban sustainable food interventions; promotion of active travel; promotion of energy saving and retrofit

measures. The funding for this project is €15,000. There may be an opportunity to avail of an additional €15,000 through partnering with Wild Belfast to deliver biodiversity enhancements, making the potential total funding up to €30,000. As above a contract for funding is currently being reviewed and will be signed by the Council and Cork City Council. For this stream the Council will work with the Belfast Sustainable Food Partnership to engage with the neighbourhoods in the UP2030 area to identify and deliver community growing projects within the timeframe that will help develop growing capacity and biodiversity improvements across the area.

Capital Letters of Offer

- 3.7 Members are asked to note the update in relation to capital letters of offer accepted in Q1 2024/25 at Appendix 1.

Contracts Awarded

- 3.8 Members are asked to note the award of tenders for capital works including services related to works in Q1 2024/25 at Appendix 2.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.9 *Financial Implications* – Waste Plan – Expansion of Glass Collection Scheme - a maximum of £810,000 is now allocated to this project. The Director of Finance has confirmed that this is within the affordability limits of the Council.

Resource Implications – Waste Plan – Expansion of Glass Collection Scheme – revenue funding is in place for 2024/25 as part of the rates setting process. Revenue requirements for 2025/26 onwards are subject to approval.

Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment

- 3.10 All capital projects are screened as part of the stage approval process.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Community Asset Management Framework – Pilot Community Benefit Sites

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval from the Committee on asset related disposal, acquisition, and estates matters.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 Community Asset Management Framework - Pilot Community Benefit Sites

The Committee is asked to:

- note the update on the various pilot projects across the city under the Community Asset Management Framework pilot.
- Note that a workshop will be undertaken with Members on the learning from the pilot to inform the Framework

3.0 Main Report

Community Asset Management Framework - Pilot Community Benefit Sites

Key Issues

3.1 Members will be aware that the Council has a long history of supporting community groups and third sector organisations to deliver services, doing so by permitting community management of council assets. It is believed that communities benefit not only from overall outcomes achieved but also through their direct involvement in the management and programming of community facilities.

3.2 Recognising this on 9th November 2021, the People and Communities Committee approved a number of pilot projects across the city using the draft community asset management framework and toolkit to identify future management models and maximise community benefits and ensure community management of council facilities can deliver on the outcomes of the Belfast Agenda. The pilot projects were designed to cover a range of different asset types currently being managed within the community (leases, FMAs, partner agreements) and included assets already managed within the community and new or vacant assets. The range of functionality included community programming, sports development and youth and community support. This work has been carried out in conjunction with

Development Trust Northern Ireland (DTNI) with the aim that it would help finalise a framework through which future similar requests. An update on each pilot site is provided below.

- 3.3 ***Ulidia Playing Fields to Rosario Football Club*** - On the 21st October 2022, approval was granted by SP&R to progress with a lease to Rosario Football Club at Ulidia Playing Fields. This approval was informed by a business case led by DTNI which recommended that a 25-year lease at less than best value was the best option to ensure future development of the asset and delivery of sporting outcomes, provided the Club maintain the entire site except for the boundary fencing. This approval further included £20,000 per annum in financial support which shall be reviewed at year 5. There have been ongoing negotiations on the lease since this time with Rosario FC who had requested the inclusion of a number of provisions which were outside of the Committee approval of October 2022 (including freedom to set prices and exclusive use of the Playing Fields meaning there would be no public access) and which therefore could not be agreed to by the Council. Members are asked to note that the lease is now in an agreed form with Rosario FC in line with the prior Committee approval. The proposed next step is to agree a photographic schedule of condition and completion of any remedial works prior to transfer which is now anticipated for end of August 2024.
- 3.4 ***Clarendon Playing Fields to Clarendon Development Association*** - On the 21st October 2022, approval was granted to progress with a lease to Clarendon Development Agency (CDA) for Clarendon Playing Fields. This approval was informed by a business case led by DTNI which recommended that a 25-year lease at less than best value was the best option to ensure future development of the asset and delivery of sporting outcomes, provided the Club maintain the site. This approval further included £20,000 per annum in financial support which shall be reviewed at year 5. There have been ongoing negotiations on the lease since this time with CDA with the main issue being the Club's lack of capacity to maintain the grass pitches and the surrounding grounds which are complex due to their topography. It has since been recommended by City and Neighbourhood Services that the Council maintain the grounds and pitches up to year 5 of the term. Members approval to the maintenance arrangements is now sought to ensure that both the asset is properly maintained and the sporting outcomes achieved and to progress the transfer.
- 3.5 ***Hammer Pitch to Shankill United*** - The Hammer Pitch has been under lease to Shankill United by way of a 10-year lease since 2012. After working with the Club as part of the pilot process, DTNI have recommended that the club are require more time to embed

and develop their governance before progressing with a long-term lease and are therefore recommending that a new 10-year facilities management agreement is the appropriate form of tenure for this Group. Members are asked to agree that a new 10-year Facilities Management Agreement is put in place with the terms of be agreed under the delegated authority of the Director of Property & Projects and Strategic Director of C&NS.

- 3.6 ***Willowbank Park Multi Sports Facility to Willowbank Multi Sports Club*** - Members are asked to note that Willowbank Multi Sports Club had their changing facilities upgraded prior to commencement of the pilot and given this they chose not to be part of the pilot. To provide a range of facilities to complete the pilot, Lenadoon Community & Sports Complex has been included in place of Willowbank (see 3.9 below)
- 3.7 ***Tullycarnet Park to TAGIT Boxing Club***- Members are asked to note that TAGIT's Boxing Club premises had only recently completed prior to the pilot and the Club had a relatively new lease in place with the Council and that given this the Club wished to continue with their existing arrangements and not proceed as part of the pilot.
- 3.8 ***Former Upper Ardoyne Youth Centre to RCity Belfast***- When the pilot sites were agreed, RCity had expressed an interest in using the former Upper Ardoyne Youth Centre as a hub from which to deliver youth and community programming. However the Group found alternative premises and given this the pilot was not progressed. Members are asked to note that an Expression of Interest process was run for the use of the Centre last year with StreetBeat Youth Project identified as the preferred applicant, based on their potential to deliver a wider benefit for the local community and on their potential to utilise the adjacent Ballysillan Park to maximise on diversionary activities to reduce the negative impacts of ASB on the community. Members are asked to note that the lease agreement is currently being finalised with StreetBeat.
- 3.9 ***Lenadoon Community & Sports Complex to St. Oliver Plunkett Football Club***- Lenadoon Amateur Sports Community Interests Company (ASCIC) is the current Facilities Management Agreement holder however Members are asked to note that they have confirmed their agreement to their FMA being transferred to St. Oliver Plunkett Football club. St. Oliver Plunkett FC are one of the leading providers of sports and recreation activity within West Belfast. A business case has been developed with DTNI for St. Oliver Plunkett FC and it is recommended that a long lease is put in place. Further detail on this will be brought to Committee when discussions have taken place with Legal Services re the transfer of the FMA.

Next Steps

- 3.10 It is proposed to hold a workshop with Members to review the draft community asset transfer framework and toolkit following the completion of the pilot and how the learning from this is incorporated within any framework. Members are asked to note that there are a number of lessons learned which have emerged through this pilot process with a central emerging theme being that there is not a 'one size fits all' model that can be adopted in respect of community asset transfer and that each request, if Members are supportive, will have to be examined in its own right. The lessons learned will form part of the proposed workshop with Members.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.11 Ulidia and Clarendon - Estates and Legal Services to progress the completion of the Leases.

Hammer - the Facilities Management Agreement to be prepared for Shankill FC at Hammer subject to Members approval

Lenadoon - consideration to be given to the transfer of Lenadoon ASCIS interest to St. Oliver Plunkett FC.

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

- 3.12 The final Community Asset Management Framework will be screened in line with Council policy.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Finance, Procurement and Performance

Contracts Update

The Committee:

- approved the public advertisement of tenders as per Standing Order 37a detailed in Appendix 1 (**Table 1**), with the exception of the Pest Control Services to enable a report on the reasons why it was not considered viable to provide these services in-house to be submitted to a future meeting.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 23rd August, 2024**

- Approved the modification of the contract as per Standing Order 37a detailed in Appendix 1 (**Table 2**):

Table 1: Competitive Tenders

Title of Tender	Proposed Contract Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Short description of goods / services
Provision of email filtering service	Up to 3 years	£57,000	P Gribben	To reduce phishing and spam attacks and also virus scanning of attachments, therefore reducing the probability of an email cyber-attack.
Concession contract for the Stables Café at Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park.	Up to 5 years	Income based contract	D Sales	Concession contract for the catering operations and management of the Stables Café at Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park. Estimated annual revenue of £240,000 pa
Supply of line marking products and equipment	Up to 4 years	£156,000	D Sales	To support operational teams with pitch line marking.
VMWare support contract renewal	Up to 3 years	£120,000	S McNicholl	Support contract for VMWare products that host council's virtual server infrastructure
Demolition of dangerous buildings in Belfast	Up to 5 years	£200,000	D Martin	The safe and competent demolition of unsafe commercial, industrial, and residential properties, carrying out repairs to properties following demolition or to ensure that a safe environment is maintained and controlled around or within existing properties.
Repair and make safe historic structures (monuments and walls)	Up to 3 years	£400,000	D Sales	Specialist service to repair and make safe large historic monuments in its cemeteries which have become unstable and unsafe.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 23rd August, 2024**

4 x 7.5ton wireless mobile column lifts	One Off Purchase	£50,000	D Sales	The lifts are required to maintain/service/repair BCCs HGV/LGV vehicle fleet, to replace the 30year old static lifts that are beyond economical repair
Strategic Assessment and Action Planning - Specialist and technical support for the Belfast Policing and Community Safety Partnership	Up to 5 years	£180,000	D Sales	Proposed 5-year contract would align with the 2025/2028 strategic plan period and take the learning into the next process. This Contractor would deliver the 2029/2031 Strategic Assessment and 2031/2032 Action Plan.
Benchmarking tool to support a new Entrepreneurship Support Service (ESS) Approved SP&R March 2024. Duration and value have been revised.	Up to 3 years	£106,000	D Martin	Belfast City Council is acting on behalf of the 11 Northern Ireland Councils to appoint a contractor to deliver a benchmarking tool to support a new Entrepreneurship Support Service (ESS). This tool will be used to enable new NI business owners to assess their progress against sector trends, to enable comparisons with business peers, provide NI businesses with good practice insights and provide case studies and success stories to help NI businesses to develop.
Hire of vehicles, mobile plant & glass collection vehicles	Up to 5 years	£1,000,000	D Sales	There is an operational requirement to hire small and medium commercial vehicles - up to and including 7.5 Ton GVW and specialized vehicles to meet work demands
Pest control services	Up to 5 years	£700,000	N Largey	To support sites/premises managers across the Council with pest control services required at

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 23rd August, 2024**

				<p>Council owned sites. These are additional services to what the Council's internal Pest Contract Unit 'PCU' provides.</p> <p>Consideration was given for the PCU to deliver these services in-house but not considered viable due to resourcing/workload pressures within the PCU and the specialist nature of the pest control services that this tender would cover.</p>
Supply of electricity	Up to 5 years	£20.5m	T Wallace	Supply of electricity for Council properties/ assets
Provision of specialist sponsorship support services	Up to 5 years	£30k * Income based contract	J Greer	<p>Specialist support services to help the Council maximise income from advertising and sponsorship opportunities across Council assets and events.</p> <p>* £30k spend value planned for initial scoping work with supplier. Future payments to supplier will be performance based linked to advertising/sponsorship income opportunities they generate i.e. % fee basis.</p>
Analysis and evaluation of city development and regeneration proposals	Up to 18 months	£250,000	T Wallace/ D Martin/ C Reynolds	To appoint a suitably qualified professional consultancy to undertake analysis, evaluation and provide financial assurance, funding advice and due diligence in relation to

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 23rd August, 2024**

				regeneration proposals involving 3rd parties and alternative funding mechanisms/ vehicles to support development and regeneration proposals.
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Table 2: Modification to Contract

Title of Contract	Original Contract Duration	Modification	SRO	Description	Supplier	Title of Contract
T2455 Procurement Advice for City Regeneration (fully funded)	Up to 1 year	Additional 12 months	C Reynolds	Extension of time to existing contract (no modification to contract value) for procurement advice to deliver competitive dialogue procurements and financial due diligence to assist with addressing sustained housing demand from across the city and unlock regeneration potential across a number of strategic sites.	KPMG	T2455 Procurement Advice for City Regeneration (fully funded)
T1856 - Provision of a facilities management service at the	Up to 6 years	Additional 6 months and £80,024.50	S Leonard	Contract extension required to allow sufficient time for Council to complete stakeholder engagement,	Athletics NI	T1856 - Provision of a facilities management service at the

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 23rd August, 2024**

Mary Peters Track				as requested by PGL, and allow time to explore alternative management options for the site following the stakeholder engagement.		Mary Peters Track
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**Commercial and Procurement Services
Social Value Working Group Update**

The Committee noted the Social Value Procurement Policy ‘SVPP’ Delivery Report.

Equality and Good Relations

**Minutes of Shared City Partnership
Meeting on 5th August 2024**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes and recommendations from the Shared City Partnership Meeting held on 5th August 2024, including:

SCP Membership

- Ms Laura Euler has replaced Ms Caroline McMenemy as the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust representative, and that Council has corresponded with the Bishop of Down and Connor Diocese seeking the faith representative for the SCP.

Request for presentation by Cross-Departmental Working Group

- SCP will receive a presentation at its meeting on 9 September regarding the work of the Cross-Departmental Working Group (CDWG) which has been established by The Executive Office in response to the recent escalation in racist hate incidents and crime in our communities.

Good Relations Q1 Report and LoO Update

- Note the Quarter 1 update on the delivery of the Council’s Good Relations Action Plan including the allocation of £158,851 in grants through the Good Relations Small Grant Scheme, listed in Appendix 2
- Note receipt of the Letter of Offer from TEO for a reduced allocation of £369,809.69.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 23rd August, 2024**

PEACEPLUS – Theme 1.1 - Local Action Plan Update

- The Partnership agreed to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that they note the contents of the report

AOB – Recent Disturbances

- A special SCP workshop to be convened to consider actions to address racism.

Operational Issues

**Minutes of Party Group Leaders
Consultative Forum**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Party Group Leaders' Consultative Forum of 15th August.

**Requests for use of the City Hall
and the provision of hospitality**

The Committee approved the recommendations as set out below:

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED
Áras Uí Chonghaile / The James Connolly Visitor Centre	12 September 2024	Small reception for an American Trade Union delegation being hosted in the City by Áras Uí Chonghaile / The James Connolly Visitor Centre Numbers attending 60	B	Small-scale daytime; £115	Yes, Tea and Coffee Reception
Ferrari c/o Richmond Marketing	20 September 2024	Media Launch of Ferrari/ Pernod 0.0 – reception event to launch the 3-day outdoor event in the grounds of City Hall showcasing the Ferrari F1 car. Numbers attending – 50	B	*Part of wider commercial outdoor event previously approved – charge TBC by City Solicitor	No hospitality

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 23rd August, 2024**

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED
Falls Women's Centre and Blackie River Community Organisations	12 October 2024	Student Graduation for adult learners on achievement at Levels 3,4 and 5, in Supporting Teaching and Learning, Health and Social Care, and Counselling. The event will promote community-based education programmes for adult learners. Numbers attending – 150	C & D	Current rate free as charity	Yes, Tea and Coffee Reception as charity/ community
Confederation of British Industry (NI)	18 October 2024	CBI NI Business Breakfast – to demonstrate to our invited guests from the UK, that Northern Ireland business is driving the economy forward, creating jobs and prosperity. Numbers attending – 200 - 300	B	£300	No hospitality
Royal British Legion NI	25 October 2024	2024 RBL Poppy Launch reception including photos and speeches. Numbers attending – 100	B	Current rate free as charity	Yes, Tea and Coffee Reception as charity/ community
Rethinking Conflict	28 October 2024	Reception for the Abraham Initiative – a group of Arabs and Jews working together and visiting NI to reflect on NI peace process and lessons learned, shared spaces. Numbers attending – 50	B	Current rate free as charity	Yes, Tea and Coffee Reception as charity/ community

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 23rd August, 2024**

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED
Podium	4 December 2024	Celebration & Recognition of Female Entrepreneurship – as part of Belfast City Council's Enterprise Pathway Programme which Podium is delivering. The event will bring together 300 17–18-year-old females who are participating in a wider leadership initiative and celebrate the role of female entrepreneurs. Numbers attending – 300	C	£300	No hospitality.
British-Irish Intergovernmental Secretariat	17 December 2024	25th Anniversary of the British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference - a forum established by the Good Friday Agreement and chaired jointly by the Secretary of State for NI and Irish Tánaiste. Drinks Reception event to mark this anniversary and speeches to reflect on BIIGC work. Numbers attending – 250	B	£825	No hospitality
2025 Events					
Co-operation Ireland	16 January 2025	Co-operation Ireland Entwined Futures Programme – Showcase and Celebration Event for 8 schools who work in partnership on a cross community and	D	TBC	Yes, Tea and Coffee Reception as charity/ community

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 23rd August, 2024**

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED
		cross border basis, based in Belfast, Lisburn and Dundalk and Drogheda. Numbers attending - 220			
Chinese Chamber of Commerce & the Chinese Welfare Association N.I.	27 January 2025	Chinese New Year Celebration - introducing attendees to Chinese traditions, music, dance, and cultural performance, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of Chinese culture and promoting community spirit and inclusivity. Numbers attending – 300-400	A, B & D	TBC	Yes, Tea and Coffee Reception as charity/ community
Department for the Economy	26 March 2025	Northern Ireland Apprenticeship Awards 2025 - recognises excellence and achievement in training and qualifications. The NIAA showcase and celebrate the depth of quality of our apprentices, and their mentors who have demonstrated exceptional progress as well as personal achievement and commitment. Numbers attending – 160	C & D	TBC	No hospitality.
British Irish Commercial Bar Association (BICBA)	10 April 2025	BICBA Law Forum Dinner for guests attending a one-day conference taking	A & B	TBC	No hospitality

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 23rd August, 2024**

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED
		place at Royal Courts of Justice. Numbers attending – 80 - 100			
Queens University Belfast	8 June 2025	Welcome Reception for INSAP 13 'Conferences of the Inspiration of Astronomical Phenomena' for guests attending the 5 day conference taking place at QUB. Numbers attending – 50 - 60	A & B	TBC	No hospitality
QUADRAT c/o University of Aberdeen	9 October 2025	QUADRAT Annual Science Meeting Drinks Reception for guests attending the 5 day conference taking place at QUB. Numbers attending – 100 – 120	A & B	TBC	No hospitality
Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland	22 November 2025	Anniversary Ball to celebrate 100 years of local pharmacy - Drinks Reception, Dinner, Speeches, and entertainment. Numbers attending – 330	C	TBC	Yes, Wine Reception as significant anniversary
2026 Events					
Molony & Kelly (Destination Management Consultants)	26 April 2026	TELUS Incentive - Welcome to Ireland – a gala dinner staff recognition event for the top performers as part of a 5 day incentive trip to NI. Telus International is worldwide a Digital and Data Solutions company.	A, B & C	TBC	No hospitality

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 23rd August, 2024**

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED
		Numbers attending 180 - 200			
British Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons	25 June 2026	BAOMS Annual Gala Dinner and Dance for guests attending the 3-day conference taking place at ICC Belfast. Numbers attending – 150 - 200	A & B	TBC	No hospitality

Request for use of City Hall grounds for sleepout to raise awareness of homelessness

The Committee approved a request which had been submitted by PWC for the use of the City Hall Grounds on 27th September for a staff sleepout to raise awareness of homelessness.

Minutes of the Meeting of the Social Policy Working Group

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Social Policy Working Group of 13th August.

Minutes of the Meeting of the Language Strategy Working Group

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Language Strategy Working Group of 8th August.

Issues Raised in Advance by Members

Good Relations Programmes – Councillor Fiona McAteer to raise

In accordance with notice on the agenda, Councillor McAteer requested the Committee to agree to the following proposal:

“That this is Council recognises the vital role of Good Relations programmes in supporting reconciliation in a society recovering from conflict, bringing communities together, creating shared spaces, challenging sectarian, racism and other forms of prejudice, and promoting respect for all cultural identities; strongly condemns the recent violence and targeting of businesses; encourages greater support and investment for sporting and cultural events as a mechanism for uniting local communities; registers its disappointment that

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 23rd August, 2024**

an enhanced and fully-funded regional Good Relations Strategy has not been prioritised since the restoration of the NI Assembly; and calls for a review of the progress of Good Relations programmes in Belfast City Council to be completed within 6 months.”

The Committee acceded to the request.

Chairperson