

People and Communities Committee

Tuesday, 11th August, 2026

MEETING OF THE PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

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

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

Apology

An apology was reported on behalf of Alderman Copeland.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 23rd June were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st July, subject to the following:

- That the decision under the heading 'Dual Language Street Signs – Long Streets' was rejected and, accordingly, the Council agreed that dual language street signs be erected along the length of both Donegall Park Avenue and Oldpark Road; and
- That the decision under the heading 'Dual Language Street Signs - Caffrey Avenue and Glenwood View' was rejected and, accordingly, the Council agreed that the applications for dual language street signs be approved.

Declarations of Interest

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

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Community Support Plan - Workshop

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

Restricted Items

The information contained in the following reports was restricted under Part 1, Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014.

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

Resources and Fleet/Waste Management - Update

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

After discussion, the Committee:

- approved the initiation of a 'knife surrender' initiative at Household Waste Recycling Centres, subject to management being satisfied with all operational aspects of the scheme;
- noted the findings of the review of Household Waste Recycling Rates (policies and performance) and noted further the intention to commission residents' surveys and research to consider the options which had been outlined; and
- approved the response to the 'DAERA Waste Prevention' consultation exercise.

Financial Reporting - Year-end 2025/26

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

Matters referred from Council/Motions

Motion and Items Raised in Advance - Update

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

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

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Committee/Strategic Issues

**Planning Application for Burial Land
Development at Dundrod - Consultation Response**

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

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

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

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

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

Dual Language Street Signs - Policy Review

Prior to considering the above-mentioned report, it was

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

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

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

Operational Issues

Request for the Use of Boucher Road Playing Fields

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

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

Requests for the Use of Parks

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

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- North Belfast Lantern Festival - Alexandra Park, 30th October;
- TinyLights for Baby Loss Awareness Week - Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park, 15th October; and
- Twilight Walk - Barnett Demesne, 26th September.

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

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

European City of Sport 2026

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

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

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

Belmont Bowling Club

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

**Generalist Advice Funding and Welfare
Reform Mitigation Payments 2026/27**

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

The Committee adopted the recommendation and noted that that the second payments might be less than anticipated, given the uncertainty that existed over the level of funding to

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be provided by the Department for Communities (DfC). In such a circumstance, the Committee agreed that, should any additional in-year funding be forthcoming from DfC, it would be reallocated on a pro-rata basis amongst the eligible groups.

Sports NI Grants - Get Active NI

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

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

**Abandoned Bins Protocol and
Improvements to Bulky Waste Collections**

The Committee considered the following report:

1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

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

2.0 Recommendation

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

3.0 Main Report

Abandoned Bins Protocol

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

- 3.2 Black general waste bins remain the legal property of residents and cannot simply be removed without their consent or knowledge. All recycling bins and containers provided by the council remain the property of the council and as such, are straightforward to remove/uplift. The council continues to provide recycling containers free of charge, so residents are never negatively impacted financially if a recycling container needs to be replaced. The opposite is true of general waste containers if they are removed or disappear without warning, householders will incur a cost in the replacement of that container.
- 3.3 Currently, Waste Management issue “Bring Your Bin Home” (BYBH) letters to areas where multiple containers are left out for periods of time obstructing public pavements, public entry heads, or the street. This function previously sat with Enforcement but was transferred to the Resource Advisor team in 2021. Resource Advisors issue letters containing relevant information, sign posting and collection information specific to their property. This informs residents to remove their bin to their property and when their next scheduled collections are due.
- 3.4 The issue of abandoned bins is more common in densely populated urban areas and is often associated with entries and communal collection points which can sometimes involve non-domestic premises. While the standard BYBH approach is effective in some areas, persistent hot spots show repeated non-compliance and complaints from residents in areas where abandoned containers are a problem. Some of the abandoned bins encountered are damaged or without a lid, factors that can encourage owners of the bins to abandon them in the first place. It can also cause the bins to attract pests as the waste is more accessible if the bin is damaged.
- 3.5 A strengthened and more robust response is required to address persistent issues, ensure compliance, and support long term behavioral change and improvements to the environment. The stickers required to support the protocol are in development with Corporate Comms and should be in hand and operationally deployable in September 2026.

Bulky waste collection service

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

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

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

3.8 Current bulky waste collection vehicles include: –

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

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

Table 1: Bulky Waste Collection plan

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

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

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

Table 3 – lead times after changes were made

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

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

Collection of bagged waste

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

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

The Committee noted the information which had been provided.

Update on Alleygates

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

Noted.

Issue Raised in Advance

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

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

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

Chairperson