

Public Document Pack

**Democratic Services Section
Legal and Civic Services Department
Belfast City Council
City Hall
Belfast
BT1 5GS**

19th August, 2025

MEETING OF STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Dear Alderman/Councillor,

I enclose a copies of the reports for the following items to be considered at the meeting to be held at 9.30 am on Friday, 22nd August, 2025.

Yours faithfully,

John Walsh

Chief Executive

AGENDA:

2. **Restricted Items**

(e) Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann (Pages 1 - 8)

5. **Physical Programme and Asset Management**

(b) Asset Management (Pages 9 - 40)

8. **Operational Issues**

(a) Minutes of the Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum (Pages 41 - 46)

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By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6
of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

Document is Restricted

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Subject:	<p>i) St. John Vianney Youth Club – Lease assignment and Deed of Variation</p> <p>ii) John Murray Lockhouse - Disposal of lands</p> <p>iii) Ulster Hall Recording Studio – Lease Renewal with BBC</p> <p>iv) Hope Street Car Park – Disposal of Lands</p> <p>v) Glor-Na-Mona – New licence at Whiterock Close</p> <p>vi) Port Health Services – Transition arrangements from existing to new facilities</p> <p>vii) Benview Community Centre – New Licence</p>
Date:	22 nd August 2025
Reporting Officer:	Sinead Grimes, Director of Property and Projects
Contact Officer:	Pamela Davison, Estates Manager

Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted?

Yes

☐

No

☒

Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.

Insert number ☐

Information relating to any individual
Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual
Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)
Information in connection with any labour relations matter
Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained
Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction
Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime

If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision

☐

After Council Decision
Sometime in the future
Never

X

Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in?

Yes

X

No

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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	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) St. John Vianney Youth Club – Lease assignment & Deed of Variation to LORAG <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Approve the assignment of the existing Lease between the Council and the Trustees of St. John Vianney Youth Club to Lower Ormeau Residents Association Group (LORAG) to ensure continuity of a youth club following the dissolution of the Trustee company. - Approve the submission of an application to the Department for Communities to seek approval for a rent at less than best value. ii) John Murray Lockhouse- Disposal of lands to LORAG <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Approve the freehold disposal of 0.055 acres of land to be carved out of the existing community garden ground Lease to LORAG to facilitate an extension to the John Murray Lockhouse project. - Approve the submission of an application to the Department for Communities to seek approval for a disposal at less than best value. iii) Ulster Hall, 3rd Floor Recording Studio– Renewal of Lease with BBC <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Approve the renewal of the Lease between the Council and the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) for the recording studio for a term of 5 years from 1 July 2025 at a rent of £3,500 p.a. iv) Hope Street Car Park – Disposal of Land <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Approve the disposal of land resulting in the loss of 4 no. car parking spaces to the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company.

	<p>v) Glor-Na-Mona – New licence at Whiterock Close</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Approve a short-term licence for a meanwhile use at lands adjoining Glor-Na-Monas existing premises at Whiterock Close. - Approve amendment to the user clause for the current Lease and License to Glor-Na-Mona - Approve the proposal that the transaction can progress under delegated authority powers upon receipt of LPS valuation. <p>vi) Port Health Services – Transition arrangements from existing to new facilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Approve a Licence extension from DAERA to the Council to occupy DAERAs new Point of Entry inspection facility on a long-term basis. - Approve a Tenancy at Will from Belfast Harbour Commissioners (BHC) to the Council to retain the existing inspection facility as an operational contingency on a short-term basis. <p>vii) Benview Community Centre – New Licence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Approve a new 5-year licence agreement for the use of a portion of Benview Community Centre as a play centre & for use of storage container.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p>i) St. John Vianney Youth Club – Lease Assignment and Deed of Variation</p> <p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>The St. John Vianney Youth Club building at River Terrace is held by way of 99-year ground lease from Belfast City Council to the Trustees of St. John Vianney Youth Club (Diocese of Down & Connor). The Trustees ceased operations during September 2023 and the youth club building has been closed since that date. This has resulted in the loss of a critical youth service to the Lower Ormeau area. Following a request from the Diocese to assign the Lease to LORAG terms have been provisionally agreed in relation to a lease assignment, subject to Committee approval. An assignment of the Lease to LORAG will ensure the delivery of youth services to the area and support the wider regeneration of the Lower Ormeau/Markets area.</p> <p>At the request of LORAG and in support of the restoration of youth services to the area and the wider community benefit in line with objectives under the Belfast Agenda and our Corporate Plan, it is proposed that the current rent of £1,400 per annum is waived and a nil consideration is applied. Any decision to do so will be subject to DfC approval as is required in accordance with the terms of Schedule 96(5) of the Local Government (NI) Act 1972. A Deed of Variation to the Lease will be required to document any variation to the Lease terms. A map outlining the location of the lands to be assigned outlined in red is attached at Appendix 1.</p> <p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p>

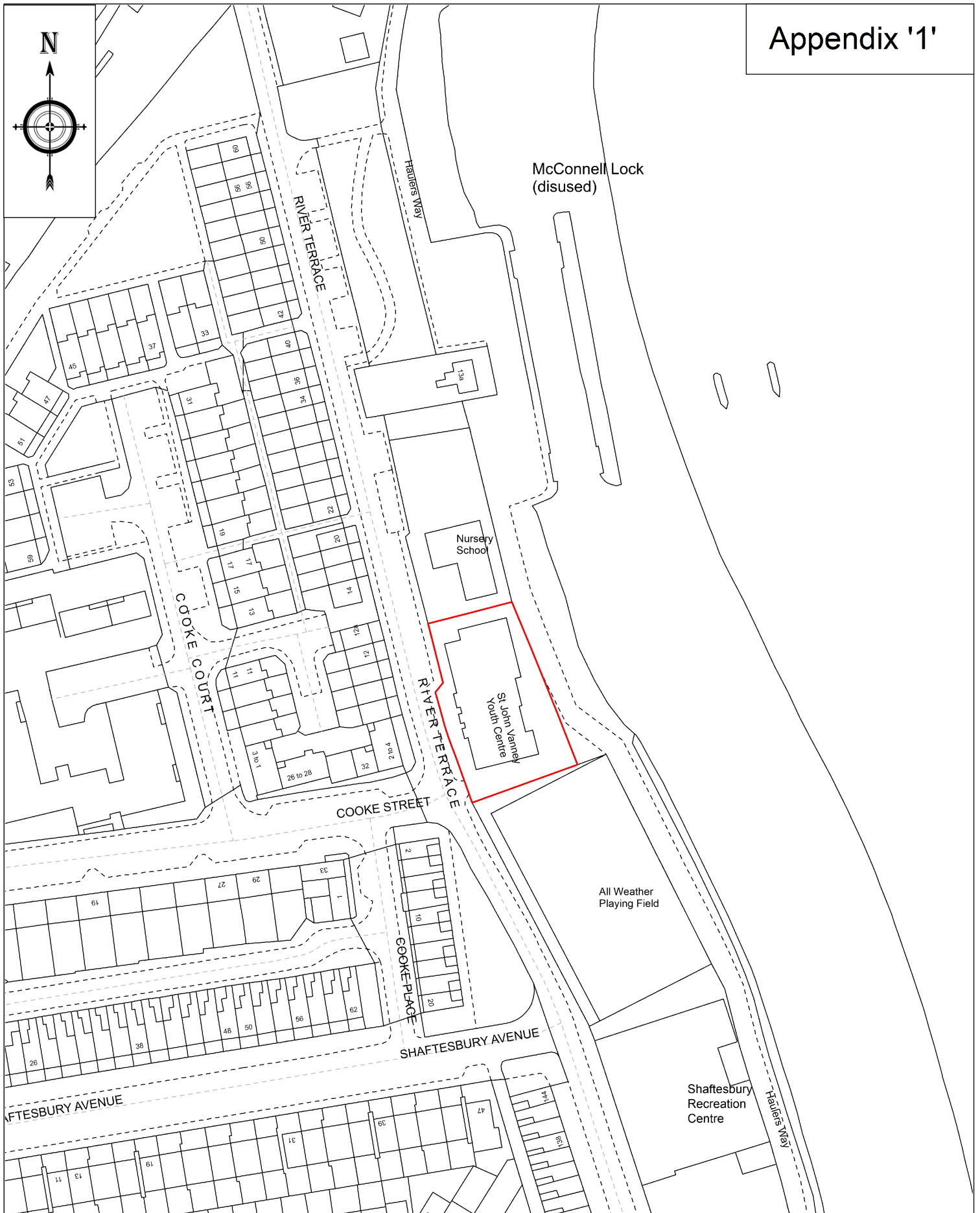
	<p>Legal Services shall act on the instructions of the Estates Management Unit.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p>
3.2	<p>ii) John Murray Lockhouse - Disposal of lands</p> <p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>The John Murray Lockhouse, River Terrace is currently being redeveloped in a community hub building funded by Urban Villages and DFC and delivered by the Council. The development was stalled due to the discovery of an unmapped NI Water pipe and it has been necessary to amend the design of the extension building to avoid relocating the NI Water pipe. The new design will extend north into the community garden which is currently leased to LORAG. It is proposed that the 25-year Lease is varied by way of Deed of Variation to carve out the 0.055 acres required, as shown shaded yellow on the attached map at Appendix 2, to facilitate the new extension design layout. It is further proposed that a disposal of the freehold will be at less than best value to reflect the added community value which will be realised upon completion of the Lockhouse redevelopment. Any decision to do so will be subject to DfC approval as is required in accordance with the terms of Schedule 96(5) of the Local Government (NI) Act 1972. The remainder of the area subject to the 25-year Lease will remain under the existing Lease to LORAG at a nominal rent for community garden use.</p> <p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>Legal Services shall act on the instructions of the Estates Management Unit.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p>
3.3	<p>iii) Ulster Hall, 3rd Floor Recording Studio– Renewal of Lease with the BBC</p> <p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>The BBC currently lease the recording studio and store (c350 sq. ft) in the Ulster Hall for a term of 5 years from 1st July 2020 and wish to renew the Lease for a further term of 5 years from 1st July 2025. Members are asked to approve the renewal of the Lease between the Council and the BBC for the recording studio for a term of 5 years from 1 July 2025 at a rent of £3,500 p.a.</p> <p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>BCC will continue to receive a rent of £3,500 p.a. Legal Services shall act on the instructions of the Estates Management Unit.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p>

3.4	<p>iv) Hope Street Car Park – Disposal of Land</p> <p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>In 2023, the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company (NITHC) approached the Council to acquire a narrow strip of land fronting the Hope Street Car Park for the provision of a third traffic lane/footpath between Sandy Row and Great Victoria Street. The initial plan was to improve the entrance to Hope Street Car Park but in 2024, NITHC presented a revised plan that relocated the car park entrance to St. Andrews Square. This was welcomed by the Council due to the improved internal traffic flow, however the revised plans will result in the loss of 4 no. car parking spaces. The loss of these spaces will generate a loss of income of £16,891.20 per annum (£4,222.80 per car parking space). Land and Property Services (LPS) have been instructed to act as honest broker on behalf of both parties and assess the compensation due to the Council resulting from the loss of car parking spaces. A sum of £150,000 was previously assessed however LPS are carrying out a valuation to obtain current market value. All works will be carried out by NITHC at no cost to the Council and will include the entrance relocation along with associated works together with the repositioning of an electric charging point. In the event that the works fail to materialise within an agreed period, the council will have a ‘buy-back’ option on terms to be agreed. Appendix 3 outlines a copy of scheme development plan at Hope Street Car Park.</p> <p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>Loss of annual revenue to the council of £16,891.20 due to the loss of 4. No car parking spaces. Council shall receive a lump sum payment assessed by LPS from NITHC once the transfer is complete. Legal Services shall act on the instructions of Estates Management Unit to agree terms.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p>
3.5	<p>v) Glor-Na-Mona – New Licence at Whiterock Close</p> <p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>Members are asked to approve the granting of a short-term licence to Glór Na Móna for a meanwhile use on lands adjoining their existing premises at Whiterock Close. Glór Na Móna currently occupy part of the site Area 1 (shaded green) under a lease with approximately five years remaining, and a further portion Area 2 (shaded purple) under a short-term licence agreement for temporary portacabins. Glór Na Móna are now seeking temporary use of additional Area 3 (shaded yellow) and Area 4 (shaded blue), which adjoin their existing buildings. The full extent of the demise is outlined in red within Appendix 4. The proposed meanwhile use is for the development of a temporary community garden facility, to be delivered in partnership with Splash Community Projects and Queen’s University Belfast with timebound funding being received for the delivery of the project. In addition, Glór Na Móna are requesting</p>

	<p>a temporary amendment to the user clause for Plots 1 and 2 to permit inclusion of the community garden use. Drawings of the proposed layout are included in Appendix 5. The licence is proposed for an initial term of five months, followed by a rolling month-to-month arrangement thereafter. Given the timebound nature of the funding Member are asked to agreed that delegated authority is granted to the Director of Property & Projects to agree that the final terms for the licence and that a licence fee assessed by LPS will be applied.</p> <p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>Legal Services will act on the instruction of Estates Management Unit. A licence fee will be assessed by LPS.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p>
3.6	<p>vi) Port Health Services – Transition from existing to new facilities.</p> <p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>The Council's Port Health service currently occupies premises at 5 Corry Place, to undertake inspections on food products entering Northern Ireland via Belfast Port. The premises are held under Lease from Belfast Harbour Commissioners (BHC) for a term of 10 years which is due to expire on 31 October 2025. The passing rent is £33,600 pa. Following publication of the Windsor Framework Agreement by the UK/EU, new arrangements for food and other products entering NI ports commenced from 1st October 2023 necessitating a new Point of Entry inspection facility which is currently under construction at 2A Dargan Drive, led by DEFRA. The facility was due for operational readiness on 11th August 2025, subject to a satisfactory inspection by DAERA. BHC have entered into an Agreement for Lease with DAERA to allow the site to be occupied and operational from 11th August 2025 (subject to inspection). BHC and DEARA will enter into a Lease when phase 2 of the works are completed, fully tested and commissioned. The facility will be shared by DAERA, Food Standards Agency, Border Force and relevant NI Councils, including Belfast City Council. A joint Memorandum of Understanding sets out the roles and responsibilities for management and operation of the facility by the shared users. DAERA have granted the Council a Licence to Occupy the facility from the date on which DAERA take occupation of the site for approximately 4 weeks subject to a nominal fee. The Licence provides for an Extension to the term for a period of 6 months and monthly thereafter, subject to committee approval, in order to govern the Councils long term occupation of the facility. BHC are agreeable to grant the Council a Tenancy at Will in order for its Port Health services to retain the premises at 5 Corry Place on a flexible short term basis beyond 31 October 2025 as an operational contingency to support transition to the new facility. The Tenancy at Will would be subject to the open market rent and terminable at short notice. Members are asked to approve the Licence extension from DAERA to the Council to occupy</p>

	<p>DAERAs new Point of Entry inspection facility and also to approve a Tenancy at Will from BHC to the Council to retain 5 Corry Place as an operational contingency. Appendix 6a show the new point of entry facility a Dargan drive and Appendix 6b shows the existing inspection facility at 2A Dargan Drive.</p> <p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>The Estates Management Unit will work with Legal Services to put in place the Licence extension which is subject to a nominal fee and the Tenancy at Will which is subject to the market rent.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p>
3.7	<p>vii) Benview Community Centre – New Licence</p> <p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>Committee of 20 June 2025 deferred a report on this subject seeking information on the nature of current use of the facility by Council Play Services staff. Senior management subsequently reviewed the extent of Play Services staff attendance at Benview outside the three afternoons of direct service delivery. The review found that since September 2024, when arrangements to base the staff at Woodvale had been put in place, staff had occasionally attended at Benview. When this had occurred, these occasions were primarily for cleaning equipment, administrative actions or in advance of delivering afternoon sessions.</p> <p>Belfast City Council has occupied and used a portion of Benview Community Centre as a play centre from 1997. The Council's current Licence expired on 30th June 2025. The People & Communities Committee on 3rd June 2025 agreed to extend the existing agreement with the Benview Community Centre for a period of 5 years. The People and Communities Committee report is attached at Appendix 7. It is therefore proposed that the Council enter into a new 5-year licence agreement from 1st July 2025 with a licence fee of £4,025.56 per annum with any additional use of the hall and hall annex to be charged at £10 per hour. The Council own and use a storage container on the site which can be removed by the Council at any time upon providing to 1 weeks' notice to the Community Centre. The Council will have the right to terminate the licence at any time by the giving of one month's notice to the Community Centre. The Council shall also be permitted use of the Play Park & Football Pitch at any time throughout the licence term by prior agreement with Benview Community Centre. See Map attached at Appendix 8.</p> <p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>Legal services shall act on instructions of the Estates Management Unit. An annual licence fee of £4,025.56 per annum will be payable by the Council with any additional use of the hall and hall annex to be charged at £10 per hour.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p>

	None associated with this report.
4.0	Appendices - Documents Attached
	<p>Appendix 1 – Map outlining location of the lands to be assigned outlined in red at River Terrace</p> <p>Appendix 2 – John Murray Lockhouse – Disposal of Lands.</p> <p>Appendix 3 - Map outlining copy of scheme development plan at Hope Street Car Park and site location.</p> <p>Appendix 4 – Map outlining the different plot numbers at Glor-na-mona.</p> <p>Appendix 5 – Visuals for the proposed Glor-na-Mona community garden.</p> <p>Appendix 6a - Map showing the new Point of Entry inspection facility at 2A Dargan Drive.</p> <p>Appendix 6b - Map showing the existing inspection facility at 5 Corry Place.</p> <p>Appendix 7 - People and Communities committee report dated 3rd June 2025.</p> <p>Appendix 8 - Map outlining Benview Community Centre in red, the storage container position shaded yellow, play park shaded blue and football pitch shaded green.</p>



Based on the Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland map with the permission of the Director & Chief Executive.
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MAP REFERRED TO

TRUSTEES OF ST JOHN VIANNEY YOUTH CLUB to LORAG

ASSIGNMENT at ST JOHN VIANNEY YOUTH CLUB

Page 17

Scale 1:1250

Produced by:-

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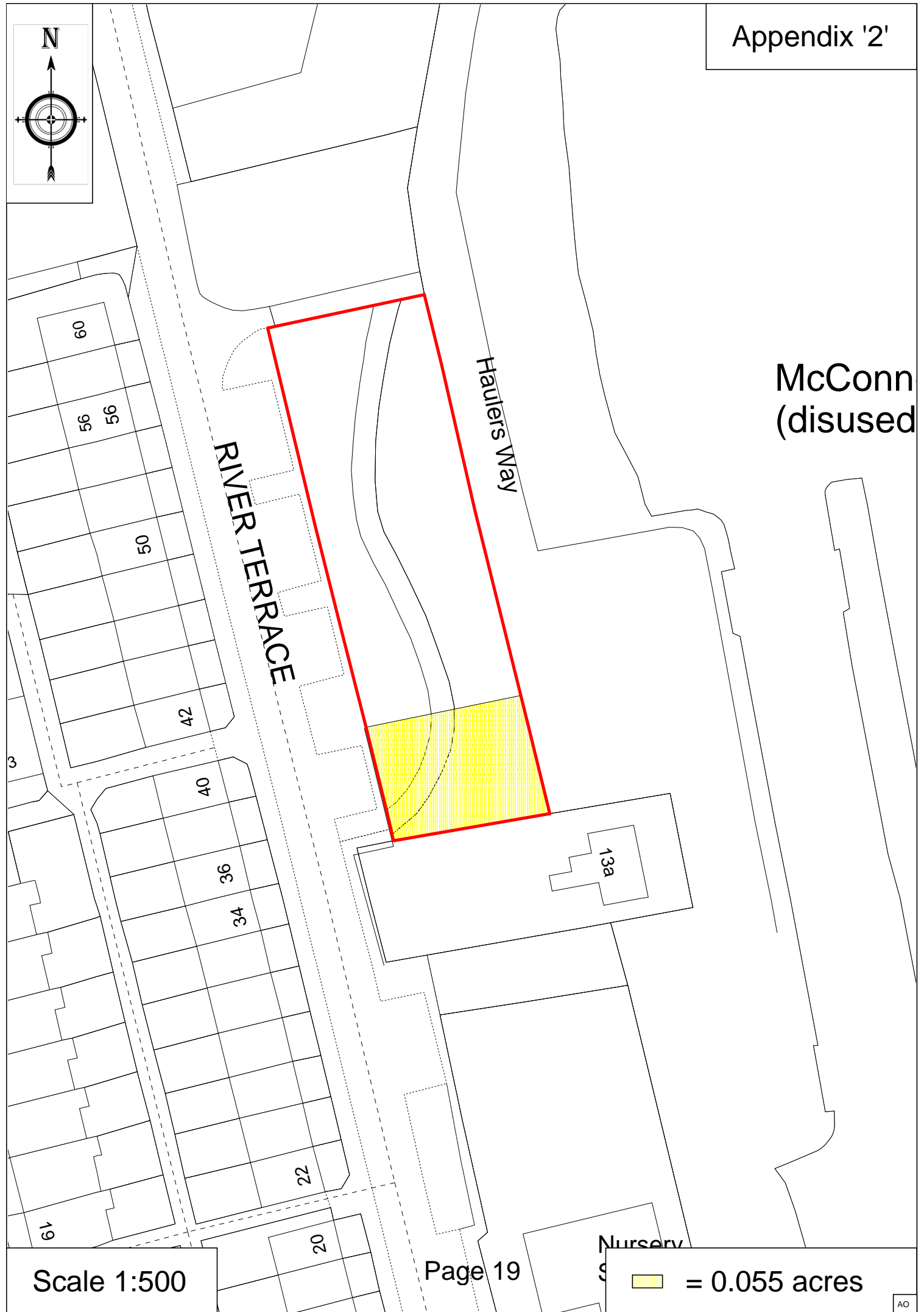
Estates Management Unit,
Belfast City Council,
Property and Projects Dept.,
9 Adelaide,
9-21 Adelaide Street,
Belfast BT2 8DJ.

Date:-

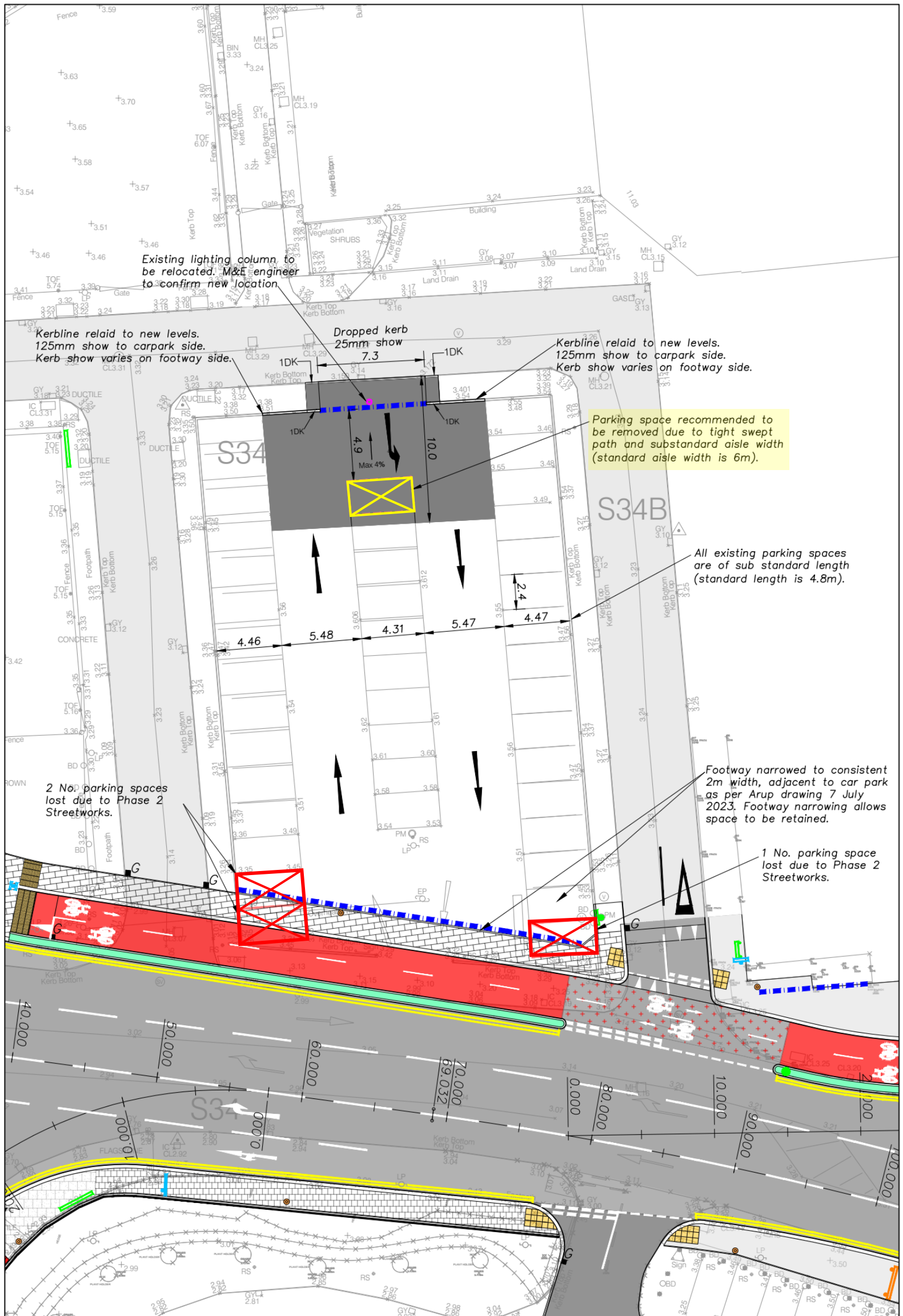
14/08/2025

Area - 0.297 acres

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WHITEROCK CLOSE



Car Park

Scale 1:500

Page 23

- = Lands at Whiterock LC
- = Area 1 - Glór na Móna Lease
- = Area 2 - Glór na Móna Licence
- = Area 3 - c.0.1683 acres
- = Area 4 - c.0.1010 acres

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CLIENT
Queens
University

CHARITY

COUNTRY
Northern
Ireland

DRAWING TITLE

**Area 1
Overview**

UPDATED

June 11, 2025

FILENAME

25_09_Queens



Page 26

Follow your project



SCAN ME

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Ireland

DRAWING TITLE

**Area 2
Overview**

UPDATED

June 11, 2025

FILENAME

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DRAWING TITLE

**Area 3
Overview**

UPDATED

June 11, 2025

FILENAME

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**Area 4
Overview**

UPDATED

June 11, 2025

FILENAME

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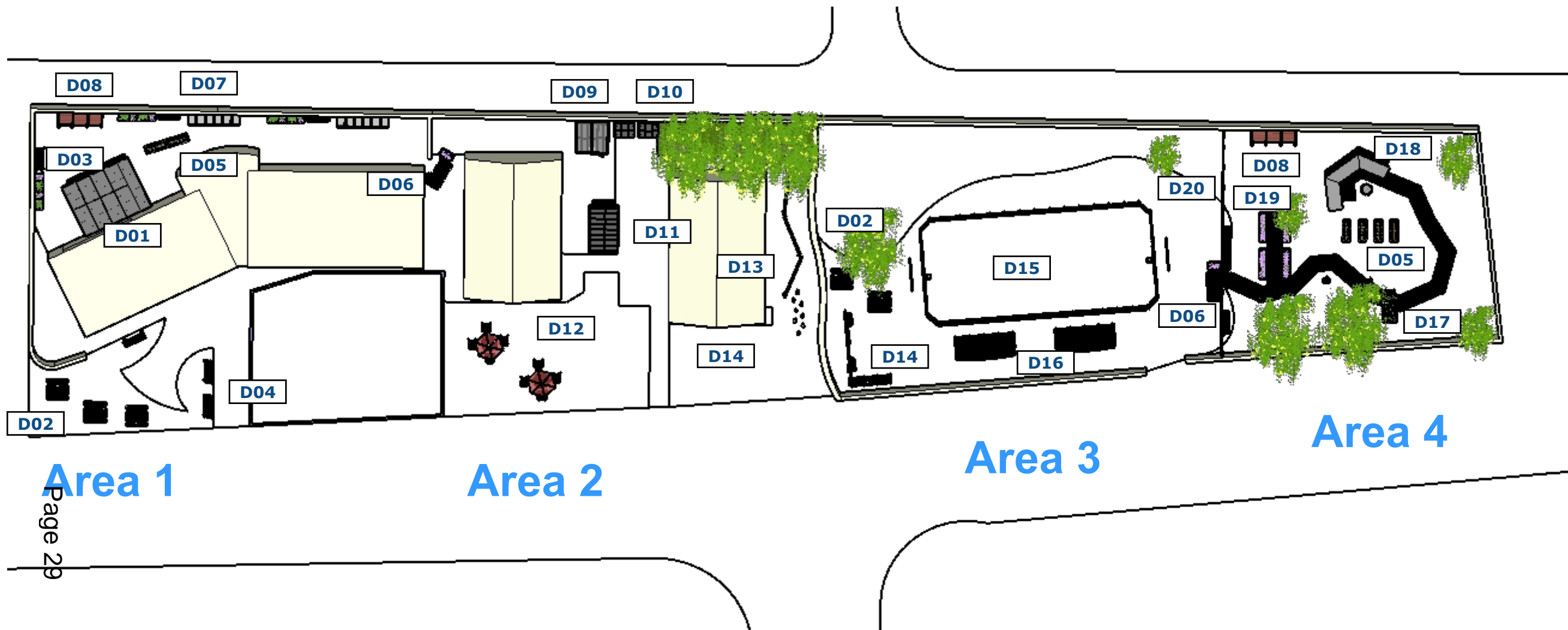
Setting out plan

UPDATED

June 11, 2025

FILENAME

25_09_Queens



Area 1

Area 2

Area 3

Area 4

Area 1

- D01. Workshop
- D02. 3x Picnic tables
- D03. Raised planters
- D04. Benches
- D05. Low planters
- D06. Archway
- D07. Cold frames
- D08. Composter

Area 2

- D09. Potting shed
- D10. Covered potting tables
- D11. Sensory cabin
- D12. Picnic benches
- D13. Balance beams and stepping stones
- D14. Bridging game

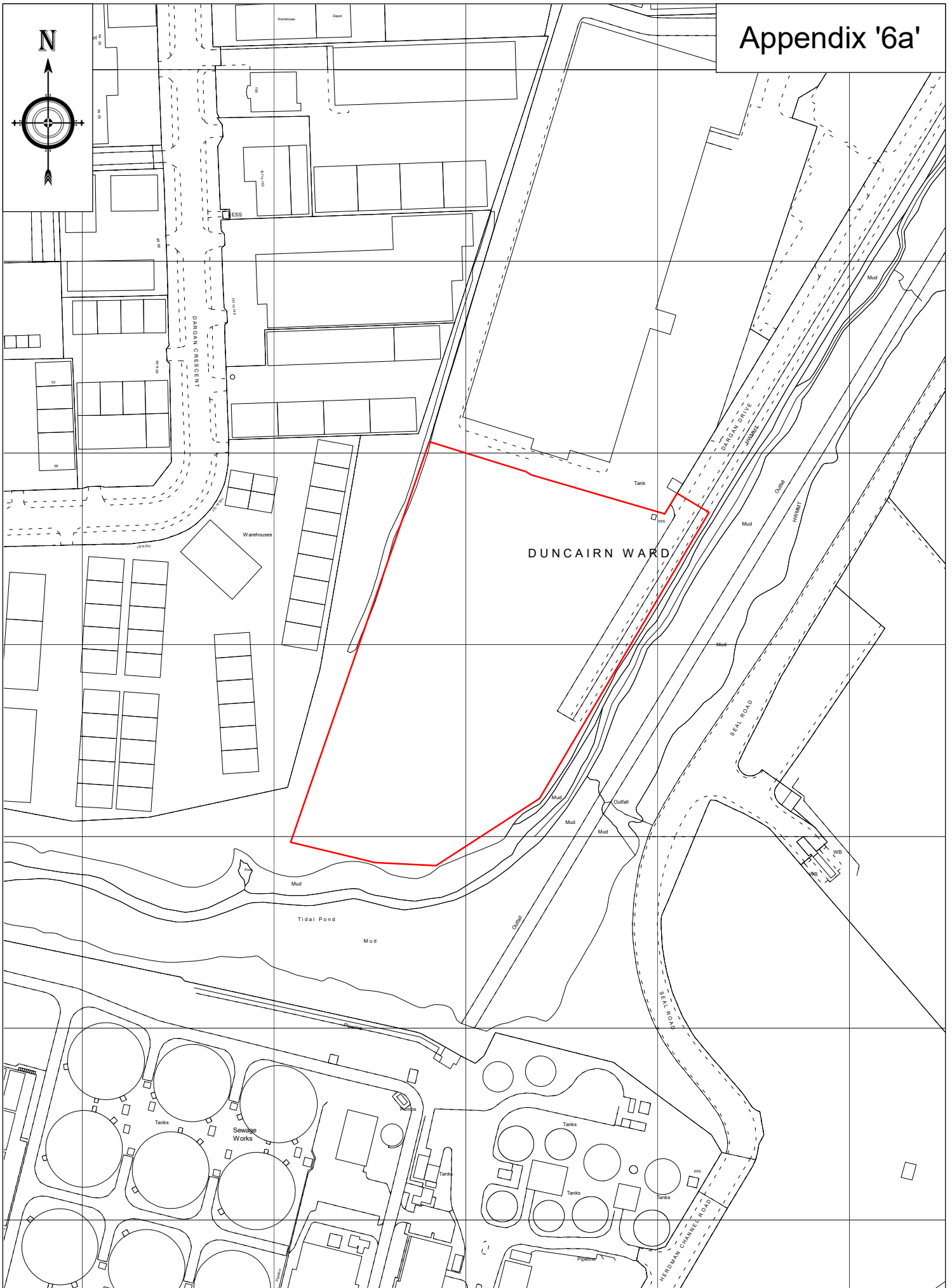
Area 3

- D14. Traverse wall
- D15. City stadium
- D20. Picnic benches
- D16. Tiered seating

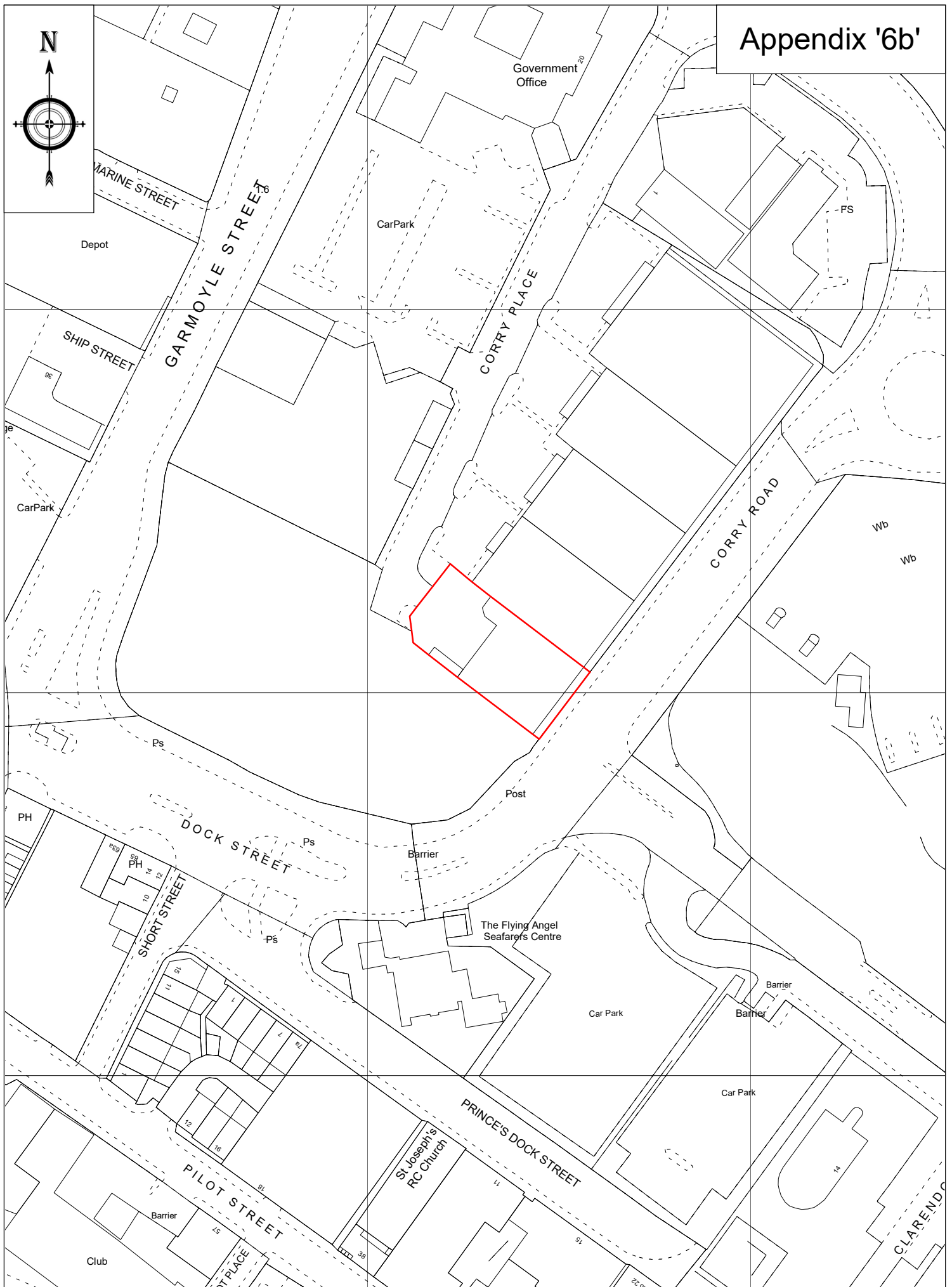
Area 4

- D17. Sensory trail
- D18. Fire pit and covered seating
- D19. Accessible planters
- D08. Composters
- D20. Fence
- D06. Archway
- D05. Low planters

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Scale 1:1250



Existing inspection facility at 5 Corry Place

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Subject:	Play Services Rental Agreement for Benview Residents Association
Date:	3 rd June 2025
Reporting Officer:	Jim Girvan – Operational Director, Neighbourhood Services
Contact Officer:	Israel Hontavilla – Community Services Unit Manager

Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted?

Yes

☐

No

☒

Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.

Insert number

1. Information relating to any individual
2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)
4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter
5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained
6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction
7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime

If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision

After Council Decision

Sometime in the future

Never

☐
☐
☐
☐

Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in?

Yes

☒

No

☐

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	The Committee will recall that, at its meeting on 6th May, it had agreed to defer, for a period of one-month, consideration of the above-mentioned report to enable further engagement to be undertaken between officers and locally Elected Members in respect of the rental agreement. The report, as presented, is set out for Members' information. Accordingly, the Committee is requested to consider the extension or expiry of the current rental agreement with Benview Residents Association.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	That committee considers the extension or expiry of rental agreement with Benview Residents Association.
3.0	Main Report
	Background
3.1	Belfast City Council's Play Service operated from six core centres in 2024 - 2025, additionally providing external projects for 18 schools, 8 community outreach programmes and one ethnic minority location. All play service delivery is child centred with all data held in compliance with General Data Protection Regulations removing concerns for parents/guardians.
3.2	<p>Benview Residents Association</p> <p>Belfast City Council entered into an informal agreement with Benview Residents Association (BRA) in 1997. A formal agreement was put in place on 1st January 2003 for an initial term of three years. This agreement has been extended in two-year periods since then. The rental agreement to Benview provides Play Service with access to;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Storeroom. • Outdoor space for a container. • Office space Monday to Friday 09:00 to 17:00. • Main Hall for activities on Mondays, Tuesday, Thursday from 13:30 to 16:30.
3.3	The Play Service pays Benview Residents Association a rental amount of £4,225 for this access and locates a Play Team and part-time cleaner in an office. Council is also required to pay £800 rent to BRA to provide a short summer scheme in the centre.
3.4	Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, Play Service operated from two Council owned buildings and three rental venues. To improve service provision the Play Service began the process to locate all staff within Belfast City Council building to ensure a standardised approach to staff facilities, programme design and implementation and outreach provision.
3.5	This approach has enabled the service to design and deliver targeted programmes working closely with local schools, service providers, residents and voluntary groups on the most impactful days and times. This targeted approach has resulted in Play Teams creating increased connections with local communities, increasing the overall outputs of the Play Service and improving outcomes in line with the Belfast Agenda.

3.6

Play Service engaged with officers from across the Department to identify under-utilised buildings which could be transformed into Play Centres. In 2022 Play Service agreed access to new venues at under-utilised Downshire Hall, Botanic Bowling Pavilion and Woodvale Bowling Pavilion. They terminated two of the three historical rental agreements and fully re-located two teams to re-purposed buildings with supporting outdoor spaces at Downshire Hall and Botanic Bowling Pavilion.

3.7

Full daytime access and control of the buildings enables the Play Service to programme services in line with local need. Hours delivered and attendance increased by 27% (average). The financial resources that were allocated to the rental agreements were re-invested in direct service delivery.

3.8

At the end of 2022, Play Service advised Benview Residents Association that they were considering re-locating the team based in Benview to Woodvale Bowling Pavilion in line with the new delivery model.

3.9

This change enabled the relocation of Belfast City Council staff to both an office and play facility within our owned facilities whilst having increasing service provision. The Play Service currently provides seven weekly sessions, to other organisations in their facilities, where we provide staff free of charge to deliver a wide range of programmes targeted to the needs of the children and group. Play

3.10

The Play Service recognises that the delivery of their after-school and summer programmes is highly appreciated by residents. It also recognises that BRA delivers similar after-school and summer scheme services in their building themselves. At the start of 2024, after conversations with BRA, a one-year extension was agreed to provide the organisation with sufficient time to identify alternative sources of income or delivery models to suit their requirements. This notice period will expire on 1st July 2025.

3.11

The Play Service has relocated its office space and staff to Woodvale Play Centre, has made arrangement for removal of the storage container and continues to provide after-schools programming at Benview three afternoon’s each week.

3.12

Belfast City Council would like to continue our work with Benview Residents Association where we will continue to deliver an afterschool and summer scheme service to children. This service would be in line with our outreach service across the City where we provide staff to deliver a high-quality play experience to children with no cost to an organisation or charge incurred by Belfast City Council.

3.13

The table below illustrates the financial support which Benview Residents Association received from Council in 2024 – 2025 and what it will be offered by Council in the 2025 – 2026 financial year, based on the decision on this report.

Funding	2024 - 2025	2025 – 2026 incl. rental	2025 – 2026 excl. rental
Community Summer Scheme	£2,500	£2,500	£2,500
Revenue Grant for Community Buildings	£20,623	£41,246	£41,246

	Play Service Rental Agreement	£4,225	£4,225	£0
	Rent of room for summer scheme	£800	£800	£0
	Total amount	£28,148	£48,771	£43,746
3.14	Belfast City Council has received a request from Benview Residents Association for an extension of the current rental agreement for a period of 5 years. Members are asked to consider the request with the consideration that the Play Service no longer requires office space, outdoor space for a container and does not pay other organisations while delivering services at their facilities.			
3.15	<u>Financial & Resource Implications</u> This decision will either continue with a rental agreement or enable improved service delivery through re-allocation of resources.			
3.16	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u> There are no equality or good relations implications from the implementation of this decision.			
4.0	Appendices			
4.1	None.			



- = Benview Community Centre Site boundary
- = Benview Community Centre
- = Storage Container
- = Play Park
- = Football Pitch

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Minutes of Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum Thursday 14th August 2025

Attendance

Members:

Councillor Jenna Maghie
Councillor Natasha Brennan
Councillor Sarah Bunting
Councillor Séamas de Faoite
Councillor Brian Smyth
Alderman Sonia Copeland
Councillor Ronan McLaughlin
Councillor Ciaran Beattie

Officers:

John Walsh, Chief Executive
Sharon McNicholl, Deputy Chief Executive/Strategic Director of Corporate Services
Nora Largey, City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services
Trevor Wallace, Director of Finance
Damien Martin, Strategic Director of Place & Economy
David Sales, Strategic Director of City & Neighbourhood Services
Sinead Grimes, Director of Property & Projects
John Tully, Director City & Organisational Strategy
Adrian Ferguson, Senior Development Manager (for Item 1)
Joanne Delaney, Portfolio and Programme Coordinator (secretariat)

1. Housing Led Regeneration

The Chief Executive welcomed John McDonald, Investment Projects Managing Director at GRAHAM who have been appointed as the Council's private sector partner to work alongside Council to deliver the housing led regeneration programme of work in order to accelerate city centre living and housing regeneration across the city.

John provided an overview of the company profile and briefed Members on the work portfolio undertaken by GRAHAM with other public authorities in relation to joint ventures. He outlined the work undertaken to date on the programme since formal appointment, the ongoing engagement taking place and the social value principles of the programme. Some queries were raised by Members in relation to the approach to affordable housing across the programme for which clarity was provided and it was agreed a detailed breakdown of units for individual projects would be included in future updates. There was discussion on the challenges around viability of some of the sites and the need to ensure continued engagement with key stakeholders. Members also highlighted the importance of branding, communication and connectivity as this work progresses. John presented some imagery on

site proposals and after detailed discussion it was agreed that a site visit to Loft Lines would be arranged for Party Group Leaders.

2. Finance Update

The Director of Finance presented the Quarter 1 financial outturn for 2025/26 and outlined the income, expenditure and projected underspend for the period. He advised a report with the detail discussed will be brought to August SP&R outlining the Quarter 1 financial position for the Council.

The Director also outlined the timeframe for the setting of the district rate for 2026/27 and highlighted challenges that will need to be considered as part of the process. He advised that Members would explore existing and new priorities at the upcoming Efficiency and Income Generation Workshop in September. In relation to some queries raised by a Member the Director clarified that detailed profile spend will be shared at the Workshop and potential solutions to issues identified. The workshop will help ensure that growth proposals submitted through the 2026/27 estimates process are aligned to the Corporate Planning process.

3. Multicultural Hub

Members discussed the amendment made at the July Council meeting in relation to the allocation of the underspend included in the Quarter 4 2024/25 finance report specifically in relation to the allocation for the resilience fund for newcomer families and communities. In relation to a Member suggestion that some of the monies could be allocated to a feasibility study for a Multicultural hub it was noted that consultation with the relevant organisations and groups should take place before any decision was made on how the monies would be allocated. The Director of Property and Projects to follow up with Director City & Organisational Strategy and then an update to be brought back to a future meeting.

4. Request to present

Members agreed to the request for Peter Sheridan to attend the September meeting in order to brief Members on the Good Relations Strategy Refresh & 3 Year Action Plan alongside the update to the Shared City Partnership.

5. Planning Update

The City Solicitor updated the Forum on the live planning applications that were considered at the August Planning Committee. There was an issue raised by a Member in relation to Environmental Health resources connected to planning applications. The Strategic Director of City & Neighbourhood Services provided clarity in terms of current resourcing, and it was agreed he would follow up. The City Solicitor also provided clarity on a number of issues raised in relation to ongoing Pre-Application Discussions.

6. Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann 2026

The Strategic Director of Place & Economy presented an update in relation to Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann and outlined the priorities and resource requirements now that the official hand over from Wexford County Council has taken place. The Director advised that Officers shadowed colleagues across a wide range of operations at Wexford County Council during their event delivery of Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann 2025 and noted how invaluable the learning from Wexford had been. Members noted the proposed governance arrangements to be established, the initial budgetary requirements and that a report will be brought to August SP&R Committee for consideration.

Members also highlighted the learning that they had gathered whilst in attendance at Wexford and it was agreed that a special Party Group Leaders meeting is arranged to capture Member feedback.

7. AOB

Somme Commemoration 2026

A Member requested that engagement takes place with The Somme Association regarding representation from the Council at the Somme Commemoration 2026. The City Solicitor to follow up.

Climate Change and Sustainability Training

The Director City & Organisational Strategy referred to a report that was considered by the Climate & Resilience Committee in June in relation to climate change and sustainability training for Members. He advised that delivery of a pilot course is planned for September and

it would be open to all Members. It was noted that Party Group Leaders would communicate within their own parties in relation to attendance.

Programme for Government - Transformation Fund bid

The Director City & Organisational Strategy provided a briefing on a recent submission made to the Programme for Government Transformation Fund via the Department for Communities to support vulnerable people in Belfast. Whilst the bid was unsuccessful, he advised that work continues to explore alternative funding routes. Members highlighted the importance of the vulnerability programme and discussed the many challenges involved in securing funding and welcomed the ongoing engagement taking place with Permanent Secretaries. In terms of the multi agency approach already in place it was noted that linkages to communities is also key and the Director to follow up. Details of the programme to be circulated following the meeting in order that Members can advocate given the importance of the issue and Party Group Briefings will be organised to explore potential funding routes.

A query was raised by a Member in relation to the ongoing programme of work in the city centre to support vulnerable people and the Director provided clarity. It was also noted that the planned visit to Dublin City Council for Party Group Leaders which is to include a visit to Merchants Quay would be followed up.

Draft Irish Language Policy Update

The City Solicitor provided an update on the draft Irish Language Policy outlining the findings from the consultation process, key issues for consideration, resource implications, financial commitment and the proposed timelines for implementation. Discussion ensued on some of the issues outlined and Members to further consider in advance of report being considered at August SP&R Committee.

Equality Commission's intent to apply to the High Court Re: Women Scotland Ltd v The Scottish Ministers

The City Solicitor provided an update on a paper published by the Equality Commission in June giving its views on the legal position in Northern Ireland, following a review of the Supreme Court judgment in 'For Women Scotland Ltd v The Scottish Ministers'. She advised that consultation had commenced but that ultimately, the ECNI intended to apply to the Court for a declaration on the legal position in NI in light of the judgement which would

provide legal certainty. The City Solicitor to circulate the paper following the meeting so that individual parties could consider whether they wished to respond to the ECNI consultation.

Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL) Update – Industrial Action

The Strategic Director of City & Neighbourhood Services provided an update on the current status of the ongoing Belfast leisure centre staff pay dispute with GLL (Greenwich Leisure Limited) and the recent industrial action. Members noted the update provided.

Notice of Motion – Safeguarding Belfast Playparks

The Strategic Director of City & Neighbourhood Services advised that the Notice of Motion, Safeguarding Belfast's Playparks was referred to Party Group Leaders from P&C August Committee to allow further information to be provided on the consultation and policy process. Following detailed discussion there where a number of concerns raised by Members in relation to the motion and issues which had arisen as a consequence. The City Solicitor to reconsider whether the motion is competent in the first instance and then a report to be brought to a future P&C Committee outlining existing powers and policies around safeguarding, as well as the consultation process. It was also noted that the process in relation to Notice of Motions in general needs to be reviewed in the longer term.

Assets Update

The Director of Property & Projects outlined some of the recommendations that will be included in the Asset Management report to August SP&R Committee specifically in relation to a tenancy agreement at the Belfast Stories site and an ongoing issue in relation to a piece of land at Boucher which Members had previously been briefed on. Members also discussed the longer term strategic approach to maximise the use of council owned assets.

FIFA Women's World Cup in 2035

The Strategic Director of Place & Economy provided an update on the UK bid to host the FIFA Women's World Cup in 2035. He advised that whilst mindful that the event is not until 2035, FIFA are expecting certain commitments from host cities by the Autumn 2025. Officers are working closely with the central bid team for Belfast and a report will be brought to September SP&R Committee for consideration.

There was discussion in relation to the Big Screen that was previously positioned in City Hall grounds, and it was agreed that the viability of a temporary/portable screen option is explored and an update brought back to a future meeting.

Illuminate Requests

The City Solicitor outlined for Members a number of illuminate requests received. Members noted the following requests would be agreed under the City Solicitors delegated authority.

- **Belfast Diwali 2025** – 25 September 2025
- **Rare Disease Day** – 28 February 2026

Northern Ireland Executive – Collaborative Funding

The Strategic Director of Place & Economy referred to joint correspondence issued to Executive Colleagues from the Minister for Infrastructure and Minister for the Economy in relation to public transport services and outlined the resource request from the Council as part of a collaborative funding package. A report will be brought to a future SP&R Committee in relation to the funding request once confirmation of Executive support has been received.